The London School of Economics and Political Science

THE NORMALISATION OF WAR

From the Korean War to the War on Terror

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation studies the relationship between the American public and the wars waged in their name. Based on the puzzling degree of continuity in overseas counterterrorism campaigns between the George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump administrations, this dissertation developed into a broader project tracing the normalisation of war from the Korean War to 2021. More specifically, this dissertation proposes a novel analytical framework for understanding the initial puzzle motivating this study along with the broader relationship in question.

This dissertation puts forward the normalisation framework, which employs a critical realist approach to incorporate the material and ideational elements of war by focusing on three key themes: mobilisation, prioritisation, and legitimation. These three themes provide a holistic and more complete account of the relationship between U.S. society and American wars than existent scholarship. Unlike some realist analysis, this dissertation stresses the interactions between policymaking and perceived public opinion. Though liberal scholarship does emphasise the influence of public opinion on U.S. foreign policy, this dissertation posits that warfighting strategies have increasingly externalised the burden of American wars, allowing governments to fight wars directly at odds with the still prevalent ideals of the American way of war. Contra critical constructivist literature, this dissertation highlights the varying salience of wars in the American political imaginary, arguing that wars have oftentimes been deprioritised instead of legitimated.

These arguments are illustrated in the context of case studies across three periods: the Cold War, the advent of the risk era (1989-2001), and the War on Terror. By employing the normalisation framework and broadening the academic applications of military strategies to consider how they relate to society and public opinion, these investigations provide revisionist and original analysis of the conflicts under study. More generally, the insights offered by the framework established in this dissertation directly contributes to the study of war and public opinion.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AUMF = Authorisation of the Use of Military Force

CIA = Central Intelligence Agency

CS = Copenhagen School

GDP = Gross Domestic Product

DCAS = Defense Casualty Analysis System

DMDC = Defense Manpower Data Center

IR = International Relations

ISIS = Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

NATO = North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OIR = Operation Inherent Resolve

PMSCs = Private Military and Security Companies

PPG = Presidential Policy Guidance

PSP = Principles, Standards, and Procedures

RMA = Revolution in Military Affairs

SOF = Special Operations Forces

UN = United Nations

UNOSOMO II = United Nations Operation in Somalia II

UNSC = United Nations Security Council

U.S. = United States of America

USAF = United States Air Force

1: Introduction

Chapter Outline

This chapter consists of three main sections before offering an outline of the dissertation.[1] The first part of the chapter outlines the research puzzle at the heart of this dissertation: how could the War on Terror continue across three radically different presidential administrations despite its seemingly politically toxic nature? In answering this puzzle, this dissertation argues that war has become normalised at a societal level, with the second section of the chapter defining normalisation and providing evidence for this claim. As this dissertation focuses on the relationship between war and society, the third part of the chapter consists of a literature review on American public opinion and the use of force,[2] outlining three schools of thought: realism, liberalism, and those arguing against democratic exceptionalism. This section finishes by offering critiques of these three approaches, setting the basis for the introduction of the normalisation framework introduced in the following chapter.

Introduction and Research Puzzle

In his 20 September 2001 address to a Joint Session of Congress, George W. Bush (2001a) announced his administration's newly launched "War on Terror".[3] In this speech, Bush argued that although the conflict began "with Al Qaeda", it would "not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated" (ibid).[4] The object of the War on Terror, Bush (2004c) later declared, was "not to wait for the next attack and respond but to prevent attacks by taking the fight to the enemy". These statements capture the core paradigmatic shift associated with the launching of the War on Terror: that instead of treating terrorism as a crime to be responded to, counterterrorism would entail pre-emptive military actions overseas to prevent terrorist attacks on the homeland. This change was captured in the 2001 Authorisation of the Use of Military Force (AUMF) which authorised the Bush administration to '[u]se all necessary and appropriate force' against 'nations, organizations, or persons' responsible for 9/11 or planning 'any future acts of international terrorism against' the United States (U.S.) (Bradley and Goldsmith 2005, 2050).[5]

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[1] In each chapter, the 'Chapter Outline' and 'Conclusion' sections are not referred to as such to avoid unnecessary repetition.

[2] I use 'America' and the 'U.S.' interchangeably in this dissertation but wish to acknowledge the geopolitical imagination that this reflects by overlooking Central and South America (Löfflmann 2017, 12).

[3] Like Jack Holland (2012, 180), I use the term War on Terror without quotation marks from hereon in for readability purposes.

[4] After a full name is given, the rest of the dissertation uses the surname only of the actor in question.

[5] Throughout this dissertation, " " are used to indicate *spoken* comments, whilst ' ' are used for *written* texts.

Indeed, although the following administrations led by Barack Obama and Donald Trump carried out different counterterrorism strategies, both administrations have relied on the 2001 AUMF to underwrite their counterterrorism operations (Fuller 2017, 140; Ryan 2019, 223). As Brian Jenkins (2017) summarised the counterterrorism approaches of the Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations, 'overall, there has been remarkable continuity in their efforts'. Put simply, the preventative militaristic approach at the heart of the Bush administration's response remains present today and the War on Terror lives on.

However, the fate of the War on Terror has been far from obvious. Senator Obama's objections to Bush's "War on Terror" formed a significant part of his candidacy, particularly in terms of distinguishing his foreign policy from Hillary Clinton and John McCain, who had both supported the Iraq War (Heaney and Rojas 2011, 45; Saldin 2008, 8). Obama's 'Renewing American Leadership' in *Foreign Affairs* (2007b) focused almost exclusively on Bush's counterterrorism policies, whilst a July 2008 campaign speech on national security strategy outlined "five goals essential to making America safer", three of which concerned Bush's War on Terror (Obama 2008). Discussing the issue of counterterrorism, Obama (2007b) stated that it was "time to turn the page" and "write a new chapter in our response to 9/11", promising to "lead this country in a new direction" (Obama 2008). Even more strikingly, after more than four years as president, in May 2013 Obama (2013b) argued that the 2001 AUMF had to be replaced, and that "this war, like all wars, must end".

Despite this rhetoric, progress in ending the War on Terror remained elusive throughout the Obama administration. In one of the most surprising aspects of the Obama presidency for his liberal supporters, the administration continued almost all of the previous administration's policies: the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the characterisation of counterterrorism as 'war', extraordinary rendition, detention without trial, military commissions, and most controversially, the targeted killing programme (Becker and Shane 2012; M. Cohen 2012; Glennon 2015, 1–2; Goldsmith 2012, x; Gregory 2011, 247; Klaidman 2012, 268; Rubin 2020, 83). Following the first *National Security Strategy* of the Obama presidency in May 2010, Peter Feaver (2010) simply described the administration's approach as 'Bush Lite'. Admittedly, after 2011 Obama was successful in reducing the number of American troops in danger's way: by the end of his presidency, there were 15,000 troops in Afghanistan and Iraq in comparison to the 200,000 he inherited in these conflict zones (Landler 2016). Notwithstanding, these troop reductions did not result in a comprehensive end to the War on Terror. After all, U.S. troops never left Afghanistan after the official end of Operation Enduring Freedom in December 2014, whilst American soldiers returned to Iraq just three years after leaving to counter the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) under the remit of the 2001 AUMF. Furthermore, the geographical scope of counterterrorism campaigns expanded significantly under the Obama administration, with approximately 560

covert air strikes (mostly by armed drones) in non-battlefield zones of Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia occurring during the Obama presidency (Zenko 2017). Having been committed to ending torture and attempting to close Guantanamo Bay, by their third year in office, the Obama administration had killed as twice as many suspected terrorists than had ever been imprisoned in Cuba during the Bush presidency (Klaidman 2012, 117–18; Olmsted 2018, 215). In this way, although there were changes to Bush's War on Terror, the preventative militarised approach at the heart of the conflict remained; as two former Obama administration officials reflected, '[w]e stopped calling it a global war on terror, [but] in many respects continued conducting the campaign [as] if it were one' (P. Neumann 2019, 15).

Similarly to Obama, 2016 presidential candidate Trump lamented the status quo of U.S. counterterrorism campaigns. Trump (2016f) accused the Obama administration's counterterrorism policies of being "a complete and total disaster", having "destabilized the Middle East" and "unleashed ISIS" upon the region. In his candidacy announcement speech, Trump (2015a) declared that "nobody would be tougher on ISIS" than himself, eventually going on to propose the reinstatement of waterboarding (*New York Times* 2016) and a blanket ban on Muslims entering America (Trump 2015b). Once ISIS was defeated, Trump (2016c) argued that the U.S. should be less involved in the Middle East and that if elected, "the era of nation-building will be ended". Like Obama, Trump also continued to advocate for a reduced level of engagement in terms of counterterrorism during his presidency. In response to the bipartisan pushback against Trump's second attempt to withdraw American troops from Syria in October 2019, Trump (2019a) tweeted that it was time for the U.S. 'to get out of these ridiculous Endless Wars, many of them tribal, and bring our soldiers home.' During his 2020 re-election campaign, Trump (2020a) decried how Joe Biden's political record was marked by him 'sacrificing American blood and treasure in endless foreign wars.'[6] Trump boasted to his supporters in September 2020 that "I'm bringing our troops back from Afghanistan. I'm bringing our troops back from Iraq. We're almost out of almost every place" (Crowley 2020b). Thus, the same pattern as Obama remained, with Trump not only campaigning against counterterrorism campaign in his presidential bids, but also calling for the ending of these campaigns when in power.

It is also true that the same countervailing trend remained, as the Trump administration failed to end these so-called endless wars (Hall 2020). As detailed in Chapter 8, the Trump administration actually escalated the use of force in Iraq and Syria until 2019,

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[6] At the same time, Biden (2020, 72) was writing in *Foreign Affairs* – not dissimilarly to Obama in 2008 – that it was 'past time to end the forever wars, which have cost the United States untold blood and treasure' and that if he were elected, he would 'bring the vast majority of our troops home from the wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East and narrowly define our mission as defeating al Qaeda and the Islamic State'.

and in Afghanistan and Somalia until 2020. Whilst some concrete progress towards withdrawal, around 5,750 troops were present in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria in 2021, which is a far cry from his campaign rhetoric. In Syria – where Trump twice battled against the political elite and the U.S. military over troop levels – around 750 were stationed in the country at the end of the Trump presidency (Crowley 2020b). More broadly, the Defense Department's budget request for Overseas Contingency Operations for FY2021 was $69 billion, which was higher than the last two years of the Obama administration (O'Donnell 2020a, vii). All in all, Trump failed in ending the War on Terror as he, like his predecessor, promised.

The paradox between Obama's and Trump's campaign rhetoric and their administration's policies is puzzling at a political level, in that both presidents clearly felt it was efficacious to argue against these campaigns, even criticising them whilst in office. Indeed, in the last four presidential elections, six of the eight nominees from the two main political American parties have explicitly expressed doubts about the War on Terror (Council on Foreign Relations 2020; H. Cooper et al. 2008; Maloney et al. 2012; Zezima and Callahan 2016). The empirical record thus suggests that supporting the War on Terror is not an advisable political ploy, which is a far cry from the beginning of the conflict (Trubowitz 2011, 89–90). Simply put, the War on Terror – especially the type of ambitious conflicts fought by the Bush administration – has become politically toxic. This is unsurprising given the enormous costs of these global campaigns (Costs of War Project 2020), the questionable efficacy of these missions (Brands and Feaver 2017), the increased isolationist sentiment amongst the American electorate that contributed to Trump's electoral victory (Smeltz, Daalder, and Kafura 2014), and more specifically the growing unpopularity of these campaigns in public opinion polling (Baron 2019; Charles Koch Institute 2020). As stressed throughout the dissertation, these ongoing counterterrorism campaigns are also directly at odds with the dominant cultural ideas of the American way of war, which stresses the importance of a rapid and total victory in generating support for war policies. There is also a consensus amongst parts of International Relations (IR) scholarship – touched on below – that democracies are ill-suited to protracted military struggles.

How, then, can this puzzle be explained? What can explain the remarkable continuity of the War on Terror in the context of its seemingly politically toxic nature which runs at odds with American political culture? This dissertation argues that a large part of the continuity of the War on Terror is in its *normalisation* of the use of military force at a *societal level*. Though Chapter 3 acknowledges that 'war' can include non-kinetic actions (as it has done in the War on Terror), this dissertation focuses exclusively on the kinetic realm (i.e. the

use of military force) as a hard case for the normalisation argument.[7] Put another way, if the public has been rendered largely irrelevant in an area where attention is usually taken for granted (Mermin 1999, 28), actions in the non-kinetic realm which rely on less material mobilisation are even more likely to be normalised. Either way, the key point here is that successful normalisation of the use of force gave presidents who ran on an anti-war platform significant leeway to continue the War on Terror despite its unpopularity.

For clarity's sake, this dissertation does not investigate in detail the reversals in policies between presidential candidates and presidents-in-place.[8] From Vietnam to Iraq, there is evidence throughout this dissertation that presidential candidates exploit anti-war positions as effective electioneering before finding ways to manage the continued use of force in the interests of perceived national security.[9] Explaining each reversal, however, is an empirical issue that could justify another dissertation itself, and thus the focus here is on a more fundamental level: *how* the use of force was made possible vis-à-vis public opinion. This is similar to Ronald Krebs and Jennifer Lobasz's (2007, 411) justification of not studying the motives of policymakers behind the Iraq War: '[h]ad the administration been unable effectively to legitimate the war with Iraq, its motives—whatever they were—could not have come to fruition.' It is on that basis that the literature review below is on the relationship between U.S. foreign policy and public opinion. Whilst the differences between these existent approaches and this dissertation are outlined further in the following chapter, it is also worth noting the period covered by this dissertation. Although this project was initially only concerned with the War on Terror, the relationship being studied – between the American people and the wars waged in their name – called for a broader historical approach, as views on the utility of force have shifted in response to major wars throughout U.S. history (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 150; Peffley, Langley, and Kirby Goidel 1995, 308–9). Certainly, the War on Terror does not exist in isolation from American political culture before it (Holland 2012, 46). Accordingly, this dissertation traces the relationship between the American public and the use of force from the Korean War to the end of the Trump presidency in January 2021. Not only does this historical approach usefully highlight changes over time, but it also delineates key lessons from past conflicts that make the deployment of force more or less acceptable. Policymakers themselves have learnt from previous administrations to assist the normalisation of war, which is the subject of the following section.

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[7] For full definitions of kinetic and non-kinetic realms, see Flemming Splidsboel Hansen (2017, 4).

[8] The dissertation also does not explore the normalisation of the War on Terror in military discourses or the effectiveness of these counterterrorism campaigns.

[9] The disconnect between the American public and elites on the merits of the use of force is discussed further in Chapter 2.

Normalisation of the War on Terror

Conceptualising Normalisation

Before providing evidence that the War on Terror has become normalised, it is worth clarifying what is meant by normalisation here. Normalisation is most predominantly used in technical disciplines in academic study, where the term concerns the process of bringing something up to a norm or standard (Merriam Webster 2016). In the social sciences, the concept of normality unsurprisingly features in works that employ discourse theory. Kevin Dunn and Iver Neumann (2016, 54) referred to how 'a discourse constitutes the limits within which ideas and practices are considered, that is, delimiting what is the norm or normal, even natural', whilst Richard Jackson (2005, 164) discussed how a discourse affects 'what counts as normal, what is seen as commonsense'. Where the term normalisation is employed, it is usually related to the idea of dominant discourses. Michel Foucault (1977, 184) stated how '[l]ike surveillance and with it, normalization becomes one of the great instruments of power at the end of the classical age.' Foucault also mentioned 'mechanisms of normalization' employed by the powerful to ensure obedience, whether that be a teacher or a judge (ibid, 306). Normalisation in discourse theory tends to be about the establishment of practices as part of dominant discourses.

This dissertation is interested in a related and more recent usage of normalisation, referring to how previously outlying practices become accepted in society, such as the 'normalisation of hate' in the Trump era (Merriam Webster 2016). This approach touches on the issue of noticeability associated with the dominant definition of normalisation. That is, whilst many things are normal, not everything is necessarily salient in the way that Foucault and the scholars who talk of a dominant 'War on Terror discourse' describe (Croft 2006, 1; Hodges 2011, 5; Holland 2012, 2–3; R. Jackson 2005, 2; Nabers 2009, 210; Shepherd 2006, 19; Silberstein 2002, 1). To use an extreme example, the Cold War 'lasted so long that it defined "normalcy" for most Americans' (Sherry 1995, 439) – which is in part why academics and policymakers failed to predict its end (Cox 2009) – but it is hardly as if the Cold War was an unnoticeable and expected context such as driving on the correct side of the road. What is interesting about the War on Terror is that the dominant rhetorical discourse – which Jackson (2005, 1) described as a necessary part of how the Bush administration was able to rhetorically 'justify and *normalise* a global campaign of counter-terrorism' (emphasis added) – no longer acts as the dominant U.S. national security discourse (Krebs 2013, 71). Not only are the central fronts of the War on Terror (Iraq and Afghanistan) seen as failures by much of the American public (McFate 2019b, 3), but policymakers have repudiated the language of the War on Terror, including the previously accepted label for the conflict itself. The perceived threat of terrorism has also diminished: whilst it was deemed 'the most important problem' facing the U.S. by some 46 percent of the American electorate in October 2001, the comparative figure

for much of the Obama and Trump administrations was around the 1 percent mark (Gallup 2020; Riffkin 2015). And yet, in policy terms, the War on Terror continues unabated, with a remarkable degree of continuity between the Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations. In this way, the War on Terror has become *normalised* differently during the Obama and Trump administrations. No longer is the War on Terror front page-news and incontestable; instead it is an accepted background condition outside the American public's concern. As Jon Simons and John Louis Lucaites (2017b, 3) summarised, 'war has become the norm in the same way that anything that becomes ordinary escapes regular notice.'

This definition of normalisation poses challenges in terms of this phenomenon can be observed, given that it describes an acceptance and decline in salience. Undoubtedly it is easier to measure the dominance of the War on Terror discourse – as IR scholars did in the context of the Bush administration – when key tenets of the discourse are rhetorically prominent. As discussed in the following chapter, the idea of deprioritisation thus plays an important role in the idea of normalisation offered here. Before that, however, the next section is devoted to providing some preliminary evidence for the normalisation of the War on Terror from secondary literature.

Evidence of Normalisation

It could be alleged that war has always been normalised in the U.S, with the empirical record showing that '[w]hen we look at the full time line of American military conflicts … including the "small wars" and the so-called forgotten wars … war is not an exception to normal peacetime but instead an enduring condition' (Dudziak 2012, 5; see also Boot 2003b; Rockoff 2012, 5). However, my claim here is that war has become normalised at a *societal* level, rather than whether war has been normal or not in the American experience. This, as argued above, is the crucial difference to the Cold War period, which is explored in Chapter 4. Moreover, there are quantitative and qualitative differences between the War on Terror and previous conflicts. Brown University's Costs of War (2020) project estimates that the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria have amounted to around $6.4 trillion, that over 7,000 U.S. soldiers have died as part of counterterrorism operations since 2001, and that more than 335,000 civilians have been killed as a result of direct violence from all parties in the conflicts the U.S. has partaken in during the War on Terror.[10] As scholars predicted with their descriptions of the War on Terror as 'endless war' (Keen 2006), 'unending war' (Duffield 2007), or the 'forever war' (Danner 2016; Filkins 2008), the scale of this war is only likely to

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[10] This is another difference to previous eras, in that the U.S. has been directly involved in all the significant conflicts of the War on Terror, unlike the proxy wars in the Cold War which are absent from the analysis in Chapter 4 (Mumford 2013, 11-12). This exclusion reflects both the scope of the relationship being studied – the wars waged in the name of the American people – and the generally underappreciated agency of domestic actors in these proxy wars (Reid 2014, 155 in Rauta 2019, 419).

continue. Further, in terms of what Derek Gregory (2011) labelled the 'everywhere war', counterterrorism campaigns continue to expand their geographical scope (Hall 2020). Thus, it is not only exceptional that conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have become two of the three longest wars in American history, but also that the broader War on Terror has continued (and even expanded) unabated for nineteen years as scholars predicted. This, I contend, is a noticeable difference from the regular experiences with war in American history and must be at least partly explained by normalisation at a societal level.

Alternatively, one might argue that because of its minimal material impact on the American public, the War on Terror is being *tolerated*, rather than *normalised*. The concept of moral hazard – a situation where an actor engages in riskier behaviour because they do not face the consequences of their actions – has been applied explicitly in discussions of drone warfare by John Kaag and Sarah Kreps (2014, Chapter 5), though it is also implicit through much of the criticisms of lethal drones (Walsh and Schulzke 2018, 118). This position holds that by reducing the human and material costs of waging war, lethal drones allow policymakers to use force with reduced political costs (Dowd 2016; Kaag and Kreps 2014). James Igoe Walsh and Marcus Schulzke (2018, Chapter 5) conducted experimental surveys to refute the idea of moral hazard in drone warfare, finding that the American public were not willing to sanction all hypothetical drone strikes instead of non-violent alternatives despite their minimal costs. This, however, sets the standard too high for moral hazard, especially given how Kaag and Kreps use the concept. Put another way, there is a difference between the U.S. public preferring drone strikes to alternative warfighting strategies because of reduced costs (which Walsh and Schulzke confirm) and American citizens being *explicitly* willing to approve of drone strikes regardless of the scenario. Rather, the best evidence that drone warfare has not prompted moral hazard is how the precision of drones has raised standards for the avoidance of civilian casualties, as can be seen in the public critiques made of the Obama administration. As explored in Chapter 7, these narrow criticisms did not prevent the normalisation of war in that period, but they do show a clear difference from the moral hazard perspective.

More generally, the status of the War on Terror in the U.S. suggests a lack of interest and coverage, rather than the American public explicitly tolerating low-cost military campaigns. With regards to Afghanistan and Iraq, Susan Carruthers (2011, 251) noted that '[n]ot supporting the wars and not paying them much attention have been common responses among American civilians.' As early as April 2002, polling organisations effectively moved beyond asking questions about Afghanistan as conflict in Iraq loomed (Berinsky 2009, 26). This reflected a decline in mass media coverage of Afghanistan after the Bush administration rhetorically prioritised the forthcoming Iraq War, as discussed in Chapter 6 (Robertson 2003). And yet, even during the 2004 election campaign, even though 'it was

evident that the United States had gone to war for reasons other than those delineated by the Bush administration, that the insurgency war was going badly, and that hundreds of billions of dollars were being spent in Iraq, other issues, such as taxes, gay marriages, and abortion rights exerted greater political pressures' than the war in Iraq (Lewis 2012, 372). By 2005 counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan had become 'routine[,] with little public enthusiasm'. In the 2008 presidential campaign, both Republican and Democratic candidates relegated the Afghanistan war to second-tier status, instead focusing on the issue of Iraq (Berinsky 2009, 27). By 2009, however, Thomas Ricks claimed that America's involvement in Iraq had become 'part of the national wallpaper, always kind of there, but not particularly noticed' (Kreps 2018b, 171). Polling in 2011 found that 50 percent of respondents felt that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan had 'made very little difference in their life' (Caverley 2014, 4). In 2018, despite a presence of 15,000 U.S. troops in the country, a two-hour Senate hearing on the top security threats facing the U.S. featured the word "Afghanistan" four times, all occurring during introductory remarks by participants (Burns 2018). Although this has of course fluctuated throughout their existence, these examples attest to how these conflicts have at times become largely background conditions in U.S. foreign policy debates. As Mary Dudziak (2012, 135) wrote, '[i]t is not a time without war, but instead a time in which war does not bother everyday Americans' (see also Danner 2016, 17). Similarly, David Brown (2014) asserted that the War on Terror existed 'in the same nebulous realm as the futures market, steel production, foreign trade, and satellite maintenance … at once a part of our lives and entirely removed from it.'

In terms of what Micah Zenko (2012a) called the 'third war' of the War on Terror (the first two being Afghanistan and Iraq, the third being the U.S.'s targeted killing regime around the world), the American public is noticeably disengaged with this conflict (Bacevich 2017; Dudziak 2012, 135). The 'third war' relies heavily on the use of armed drones which make it easier to use force given their ability to project power without risking American lives (Brooks 2012; Buchanan and Keohane 2015, 21; Cohn Warrior 2015, 95; Krieg and Rickli 2019, 91; Singer 2012). As a result, the light-footprint approach of this 'third war' (and the Obama and Trump administrations more generally) has made it easier for conflicts to 'fly below the domestic political radar screen' (Staniland 2018). As these conflicts have been funded entirely via borrowing, there has been a minimal economic impact on the U.S. public during the War on Terror (Cappella Zielinski 2016, 127; Kreps 2018b, vii). As one writer concisely put it in 2015, '[a]s a country, America has been at war nonstop for the past 13 years. As a public, it has not' (Fallows 2015).

Given that the American public is detached from the wars fought in its name, it is unlikely to generate significant domestic pressure against these conflicts (Kreps 2018a). Consequently, one would have to rely on Congress to ensure that these conflicts have

remained a point of discussion, which it has largely failed to do during the War on Terror (ibid; Bacevich 2018a). Although issues in the War on Terror may have sporadically risen in salience in Congress or the media, generally speaking 'war has drifted to the margins of American politics' (Dudziak 2012, 8). For example, there was a brief outcry in Congress and the media in reaction to four American casualties in Niger in 2017, but if anything this revealed the extent to which Congress had previously ignored such issues, as congresspeople were unaware that U.S. soldiers were even in the country (R. Cooper 2017; Staniland 2018). As Senator Lindsey Graham summarised, "[w]e don't know exactly where we're at in the world militarily and what we're doing" (Grant and Goldsmith 2018). Congress' almost unanimous absence regarding the War on Terror is particularly striking given the historical levels of polarisation in the institution (Drezner 2017, 54–55).

Another realm where normalisation has occurred has been in the media; although information is available on the War on Terror, it is largely in less prevalent news sources and academic journals (J. Simons and Lucaites 2017b, 6–7). This is significant as previous research has shown that public attention to an issue is more likely when media coverage is concentrated during a brief duration, rather than consistent low-level coverage over a longer period (Knecht and Weatherford 2006, 716). Where there is coverage of the War on Terror, there is often no 'big picture', as warzone events – or even whole conflicts – are reported without their broader context (Bacevich 2018c; Ricchiardi 2006; Robertson 2003). This is especially so given the immediate nature of television coverage in the U.S. context (Hallin 1986, 208), which is ill-suited to these low-level and ongoing conflicts. Ultimately, U.S. counterterrorism campaigns lack even a name, being labelled by Andrew Bacevich (2018c) as the 'no-name war' since the abandonment of the term "War on Terror" in 2009, which is a telling indictment of their current significance in American politics.[11]

Whether as a cause or as a result, it has meant that 'Washington need not even propagandize the public' regarding the War on Terror (Bacevich 2018b). Drone strikes, for example, quickly became a central part of the Obama administration's counterterrorism strategy, but this programme was never officially acknowledged – let alone justified to the electorate – until 2013 (Sullivan 2013). In contrast to meaningful congressional debates over troop numbers in Afghanistan, drones quickly became "the only game in town" when it came to countering al-Qaeda, as then Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director Leon Panetta put it (Goldsmith 2012, 14; Shane, Mazzetti, and Worth 2010). In March 2019, the Trump administration revoked an Obama-era policy that required the CIA to publish the number of civilians killed in U.S. drone strikes outside of officially designated war zones (*BBC News* 2019). This action should not be considered an isolated incident, but part of a broader

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[11] It is on this basis that I use the term 'War on Terror' to describe U.S. counterterrorism campaigns from 2001 to the present.

campaign to decrease the availability of information regarding U.S. counterterrorism campaigns during the Trump administration detailed in Chapter 8. Withal, given the ability of the Trump presidency to endlessly generate news based around Trump himself, analysis of his presidency has been focused on style as opposed to policy, with foreign policy being no different (Friedman 2017). Referring to the territorial defeat of ISIS, one commentator observed how

> [t]here is nothing more characteristic of the Trump era, with its fire hose of misinformation, scandal and hyperbole, than that America and its allies recently managed to win a war that just two years ago consumed headlines and dominated political debate and helped … Trump himself get elected president — and somehow nobody seemed to notice (Douthat 2017).

In Bacevich's (2017) words, '[l]ike traffic jams or robocalls, war has fallen into the category of things that Americans may not welcome, but have learned to live with.' War has become normal and unnoticeable, and this is a key part of how U.S. counterterrorism campaigns have been able to continue despite the unpopularity of these wars, with this dissertation investigating how this situation came to be.

U.S. Foreign Policy, Public Opinion, and the Use of Force

In this sense, this dissertation is interested in the relationship between the American public and the use of force as a way of understanding the continuity of the War on Terror. The following chapter proposes a novel approach for understanding this relationship, but before that, this section outlines three schools of thought from IR scholarship. The three positions explored are realism, democratic exceptionalism (or liberalism)[12], and scholarship that can be defined as writing against democratic exceptionalism. I outline these three viewpoints mostly without comment, before offering criticism at the end of this section.

The Realist Perspective: The Almond-Lippmann Consensus

As labelled by Ole Holsti (1992), the Almond-Lippmann consensus was once the dominant perspective on the relationship between public opinion and U.S. foreign policy in IR, especially in the 1950s and 1960s (Holsti 1996, 12; Nincic 1992, 775). As the name suggests, this viewpoint was closely associated with Gabriel Almond and Walter Lippmann. Because of the disparaging view that this perspective held of American public opinion regarding foreign affairs, it led to the topic being largely ignored within IR during this period (Holsti 1996, 37). Similarly, the advent of structural realism in the 1980s meant much IR scholarship

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[12] I borrow the realist and liberal dichotomy from Ole Holsti (1996, 2), before adding the third perspective myself.

underexplored so-called 'first-image' explanations for the behaviour of states (Saunders 2014, 160).

For all the variations of realist theory, Daniel Drezner (2008, 52) has identified that '[r]ealists share at least one common belief': public opinion does not agree with a realist worldview. Rather than being rational and consistent, realist scholarship has portrayed American public opinion as being volatile and incoherent (Holsti 1996, 26), and hence at odds with statecraft that would ideally revolve around the national interest. Almond (1960, 239), for example, referred to 'the instability of mass moods' and its 'cyclical fluctuations', whilst Lippmann (1955, 20 in Holsti 1996, 30) stated that 'prevailing public opinion has been destructively wrong at the critical junctures'. More recently, John Mearsheimer (1990, 41) claimed that '[p]ublic opinion on national security issues is notoriously fickle'. By extension, as Hans Morgenthau (1978, 558 in Holsti 1996, 7) argued, 'the rational requirements of good foreign policy cannot from the outset count upon the support of a public opinion whose preferences are emotional rather than rational'.

Where there is less consensus amongst the realist position is with regards to the extent that public opinion influences foreign policy. For Holsti (1996, 26), one of the three central tenets of the Almond-Lippmann consensus was that public opinion had 'a very limited impact on the conduct of foreign policy.' Even when foreign policy was a salient issue to the public, both Almond and Lippmann believed that the idea of direct democracy – which essentially underwrites the liberal perspective explored below – was a myth. Instead, elites had a significant amount of leeway to translate a general 'mood' into policy (Almond 1960, 4; Lippmann 1927, 47). Later scholarship, such as Bernard Cohen's (1973) prominent text on this issue concluded that public opinion failed to even establish limits for policymakers, let alone have any significant effects on the formulation of foreign policy. Although not devoted explicitly to the issue of public opinion, Stephen Krasner (1978) proposed 'a statist image of foreign policy' wherein the state is best conceived as 'an autonomous actor' in pursuit of the national interest, which was 'defined inductively as the preferences of American central decision-makers', rather than 'some summation of the desires of specific individuals or groups'. In this version of events, not only is public opinion fickle, but it also lacks impact on policy.

A variation on this argument from realist thought concerns the issue of deception as a tool for policymakers to circumvent public opinion. According to this theory, democratic leaders are not restrained in the ways that theories of democratic exceptionalism dictate (see below), as they 'are regularly able to overcome the institutional constraints they face through deception' to generate support for their desired policies (Mearsheimer 2013, 7; Schuessler 2015, 1). The scale of this is such that John Schuessler (2015, 123) claimed that 'deception is a feature, and not a bug, of democratic politics when it comes to issues of war and peace.'

This is because there are no overriding powers in international politics to prevent deception as there is in domestic politics (Mearsheimer 2013, 8). These arguments effectively align with the broader realist position that 'regime type has no effect on foreign policy behavio[u]r' (Reiter 2012, 599). Building upon this kind of idea, Christopher Layne (1994, 10, 12) argued that 'international politics is the same damn things over and over again: war, great power security and economic competitions, the rise and fall of great powers, and the formation and dissolution of alliances', regardless of the governance model of individual states. For Layne, this is because of the anarchic international system, which states are unable to change (ibid; Waltz 2000, 10). Hence, domestic politics – let alone public opinion – is hardly a concern of some realists who focus on international level factors as explanations of war and peace. As Kenneth Waltz (1986, 329 in Layne 1994, 12) put it, '[i]n self-help systems, the pressures of competition weigh more heavily than ideological preferences or internal political pressures.' Similarly, whilst Mearsheimer (1990, 21) acknowledged that 'hyper-nationalism is the most important domestic cause of war', he still maintained that it is a 'second-order force in world politics' and that the causes of war 'lie largely in the international system'. Indeed, 'factors of military power have been most important in shaping past events, and will remain central in the future' (ibid, 7).

By contrast, some realists have argued that public opinion has had a significant and adverse impact on U.S. foreign policy. For example, George Kennan remonstrated that although 'every statesman everywhere has to give some heed to domestic opinion' in the conduct of their foreign policy, this process had been 'carried to greater extremes' in the U.S. than elsewhere (Craig and Logevall 2009, 1). More specifically, Henry Kissinger (1994, 30 in Drezner 2008, 50) lamented how 'it is above all to the drumbeat of Wilsonian idealism that American foreign policy has marched since his watershed presidency', rather than more realpolitik-based concerns. For some realists, this dynamic was particularly clear in the post-Cold War interventions of the 1990s, especially with the growth of news sources able to report humanitarian issues back to the U.S. context. Michael Mandelbaum (1994, 16) contended that 'the televised pictures of starving people in northern Iraq, Somalia, and Bosnia created a political clamor to feed them, which propelled the U.S. military into those three distant parts of the world' to intervene. Similarly, reflecting on the failures of the U.S. intervention in Somalia, Kennan (1993) characterised U.S. foreign policy as being 'controlled by popular emotional impulses, and particularly ones provoked by the commercial television industry'. In this way, some realist practitioners concur with the liberal perspective on the *impact* of public opinion on foreign policy, whilst disagreeing with the *merits* of this situation.

Either way, the Almond-Lippman consensus has been critiqued for its portrayal of American public opinion regarding foreign affairs. Based on survey data, Drezner (2008, 63) argued that in fact, the American public is far from being entirely anti-realist in its stance on

foreign affairs. This echoed the results of a landmark study by Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro (1992), which concluded that public opinion was far from volatile and incoherent, and was in fact quite consistent, with changes largely occurring in response to significant international events such as the Vietnam War. With regards to Vietnam, Lippmann himself would acknowledge that public opinion had *exceeded* the wisdom of U.S. policymakers (Holsti 1996, 39). Additionally, as this dissertation will reveal, the actions of U.S. policymakers and American adversaries show the perceived importance of American public opinion. In the Vietnam War, for example, the Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon administrations relied heavily on opinion polls in their conduct of the Vietnam War (Jacobs and Shapiro 1995), whilst North Vietnamese Colonel Bui Tin quoted Ho Chi Minh as saying that because "[s]upport for the war from … the American rear was vulnerable", his army did not need "to win military victories", but only "to hit them until they give up and get out" (Potholm 2010, 148).

The Liberal Perspective: Democratic Exceptionalism

From liberalism, I focus upon the domestic element of democratic peace theory, hence the adoption of Jonathan Caverley's (2014, 11–12) term 'democratic exceptionalism'. Much like the above, the liberal position is unsurprising given the paradigm's general theories. As Juliet Kaarbo (2015, 196) stated, 'liberal theory is perhaps the most logical and expected place to find domestic political factors' in theories of foreign policy. Based on the writings of Immanuel Kant, democratic exceptionalism argues that democracies have unique foreign policies because their leaders are accountable to their citizens. As Kant put it,

> [i]f the consent of the citizens is required in order to decide that war should be declared … nothing is more natural than that they would be very cautious in commencing such a poor game, decreeing for themselves all the calamities of war… on the other hand, in a constitution which is not republican … a declaration of war is the easiest thing in the world to decide upon, because war does not require of the ruler (Doyle 1983, 299).

The empirical record shows that democratic publics have not become pacifistic as Kant predicted (ibid; Reiter and Stam 2002, 132), but the key point maintained by this scholarship is that the 'caution' that Kant describes still applies: political leaders must still generate support for their foreign policies (Maoz and Russett 1993, 625; Reiter and Stam 2002, 12). As Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett (1993, 626) contended, '[i]nternational action in a democratic political system requires mobilization of both general public opinion and a variety of institutions that make up the system of government'. These theories are also founded on the logic that citizens in democracies will punish politicians who force them to endure war costs (Aldrich et al. 2006; Fearon 1994, 582; Gelpi 2017, 1928). Hence, it is argued that because politicians in democracies know that their political fortunes rest upon policy success, they tend to only launch wars that they are very likely to win and will be popularly supported

(Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999, 804, 2003, 426, 449; Maoz and Russett 1993, 626; Reiter and Stam 2002, 12, 17). By contrast, in nondemocracies, wars can be fought 'with little regard to public opinion' once the support of key elite groups is attained (Maoz and Russett 1993, 626).

For policymakers in a democracy then, the need for victory is also intertwined with the desire to reduce the costs of war. One obvious way to do this is to reduce the longevity of the conflict in question. As is widely quoted, General George Marshall's reflections on America's conduct in World War II effectively summarised the conventional wisdom regarding democracies in lengthy wars:

> [w]e had to go ahead brutally fast [in Europe because] we could not indulge in a Seven Years' War. A king can perhaps do that, but you cannot have such a protracted struggle in a democracy in the face of mounting casualties. I thought that the only place to achieve such a positive and rapid military decision was in the Lowlands of Northwestern Europe. Speed was essential (Stoler 2010, 79).

This logic can be seen during the War on Terror, as then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld claimed that "the American public is not tolerant of the long-term involvement of U.S. forces in combat" (Dieck 2015, 76). This assumption is also present in academic literature; Thomas Knecht and Stephen Weatherford (2006, 708) concluded that '[s]ince Vietnam … politicians understand that a drawn-out, costly war is likely to alienate' the American public. As noted above, this understanding has led nondemocratic countries to 'recognize democratic sensitivity to casualties and in turn … draw democracies into long and bloody conflicts' (Reiter and Stam 2002, 21). The situation for democratic leaders is made all the more troubling because of the picture of public opinion painted by liberal theory. That is, 'an important assumption' of this literature is that consent is not something that can be 'easily manufactured' by policymakers and leaders (ibid; see also Reiter 2006, 601). '[D]emocratic leaders can sometimes shift public opinion at the margins', but little more than that (Reiter and Stam 2002, 132–33).

Because of this, casualty levels have been identified as the key determining factor in the levels of war support in the U.S. (Segura and Gartner 1998, 279; G. Simons 1998, 23).[13] Analysing the wars in Korea and Vietnam, John Mueller (1971, 365) found that every time that American casualty levels increased by a factor of 10, support for the war in question decreased by around 15 percent. The perceived salience of casualty aversion has increased over time, particularly in the post-Cold War period. Mueller (1996, 31 in Burk 1999, 54) observed how 'when Americans asked themselves how many American lives it was worth to save

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[13] As is explained in the following chapter, I define casualties those killed in connection with a military operation, rather than including those wounded in war. Secondly, although the salience of civilian and oppositional casualties may have risen over time, it is still the case that these deaths are largely irrelevant to the support for the use of force in the American context (Tirman 2011).

hundreds of thousands of Somali lives, the answer came out rather close to zero'. Going further, the 'casualties hypothesis' dictated that American public opinion would not support the use of force if American lives were being lost (Burk 1999, 56). This position was most prominently advanced by Edward Luttwak (1994, 27; 1995, 115; 1999, 105–6), who argued that American society had become 'debellicized' and 'intolerant of casualties' for any cause 'short of an invasion or usurpation of the national territory'. Where casualties did occur then, perceived public opinion would dictate American withdrawal, as evidenced in Somalia (Gentry 1998, 185). Because of its simplicity, this idea quickly became a staple of media discourse, with Mueller and his followers being asked for comment whenever troops were deployed and especially when casualties were sustained (Casey 2014, 220). For instance, journalist and pollster Richard Morin would write in the *Washington Post* during the build-up to the Gulf War that '[o]f all the complex variables governing public opinion, the single overwhelming fact is the casualty total' (ibid, 206).

In academic circles, however, the casualties hypothesis has received little support (Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2006, 10). The liberal position dictates that citizens are impacted by the costs of war, but not necessarily in the direct and extreme manner of the casualties hypothesis. Thus, alternative theories have proposed other key determinants of war support, all of which essentially follow in the footsteps of Page and Shapiro's work emphasising the rationality of public opinion. Whilst these studies are not necessarily aligned with democratic exceptionalism per se, they share some important commonalities with liberal ideals, such as the increased sensitivity to the costs of war in democracies, the assumed rationality of public opinion, and its importance in determining policy (Feaver and Gelpi 2004, 100; Gelpi 2017, 1931). This revisionist position does not claim that American citizens have significant degrees of knowledge regarding foreign affairs (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 297–98), but does assert that 'Americans have premises from which they make inferences, and from which they manage to reason sensibly about issues' (Nincic 1992, 773–75, 778). For example, in Eric Larson's (1996, ix) study of the American experience in World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, the invasion of Panama, and the intervention in Somalia, he concluded 'that support for U.S. military operations and the willingness to tolerate casualties are based upon a sensible weighing of benefits and costs that is influenced heavily by consensus (or its absence) among political leaders.'

In line with this cost-benefit calculation perspective, three factors have been identified as significant determinants in support for war policies: the importance of *success* (Eichenberg 2005; Feaver and Gelpi 2004; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2006), the *principal policy objective* in question (Burk 1999; Jentleson 1992; Jentleson and Britton 1998), and *multilateral approval* (Chapman and Reiter 2004; Grieco et al. 2011). With regards to the first camp, there are two slightly different positions. For Feaver and Christopher Gelpi (2004, 197), Americans

'will tolerate when victory is in sight.' As such, 'the critical belief' in determining levels of war support 'is the expectation of eventual future success' rather than 'assessments of how the war is going right now' (Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2006, 16). In sum, the American public 'is defeat phobic, not casualty phobic', as can be seen in the toleration of American casualties in World War II and the earlier stages of the Korean and Vietnam wars (Feaver and Gelpi 2004, 97, 136–44). The slightly different position proposed by Richard Eichenberg (2005, 175) is more retrospectively focused and links back to the more general theories concerning regime type above, finding that 'the public's support is conditioned by the outcome of the military intervention rather than by the number of casualties that are actually suffered'.

The second theory dictates that the 'principal policy objective' of the use of force primarily determines the levels of public support. Americans are much more likely to support the use of force when repelling aggressive actions, rather than intervening in internal domestic issues or carrying out a humanitarian intervention (Jentleson 1992, 50; Jentleson and Britton 1998, 396). More recently, scholars have found that that a counterterrorism principal policy objective is even more popular than the 'restraint' option (Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2006, 100–101).[14] This research suggested that Americans 'appear to have a much more pragmatic sense of strategy than they are given credit for—an approach to the world that is actually "pretty prudent" when it comes to the use of military force' (Jentleson 1992, 71).

With regards to the effect of multilateralism on war legitimation, research has consistently shown that approval of international institutions has led to higher levels of domestic support (Baum and Potter 2008, 45; Eichenberg 2005, 174; Holsti 2004, 296; Page and Bouton 2006, 108–12). This is because multilateral institutions act as cue-givers or 'second opinions' to the American public regarding the claims being put forward by the administration in question (Grieco et al. 2011). For example, Terrence Chapman and Dan Reiter (2004, 887) found that the approval of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) led to an increase in rallying effects of around 9 percentage points. Another study discovered that this increased approval effect was noticeable amongst those citizens who did not have faith in the president-in-place (Grieco et al. 2011, 564). Multilateral approval has also been shown to have an effect at the congressional level, as it can effectively force Congress' hand, as congresspeople will most likely wish to avoid being perceived as standing in the way of the moves towards war (Kreps 2011, 39). As the dissertation will show then, policymakers have regularly sought multilateral approval to increase domestic support for war policies. As Brent Scowcroft (National Security Advisor during the Gulf War) put it, the November 1990

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[14] However, the experimental condition for the counterterrorism principal policy objective – that 'Yemen provided safe haven to Al-Qaeda terrorist bases' – is too contrived, as it invokes the role of the Taliban before 9/11. A more realistic scenario would have been terrorist organizations operating in relatively lawless areas, as has been seen throughout the War on Terror.

resolution from the UNSC was "was a political measure intended to seal international solidarity and strengthen domestic U.S. support" (Chapman and Reiter 2004, 895). Finally, policymakers have also sought multilateral involvement in American wars because of the effect this might have on reducing American mobilisation costs, which is not inconsistent with the dominant 'second opinion' position (Grieco et al. 2011, 565).

Against Democratic Exceptionalism

The perspectives covered in this subsection are united by their stance against the core logic of democratic exceptionalism: that a rational public directly feels the costs of war and accordingly dictates war policies. Instead, these scholars argue on behalf of the ability of the executive to *generate support* for war amongst the citizenry. They all derive from the sparsity of knowledge of foreign affairs amongst the American public, meaning that citizens are susceptible to persuasion and manipulation from elites (Guisinger and Saunders 2017, 425; Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 194). Where these authors differ is in their emphasis on *how* governments can create support for war policies. In this section, I review three approaches with different emphases, looking at how governments manage public opinion via *diversion*, *shielding*, and *selling*.

Based in sociological research on in/out groups, *diversionary* war theory claims that government leaders have historically begun or escalated wars to resolve domestic political crises (R. Miller 1995, 761; T. C. Morgan and Bickers 1992, 26). This observation has been made in IR scholarship since the 1950s with cases such as World War I being touted as exemplar cases of this phenomenon (Levy 1989, 260, 264; R. Miller 1995, 761–62). With the advent of the rally-round-the-flag thesis in the 1970s (Mueller 1970), more modern proponents suggested that force could be used to generate political support in the build-up to a reelection campaign under certain conditions, effectively undermining the premises of democratic exceptionalism. For example, it was argued that policymakers would deploy force to act as a diversion when defence issues were salient (Stoll 1984, 233), when there were economic problems (Russett 1990), or if there was discontent amongst important parts of the electorate (T. C. Morgan and Bickers 1992, 25).

Another perspective arguing against democratic exceptionalism is economically focused, maintaining that governments can *shield* the citizenry from the costs of war. Based on a dataset of wars from 1900 to 2005, a recent group of scholars contended that 'greater accountability of democratic leaders to their citizens creates powerful pressures on leaders to reduce the human costs of war', which effectively undermines a central claim of the logic of democratic exceptionalism (Valentino, Huth, and Croco 2010, 528). The study found that the reduction of the human costs of war amongst democratic nations in this period had been achieved via four primary methods: generating higher military capabilities than

nondemocracies, enhancing these resources by joining military coalitions, exercising military strategies that reduce casualties, and fighting wars away from home (ibid). There is also an economic method of *shielding*, as governments can reduce the material impact of war on citizens via borrowing or external funding, meaning the public is less politically engaged with these conflicts (Cappella Zielinski 2016, 8; Kreps 2018b, vii). Relatedly, Caverley (2014, 2–3) developed a theory of 'democratic militarism', which argued that the average voter would be likely to support the use of force 'if the costs in blood are minimized and the costs in treasure can be shifted to an affluent minority'. In fact, Caverley went as far as to claim that 'a democracy's average voter … is as likely to choose an aggressive grand strategy as any unitary actor or despot … as long as she can get someone else to pick up the tab' (ibid, 2). Like the other perspectives here, *shielding* allows democratic governments to manipulate the presentation and impact of war to generate support.

In terms of *selling* war, John Zaller's (1992) research led the study into how elite opinions could drive popular opinion regarding foreign policy. For Zaller, '[w]hat matters for the formation of mass opinion is the relative balance and overall amount of media attention to contending political positions' at the elite level (ibid, 1). Where there is no significant degree of opposition (or coverage of dissent) to a government's claims, 'the public can do little more than follow the elite consensus on what should be done' (ibid, 8). This does not simply reflect the aforementioned low levels of awareness of foreign affairs amongst the American public, as politically attentive citizens tend to absorb information that conforms to their preexisting political predispositions (ibid, 18, 98). One of Zaller's case studies was the Vietnam War, finding that in the early stages of the conflict, 'the public was offered only one way to think about the war' in terms of the dominant Cold War discourse of maintaining freedom via containment against communism (ibid, 8). However, by the late 1960s, when consensus had become dissensus, especially those who were politically aware had polarized opinions on the conflict (ibid, 170). A more modern exponent of this kind of theorising is Adam Berinsky (2009), who also argued that public opinion follows partisan dynamics, just as in domestic politics.

In this model then, the presence of an opposition voice helps to reduce the persuasiveness of the president and the administration to the general public (McHugh 2015, 4). Accordingly, Elizabeth Saunders (2015, 467) posited that leaders are constantly attempting to persuade and coerce other elites into supporting (or at least not publicly criticising) their war policies to maintain the support of the public. One can see this dynamic in North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) members' troop contributions to the Afghanistan War, as even where elite consensus in favour of increased deployments had not translated to the respective publics in question, agreement at the elite level had 'defuse[d] … the electoral consequences' of unpopular policies (Kreps 2010, 199). Even if elite consensus might make public support

more likely, it also might not be strictly necessary if unpopular policies can be reduced of their electoral significance.

Another group of authors that focuses on the *selling* of war policies to the public is critical constructivists. Based in a constructivist or poststructuralist epistemology, these scholars argued that events have no inherent meaning, and instead that social meaning is oftentimes constructed by governments to generate support for foreign policies (inter alia, D. Campbell 1998; Doty 1993; Weldes 1999; Weldes and Saco 1996). For example, events and threats in national security discourses do not speak for themselves but are interpreted via dominant cultural tropes. Hence, it is assumed, that elites 'are constantly attempting to guide political mobilisation toward a particular outcome and for a political goal by using symbols, metaphors and cognitive cues to organise experience and fix meaning to events' (Barnett 1999, 8-9, in Holland 2012, 34). Similarly, Lene Hansen's *Security as Practice* (2006, 25) stated that '[t]he goal for foreign policymakers … is to present a foreign policy that appears legitimate and enforceable to its relevant audience.' This logic has also been put forward in studies of the War on Terror: Jackson's (2005, 2) seminal *Writing the War on Terrorism* contended that the Bush administration's 'carefully constructed discourse … [was] designed to achieve a number of key political goals', whilst Jack Holland (2012, 35) spoke of how '[t]he strategic agency of politics, such as President Bush, to frame foreign policy discourse such that it resonated with Americans was central to … an ability to realise a particular policy response'. As Holland's book title – *Selling the War on Terror* – suggests, the key point here is the capability of elites to generate public support for war policies.[15] To invoke Roxanne Lynn Doty's (1993, 297–98) phrasing, these texts focus on how powerful elite discourses 'make possible' the use of force to domestic audiences.

Although not explicitly focused on foreign policy and public opinion, another relevant approach here on *selling* war is securitisation theory. At its core, securitisation – the process of labelling issues as security threats to legitimate previously invalid policies – is a narrative. Early scholarship from the Copenhagen School (CS) referred to how successful securitisations had to 'follow … the grammar of security … construct[ing] a plot that includes an existential threat, point of no return, and a possible way out' (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 33). Furthermore, in terms of the consequences of a successful securitisation, these scholars noted how the successful 'invocation of security has been the key to legitimizing the use of force, but more generally it has opened the way for the state to mobilize, or to take special powers, to handle existential threats' (ibid, 21; see also Bright 2012, 868; L. Hansen 2012, 531). Like the perspectives reviewed above, the CS 'portray a securitizing move as a highly intentional,

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[15] This title – with its inclusion of the word *Selling* – is noticeably similar to texts from Steven Casey (2008), Kenneth Osgood and Andrew Frank (2010), and Josef Seethaler et al. (2013).

strategic action' to produce specific results (M. McDonald 2008, 569), potentially including legitimating the use of force with the public.

Critiques of the Existent Literature

In this section I offer some initial critiques of the literature reviewed above. In doing so, I refer in passing to three key themes in the normalisation framework (mobilisation, legitimation, and prioritisation), which are defined and further explored in the following chapter.

At the broadest level, this dissertation takes a different theoretical starting point to some realist theorists on the importance of domestic politics in foreign policy formulation. Taking insights from Foreign Policy Analysis, this dissertation argues that politics does not stop at the water's edge, and that 'student of a country's foreign policy must also be concerned with its internal affairs' (Rosenau 2012, xv). Foreign policy must always – in theory at least – be justified in the domestic realm. Historian Walter LaFeber (1994, 31 in Johns 2010, 2) nicely captured this dynamic with his contention that a successful foreign policy in the U.S. 'requires a dual approach: constructing a strategy that is workable abroad, and developing a political explanation that creates and maintains sufficient consensus at home.' These sentiments have been echoed by experienced practitioner John Brennan, who claimed that "[i]f you're going to be involved in some type of foreign activity that is going to take resources and entail risks to forces, you need to do it in a manner that is both most practical and most effective, but at the same time try to keep your political support at home" (Payne 2020, 163). Without such support, international crises can be transformed into domestically salient issues where political lives are at stake, such as the downfalls of Harry Truman or Johnson in light of the Korean and Vietnam wars respectively (Craig and Logevall 2009, 240; Mermin 1999, 3). 'Few things', it has been noted, 'could be more damaging to a democratic politician's career than the widespread belief that he had failed to protect his country from attack or needlessly sent large numbers of citizens to their deaths' (Valentino, Huth, and Croco 2010, 529). If public opinion has been rendered irrelevant in the conduct of the War on Terror, this is only because governments have made it so.

Although liberal and critical constructivist approaches appreciate the importance of domestic politics in understanding a state's foreign policy, issues nonetheless remain. Democratic exceptionalism relies on an epistemology that largely assumes that the world speaks for itself and that public opinion exists largely in response to this information. As critical constructivists have argued, however, there can be no meaningful reality outside of the social realm (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 2). In this way, the world does not simply exist 'out there' as a natural fact but is better understood as a social and cultural production (Weldes et al. 1999, 10). As Jackson (2005, 23–24) put it, by determining how we view and

understand the world, 'language has a reality-making effect … it creates or constructs reality'. Furthermore, without understanding broader discourses within a specific political context, one cannot truly understand the type of debates that influence levels of war support. In this sense, Reiter and Stam's (2002, 132–33) contention that democratic leaders can only 'sometimes shift public opinion at the margins' not only underestimates the power of elite discourses to change opinions on specific issues but also to set the terms of the debate more broadly. For example, although American policymakers have almost always invoked the idea of "national interests" and "American values" in their legitimation attempts for war policies, the historical record shows a significant degree of variation in how these terms have been used (Western 2005, ix). Jentleson's theory does not account for these differences in framing and how they can account for varying levels of approval amongst the American public (Drury et al. 2010, 84; Walsh and Schulzke 2018, 101). At a more specific level, Gelpi, Reifler, and Feaver's model relies on perceptions of belief in future *success* and *victory* but pays limited attention to interrogating how these terms might be understood and who leads this process.[16] Their data on the Iraq War suggests that 'the public may have taken its cue on defining success from the Bush administration' (Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2006, 41; 2009, 197), but the consequences of this remain unexplored. This is problematic as 'war and success in war are cultural constructs' and matters of perception, especially given the growing indecisiveness of twenty-first century warfare (Bartholomees 2008; Black 2001, vii in C. Gray 2002, 18; D. Johnson and Tierney 2006, 18).

To some extent, these liberal perspectives acknowledge the importance of the selling of war policies, but these are largely as acknowledgements to accompany quantitative analyses. Despite their book being primarily devoted to arguing that the U.S. public will tolerate casualties in wars, Feaver and Gelpi (2004, 197) still concede that 'political leaders must mobilize public opinion' and that '[i]f such a leadership effort is lacking … then it is reasonable to expect that public support for the mission will erode, and hence public sensitivity to the human costs of the mission will intensify.' In his piece arguing that it is the principal policy objective that chiefly determines levels of war support, Jentleson (1992, 71) similarly referred to how public support 'must be cultivated and evoked through effective presidential leadership'. In their study of the impact of drones on the support for the use of force, Walsh and Schulzke (2018, 30, 101) argued that factors such as the policy mission or chances of success will be the most significant factors in determining public support, before acknowledging that '[h]ow elites frame a conflict … could influence the effect of drones on support for war.' Finally, Larson's (1996, xxi) model of Americans employing cost-benefit

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[16] In the two primary works by these authors devoted to elaborating the idea that perceptions of success determine levels of war support (Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2006; 2009), a total of 12 pages are devoted to how success might be understood, all of which are based in that specific context.

calculations to determine their approval or wars noted that 'support—and the evaluation of benefits, prospects, and costs—is socially constructed', but fails to explore this process of social construction.

By contrast, those who focus on the *selling* of war often present a picture of elite rhetoric being overly powerful. In David Campbell's pioneering *Writing Security* (1998), for example, there is only *one* unsuccessful case of foreign policy rhetoric (i.e. those that failed to reaffirm American identity). Put another way, rhetorical efforts by the government are often *assumed* to have a considerable impact, effectively removing deliberative agency from citizens. This problem is particularly acute with regards to the adoption of speech act theory by the CS, as proponents claimed that by uttering 'security', policymakers would immediately enact material consequences in the same way as declaring "I do" at a wedding ceremony (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 26; Wæver 1995, 55). As such, the CS was discursively focused, arguing that '[t]he way to study securitization is to study discourse' (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 25). This approach, as scholars have noted, is well suited to studying *how* securitisation operates, but less pertinent for explaining the failures and successes of securitisation attempts, which is a dynamic process (Balzacq 2011b, 47). Thierry Balzacq (2005, 181) has claimed that the CS 'neglected the importance of "external or brute threats"', which aligns with the recent critique made of critical constructivists employing discourse analysis: that language has been overly prioritised in their conceptions of discourse at the expense of important material factors (Banta 2012, 380; I. Neumann 2002, 627; Pouliot 2007, 366; Vaughan-Williams and Lundborg 2015, 11). Furthermore, by focusing on the speech act of security, the CS overlooks the deeper cultural processes and contexts considered here that dictate whether securitisation efforts (and legitimation more broadly) are effective or not (Balzacq 2005, 172, 2011a, 14; M. McDonald 2008, 566-67). The excessive focus on successful securitisations encouraged by the CS (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 39; cf. Balzacq 2011b, 34; Ruzicka 2019; Salter 2011) is also countered here in Chapters 6-8, including discussions of the legitimation challenges concerning the Iraq War during the Bush presidency, the continuation of counterterrorism campaigns alongside Obama's desecuritising rhetoric, and Trump's inability to successfully securitise beyond his domestic base.

Because securitisation cannot be both a 'speech act' and 'an essentially intersubjective' process that relies on the assent of an audience (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 26, 30), this dissertation follows in the path of second-generation securitisation theorists in attempting to further specify relevant audiences and the factors that influence their acceptance of security claims. For example, Balzacq (2005, 184-85) distinguishes between 'moral' and 'formal' support in securitisation efforts, which is reflected in the discussion of legitimation at mass and elite levels in the following chapter. Similarly, although the CS does discuss the idea of 'functional actors' who can influence securitisation processes (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde

1998, 36), work in the CS tradition has underestimated the role of the media (O'Reilly 2008, 67; Vultee 2010, 33), which is adjusted for in this dissertation. Put simply, this dissertation moves beyond the CS's focus on elite discourse. As the cases of Korea and Vietnam make clear, even dominant discourses such as anti-communism cannot justify *all* policies, especially given how the American public respond to the various factors influencing levels of war support. Additionally, there are examples of how public opinion has moved *regardless* or *in opposition* to unified elite cues, such as Democrats' objections in the build-up to the Iraq War, despite the dominance of the pro-war message at the congressional level (Berinsky 2009, 102; Feldman, Huddy, and Marcus 2012, 496–97). Elite rhetoric is a necessary part of the generation of public support for war, but governmental pronouncements are not all-powerful and can be subject to contestation.

It should also be acknowledged that there is more to determining levels of war support than rhetoric alone. As this dissertation shows, military strategies are chosen specifically with public opinion in mind, especially in terms of how the nation is mobilised for war. John Lewis Gaddis' (2005, 7–8) definition of strategy – 'the process by which ends are related to means, intentions to capabilities, objectives to resources' – touches upon the very crux of how policymakers have to manage their foreign policy goals with what they deem to be the level of costs that the public will tolerate. More broadly, states have reduced the impact of war on their citizens via transferring these costs to other actors (Krieg and Rickli 2019; Mumford 2013; Waldman 2018). As Andreas Krieg and Jean-Marc Rickli (2019, 18) argue, the 'externalization of the burden of warfare is as old as warfare itself', with this process being demonstrated throughout this dissertation. Given the ability of the state to change, reduce, or transfer costs, focusing solely on how war is sold to the American public overlooks the varying necessity of this process (Engels and Saas 2013, 227; Ohl 2015, 613). This dissertation adopts a critical realist approach that is well-suited to analysing both material and ideational factors (Porpora 2010, 100), which is discussed further in Chapter 3.

In terms of the liberal perspective, the overwhelmingly quantitative research into correlational relationships between public opinion and the use of force fails to capture the dynamic 'back-and-forth process between public opinion and decision-making' that occurs in the conduct of war policies (Dieck 2015, 9, 26; Knecht and Weatherford 2006, 711; Payne 2020, 170). 'The domestic politics of war are profoundly dynamic and interactive' (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 115), and policies can be crafted 'to be responsive to future opinion at the same time they are trying to shape current opinion' (Zaller 1994b, 250). The anticipation of future public opinion can affect the decision to use force or not (Walsh and Schulzke 2018, 53–54), as well as the objectives being pursued in war (Dieck 2015, 184). Furthermore, military and public relations strategies can then be specifically crafted with public opinion in mind, which opinion polls before and during conflicts fail to capture (ibid, 185; Michaels

2013, 2). Nonetheless, this is not to say – as diversionary war theory dictates – that wars are politically profitable. The theory has received little quantitative empirical support, with there being no significant evidence of American presidents benefiting politically from war policies (Levy 1989, 282; Meernik and Waterman 1996, 577). Instead, the point is that war policies are *always* crafted around policymakers' perceptions of domestic politics, with 'military options … [being] put aside or selected based on their acceptability to the public' (Dieck 2015, 54), which cannot be captured by the dominant quantitative approach. As the dissertation will show, policies that are deemed to be optimal for their purpose have been avoided due to domestic constraints (Farnham 2004, 457).

The overlooking of the interactivity of strategy and public opinion by democratic exceptionalism theorists is particularly relevant as Reiter and Allan Stam's (2002, 150–51) analysis is based on 'traditional' inter-state wars, hence why the authors place such emphasis on democracies successes in wars generally, but also their inability to fight long wars. Especially since the end of the Cold War, however, Western nations have repeatedly failed to achieve their aims when deploying force (McFate 2019b; R. Smith 2007) and instead have been embroiled in lengthy low-intensity conflicts. Certainly, Marshall's famous observation that 'a democracy cannot fight a Seven Years' War' is at odds with the U.S. experience of continuing unpopular wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan (Carruthers 2011, 252; Caverley 2014, 254), and part of this has to be due to warfighting strategies. Moreover, in all these cases, 'it took a relatively long time for public disapproval to break through, yielding leaders significant leeway to conduct military operations in the meantime' (Saunders 2014, 164). Finally, although Reiter and Stam (2002, 144) acknowledge how '[c]ases of covert action and the deception of the voting public abound' in U.S. history, they fail to deal with the consequences of these examples for democratic exceptionalism. Instead, their theorising is based in an 'idealized environment that is often taken as a given by theorists of democratic advantage in international relations' rather than being based on empirical reality (Staniland and Narang 2018, 422).

Lastly, none of the previous work reviewed above considers the issue of salience in analysing the relationship between the use of force and the relevance of public opinion. Even Zaller's theory, which excellently highlights how political attentiveness interacts with policy preferences, may be best suited to policy issues that are less accessible to the general public and thus more prone to the effects of elite discourse (Feldman, Huddy, and Marcus 2012, 501). Paradoxically, however, because of the nature of foreign news reporting in the U.S., if a war is not rhetorically prioritised by the government-in-place, then this issue can slip off the political radar, as examples in the War on Terror given above attest to. Older realist works effectively touched on this idea of non-prioritisation (Almond 1960, 71; Lippmann 1927, 14), but this insight is overlooked in the existent scholarship or is assumed to not be the case in

the matters of war and peace (inter alia Mermin 1999, 28; Western 2005, 14). The issue of prioritisation is an important one because it comes back to an essential part of both liberal and critical constructivist theory: that foreign policies (and wars in particular) *must* be legitimated with the American public. For liberals, this is a transparent and explanatory process between elites and the public (Baum and Potter 2015, 3); for critical constructivists, it is usually a process of elite-led social construction of meaning. Further, all the specific theories on the determinants of public support (such as partisanship) make the same assumption: that legitimation processes and public opinion polling matters. These perspectives are brought into question by the way that U.S. counterterrorism campaigns seem to have surpassed the necessity of legitimation, as discussed further in the following chapter.

Conclusion

Given the seemingly politically toxic nature of the War on Terror, this dissertation is interested in the content and relevance of public opinion that has allowed for the continued deployment of pre-emptive force. As noted in the first section of the chapter, it is in many ways puzzling that the War on Terror has been able to exist for so long given its growing costs and questionable efficacy, which can be seen in the ever-increasing unpopularity of these conflicts. To explain this puzzle, this chapter has argued that the War on Terror has become normalised at a societal level, with war drifting to the margins of society and escaping significant political attention as time has progressed. Not only has American society become disconnected from these conflicts, but Congress and the news media have largely abdicated their oversight roles with regards to the War on Terror, meaning that Obama and Trump have largely avoided legitimating their counterterrorism policies.[17]

As reviewed in the third section of this chapter, this normalisation of war poses challenges to the existent scholarship on American public opinion and the use of force. Although the disconnection between the War on Terror and the American public may ostensibly support some realist positions on the irrelevance of public opinion in the conduct of foreign policy, this is only because U.S. governments have made it so, and not because of the inconsistency and incoherency of American public opinion as this literature suggests. Indeed, as the dissertation will show in its exploration of the use of force since 1945, American leaders have repeatedly crafted their military and public relations strategies with public opinion in mind. This dynamic, it was claimed, is also missed by liberal theories on public opinion, which fail to capture both the social construction of meaning and the dynamic nature of policy construction. As such, theories of democratic exceptionalism adopt an overly idealistic picture of democratic politics which assume incorrectly that war costs directly

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[17] The notable exception to this, as discussed in Chapter 7, was Obama's explicit legitimation efforts for the surges in Afghanistan.

translate to democratic populaces. On the other hand, critical constructivist accounts appreciate how American policymakers have been able to manage support for war, but apply too much weight to elite rhetoric, as the record of unpopular American wars attests to. Finally, none of the theories reviewed here consider the issue of saliency and prioritisation. Not only can policies be crafted to appease public opinion, but they can also alleviate the relevance of public opinion to manage the political consequences of war policies. The following chapter proposes a dynamic framework that considers both ideational and material factors to counter the issues posed to these theories by the normalisation of war.

Dissertation Outline

The dissertation is split into two parts. Part I of this dissertation has two main purposes: to outline the theoretical framework employed in this dissertation (Chapters 2 and 3) and establish the relevant historical contexts for the normalisation of the War on Terror (Chapters 4 and 5). Part II applies the normalisation framework to the first three presidencies of the War on Terror: Bush (Chapter 6), Obama (Chapter 7), and Trump (Chapter 8). In more detail, each chapter can be summarised as follows.

Chapter 2 introduces the novel analytical framework introduced in this dissertation to studying the relationship between the American public and the wars waged in their name. This chapter begins with a discussion of some important assumptions and scope conditions for the dissertation, noting how the main challenge for policymakers is to manage the tension between limiting the material and political impacts of war and triumphing in conflict. This section also outlines the method used by this dissertation: interpretivist process tracing. Next, the chapter introduces the three key themes of the normalisation framework: mobilisation, legitimation, and prioritisation. Combined, these factors inductively cover the political and material ways in which wars have affected American citizens. The chapter outlines a continuum of what policies have looked like regarding each theme, as well as offering rationales as to why policymakers might pursue specific policy options in that area.

Chapter 3 completes the theoretical approach adopted in this dissertation. Based in a critical realist philosophy of science, I follow Carl von Clausewitz (and his modern advocates) in arguing that the ontological core of war is fighting (broadly conceived). This minimalistic core allows for the study of the material impact of war whilst recognising its contextual nature, meaning that the War on Terror can be acknowledged as a war despite its unfamiliar features. Next, the chapter outlines the scholarly literature on the 'American way of war' to outline the types of wars that Americans prefer to fight. The conventional account argues that although Americans are averse to war, once conflict begins, wars should be highly prioritised to achieve total victory in the name of far-reaching political objectives. The historical record, however, has been quite different: the U.S. has been at war for much of its existence,

oftentimes fighting non-prioritised wars for goals well below total victory. To analyse this tension, I introduce the concept of the dualism of the American way of war, which highlights the contrast between the American way of war in practice and the social constructions of the American way of war. Again, how policymakers have managed this tension has been of vital importance in the acceptance of the deployment of force.

Chapter 4 begins the historical analysis of the relationship between public opinion and the conduct of American wars, focusing here on the Cold War era. To start with, this chapter reviews limited war strategising, arguing that although this proposed strategy ran at odds with the tropes of the American way of war, it also limited the impact of war on the American public, as per the dualism outlined in Chapter 3. Focusing on the themes of the normalisation framework, the chapter analyses the main American wars in this period: the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Although these conflicts may seemingly suggest the impossibility of using force in conflicts at odds with the American way of war, this belies a more complex picture, and this chapter shows the various ways that policymakers were able to craft war policies to continue the use of force despite public scepticism. In this way, although this chapter largely relies on secondary literature, its employment of the normalisation framework effectively provides a revisionist account of these wars.

The same can be said for the wars analysed in Chapter 5 between 1989 and 2001, which are usually seen as brief and unimportant. Like Chapter 4, this chapter begins with a discussion of military strategies, this time focusing on the idea of risk management strategies being transferred to the realm of war in the post-Cold War era. Much like limited war strategies, it is argued that risk management strategies – with their focus on managing risks rather than defeating threats – run directly at odds with traditional conceptions of war in America. With their emphasis on routinisation of the use of force with minimal risks posed to American soldiers, risk management strategies have also offered strategies for policymakers to make acceptable the use of force. Like Chapter 4, this chapter then uses case studies, looking at eight uses of force by the U.S. in this period, albeit in a more generalised fashion than previous analysis. This chapter reveals the extent to which military strategies at this time were defined by their non-mobilisation efforts as an attempt to avoid legitimation challenges invoking the legacy of Vietnam. Although no comparisons are made to the War on Terror in Chapters 4 and 5, Part II consistently refers to the content of Chapters 4 and 5 and the conditions that have allowed for the waging of war.

Part II uses the normalisation framework to analyse the War on Terror and the normalisation of the use of force, with Chapter 6 looking at the Bush administration. In the aftermath of 9/11, the Bush administration heavily prioritised the newly launched conflict to establish the War on Terror discourse in American politics and legitimate the sea-change in counterterrorism policies. Even at this time, however, the Bush administration made non-

mobilisation decisions that would minimise the impact of the War on Terror on American society, laying the basis for the rest of the conflict. In contrast to the prioritised and legitimated status of the War on Terror at the beginning of the Bush administration, the chapter traces the declining salience of the Afghanistan War and the increasing unpopularity of the Iraq War as mobilisation costs grew and legitimation challenges arose.

Chapter 7 studies how the Obama administration was able to consolidate the position of the War on Terror when it was politically vulnerable. Having reviewed the secondary literature on the unexpected continuity of the Obama administration's counterterrorism policies, this chapter argues that a key part of this broad continuity were the changes that occurred during Obama's presidency. More specifically, it is contended that Obama's rhetorical changes and later adoption of a light-footprint model allowed the War on Terror to continue despite the political concerns that led to Obama's election. Although the tropes of the American way of war do again raise their head as part of the legitimation challenges to Obama's counterterrorism policies, it is shown that the demobilisation and deprioritisation strategies of the Obama administration resulted in the normalisation of the use of force, which would continue during the Trump administration.

Chapter 8 is the final empirical chapter on the War on Terror, arguing that despite the rhetorical prioritisation of (counter)terrorism by Trump at the beginning of his presidency, the use of force was increasingly normalised during this period. This is because Trump's rhetorical use of terrorism was to fulfil the inherent need for crisis that populism requires, rather than to meaningfully describe or legitimate policy as democratic exceptionalism suggests. Although the use of force increased during the first two years of the Trump administration and then decreased towards the end of this period, it is shown that these changes occurred within the boundaries of the now dominant light-footprint approach. Again, legitimation challenges revolved around the dualism of the American way of war, but ultimately this chapter reveals that if it were not for Trump's repeated attempts to declare victory against terrorism, there would have been little contestation or attention to the War on Terror.

Chapter 9 concludes the dissertation by firstly summarising the central arguments put forward in each chapter. This chapter provides a summary of the trends in each of the key themes of the normalisation framework, before later relating these themes back to the literature reviewed in Chapter 1. Chapter 9 also outlines the contributions of this dissertation to study in three separate fields: foreign policy and public opinion, the relationship between warfighting strategies and society, and the War on Terror. This chapter finishes by noting some limitations of this research, as well as future research avenues such as the application of this dissertation's framework in different national contexts or policy areas.

Finally, the epilogue to this dissertation, Chapter 10, counteracts that the American withdrawal from Afghanistan may directly challenge the argument that the War on Terror has been normalised.

Part I: Theory and History

2: The Normalisation Framework

Chapter Outline

This chapter consists of four main sections. Firstly, the chapter outlines the scope of investigation of this dissertation, namely the broad concept of the 'national mood'. In this section, it is argued that because war is almost inherently unappealing politically, policymakers must craft and manage war policies as to their understanding of what the 'national mood' will tolerate. This section also outlines the method employed in this dissertation, namely interpretivist process tracing. To look at the process of normalisation, the dissertation focuses on three key themes which are the focus of the following sections in this chapter: mobilisation, legitimation, and prioritisation. Each section defines these key terms, outlines a continuum of what each theme has looked like, and reviews what policymakers might do in this area and why, particularly vis-à-vis the normalisation of war. In doing so, the chapter establishes much of the theoretical framework for the historical and empirical analysis in this dissertation.

Managing the 'National Mood' and Interpretivist Process Tracing

The approach adopted in this dissertation looks beyond solely quantitative methods that revolve around opinion polls to investigate the relationship between the American public and the use of force. Although I do use opinion polls to support analysis regarding specific conflicts, this research has a wider focus, attempting to capture notions such as John Kingdon's (2013, 146) 'national mood', Richard Sobel's (2001, 14) 'climate' of public opinion, or Daniel Hallin's (1994, 2–10) 'public sphere'. These concepts speak to how 'a rather large number of people … in the country are thinking along certain common lines' on certain issues, and that government officials and elected politicians can 'sense a national mood … and believe that they know when the mood shifts' (Kingdon 2013, 146). As such, perceptions of prevailing trends in the public sphere dictate what type of issues become political priorities or not (ibid, 147). In this sense, even if one were to contest that such shared positions existed amongst the American electorate, the key point is that policymakers believe such a phenomenon to exist and that this affects policy more significantly than specific polling results (ibid, 148; Entman 2004, 128). Furthermore, this broad approach aligns with the phenomenon that I am investigating: the relationship between the American public and the wars waged in its name. There is no reason that there should not be such a 'national mood' with regards to the use of force, such as the ongoing legacy of the Vietnam War (Page and Bouton 2006, 106; Sobel 2001, x). Polls, on the other hand, rarely ask about the salience of issues to the American electorate and thus assume importance regarding any given issue,

which may not necessarily be the case (Knecht and Weatherford 2006, 713). Instead, polls are better suited to detecting public opinion on already salient political topics, and especially when there are cleavages in opinion (Krebs 2015, 194; Krebs and Lobasz 2007, 427; Zaller 1992, 140). In this sense, the limitations of this dissertation in overlooking the variety of the individual American experience with war reflects the nature of the question being investigated.

In attempting to explain how the normalisation of war has occurred, this study does not focus explicitly on structures, discourses, or agency, but by considering how American wars have affected U.S. citizens, both materially and politically.[18] Like theories of democratic exceptionalism, I assume that policymakers generally wish to reduce the financial and human costs of war to reduce political risk *whilst also* attempting to triumph in war because of the political costs of failing in war (Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995; Cappella Zielinski 2016, 20; Krieg and Rickli 2019, 197; Rockoff 2012, 27). This dynamic is particularly relevant given the high standards set by the American way of war in terms of victory at minimal costs (Halperin 1963, 25), which is reviewed in the following chapter. As historian George Herring (1994) summarised,

> [t]hroughout U.S. history, building and sustaining popular support in wartime has been among the most difficult problems faced by the nation's commanders in chief. Opposition to war has been the norm rather than the exception among Americans, and partisanship has never stopped at the water's edge.

Put simply, war is unlikely to be an easy sell to a domestic public. This assumption is supported by survey data that reveals that the American public is neither inherently isolationist nor interventionist: 'beyond relatively low-cost' military operations, 'most Americans prefer diplomatic methods, with major uses of force as a last resort' (Page and Bouton 2006, 100). This general finding is even more noticeable given that the majority of the opinion polls cited in this dissertation likely overstate the extent to which Americans are willing to approve of the use of force, as survey questions often do not mention diplomatic alternatives (A. Hoffman et al. 2015). It is these trends that most likely explain the regularity of anti-war stances by presidential candidates, as discussed in Chapter 1. However, regular surveys of 'foreign policy leaders' from the executive branch and Congress also reveal that elites are 'considerably more' likely to support the use of force than both the public and military leaders (Feaver and Gelpi 2004, 24; Page and Bouton 2006, 205, 213). Accordingly, the challenge for policymakers is *how* to make war acceptable to the American public and appropriately manage the 'national mood', especially if they have previously campaigned

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[18] The critical realist approach that allows for the consideration of material and ideational factors is discussed in the following chapter.

against the use of military force (Cappella Zielinski 2016, 6; Kreps 2018b, 12).[19] This dynamic is largely ignored by liberal theories, and instead forms a central part of this dissertation. Put simply, it has been the capabilities of American policymakers to both generate bursts of support and manage the relevance of public opinion that explains the regular use of force despite a more general public scepticism. Generally, it is found that American policymakers have pursued a middling approach to the deployment of force to do so (Echevarria 2014, 2; Peceny and Sanchez-Terry 1998, 2). To paraphrase Fareed Zakaria's (2016, xi) review of the similarities between the Vietnam War and the ongoing War on Terror, 'Option C' – between costly escalation and total withdrawal that would be against policymakers' wishes – often seems like a good option to policymakers.

To investigate these attempts to make war acceptable to a generally sceptical public, this dissertation focuses on three key themes that reflect both the political and material element of war and its justifications: *mobilisation*, *legitimation*, and *prioritisation*. These three themes were chosen inductively by considering how war might appear in the everyday lives of American citizens. Each theme is conceived of in terms of a sliding scale (see below), but combined, these processes present an ideal type of normalised war: where society is *demobilised* in the war effort, where war is deemed *legitimate*, but also is politically *deprioritised*. Although these processes do not exist in isolation and intuitive relationships are highlighted throughout the dissertation, there is no direct causal link between these three themes.

Accordingly, the normalisation framework adds nuance to one-dimensional explanations of war support such as 'war fatigue'. Although academic scholarship on war fatigue is very sparse, the term is used in elite and media discourses in two different fashions. Firstly, war fatigue refers to how the public tires with protracted conflicts, creating dissent against government policy (Barzilai 1996, 196-199; Khouri 2013; Myers 2020; Pillar 2011; *VOA News* 2012). For example, an *ABC News* piece from 2013 devoted to recent opinion polls was titled 'Afghan War Fatigue Hits New High, Matching Levels Last Seen in Iraq' (Holyk 2013). Six years prior, Bush had used this concept to justify staying the course in Iraq, stating how he understood that "there's war fatigue in America" (Terkel 2007). The second usage of war fatigue inverts the first: like in the case of compassion fatigue, citizens become tired of war and no longer want to hear about it (Brown 2014; *CBS News* 2003; Ramazani 2013, 6; Stahl, 141; Stelter 2010). In 2007, American television reporters were claiming that war fatigue had made 'it difficult to inform readers of the reality on the ground [in Iraq], as people either don't want to or are sick of hearing about it' (Francis 2007). As this dissertation will show, there is an element of truth in both accounts of war fatigue: the first position is

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[19] For a quantitative approach to this issue, see (Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995). For a qualitative exploration of similar arguments, see (Zaller 1994b).

well represented in Vietnam and Iraq, whilst the second usage can be seen in Korea and Afghanistan. The key point then, is that none of these factors alone – in this case, mobilisation – dictate public opinion. Rather, the three themes of the normalisation framework interact in a complex fashion to explain the status of war. The following three sections of this chapter are devoted to explaining these three themes.

As some of the language above may suggest, this dissertation employs interpretivist process tracing (Guzzini 2012b; Norman 2015; Pouliot 2014). Although – as outlined in the following chapter – this dissertation does not use an interpretivist epistemology, the adopted approach of critical realism is equally committed to the idea that both our own knowledge and the broader 'realities' we interact with are socially constructed. Interpretivist process tracing has been used because the question of *how* U.S. counterterrorism operations *have become* normalised is particularly appropriate for process tracing, rather than the causal what-questions more suited to correlational arguments (Guzzini 2012a, 258). Indeed, 'how did we get here?' is the question that Derek Beach (2017, 18) explicitly identifies with theory-building process tracing. Although process tracing is somewhat unfamiliar with non-positivistic epistemologies, there is no reason to believe it is the only acceptable version of the method (A. Bennett and Checkel 2014, 14–15; A. Bennett and George 2005, 206; Checkel 2008, 114; Pouliot 2007, 373). The key difference between the two approaches is the starting point of investigation, as interpretivist process tracing begins not with events in themselves, but the *understanding* of events (Guzzini 2012a, 254). As argued in Chapter 1, events are not objective realities, and hence, process-tracing cannot escape what Vincent Pouliot (2007, 234) terms the 'interpretivist moment'. That the world is forever being constructed – rather than simply existing – is precisely why a process-centred approach seems so appropriate with a non-positivistic epistemology (ibid, 364), especially with more mainstream process tracers emphasis on a lack of finality (Beach 2017). As this dissertation shows, it is not events in war themselves that have solely affected public opinion, but the meanings and understandings associated with events in war. Although this dissertation does not provide a replicable model for a particular method and methodology, interpretivist process tracing has guided its project since its inception, and the analysis fully aligns with the assumptions and guidelines of this method.

Mobilisation

Mobilisation is defined here as the process by which society is organised around a war effort. In this sense, it is the most acutely material and least overtly political theme discussed here. Like the other themes, I conceive of mobilisation as a continuum, from a limited mobilisation of military forces with little effect at the societal level, to an extensive mobilisation with a large number of ground forces and the revolving of economic and industrial power around war efforts (Martel 2011, 9, 48). With an extensive degree of mobilisation, it is expected that

demobilisation would then occur, but it is also worth noting that a society could be non-mobilised for part of, or the duration, of a conflict. The conundrum for policymakers is a relatively simple one: mobilisation helps increase warfighting power and increases chances of military success, but also intrudes into civilian life and increases the potential of human and political costs. It is expected that the smaller impact on U.S. society, the greater the potential that war could become normalised as an instrument of foreign policy. Although they are interconnected, for analytical precision I categorise mobilisation in two realms: economic and military.[20]

Regarding the former, the question is essentially what do American citizens have to pay to maintain the war effort? Taxation – as Charles Tilly has argued – can be considered one of the 'the largest intervention[s] of governments in their subjects' private life' given that it requires the redistribution of personal property (Kreps 2018b, 4). Rosella Cappella Zielinski (2016, 5, 14, 28) also used the idea of a continuum to explore the various means of war financing and their relative impact on American citizens, ranging from 'direct resource extraction at one end, indirect resource extraction in the middle, and external extraction at the other end.' This continuum ranges on the extent to which citizens can opt out of the government's resources claims and most crucially, 'the extent to which citizens are aware of finance policy' because of the varying directness of these policies (ibid, 5).

Up until the Iraq War in 2003, the costs of U.S. wars had been at least partly covered by raising taxes, providing a direct reminder of the costs of war to American citizens (ibid, 4; Rockoff 2012, 6). Throughout World War II, for example, the number of American taxpayers increased from 4 million to 43 million (Kreps 2018b, 77). To try and reduce the negative political impact of war taxes, administrations oftentimes pressed for a tax bill as close to the starting of hostilities as possible to take advantage of rallying effects at the beginning of a conflict (Rockoff 2012, 6). An alternative strategy for raising war funds has been printing money, which was the de facto purpose of the Federal Reserve during the World Wars and Cold War (ibid, 5). As Hugh Rockoff noted, the use of the Federal Reserve meant that 'it was harder for the public to see the connection' between governmental policy and war financing (ibid, 5). Other methods for war funding have been lump-sum appropriations for war policies (which have effectively taken away the power of the purse held by Congress; Banks and Straussman 1999, 204) and relying on international partners, as seen in the Gulf War (Rockoff 2012, 309).

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[20] William Martel (2011, 48) argued that conceptualisations of mobilisation 'must distinguish between mobilizing military, industrial, and economic resources and mobilizing the civilian population as well as its leadership for war', but I instead focus on the political issue of war in my second and third themes outlined here.

The most important shift in war funding, however, has been the use of debt financing (Kreps 2018b). Federal debt in 2020 was around 80 percent of the U.S.' gross domestic product (GDP), which constitutes a level not seen since the immediate aftermath of World War II (Congressional Budget Office 2020, 4). As such, the debt financing of the War on Terror – even if it constituted around 20 percent of the added national debt between 2001 and 2012 (Blimes 2013, 3)– pales into insignificance in comparison to wider debt levels. Mobilisation costs in terms of debt financing may well not be observable (or even comprehendible) to ordinary citizens in a wealthy country (Kreps 2018b, 19; Rockoff 2012, 317), but this is especially so when war is but one source of debt out of many (Kaag and Kreps 2013, 100–101). It is this dynamic that accounts for how the long-term costs associated with U.S. veterans are significantly underappreciated (see Stiglitz and Blimes 2008, xi). Although some scholarship has stressed the importance of economic costs on levels of war support (Bassat et al. 2012; Geys 2010), especially as time has progressed it has become hard to disagree with Robert Komer's contention that "what it costs you in blood is much more politically visible than what it costs you in treasures" (Record and Terrill 2004, 51; see also Krieg 2012, 186; Rockoff 2012, 31-32). Komer's rationale was that because casualties were cumulatively tallied up, they caused a "psychological and political impact over time"; by contrast, wars were funded by yearly appropriations that were harder to keep track of, which relates directly to the arguments made above (Record and Terrill 2004, 51). Strikingly, Komer – who was Lyndon Johnson's primary counterinsurgency advisor during the Vietnam War – professed these views as early as 1982, given that democratic states have increasingly translated capital into capabilities to reduce their own casualties in war since then (Krieg 2013, 353; Krieg and Rickli 2019, 75). In just the first decade of the War on Terror, for example, the U.S. spent at least $3.3 trillion without directly impacting tax levels, despite this representing some $6.6 million for every dollar al-Qaeda had spent on the 9/11 attacks (Glennon 2015, 21). Economic costs are not irrelevant, but they are overshadowed by military ones, which is why policymakers have repeatedly attempted to substitute the former for the latter.

While the 'casualties hypothesis' (reviewed in Chapter 5) may be too extreme, the logic of the importance of casualties is clear, as it asks American citizens to pay the ultimate price for their country. As a result, 'even those who doubt that casualty aversion is a decisive factor typically credit it with having some role in dampening support for war' (Walsh and Schulzke 2018, 31, 59). Casualties transform foreign policy issues into domestic ones by bringing home the costs of war and directly impacting congresspeople's constituency-based interests, making dissent more likely (Baum and Potter 2008, 54; Mermin 1999, 25). Previously tangential discussions about the merits of the use of force can be attached to the issue of growing casualties (Baum and Potter 2008, 54). For these reasons, casualty levels play an important role in the analysis of mobilisation costs throughout this dissertation. By casualties, I adopt

the popular definition of the term – those killed in connection with a military operation – rather than the approach of the Department of Defense, which also includes those wounded in war (Feaver and Gelpi 2004, 99; Larson 1996, 7). I do so because of the way that deaths in war crystallise the costs of war. As Graham reportedly put it in the context of Afghanistan policy: "[w]e've been in Europe for 60 years and Japan, all these countries. Nobody gives a shit. It is casualties" that matters in terms of determining war support (Woodward 2010, 206).

Although the number of casualties is used throughout the analysis of American wars, casualties do not necessarily speak for themselves, nor is the relationship between casualties and war support a simple one (Avant and Sigelman 2010, 260). As Casey (2014, 4) summarised, the American experience with casualties has often been 'a dark tale of censorship and suppression, propaganda and spin … to mute or mask the human cost of bloody battles'. Furthermore, the way that casualties have been interpreted in the domestic context has changed over time, such as the increased personalisation in the coverage of casualties in war. For example, in 1969 *Life* published individual profiles of all the American soldiers killed in the Battle of Hamburger Hill in Vietnam, but this was 'highly unusual and deeply controversial' at the time (ibid, 219). As the Vietnam War shows, casualties counted in their tens of thousands somewhat obscure the individual human tragedy in question (ibid, 205; Shaw 2006, 80). By contrast, U.S. wars in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century have largely been marked by their casualty aversion, leading to a paradoxical effect whereby *fewer* American deaths resulted in *increased* coverage of casualties and their personal stories (Casey 2014, 218–19). As research in psychology has shown, individual deaths can have a more significant impact on opinions than statistics, given that they are often more emotionally powerful (Sunstein 2002, 64).

Beyond the specific issue of casualties, military mobilisation can be conceived along a scale from most to least mobilised: conscription,[21] drafting the military reserves, an all-volunteer army, and the use of alternative fighters. In theory, this scale would relate directly to the issue of prioritisation: conscription should encourage citizens to take an active interest in the policies of the government that might send them to war, whereas if alternative fighters are deployed, one of the key assumptions of democratic exceptionalism is brought into question (Avant and Sigelman 2010, 231–32, 241). Broadly speaking, this scale also represents the way that U.S. warfighting has developed over time as governments have attempted to reduce American casualties in war.

Selective service was instigated in response to World War I and World War II, with draftees making up 72 per cent of the armed forces in World War I, and with 10 million men

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[21] Although, as the U.S. case shows, conscription can be implemented to different standards (see Rostker 2006).

inducted into the military during World War II (Rostker 2006, 24). The draft was reinstated for the Cold War in 1948 but was largely uncontroversial due to both the small number of draftees and the relative ease with which citizens could avoid service until the Vietnam War, especially as exemptions for college students were in place until 1965 (ibid, 27; Hatt 2016). The extension of draft calls for a contestable war created a political atmosphere where the merits of the draft were brought into question, with presidential candidate Nixon calling for a transition to an all-volunteer force in 1968 before its enaction in 1973. What has been particularly significant about the transition to an all-volunteer force has been the increased retention of troops, resulting in the military becoming increasingly isolated from American society (see Figure 1). As Mike Mullen (Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Bush and Obama administrations) contended, the U.S. military is "professional and capable … but I would sacrifice some of that excellence and readiness to make sure that we stay close to the American people … It's become just too easy to go to war" (Fallows 2015).

Figure 1: Increased retention rates in U.S. armed forces, 1969-2006[22]

Service branch of the U.S. military	Percentage of those who had served for longer than four years		
	1969	1977	2006
Army	18	37	51
Navy	31	42	49
Marine Corps	16	26	35
Air Force	46	54	66

The employment of fighters other than American soldiers represents yet another step in this process, as American governments have increasingly attempted to externalise the burden of warfare beyond its polity whilst maintaining strategic influence (Krieg and Rickli 2019, 114; Mumford 2013, 11). Although the use of contractors has been commonplace since the American revolution (Dunigan 2016, 243; McFate 2014, 19), the usage of private military and security companies (PMSCs)[23] was already 'unprecedented' by the 1990s (Singer 2004,

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[22] Data from (Rostker 2006, 8).

[23] There are a variety of terms for contractors related to war that attempt to differentiate their roles in the process of waging war. For example, only around 10 percent of contractors employed in the War on Terror are armed (McFate 2016a). Crucially however, even those contractors tasked with logistical or reconstruction tasks have played an integral role in the ability of the U.S. to deploy force, especially as the boundaries between policing and war have become increasingly blurred in twenty-first century warfare (Avant and de Nevers 2011; Avant and Sigelman 2010; Dunigan 2016; Kinsey 2009; Kinsey and Patterson 2012; Krieg 2018). As such, I use the broad umbrella term of PMSCs to describe those contractors employed by U.S. governments as part of war efforts.

16), and this reliance has only continued during the War on Terror as the scope and scale of PMSC activity increased. Although there a variety of reasons why governments may employ PMSCs or local forces (Berndtsson and Kinsey 2016b, 1), American governments in the period covered by this dissertation have primarily done so to reduce economic, military, and political costs. In economic terms, PMSCs are widely perceived to be more efficient and do not come with the associated long-term costs such as veterans benefits (Kinsey 2009, 25; Krieg 2013, 341, 2018, 8; McFate 2019a, 25). Employing proxy forces also reduces the risk of American casualties. In Afghanistan, for example, it was announced in September 2019 that more than 28,000 members of the Afghan Security Forces had been killed since 2001: the comparative figure for U.S. soldiers at that point was 3,563 (DCAS 2021a; Ali 2018). As has been widely observed in the literature on PMSCs, non-American military lives are less politically significantly. 'Ultimately', as Sean McFate (2019a, 18) put it, 'contractors are disposable people' to the American public, and their deaths seldom result in media attention (Avant and Sigelman 2010; Carmola 2012; Kinsey 2007, 2009; Kinsey and Patterson 2012; Krieg 2013, 2018; Mandel 2012; McFate 2016a; Mumford 2013). In this way, employing PMSCs and local forces means that governments can 'dodge national political debate over whether … wars should end' or not (McFate 2014, 55). This dynamic is particularly salient given that the American executive branch can employ highly secretive PMSCs without having to consult with Congress (ibid, 9; Avant and Sigelman 2010, 249, 252). Indeed, these points are almost exactly the critiques made by contemporary Western policymakers of proxy warfare by non-democratic states (Stevenson 2020).

An overarching theme throughout the period under study has been the way that the U.S. has regularly attempted to reduce American casualties via the use of technology. This has largely occurred via new forms of airpower, as per the capital-rich American way of war (Rockoff 2012, 4). For example, the strategic bombing campaigns during World War II were at least partly justified as an attempt to avoid the level of casualties that had been experienced in ground combat in World War I (Larson 1996, 17). Adrian Lewis (2012, 377) referred to how the new visions of warfighting outlined in the 1940s, 1950s, 1970s, and 1980s were all in pursuit of the same ideal: 'war without ground combat forces, war fought with technology … war that was clean and neat, where Americans were not exposed to the nastiness of killing and the trauma of death'. No other state, Lewis contented, 'has expended the resources comparable to the US in the search for the panacea for war' (ibid; see also Coker 2009, 8; McFate 2019b, Chapter 4). The lethal drone programme can be seen as another development in this process, but crucially – as discussed in Chapter 7 – this technology provides invulnerability to certain actors in war, effectively transforming technology from a force multiplier to a way of externalising the burden of warfare (Chamayou 2015, 12; Coker 2015; Kaag and Kreps 2013, 98; Krieg and Rickli 2019, 85–86; Walsh and Schulzke 2018, 4–6).

Lastly, the cyber domain – which is included in the definition of war offered in Chapter 3 – is also particularly well-suited to 'surrogate warfare' and the ability of states to reduce the physical costs of war (Krieg and Rickli 2019, 12, 22).

Legitimation

Legitimation refers to the process of providing legitimacy to a practice. Rodney Barker (2004, 9, 22) argued that 'legitimacy' and 'legitimate' are descriptions of a system, whilst 'legitimation' describes an 'activity'. As has been noted, the concept of legitimation has been under-theorised (ibid, 2), especially in IR scholarship (Goddard and Krebs 2015, 6).[24] Stacie Goddard and Krebs defined legitimation as 'how political actors publicly justify their policy stances before concrete audiences, seeking to secure these audiences' assent that their positions are indeed legitimate and thus potentially to garner their approval and support' (ibid).[25] This process is particularly relevant to the realm of war, as "[n]o government will send young men into battle to kill and be killed without offering some justification for what they are doing" (Kaag and Kreps 2013, 107). Like securitisation theory (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 25), audiences play a vital role in legitimation theory, for actions can only be legitimate if target audiences approve claims to legitimacy (Beetham 2013, 38–39; Goddard and Krebs 2015, 9, 29). This definition of legitimation considers how messages will be crafted for specific audiences, as will be shown throughout the dissertation. Goddard and Krebs' conceptualisation of legitimacy suitably follows in the social scientific tradition which focuses on what is seen as legitimate, as opposed to philosophical approaches which focus on whether actions meet standards of the right and good (Beetham 2013, x).

It should be apparent that legitimacy is not merely confined to legal validity in this conception. For David Beetham, legitimacy has three dimensions: 'conformity to rules', 'justifiability of rules in terms of share[d] beliefs', and processes of 'expressed consent' (ibid, 20). Beetham's framework rightly highlights the multifaceted nature of legitimacy, and this dissertation attempts to capture that in its discussions of the legitimation of U.S. foreign policy. Barker (2004, 12, 25) also noted how legitimation can take place in a myriad of fashions, which Goddard and Krebs somewhat overlook with their explicit focus on actors' public attempts to legitimate their policies. Accordingly, alongside explicit legitimation attempts, this dissertation considers how unstated political dynamics such as partisanship or

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[24] Most of the existent research has been by constructivists; for a realist perspective that emphasises the idea of legitimation, see (Tjalve and Williams 2015).

[25] The focus on legitimation in this dissertation aligns with influential research on American politics that stresses the importance of the president's rhetoric to policymaking (inter alia, C. A. Smith and Smith 1994; Tulis 1987). Although this dissertation focuses on legitimation concerning the American public, there has also been research on legitimation at an elite level (Saunders 2015) and at the international level (Goddard 2009; 2015; Lake 2013; Mitzen 2015).

presidential approval ratings may affect the legitimacy of foreign policy decisions (Sobel 2001, 14–15). Like the approach of this dissertation more generally, the study of legitimation 'transcend[s] the ideational/material divide in the study of world politics', in that legitimation is 'deeply embedded in culture' whilst taking place 'in a material context of resources, institutions, and coalitional politics' (Goddard and Krebs 2015, 34).

Having established what legitimation is, one might ask why legitimacy matters to policymakers. Legitimacy in governing is important because of both electoral pressures and how it makes governing easier by generating cooperation (Beetham 2013, 28–29). Put another way, governmental power cannot simply be an issue of capabilities and resources, but also about how successfully support can be attained for one's policies (ibid, 38). With regards to electoral pressures, 'public opinion about military operations matter specifically because public opinion matters generally' at the next election in question (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 218). More precisely, by establishing a degree of consensus, effective legitimation efforts can help generate political and material support for war policies (Goddard and Krebs 2015, 18), along with affording policymakers more flexibility in their policies (Sobel 2001, x). Hence, the necessity for legitimation is likely to correlate to the mobilisation costs of using force and the visibility of the policy in question (Cappella Zielinski 2016, 6; Gaubatz 1995, 541; Goddard and Krebs 2015, 7–8, 2018, 74–75). For example, the Gulf War was marked by the extensive pre-war legitimation efforts of the George H. W. Bush administration to generate support for a significant degree of military mobilisation. In contrast, as noted in the previous chapter, the minimal mobilisation demands of the contemporary War on Terror have meant that presidents have increasingly avoided explicit legitimation attempts. The Gulf War example also reveals how legitimation efforts may be more necessary when the use of force is particularly contentious, such as it was in the wake of the Vietnam War. All things considered, one only needs to look at the conduct of governments around the world for the importance of legitimacy and legitimation, as legitimation attempts are ever-present in both domestic and international politics (George 1980; Goddard and Krebs 2015, 6; 2018, 68). After all, the significance of when legitimacy is lost is clear, whether that be in terms of forcing U.S. leaders to end wars or damaging a government's electoral prospects (George 1980).

In terms of normalisation, I conceive of the legitimation of war in a continuum from normalised to contested: accepted as background condition, publicly legitimated, publicly contested, and deemed illegitimate. I assume that legitimated war is more likely to become normalised, but there is no inherent relationship here, as a legitimated war could be popular and extraordinary. To gauge successes and failures in legitimation, I not only study opinion polls, but also analyse discourses from two important institutions in legitimation: the news media and Congress. Because of the distant nature of foreign policy, the news media acts as the primary source of information regarding foreign affairs for most citizens, making it an

important site for analysis (Baum and Groeling 2010b, 2; Baum and Potter 2015, 2-3; Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 156; Knecht and Weatherford 2006, 714; Mermin 1999, 3–4; Soroka 2003, 28). Although Congress does have specific constitutional powers regarding war and the ability to legislate on war issues, because its 'apparent power … vastly outstrips its real power over national security' (Glennon 2015, 49), it is many ways the ability of congresspeople to publicly challenge the legitimation efforts of the government-in-place that has the biggest impact on the levels of war support (Heaney and Rojas 2015, 203; McHugh 2015, 2–3).

This is especially true if one subscribes to one of the three primary models of the nexus between the news media, public opinion, and foreign policy: the indexing hypothesis. First coined by Lance Bennett (1990), the indexing hypothesis dictates that media coverage mirrors the degree to which policies are debated in Congress, with critical perspectives being marginalised if there is no dispute on Capitol Hill (ibid; L. Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2007; Mermin 1999). This account emphasises American journalistic practices: because the news media relies on official sources and has an ingrained culture of 'objectivity', the press is 'unable to build and sustain' contrarian accounts of foreign policy issues without clear dissensus at the elite level (L. Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2007, 36; Hallin 1986, Chapter 4). Furthermore, where critiques of official policy are made in the news media, they are often on procedural grounds or from foreign sources, thus being relegated to less prominent positions than government policies and pronouncements (L. Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2007, 23, 34; Entman 2004, 50-51, 54-55, 78-79, 112; Hallin 1986, 83; Mermin 1999, 9-10). Although the indexing hypothesis is not explicitly a model of public opinion, it neatly aligns with Zaller's (1992, 8) framework and its emphasis on whether the American public is exposed to 'alternative visions' of foreign policy issues.

A related account of the relationship between the news media and government policies is the 'propaganda' or 'hegemony' model (DiMaggio 2009, Herman and Chomsky 2002). Most closely associated with the work of Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (2002), this perspective posits that the media serves to promote the interests and policies of the American government. Herman and Chomsky adopt an explicitly macro approach, arguing that the propagandising of the news media does not rely on direct government intervention but instead reflects hegemonic capitalist structures (ibid, xi, 2). Because media conglomerates have close relations with the sources of power and rely on advertising for funding, it is argued that media organisations avoid controversial issues and in doing so 'serve' government interests (ibid). Again, the theory does not explicitly deal with the effects of the media on public opinion (ibid, xii), but the significance of the media on the formulation of public opinion is certainly implied and is at times explicitly stated in more recent studies from this school of thought (DiMaggio 2009; Herman and Peterson 2000; Thussu 2000).

Both the propaganda model and indexing hypothesis have been critiqued for their inability to explain the post-Cold War media environment, with Robert Entman (2004, 95) claiming that the 'end of the Cold War allowed journalists … greater leeway to challenge the White House' and their framing of events. Indeed, the third model reviewed here – the so-called 'CNN effect' – claimed that with the advent of real-time communications technology, the news media in the post-Cold War period exerted an independent effect on public opinion and government policy, most notably by generating support for humanitarian interventions (Robinson 2002, 1-2). For example, former Secretary of State James Baker III (1995, 103 in Gilboa 2005, 28) claimed that '[i]n Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, and Chechnya, among others, the real-time coverage of conflict by the electronic media … served to create a powerful new imperative for prompt action that was not present in less frenetic [times]'.

As discussed further in Chapter 5, these claims have received little empirical support, and CNN effect proponents have been critiqued for adopting a simplistic picture of policymaking that overlooks the multiplicity of concerns facing decision-makers when considering the use of force (Bahador 2011, 45; Gilboa 2005, 38; Robinson 2011, 7). For example, Piers Robinson (2002, 123) has shown how the impact of the CNN effect interacts with mobilisation costs, as media pressure is more likely to exert an impact on military interventions that rely exclusively on airpower. This touches on the problem of generalisability for all three of these models: the propaganda model 'tends to ignore the possibility that journalists might actually take sides … during elite debates over policy' (ibid, 15), whilst the indexing hypothesis cannot explain why, when, and to what degree leaders challenge official accounts of foreign policy issues (Entman 2004, 5). As an alternative to adopting a general model of the relationship between the news media, public opinion, and foreign policy, I draw upon the insights of each model here to outline the conditions in which governments can successfully legitimate the use of force.

To begin with, the government determines policy in foreign affairs, which has important consequences for policy legitimation. In the most extreme scenario, leaders can manipulate events to generate support for their proposed policies. In World War II, for example, Franklin Delano Roosevelt effectively crafted policies to create 'an incident' against German forces in the Atlantic that would justify the beginning of a militarised American intervention (Mearsheimer 2013, 47). More commonly, the privileged policymaking position of the executive branch 'determines the scope and nature of the debate' that follows; Congress may be able to question or agree with policy, '[b]ut they are rarely in a position to examine the full range of alternatives that may be open to them' (Dahl 1950, 63 in Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 9). Similar effects can be seen in the news media: because journalists 'help audiences economize' their time by focusing on the actions and statements of those who can most heavily impact policy, presidents can 'draw journalists' attention from mere ideas' with

'almost any kind of action' (L. Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2007, 63; Entman 2004, 85, 88).

Not only does the government have inbuilt legitimation advantages in terms of its ability to enact policies, but it also has the upper hand in informational terms. Most fundamentally, the White House has access to all national intelligence resources, which gives administrations significant leeway to strategically release or withhold information to suit their agenda (Baum and Groeling 2010b, 5; Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 9; C. Kaufmann 2004, 37). As discussed below with the concept of the 'elasticity of reality' (Baum and Groeling 2010a, 2010b; Baum and Potter 2008, 2019), these informational advantages are particularly prominent at the beginning of a war. Although government agencies do usually have a significant authority advantage in American politics more broadly, this is particularly so when there are no competing authorities, hence why the White House has such an informational primacy in foreign affairs where authority is far more centralized (C. Kaufmann 2004, 41). This is true in counterterrorism, given that 'the offices primarily responsible for responding to terrorism all fall within the purview of the chief executive' (Silberstein 2002, 4). In terms of Congress, the government can either manage information channels to the body (such as who testifies before Congress) or directly control which information is made available to co-opt or alienate certain elites to try and maintain congressional support (Saunders 2015, 480). In this scenario, '[c]ertain elites may thus be relegated to a role similar to uninformed public' (ibid). This is also true for the media, who must rely on official sources of information, which accounts for the indexing hypothesis and the propaganda model (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 159). Even if one subscribes to a model of a 'thriving independent media' (such as CNN effect advocates), 'there are times when a group in control of the executive will be able to rely on the media to advance its information advantages', which undermines the assumptions of democratic exceptionalism (Western 2005, 18). Whilst the end of the Cold War appeared to have dampened this dynamic, Chapter 6 shows how the 'public deference to official policy' returned with the beginning of the War on Terror (Hallin 2013, 95).

What's more, when the U.S. government does place troops into combat, this sparks 'a whole set of cultural responses by the troops themselves, the public, the media and other actors' which can result in a rally-round-the-flag effect (Hallin 2013, 100). In Congress, elected representatives are likely to coalesce around the idea of supporting troops in action, even if they had previous objections to the proposed policy. This is because of the potential consequences of criticising actions that involve U.S. soldiers: accusations of being antipatriotic, demoralising American troops, or encouraging the enemy to prolong the conflict in question (Krebs 2015, 185; see also Entman 2004, 155-56). One quote from a political commentator regarding the U.S. intervention in Haiti in 1994 typified this logic:

"[t]here's bipartisan criticism of going into Haiti. There's also bipartisan support, at least, in supporting the troops now that they're there" (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 7). Accordingly, it is informational advantages, along with media and congressional consensus this produces that account for the rally-round-the-flag effect (Baum and Groeling 2010b, 3). Rather than a kneejerk reaction from the American public then, rallying effects are better understood as a reflection of specific legitimation dynamics associated with the launching of wars (Baum and Potter 2008, 45). This rallying effect can be particularly powerful if rapid military success can be achieved. This is because of reduced mobilisation costs, but also because there is simply no time for the rally-round-the-flag effect to decrease, especially in terms of congressional legitimation disputes (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 21). As David Halberstam (2001, 16) put it, '[i]f not everyone loves a sword, then almost everyone on the winning side loves a swift sword.' Examples of this kind of rapid military success in the post-Cold War period are explored in Chapter 5.

In their legitimation efforts, governments can reduce elite and media dissent with clear and 'culturally congruent' narratives concerning the use of force (L. Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2007, 139-40). Inconsistent or vague legitimation strategies from government actors can help create political vacuums for alternative actors to put forward different interpretations of events, and vice versa when there is clear messaging (Entman 2004, 91; Hallin 1986, 83). Studies of the CNN effect have found that clear rhetorical leadership is a critical factor in explaining the varying impact of the news media on specific military interventions (Gilboa 2005, 37; Robinson 2002, 120). For Entman (2004, 17), the use of culturally dominant frames – such as anti-communism or anti-terrorism – makes it extremely difficult for congresspeople or the media to credibly challenge these narratives. Indeed, when there is 'culturally congruent' framing, Entman acknowledges that the predictions of the propaganda and indexing models are the same as his 'cascade model' which attempts to incorporate the differences of the post-Cold War media environment (ibid).

The main problem, then, for Entman's model, is the availability and salience of these 'culturally congruent' discourses in U.S. national security narratives. Especially because of the U.S. government's informational advantages (Glennon 2015, 21), American policymakers have continuously exaggerated and *othered* threats facing the American public without significant contestation, from worldwide communism to alleged drug smugglers (Campbell 1998, 31). As observed by Stanley Hoffman (1968, 186, in Krebs and Lobasz 2007, 437, these threats have been described as 'more diabolical, more effective, more powerful, [and] more insidious than' the reality to rationalise the use of force and reduce the discursive space for nuanced discussion and dissent (ibid, 88-89; Doty 1993, 313; R. Jackson 2005, 9, 69; Kennedy 2013, 623–24; Porpora 2010, 93). For example, American leaders have regularly compared enemy figures to Adolf Hitler (Young 2005, 178), whilst 'opposition to '[e]vil' has marked

American foreign policy for much of the twentieth and twenty-first century' (Kennedy 2013, 624). Not only do these descriptions effectively demonise opposition forces, but they also – as per the American way of war outlined in the following chapter – reaffirm ideas about what America *is* and *what* purpose it serves, thus creating impetus to act. In sum, certain constitutive tropes are often available to policymakers to reduce dissent from alternative institutions and generate support for the use of force.

Even once issues might arise in a military campaign, the government still has some leeway to play with in terms of their presentation of the conflict in question. Claims of success can have an important legitimating effect amongst the American public by offering reassurances that victory will be attained (Pach 2010). Much like how winning in war is based on perceptions (Bartholomees 2008; D. Johnson and Tierney 2006), success is also a malleable social construction subject to government informational advantages. This has only increased in the post-Cold War era with the rise of political 'spin', as discussed in Chapter 5. In the War on Terror, for example, the 'inherently ambiguous' nature of the conflict has meant that administrations have chosen their own criteria for success, 'thus encouraging the selection of arbitrary or self-serving metrics' (D. Johnson and Tierney 2006, 283).

For all these governmental advantages in legitimation, some common challenges reappear throughout this dissertation. As conflicts drag on, not only do mobilisation costs rise but governmental legitimation advantages that account for the rally-round-the-flag effect decrease. Put another way, the 'elasticity of reality' reduces as more independently sourced information becomes available, thus providing a challenge to the indexing hypothesis (Baum and Groeling 2010b, 33; Baum and Potter 2008, 43). As a bridge between theories that focus on events (i.e. casualties) and elite rhetoric, the 'elasticity of reality' concept can explain how growing mobilisation costs and declining legitimation advantages result in policy contestation, which can occur in Congress via resolutions, debates, hearings, and so on (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 10). As adaptations to the indexing hypothesis have shown, journalists have professional incentives to represent political conflicts, and especially when there are intra-party disputes (Baum and Groeling 2010b, 5; Entman 2004, 18). This general pattern occurred in the conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq (Hallin 2013, 95), suggesting how culturally dominant discourses such as anti-communism and anti-terrorism can decrease in effectiveness as a conflict carries on, even if these discourses both precede and outlast these wars (Buzan 2006, 113). Relatedly, the tendency of American governments to justify wars as moral crusades in pursuit of far-reaching political objectives has created 'unrealistic expectations' about what these wars might achieve or at what cost (Western 2005, 232), which Jeffrey Michaels (2013) termed the 'discourse trap'. These 'traps' are significant because of the importance of perceived credibility in presidential rhetoric, as it lays the foundation for the effectiveness of legitimation efforts (Rubin 2020, 45).

More broadly, policymakers during the War on Terror have faced the challenges of managing a novel media environment. If the Gulf War represented 'a new mediatization of time and space' that ushered in the CNN effect (Hoskins and O'Loughlin 2010, 17), then governments now face 'an overwhelming ... proliferation of digital data flows from an almost infinite multitude of digital sources' (Gowing 2011, 18). Along with the advent of social media and the growing salience of misinformation, media sources have become increasingly fragmented, at least in part causing the hyper-polarisation of American politics in the twenty-first century (Baum and Potter 2019, 751). Certainly, the ability of American presidents or trusted news sources to credibly speak across partisan boundaries has decreased over time (ibid, 750). However, this new media environment has not rendered the above arguments redundant. Even if dominant media sources no longer command the audiences they once did, domestic television, newspapers, and radio remain the predominant sources of political information for the American electorate (Baum and Potter 2015, 5, 231, 2019, 751; Krebs 2015, 289-90; Robinson 2011, 9). In fact, the diversification of media sources has somewhat paradoxically reinforced the legitimating power of American elites (Baum and Potter 2019, 751; Krebs 2015, 28). As such, whilst presidents are less capable of effectively legitimating across the political spectrum, social media, media fragmentation, and hyper-polarisation has meant that their legitimation efforts are increasingly effective to their own supporters (Baum and Groeling 2010b, 296; Baum and Potter 2019, 754), which is most clearly seen in Chapter 8 on the Trump presidency. To conclude, whilst even proponents of the indexing hypothesis now acknowledge that 'press dependence on government officials is not an absolute' (L. Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2007, 60), the White House retains powerful legitimating advantages, most notably the ability to set policy use informational advantages and thus also the terms of political debate.

Prioritisation

Prioritisation is defined here as the extent to which the conflict in question is politically important. Prioritisation is largely determined by governments, but much like the above, the media acts as a crucial vessel to public opinion given that wars are 'in effect, media events' (Baum 2004, 197; Knecht and Weatherford 2006, 714; Mermin 1999, 4). Noting that 'it would be arresting to find that media content does not drive public attention to foreign affairs', Stuart Soroka (2003, 34) has found a clear relationship between the two variables. Whilst the media normally channel the relative prioritisation afforded to an issue by the government-in-place (i.e. the indexing and propaganda models), the media can also play a role in disrupting the prioritisation afforded to wars (i.e. the CNN effect). Indeed, it has been argued that changes in the media should have resulted in increased prioritisation of conflict, given that 'we can now connect to war in a manner that was not possible before' (Hoskins and O'Loughlin 2010, 1) and that 'no people and no conflict are so far away that we can claim to

know nothing about them' (Seib 2013, 12). Even exponents of the indexing hypothesis have noted how the media can bring about cases of *unwanted* prioritisation that might occur because of uncovering scandals or publishing information that contradicts a government's legitimation efforts (L. Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2007, 63). As argued in Chapter 1 however, war in the U.S. has become normalised and ordinary, indicating the extent to which media changes have not necessarily had the predicted effects in the War on Terror.

Indeed, prioritisation is perhaps the most connected theme discussed. Prioritisation is oftentimes connected with mobilisation costs, in that policymakers may feel that potential costs are so significant that explicit public support is necessary; this can be seen in the wars in Iraq in Chapters 5 and 6. In this way, the 'agenda-setting and policy-selling components of presidential rhetoric work together', as presidents choose what policies should be prioritised and hopefully legitimated (Rubin 2020, 19).[26] Even if administrations do not take this approach, significant mobilisation costs can frequently cause a rise in the salience of a war, even if this is undesired by the government, such as the Vietnam War. The degree of prioritisation a conflict receives is likely to reflect the extent to which explicit legitimation attempts have been successful or not (Goddard and Krebs 2018, 75). For example, although anti-war movements have usually failed in terms of preventing the use of force, they have at times posed legitimation challenges to U.S. governments and even more importantly, raised the saliency of wars in political discussions (Marullo and Meyer 2004, 641). Again, however, these connections are not a given. The salience of national security issues varies significantly; sometimes this 'may reflect objective threat conditions', yet often this is 'delinked from objective material threats' (Staniland and Narang 2018, 418). As this dissertation will show, '[w]hat counts as news, and who counts as newsworthy, differs according to context' (Carruthers 2011, 41).

There are less discrete steps when it comes to conceiving of a scale of prioritisation, but the key point is that the saliency of war can vary over time along a scale from never being a political priority (non-prioritisation), becoming less of a political priority (deprioritisation), or existing as a political priority (prioritisation). In terms of normalisation, it is assumed that a deprioritised war is more likely to lead to war becoming normalised. The importance of prioritisation is both the flexibility it gives to policymakers (see below), but also more broadly in the way that it speaks to the patterns and priorities of political life. Albeit focusing on domestic politics, Kingdon (2013, 2) captured this succinctly when stating that the 'patterns of public policy … are determined not only by such final decisions as votes in legislatures, or initiatives and vetoes by presidents, but also by the fact that some subjects and proposals emerge in the first place and others are never seriously considered.' I assume that the formal

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[26] Like legitimation above, studying government-led prioritisation is in line with influential research agendas in the study of American politics (inter alia, Kernell 2007; Laracey 2002)

political sphere (and by extension, the news media) only meaningfully covers so many issues at any given time, and thus the relative prioritisation afforded to issues of war and peace has important consequences in terms of foreign policy. To invoke an old Washington D.C. saying, "the president can only do one and a half things at a time". For better or worse, the formal political sphere – in the U.S. context at least – tends to become preoccupied with certain developments, at the loss of attention in other areas.

In this context, policymakers may choose to either prioritise or deprioritise war, but the key point is that these actions suit their political purpose and managing the approval of war policies. Later chapters look at examples of these cases, but in the meantime I will lay out these reasons in the abstract form. Policymakers may choose to prioritise war for several reasons. Firstly, as the literature on domestic audience costs dictates, prioritising a war in the domestic sphere adds credibility to a leader's actions in war and improves his chance of winning a conflict (Baum 2004, 190). Secondly, in line with previous comments, a war may be prioritised to generate necessary material resources for war. Thirdly and most extremely, diversionary war theory dictates that policymakers may wish to prioritise the use of force to divert attention away from other political issues. This logic follows even if one were to disagree with the idea that war may have been *launched* as a diversionary act.

Similarly, governmental de-prioritisation can be explained by several factors. Goddard and Krebs (Goddard and Krebs 2015, 7–8) attempt to explain the varying degree of explicit legitimation attempts in terms of two factors: the government's need for mobilisation, and the visibility of the policy in question. To this, I would also add a third consideration: the political viability of the issue. In this sense, deprioritisation may reflect legitimation fears by hiding the issue of war if it is not politically appealing, or if there is no electoral incentive to devote time to the issue (Krieg and Rickli 2019, 64; Staniland and Narang 2018, 417). Citing how the Ronald Reagan administration consistently undertook specific policies at odds with public opinion polls whilst retaining overall popularity, Entman argued that '[r]educing a policy to a low priority … can be as politically consequential as generating actual support of the policy'. Alternatively, as shown throughout this dissertation, wars have been deprioritised because of how they did not conform to the dominant understandings of war in the American imaginary. This could be on account of the legitimation challenges this clash would pose, or because of fears that a war hysteria would call for something other than optimum policies.

Another reason for deprioritisation is that it gives policymakers more flexibility (Baum 2004, 194; Knecht and Weatherford 2006, 711; Staniland and Narang 2018, 417). In Sobel's (2001, x) account of the impact of public opinion on U.S. foreign policy between the Vietnam and Iraq wars, '[t]he public's attitudes set the parameters within which policymakers operated', but the 'discretion' afforded to policymakers to determine their own policies 'was wider when conflicts were less salient'. This is because the absence of a prying Congress,

media, or mass public, means that policymakers face fewer domestic constraints in their chosen policies (Baum 2004, 194; Knecht and Weatherford 2006, 711). If presidents can avoid legitimation challenges from these areas, they 'can basically do as they choose' (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 48). As such, deprioritisation sometimes allows for governments to conceal morally questionable actions, albeit with obvious risks attached in terms of legitimation and credibility.

One area of focus within the theme of prioritisation is whether policymakers elect to adopt the war label or not. As is shown by the rhetoric of previous American presidents, it is apparent that labelling something as a "war" leads to the increased political saliency of the issue at hand. As a result, presidents have used the war label outside of its conventional context to generate political support. For example, Roosevelt promised to solve unemployment by "treating the task as we would treat the emergency of war", Dwight Eisenhower referred "to a new kind of war … upon the brute forces of poverty and need", Johnson launched "wars" on "poverty", "hunger", and "killer diseases", Nixon declared a "war on cancer", and finally Bush 41 launched a "war on drugs" (Sherry 1995, 15, 205, 263, 431). Noticeably, however, in the same period, actual wars were increasingly described under other names than "war", which comes back to the points made above about policymakers deprioritising war to avoid explicit legitimation attempts. The contrast between Obama and Bush administrations nicely illuminates the effects of this naming process, as the "War on Terror" was rebranded with terms such as "Overseas Contingency Operations" which failed to become commonplace descriptions (Bacevich 2018c).

Finally, the issue of classification of "war" also relates to Congress. As is well known, Congress – the only body in the U.S. context that can legally declare war – last did so against Romania in June 1942. Since Truman described the Korean War as a "police action", American wars have been fought without formal declarations of war (Rubin 2020, 25). Whilst this is somewhat of a technical matter, it does tell us something about the way that war has become increasingly absent in the public realm. As Jean Baudrillard (1995, 26) stated in his critique of the Gulf War, '[w]e should have been suspicious about the disappearance of the declaration of war'. Relatedly, presidents have repeatedly faced the choice of going to Congress for an AUMF versus justifying the deployment of force under executive action. Whilst generally those looking to deprioritise wars have avoided going to Congress because of legitimation fears (Hildebrandt et al. 2013, 262–63), AUMFs can also deprioritise war policies and afford policymakers more flexibility to conduct war policies outside of legitimation challenges. Additionally, successful AUMFs can effectively reduce war opposition if members of congress had previously voted in favour of the authorisation in question (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 269). In sum, war is an acutely political phenomenon, and its saliency by no means speaks for itself in the political sphere but depends on many

factors. This, I contend, has been vital to the acceptability of the deployment of force in the history of U.S. foreign policy, particularly in terms of the normalisation of U.S. counterterrorism campaigns today.

Conclusion

As argued in the first section of this chapter, American policymakers must craft their war policies around the 'national mood' to prevent the use of force from becoming a contentious and costly political issue whilst ensuring policy success. This crafting process has been achieved in both political and material terms, hence why the normalisation framework put forward in this chapter considers both ideational and material factors. As well as introducing the method of interpretivist process tracing, the chapter has defined each theme and outlined a continuum of what each theme has looked like in the American context.

To briefly summarise the empirical review above, it was contended that American governments have increasingly attempted to reduce the impact of mobilisation costs on the American public. In the economic realm, governments have shifted their primary mode of war funding from taxation to borrowing, which reduces the short-term impact of war on the American populace and makes the costs of war harder to observe. In military terms, this has primarily been achieved by reducing the number of U.S. casualties in war because of their political salience, whether that be via the use of alternative fighters or the repeated reliance on new technological developments that reduce the risks posed to American forces.

The chapter has highlighted potential connections between the three themes, and mobilisation costs can best be conceived as a base from which the government has to work from to make war acceptable to the American public. For example, it is intuitive that higher mobilisation costs will necessitate stronger governmental efforts in the second theme studied here: legitimation. Having outlined the advantages of garnering legitimacy in policymaking, this chapter reviewed the plentiful legitimation advantages available to U.S. governments, such as the ability to manage and control the flow of information on national security issues. On the other hand, it was also argued that legitimation attempts have faced repeated challenges over time, which in part reflect how the government's legitimation advantages decrease as a conflict endures.

It is on this basis that American governments have at times attempted to deprioritise the use of force to avoid legitimation challenges, in a similar dynamic to how an administration may choose suboptimal military strategies to decrease mobilisation costs. Although explicit prioritisation efforts can be useful in generating resources, actions such as avoiding the war label have meant that American governments have managed to avoid the oftentimes unappealing nature of war and generate flexibility in policymaking. Therefore, whilst this chapter stressed the potential political dangers of war (rising mobilisation costs

leading to legitimation challenges and unwanted political prioritisation), this chapter has also highlighted the options available to American policymakers to manage the 'national mood' regarding war policies. Following the final theoretical chapter, the rest of the dissertation is devoted to analysing the policies that American governments have enacted regarding these three key themes in their war policies since 1945.

3: The Dualism of the American Way of War

Chapter Outline

This chapter consists of three main sections. In the first section, I review and critique four approaches from academic scholarship and the U.S. national community to defining and conceptualising war. Based in a critical realist approach, I put forward a modest and contextual definition of war that centres around the ontology of war as fighting, broadly conceived. In the second section, I use secondary literature on the American way of war to outline war is in the American imagination, along with the ideal picture of what wars should look like and how they should be fought. This account of war is un-Clausewitzian, arguing that wars should be highly prioritised and fought in pursuit of total victory to eradicate the sources of the problems in question. And yet, as noted in the third section, the empirical record fails to match up to these idealised notions of war. To understand these tensions, I propose the concept of the dualism of the American way of war between the dominant cultural tropes of war and warfighting in practice. With this concept, the entirety of the theoretical framework is established for the rest of the dissertation.

Conceptualising and Defining War

War is not something that can be defined easily, to the extent that a group of scholars recently contended that it 'is not a phenomenon to be definitely distilled' but should instead be seen as 'only ever partial and contextual' (Bousquet, Grove, and Shah 2020, 104, 115). As these scholars convincingly argued, '[t]he more assured we are that we know what war is … the more it will slip between our fingers' (ibid, 104). After all, there are no universal definitions for phenomena such as 'law', 'morality', 'religion', and 'science' (Guess 2017, 189). Instead, 'definitions and understandings are transient, changing, and culturally specific': when we define something like war, what we effectively mean is 'this is the definition offered by "a" in period "b"' (Black 2019, 2). Though this statement refers to academic definitions of war, we can see this kind of contestation throughout this dissertation, as understandings of what war is are not only contextual but open to discussion and most relevantly, elite manipulation. Even something as brute as war does not speak for itself, as seen in the decisions of policymakers to use the 'war' label or not to describe either military or social policy (Mansfield 2008, 2–3). As a final point on the challenges of defining war, it is crucial to recognise that the value of any definition of war should also be judged according to its objective: a definition of war in a treatise on the laws of armed conflict is likely to be very different to a definition of war in a sociological enquiry explaining an ongoing state of hostilities (Wolfendale 2017, 18).

With these caveats in mind, this section will first review and assess definitions of war from academic scholarship and the U.S. national security community before offering the

definition of war used in this dissertation. The first approach, following in the intellectual footsteps of Hugo Grotius, views war as a legal condition that defines the acceptable limits of violence (Metz and Cuccia 2010, 2; Vasquez 2009, 18). As the *Department of Defense Law of War Manual* (2016, 18) summarised, '"[w]ar is sometimes used as a legal concept" and that 'the application of operation of a legal rule may depend on the existence of a "war"'. This perspective has traditionally been associated with interstate warfare and was used to argue against the idea that the War on Terror was a 'war'. Jackson (2005, 147), for example, stated that 'war cannot be properly declared except against other recognised state', and that 'war cannot be declared against a kind of military tactic'. Similarly, Antonio Cassesse (2009, 993 in J. McDonald 2017, 40) posited with regards to the War on Terror that '[i]t is obvious that in this case "war" is a misnomer' as '[w]ar is an armed conflict between two or more states'.

The primary problem with this approach is that it is rooted in the European sovereign state system, portraying war as a binary and exceptional condition in opposition to peace (Barkawi 2016, 202). In fact, not only did war precede the Westphalian state system but as argued in Chapter 5, war has also succeeded this order. This is especially apparent given that the phenomenon of declaring war has long gone out of fashion, precisely so states can avoid the legal obligations of international law (Fazal 2012; Strachan 2011, 9). Even with this high standard of declaration considered, in the case of the War on Terror, al-Qaeda has declared war against the U.S., and vice versa (Bradley and Goldsmith 2005, 2068; Coker 2009, 83; Dalton 2006, 523–24).

A second and related perspective understands war as an empirical phenomenon that can be identified via meeting certain empirical criteria (Angstrom and Widen 2015, 14–15). In academic scholarship this is most closely associated with the Correlates of War Project (2021), but this perspective can be seen in the Office of Legal Counsel's view of war as something that should be determined by 'a fact-specific assessment of the "anticipated nature, scope, and duration" of … military operations' (Krass 2011, 8). The critiques quoted at the beginning of this section are particularly relevant here, as this perspective lends itself to arbitrary – and again increasingly outdated – definitions of what war is. Furthermore, this approach implicitly invokes a Western perspective of war, where '[r]eal war is interstate war' that meets certain empirical criteria and '[a]ll other conflicts are relegated to derivative categories' (Barkawi 2016, 199).

A third perspective of war in academic scholarship and the U.S. national security community follows one of Clausewitz's two primary definitions of war as 'an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will' (Angstrom 2011, 35; Levy and Thomson 2010, 8; Long 2012). This is seen throughout American military strategy documents with claims that 'war will remain a contest of wills' (U.S. Army 2014, 7), and that '[w]ar remains a clash between hostile, independent, and irreconcilable wills each trying to dominate the other through

violence' (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2012, 1). As this definition 'elucidates the logic' of the 'means' of war (Vasquez 2009, 34), it is unsurprising that this has been adopted so prominently in strategy documents. However, it tells us less about what might constitute war and how this might have changed in the twenty-first century information age.

The fourth and final perspective here takes a broader approach and focuses on the ontology of war. Arguing that the first two definitions of war offered above reduce war to a positivistic and narrow phenomenon, Tarak Barkawi and Shane Brighton (2011b) have claimed that this account strips war of its wider consequences and societally transformation effects. Put another way, war both shapes society and is shaped by society (Barkawi and Brighton 2011b, 132–33). War is 'a total relationship—political, legal, social, and military' (C. Gray 2006, 11),[27] and this is explored further in Chapter 5 by demonstrating the changes in war associated with Ulrich Beck's (1992) 'risk society'. Thus, Barkawi and Brighton attempted to clarify war's ontology by again following in Clausewitz's (1976, 127) footsteps, who noted how '[e]ssentially war is fighting, for fighting is the only effective principle in the manifold activities generally designated as war', and that it was as critical to war as cash exchange for the economy. To accommodate for this ontological core and war's underappreciated generative effects, Barkawi and Brighton's (2011b, 135–36) claimed that 'war is defined by fighting', but also by 'the capacity of organized violence to be more than kinetic exchange, to be constitutive and generative', as shown in Figure 2. Whilst Clausewitz may have primarily had set-piece land battles in mind, Brighton (2019, 134) claimed that the concept of fighting – which is defined for Clausewitz by its reciprocity and dynamism between the belligerents of war – can be applied to be varying types of violence such as (counter)insurgency and (counter)terrorism.[28] It is precisely 'because fighting takes so many different forms' that there is such variation in what war looks like (Barkawi 2017, 225), as per Clausewitz's dictum that 'each age has its own kind of war' (Heng 2006, 9). Indeed, Clausewitz (1976, 89) also said that war was 'more than' a 'true chameleon', reflecting the way that there is an identifiable core of what war is, as well as appreciating its contextuality (Barkawi and Brighton 2011b, 137).

Figure 2: Barkawi and Brighton's conception of war and society

War as fighting

War as a socially generative force

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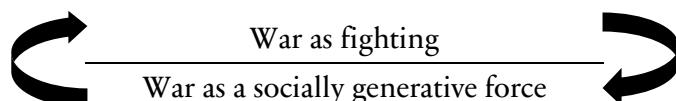
[27] One might also add 'cultural' to Gray's list.

[28] This emphasis on reciprocity may seem at odds with my classification of the U.S. lethal drone programme as war given the way that drone pilots are invulnerable to enemy fire, as discussed in Chapter 6. However, the key point here is the way that terrorist organisations have adapted their own strategies to the drone era, such as utilising drone warfare themselves (Sims 2018; Wagner 2019).

The definition adopted in this dissertation utilises the insights from Barkawi and Brighton, amongst others. I define war as *large-scale fighting between political units, where no parties to the conflict have the authority to adjudicate between opposing sides*. To briefly break down this definition, I include 'large-scale' to distinguish war from other more limited forms of hostilities between organisations (Levy and Thomson 2010, 10), but ultimately this judgment is left to the beholder. 'Fighting', as noted above, is a broad term that refers to actions in the kinetic and non-kinetic realms and thus incorporates measures such as cyberattacks which can be as damaging as the use of military force (Krieg and Rickli 2019, 22). To account for this new reality in warfare, 'fighting' is measured in terms of consequences, namely when 'the ability of civilians to meet their basic needs is seriously threatened' (Wolfendale 2017, 16, 21, 30). 'Between' is incorporated to account for the reciprocity of fighting that Clausewitz outlines, whilst 'political units' allows for the appreciation of how war is not restricted to states only (Bull 1997, 184 in Vasquez 2009, 24), something that is especially apparent in the War on Terror. Finally, 'no parties…' distinguishes between large-scale fighting that exists under state authority and war, such as conflicts between gangs (Wolfendale 2017, 22). This modest and contextualist definition moves beyond the common arguments that the War on Terror should not be viewed as a war. The War on Terror may well not be war as we used to know it, but this should not mean that it should be disregarded as something other or less than war.

To understand the flexibility of war whilst recognising its ontological core, an approach is needed that recognises both the material and immaterial elements of war. Whilst this dissertation does not attempt to make any contributions regarding the philosophies of science underwriting the study of IR (see P. T. Jackson 2011), it adopts a critical realist approach which amongst other things, emphasises the study of both physical and ideational factors (Porpora 2010, 100). Also known as scientific realism, critical realism is largely associated with the work of Roy Bhaskar who attempted to provide a philosophy of science at odds with positivism and its assumption that knowledge must be grounded in empirical observation (Bhaskar 2008, xxix; Rivas 2010, 209–10). Instead, critical realism adopts epistemological relativism, arguing – like the IR theories of critical constructivism and poststructuralism (Rivas 2010, 210–11) – that 'knowledge is a social product' and is grounded in its specific historical context (Bhaskar 2008, 5). In Bhaskar's (ibid, 11) terms, this is 'transitive' knowledge. This is but one part of the picture, as Bhaskar also outlined the 'intransitive' realm, which refers to things that exist independently of our knowledge (what Patrick Thaddeus Jackson terms the 'mind-world dualism'; P. T. Jackson 2011, 30–31), such as the 'specific gravity of mercury' (ibid, 97; Bhaskar 2008, 11; Porpora 2010, 92; Rivas 2010, 210). Thereby, the study of both material and ideational factors is essential to critical realist enquiry because the world cannot be reduced to simply the transitive or intransitive realm (Bhaskar

2008, xxx; Patomäki and Wight 2000, 225, 235; Porpora 2010, 100). This position is at odds with discourse theorists who argue that there is nothing outside of our own understanding of 'the world' (Barkin 2003, 330–31; Danermark et al. 2005, 22; P. T. Jackson 2011, 35; Rivas 2010, 211), and also Alexander Wendt's influential account of scientific realism which suggested that a subjective ontology could be combined with an objective epistemology (Rivas 2010, 203–4). Critical realism is best considered the inverse of Wendt's account: an objective ontology (social structures can exist independently of experience) and a subjective epistemology (objective knowledge cannot be attained of these structures) (ibid, 209).

As an example, fighting – as the ontological core of war – captures the combination between the material and ideational realms. In the moment of a bullet travelling or a bomb dropping, these acts exist as material realities which can exist independently of our knowledge. Simply put, one would not need to know what a gun or bomber was to be affected by it. And yet, it is also true that these acts have no meaning outside of the ideational realm. Will the shot of a gun or the dropping of a bomb be understood as an act of self-defence, a war crime, or one of the infinite number of alternative possibilities? The dualism of these specific actions can be extrapolated to war more broadly because of the way that fighting forms war's ontological core, but also because of how war – at the broadest level – is also a social construction (Joenniemi 2008, 236; Shaw 2006, 26; Vasquez 2009, 19). Even before the act of fighting, critical realists have analysed the material potential of weapons which ultimately pre-exist individual agency, such as the presence of guns in the context of the Bosnian conflict or the impact of the potentialities of nuclear weapons (Kurki 2008, 237–38; Patomäki and Wight 2000, 223). The dualistic nature of war is represented in Figure 3, with the critical realist approach establishing both the analytical perspective of this dissertation and providing the framework for analysis of the American way of war in this chapter.

Figure 3: A dualism in conceptualising war

War as material reality (intransitive)

War as social construction (transitive)
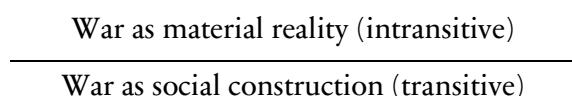
The American Way of War[29]

A 'Way of War'

To begin with, it is worth clarifying the term 'way of war'. In the secondary literature on the American way of war, the phrase largely concerns warfighting and strategy. For example,

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[29] Although studies cited in this section assert the uniqueness of the *American* way of war vis-à-vis other countries, as this dissertation is not a comparative study, I make no claims along these lines. Rather, the concept in this dissertation is best conceived as the way of war in America.

Russell Weigley's (1973, xx) prototypical text focused on American strategic thought 'expressed in action', whilst a revisionist account concentrated on 'strategic and operational practice' (Echevarria 2014, 1). However, because war is a total relationship that both shapes society and is shaped by it, this dissertation adopts a broader approach. War does not exist independently from society and expanding the idea of an American way of war reflects that. This approach aligns with the focus of this dissertation, namely the broad relationship between the American public and the wars waged in their name. Using the terms introduced in Chapter 2, the American way of war that I am focusing upon concerns the mobilisation requirements, the legitimation efforts, and the relative prioritisation of war. Only then can the American way of war be appreciated in its totality. This conceptualisation follows 'recent trends to no longer define the American Way of War solely as the conduct of wartime operations' and Brian Linn's (2016) call for research into 'how the military, media, and civilian leaders have marketed war to the American public'. In other terms, whilst the American way of war is commonly conceptualised as a national 'strategic culture' that dictates strategic thinking, this dissertation is more interested in the 'public culture' of war that concerns how war is thought of (C. Gray 2007, 5, 7).

In using what the existent scholarship on the American way of war has to say on the ideal image of war in the popular imaginary, it could be argued that I am taking these works out of context. Certainly, it is the case that these works are not focused on the issues of public opinion and legitimation. Nevertheless, these texts are often replete with references to how 'us', 'we', or 'Americans' prefer their wars to be fought, thus effectively alluding to public opinion and popular imaginaries even if rarely putting it in such terms. In this way, I am less concerned with the critiques of the empirical accuracy of Weigley's thesis, or the idea that there might be a "new" American way of war (Boot 2003a; Buley 2008; Echevarria 2014; Linn 2002). For example, Henry Kissinger (1957, 15) referred to '[o]ur traditional insistence on reserving our military effort for an unambiguous threat and then going all-out to defeat the enemy', whilst Colin Gray (2006, 44) stated that 'Americans have approached warfare as a regrettable occasional evil that has to be concluded as decisively and rapidly as possible'. Even more recently, Dominic Tierney argued how "we're still stuck in this view that war is like the Super Bowl: we meet on the field, both sides have uniforms, we score points, someone wins, and when the game ends you go home" (Ward 2018). What runs throughout almost all the scholarship on the American way of war – as well as those criticising its features – is an implied consensus on the qualities of wars that the American public would support. As Eliot Cohen (2001, 45) put it, Weigley's account of the American way of war 'stands more as a statement of ideal conditions than real circumstances—what war ought to be more than what it has actually been.' It is this contrast that this dissertation is interested in.

Dominant Accounts of the American Way of War

In this subsection, I identify six key elements of the typical presentation of the American way of war, as seen in Figure 4. Before that, I want to briefly touch on what 'war' is in the American imagination. Ultimately this is an empirical question that requires further research, but the literature on the American way of war makes some important suggestions in this regard. The crucial point that structures the conventional account of the American perspective on war is that it is thoroughly un-Clausewitzian. Contrary to Clausewitz's (1976, 89) second primary definition of war as 'a true political instrument, a continuation of political activity by other means',[30] war in the American context has been considered as the *failure* of politics (Buley 2008, 2; F. G. Hoffman 1996, 8–9; Record 2006, 4). As discussed further below then, the American imagination 'imagine[s] wars to be bound in time' as discrete events (Dudziak 2012, 5), and it is little wonder then that war is primarily associated with the use of military force and classical inter-state warfare.[31]

This conception of war explains the continuing salience of World War II in the American imagination, especially after the cultural renaissance of this conflict in the 1990s (Ramsay 2015, 51). In her review of the memory of World War II in the American media, Deborah Ramsay identifies three key interlinked tropes: 'the citizen soldier', the ideological narrative of the conflict as the 'good war', and a distinctive picture of warfare which renders war as 'nothing but combat' and draws clear distinctions between 'war and peace, good and evil, us and them' (ibid, 10, 71-72). Accordingly, World War II in the American imagination is not just an ideal type of what wars should look like, but it is also a framework for what war is. Adrian Lewis (2012, 26-27) noted how 'Americans believe that war is fighting', and this is seen in the memory of World War II. 'For most of us,' Rosa Brooks (2016, Part I) reflected, 'the word "war" still conjures up images of World War II, or at least Hollywood's version of World War II: we think of tank battles on open plains, or the D-Day scenes of Saving Private Ryan'. Similarly, Max Boot (2003, xiv) noted how '[t]he big wars, especially the Civil War and World War II, are celebrated in countless books, movies, and documentaries … many of us have come to think of Gettysburg and D-Day – conventional, set-piece engagements – as the norm'. It is this conception of war that structures the dualism of the American way of war discussed below.

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[30] As Barkawi and Brighton (2011a, 528) argued, this oft-cited definition of war is actually 'a strategic appropriation of war' and what purpose war should serve from a policy perspective.

[31] The other noticeable conception of war in the American imagination is in 'cultural, social, and ideological terms' (Black 2019, 3), as seen in ideas such as 'culture wars' or even the 'War on Christmas', but these are better understood as examples of wars as metaphors, as discussed in Chapter 2.

As noted above, the rejection of Clausewitz's idea that war should be a continuation of politics has important repercussions for the American way of war, beginning with the first element identified here: that Americans are averse to war (Lewis 2012, 24; R. Osgood 1957, 30). This view has been put forward by American figures from Harry Truman ('Americans hate war'; Lewis 2012, 24) to General Douglas MacArthur ("I am just one hundred per cent a believer against war"; ibid, 32) and Reagan ("[o]ur country has never started a war"; Bacevich 2005, 185). Secondly, however, there is the idea that once war has become necessary, it should become the number one priority for the nation, and that a rapid mobilisation should occur to ensure a swift military victory (Buley 2008, 18–23; E. Cohen 2001, 41; Mahnken 2003, 71; R. Osgood 1957, 29).[32] To return to Truman's memoirs, he claimed that Americans may well hate war, '[b]ut once they are provoked to defend themselves against those who threaten their security, they mobilize with unparalleled swiftness and energy' (Lewis 2012, 24). Similarly, as Lieutenant General Edward Almond (the commander of the X Corps during the Korea War) put it, "I am against war until we get into it. When we get into it, I think we ought to fight it with everything we have in the best possible manner" (ibid, 132). This was hardly a view unique to Almond; in his 1977 survey of military approaches to Cold War crises, Richard Betts found that although military members were often divided about whether to commit American forces to battle, there was a consensus that force should be used quickly and decisively to destroy enemy forces once conflict began (Buley 2008, 33). This was observed by Weigley (1973, xxii) in his prototypical text, as he argued that from the Civil War onwards, the U.S. had employed military strategies of annihilation which aimed at the destruction of the enemy's military forces as quickly as possible. After it was felt that this strategy was abandoned in the Vietnam War, the discourse of 'overwhelming force' (closely associated with the Weinberger-Powell doctrine) ruled supreme in the American military as a corrective to the mistakes in Vietnam (Buley 2008, 63). In Colin Powell's words, overwhelming force was 'the bully's way of going to war' (ibid, 67).

More generally, the strategy of annihilation relates to the idea discussed in Chapter 1: that democracies *cannot* fight long wars with mounting casualties (Stoler 2010, 82). By emphasising the scale of the effort that should be applied during wartime, protracted warfare has been deemed to be 'un-American' (Lewis 2012, 27). Like Western political thought more broadly then, the third element of the American way of war is that clear distinctions have been drawn between periods of war and peace (Buley 2008, 2; Dudziak 2012; C. Gray 2006, 44; F. G. Hoffman 1996, 9; Kissinger 1957, 11–12; McFate 2019b, 64; R. Osgood 1957, 29). Wars can, in other words, be comprehensively won and ended (C. Gray 2002, 34), and this

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[32] This is a noticeable exception to the American way of war being un-Clausewitzian. As Clausewitz (1976, 76) put it, '[t]o introduce the principle of moderation into the theory of war itself would always lead to logical absurdity.'

can be seen in the repeated emphasis on an 'exit strategy' in post-Vietnam military discourse (Boot 2003b, 319).

The fourth component of the American way of war is that wars have been fought to achieve total victory and comprehensively eradicate the source of the problems that led to war (Buley 2008, 27, 34; E. Cohen 2001, 40; Heng 2006, 7; F. G. Hoffman 1996, 9; Kissinger 1957, 12; Kreps 2018b, 102; Mahnken 2003, 73; R. Osgood 1957, 29–30; Record 2006, 5). In both World Wars, American presidents felt that domestic pressure would not allow for anything short of 'unconditional surrender' of the opposing belligerents (Buley 2008, 27; Craig and Logevall 2009, 31), with opinion polls throughout World War II showing around 80 percent of Americans favoured this war aim (Larson 1996, 16). For Martel (2011, 154–55), World War II 'firmly established the principle in the U.S. public among its leaders that total victory was how 'the nation *should* conduct war as a way to resolve problems definitively'. During the Korean War, when MacArthur argued that "war's very object is victory" and that "[i]n war there is no substitute for victory", he was – according to Weigley (1973, 391)– expressing 'a view of the nature of war that was … a commonplace among Americans' (see also Brodie 1959, 318; Buley 2008, 2; C. Gray 2006, 40; Mahnken 2003, 72; R. Osgood 1957, 29–30). Limited war theorists noted that it remained 'difficult to rationalize a conflict that does not result in the crushing defeat of the enemy' (W. Kaufmann 1956, 134) and that 'war as an instrument for attaining concrete, limited political objectives' seemed improper to the U.S. public (R. Osgood 1957, 30). Moreover, these ideals lived on after the Cold War. During the Gulf War, between 73 and 84 percent of poll respondents felt that U.S. forces should not only liberate Kuwait but then also remove Saddam Hussein from power, despite this not being a publicly declared war goal (Jentleson 1992, 69). At the 2000 Republican convention, Bush 43 (2000) posited that the U.S. "must remember the lessons of Vietnam" when using "force in the world … the goal must be clear, and the victory must be overwhelming". As the 1993 U.S. Army Field Manual 100-5 Operations unequivocally stated, 'the American people expect decisive victories' (Heng 2006, 7).

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the preferred aims of American wars, they have traditionally been justified with similarly grandiose rationales, which is the fifth facet discussed here. Thomas Mahnken (2003, 72), for example, argued that the U.S. has had 'a strong and long-standing predilection for waging war for far-reaching political objectives', whilst Michael Pearlman (1999, 7) noted how 'Americans tend to demand utopian war aims like universal democracy and permanent peace (see also F. G. Hoffman 1996, 3; Sapolsky and Shapiro 1996). Again, this tendency to view war as a 'moral crusade' comes back to the un-Clausewitzian nature of the American way of war: instead of seeing war as a continuation of normal politics, war has been seen as a moral event in pursuit of idealistic goals such as civilisation, democracy promotion, or world order (Halperin 1963, 20; Kissinger 1957, 87).

As Kissinger (1957, 87) put it, '[b]ecause we have thought of war more in moral than strategic terms, we have identified victory with the physical impotence of the enemy.' Anything less than war 'as the crusade', Robert Osgood (1957, 30) lamented, appeared 'unworthy to a proud and idealistic nation'. Indeed, this was the perceived lesson from the American experience with limited wars in the Cold War: that 'the American people … never accepted the doctrine or strategy of limited war' (Lewis 2012, 3) or that 'Americans … have … been uncomfortable with wars fought for limited political aims' (Mahnken 2013, 72; see also Brodie 1963, 318; Buley 2008, 2; C. Gray 2006, 40; W. Kaufmann 1956, 134). In the context of the Korean War, Weigley (1973, 383) claimed that any military strategy except annihilation was so at odds with 'the American conception of war' that it upset not only American officers in Korea, but also 'threatened the psychological balance of the nation itself'.

And yet, for all of this, the conventional wisdom argues that the U.S. public has been rarely willing to tolerate casualties in the pursuit of such grandiose goals. As Pearlman (1999, 13) summarised, the 'American public has wanted only one thing from its commanders in chief: quick wars for substantial victories with minimal costs' (see also Krieg and Rickli 2019, 64). This quote might almost be deemed ironic out of context, but there is evidence for this demanding stance. In World War II, despite a large majority demanding unconditional surrender and total victory, some 79 percent of those polled in May 1945 preferred "taking time and saving lives" to "ending the war quickly despite casualties" (Larson 1996, 18). This particular response contradicts the idea that wars should be prioritised and won quickly; the incoherence of the demands of the standard account of the American way of war can be seen in the analysis in Chapter 4 in particular. As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1989, Admiral William Crowe remarked that

> every time I face the problem of having to deploy [troops] … what the American public wants is for the US military to dominate the situation, to do it quickly, to do it without loss of life, to do it without any peripheral damage, and then not to interrupt what's going on in the United States or affect the quality of our own lives (Buley 2008, 64).

In terms of official doctrine, the previously quoted 1993 Army field manual defined 'decisive victory' as the ability of U.S. soldiers 'to win quickly with minimum casualties', whilst the quote above in full dictated that 'the American people expect decisive victories *and abhor unnecessary casualties*' (emphasis added; K. W. Eikenberry 1996). This kind of thinking can be seen in the repeated American reliance on the lavish use of firepower, airpower, and technology, as discussed in the previous chapter (C. Gray 2006, 37; Mahnken 2003, 71). General William Westmoreland's one-word response to the question of how the U.S. army would deal with the North Vietnamese insurgency – "firepower" (Boot 2003b, 294) – concisely encapsulates this element of the American way of war. These military tactics go hand in hand with the strategy of annihilation, but they also speak to the way that the

American way of war has attempted to appease the American public by reducing the 'human space of war', even if it meant this was both a suboptimal military strategy and resulted in the mass killing of enemy soldiers and civilians (Coker 2015; Craig and Logevall 2009, 245; Lewis 2012, 377; Mahnken 2003, 77).

Figure 4: Elements of the conventional understanding of the American Way of War
1. Americans are averse to war
2. Once entered, wars are highly prioritised and fought with overwhelming force to be won quickly
3. War and peace are two distinct periods
4. Wars are fought to achieve total victory
5. Wars are fought in the name of far-reaching political objectives
6. Firepower, airpower, and technology have been used lavishly to reduce American casualties

Conceived accordingly, the exemplar conflicts of the American way of war in the modern era are World War I, World War II, and the Gulf War (Boot 2003b, xiv; Lewis 2012, 16; McFate 2019b, 5; Young 2005, 178). As General Wesley Clark put it, '[t]here is an American way of war, developed in the two world wars, last practiced in the Gulf War: muster an overwhelmingly large force: prepare and train it; then use it to achieve militarily decisive results' (Echevarria 2014, 1). In many ways, the Gulf War represented 'an idealization' of the American way of war that had supposedly been ignored in Vietnam, with the Weinberger-Powell doctrine dictating that the U.S. should not fight wars where vital national interests were not at stake, or without 'the firm commitment to win' (Buley 2008, 66; Weinberger 1986, 685). As columnist Ann McFeatters described the Gulf War, it had ended up 'leaving the nation with its reassuring images from World War II intact' (Sherry 1995, 472). '[W]ar still dominates the imagination' (Coker 2015), with popular culture revealing the ongoing salience of World War II in the American popular imaginary, even today (McFate 2019b, 28). As shown throughout the dissertation, the *ideas* of the American way of war remain at least ever-present, if not dominant, in American political discourse. Equally, however, American military and political strategies have not always aligned with these cultural tropes. As such, the management of these tensions is one of the primary challenges in the justification of war policies studied in this dissertation.

The Dualism of the American Way of War

These ideals of the American way of war may be dominant in secondary literature and elite rhetoric, but their relationship to the empirical record is notably mixed. The tenets offered in Figure 4 may be an apt summary of the iconic American conflicts mentioned above but this oversimplifies the historical record. As Boot (2003b, xii) argued, although war is often seen through the prism of the Civil War and World War II, '[t]here is another, less celebrated

tradition in U.S. military history – a tradition of fighting small wars.' For Dudziak (2012, 31), these sorts of campaigns 'fall within most definitions of war', and it is 'only through forgetting the small wars that so much of American history is remembered as peacetime.' Weigley's landmark study is focused 'decidedly on major wars', meaning that this dominant account of an American way of war is somewhat incomplete (Echevarria 2014, 2). This is not to suggest that Weigley's text should have attempted to cover all the wars in American history, but merely that a consideration of these conflicts provides contrary evidence to the elements of the conventional understanding of the American way of war.

For example, the idea that the U.S. has been historically averse to war. As noted in Chapter 2, the empirical record does not match this claim. Although all these conflicts might not necessarily meet even contextual definitions of war, it is significant that the Congressional Research Service identified over 280 occasions in which the U.S. has used military force abroad between 1798 and 2010 (Grimmett 2011). The US Marine Corps Small Wars Manual in 1940 aptly summarised this state of affairs:

> [t]he history of the United States shows that in spite of the varying trend of the foreign policy of succeeding administrations, this Government has interposed or intervened in the affairs of other states with remarkable regularity, and it is anticipated that the same general procedure will be followed in the future (Boot 2003b, xii).

Similarly, as the quote from Dudziak attested to, it is only by forgetting the so-called 'small wars' of America's past that war and peace have been imagined as distinct periods in the American way of war. Recognising these conflicts also reveals that America's wars have not necessarily been the number one priority in U.S. politics. Generally speaking, these smaller wars required little mobilisation of the American public, leading to the non-prioritisation of these conflicts. For example, the occupation of Port-au-Prince in Haiti in July 1915 and the ensuing imposition of a new constitution on the country by U.S. marines was 'barely noticed' by Americans back home as events in Europe took centre stage (ibid, 158).

Regarding the fourth element of the American way of war identified above, the U.S. has also not always pursued total victory in its wars. Boot's investigation into the U.S.'s 'small wars' observed that 'most of these campaigns were fought … pursuing limited objectives with limited means' (ibid, xiv). As Chapters 4 and 5 show, the U.S. fought for limited war aims in both the Cold War and post-Cold War period. One agreeable point from Figure 4 is the fifth; that wars have been justified in the name of far-reaching political objectives, even if there might have been a mismatch with the actual goals being pursued (Porch 2014, 698). The following chapters show how these grand ideals have been used in the legitimation of the use of force and how 'these exaggerations often come back to trap' policymakers (Sapolsky and Shapiro 1996). Nevertheless, one might still object to the idea that Americans have been

inherently disposed against wars in the pursuit of limited goals. Instead, as Echevarria (2014, 41) posited, the American public has been 'uncomfortable with what it perceives to be disproportionate disruptions to its economic and daily life' caused by some limited wars. In this sense, the issue is not so much the lack of far-reaching political objectives, but the extent to which the American public has incurred mobilisation costs because of wars. As outlined in the previous chapter, legitimation is oftentimes connected to prioritisation: wars have not always been crusades when they have been deliberately deprioritised to allow for flexibility from a policymaker's perspective.

Similarly, the sixth element of the conventional understanding of the American way of war – that firepower and technology have been used to decrease American casualties – is largely accurate. What can be noted is the extent to which Weigley's description of the U.S. consistently pursuing a strategy of annihilation also overgeneralises the historical record. As Weigley (2002, 531) himself acknowledged, his book placed 'too much emphasis on only two categories of strategy' and effectively tried 'to shoehorn practically everything into one or the other of those limited concepts' of annihilation and attrition. By focusing on Hans Delbrück's two military strategies, Weigley's book both conflated military strategies and ignored other alternative strategies that have been pursued (Buley 2008, 6). Small wars have often been fought pursuing strategies other than annihilation, whilst the strategy of attrition can be seen in U.S. warfighting in the Civil War, World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War (Boot 2003b, xiv; Caverley 2014, 193; Echevarria 2014, 40, 166; Linn 2002, 504–5, 511, 529). Likewise, counterinsurgency strategies (however flawed) have been employed in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, much like in America's 'small wars' of the nineteenth century (Echevarria 2014, 166). As Benjamin Buley's (2008, 6) study showed, '[t]here is no single American way of war'.

How, then, can these contradictions between the picture of the American way of war outlined above – ascribed to by both academics and policymakers – and the realities of American warfighting be explained? Lewis (2012, 1) argued that the Cold War was marked by the attempts of U.S. governments to adapt the popular cultural tenets of war to the changing geopolitical environment. For Lewis (2012, 1, 225), the tensions between U.S. Cold War strategy and the American cultural tenets of war could be seen in the failures of the Vietnam War, hence the emergence of a new 'American practice of war … that virtually eliminated the American people from the conduct of war' (ibid, 1, 225; see also Buley 2008, 139). However, Lewis overstated the saliency and dominance of these cultural tenets, especially as he effectively claimed that the American people only wish to fight wars in the model of the stereotypical conflicts of the conventional understanding of the American way of war. In this sense, Lewis misses the *ongoing* friction before, throughout, and after the Vietnam War between the 'ideal[s] of war' in the U.S. and the historical record (Young 2009).

This tension, which I term here the dualism of the American way of war, is represented in Figure 5. American wars have been fought in very different ways to both elite representations and popular understandings of what wars ought to look like, and much of the continued justification of the use of force has been the process of handling these tensions. Cultural tenets and warfighting strategies have rarely aligned as they did in the wars that the American way of war celebrates. Instead, the norm has been choosing warfighting strategies to reduce the material impact of war on the American people and reduce the political salience of these contradicting demands. This dynamic – between culturally incongruent warfighting strategies and minimising the mobilisation effects on the American public – is explored in further detail in the discussion of limited war and risk management strategies in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

Figure 5: The dualism of the American Way of War

$$\frac{\text{The American way of war (in practice)}}{\text{(Social construction) of the American way of war}}$$
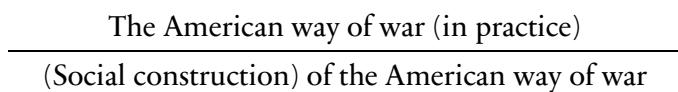
Conclusion

This chapter began by arguing that war is notoriously difficult to define, and hence any conceptualisation or definition of war should be modest enough to reflect that. Having critiqued the legalistic and empiricist accounts of war for being overly based in the Westphalian state system, the chapter adopted a definition of war that centres around its ontological core as recipriocal fighting. This conceptualisation allows us to move beyond largely technical critiques of the classification of the War on Terror, and in so doing, recognise the extraordinary and global impact this conflict has had. Furthermore, the ontological core of war as fighting also incorporates the recognition of the socially constructed and generative effects of war, as per the critical realist approach with its recognition of both material and ideational realms.

In line with the acknowledgement of war's constitutive relationship with society, the second section of this chapter similarly argued for a broader conceptualisation of a 'way of war'. Using secondary literature and rhetoric from American elites, this section reviewed the consensus on what war constitutes in the American imagination and how they would ideally be fought. This focused on six key elements that largely flow from the rejection of the Clausewitzian idea of war as a continuation of politics. This account claims that although Americans are averse to war, once conflict begins, wars should be highly prioritised to achieve total victory in the name of far-reaching political objectives. Additionally, firepower, airpower, and technology should be used lavishly to reduce American casualties and return to peacetime at the earliest possible opportunity. In other words, the American way of war in

the popular imaginary – according to secondary literature and American policymakers – is epitomised by the World Wars and the Gulf War.

Nonetheless, the final section of this chapter also showed the extent to which American military and political strategies have been at odds with these cultural tropes. As noted in Chapter 2, the U.S. has been at war for much of its existence, oftentimes fighting non-prioritised wars for goals well below total victory. Thus, whilst American wars have been justified by far-reaching objectives, disconnections have often been present. Hence, there is a similar tension to the one outlined in Chapter 2, as policymakers have attempted to abide by the dominant social constructions of war whilst carrying out contrary military strategies. In this chapter, I have labelled this the dualism of the American way of war, and again, how this tension has been managed has been crucial to the approval of the use of force. In understanding the management of these tensions, the rest of the dissertation applies the normalisation framework outlined in Chapter 2, beginning with the Cold War era in the following chapter.

4: The Cold War

Chapter Outline

This chapter consists of two parts. Firstly, I outline limited war strategy in theoretical terms. Having discussed how limited war can be conceptualised and defined, I argue that given the focus of this dissertation limited wars can be considered in terms of their reduced domestic impact. In this section, I also discuss the tensions of limited war strategy, especially in terms of the challenge of generating domestic support for a strategy carved out in direct opposition to the traditional American way of war. The second half of the chapter analyses two case studies of limited war in the U.S. experience: the Korean War and the Vietnam War. Although I do not make comparisons to the War on Terror in this chapter, these case studies provide lessons as to the conditions that allow for the normalisation and rejection of the use of force for Part II of the dissertation. Whilst both wars were eventually unpopular, I contend that these conflicts reveal some important lessons about the ability of policymakers to manage and justify American wars, whether that be via non-mobilisation, deprioritisation, or legitimation.

Limited War Strategy in Theory

Conceptualising Limited War

Limited war theory rose to prominence during the 1950s, as American scholars and policymakers attempted to rationalise the use of force in the context of the Cold War. Fundamentally, limited war theory was based in the attempt to make the use of force relevant in the era of superpower rivalry when the Soviet Union had added the nuclear bomb to their repertoire in 1949, thus running at odds with the idea that Americans are averse to war (Clark 2015, 51; Lewis 2012, 24; Shaw 1988, 17–18). That is, limited war theorists essentially outlined a strategy that would allow for the U.S. to respond to the actions of the Soviet Union without conflicts escalating into total war and large-scale nuclear conflict. This logic is essential to understanding American involvement in Korea and later, Vietnam. In this way, limited war theory was also central to the grand strategy of containment in the Cold War (W. Kaufmann 1956, 102; R. Osgood 1982, 5).

In two different ways, the Korean War proved to be the catalyst for explicit theorising about a doctrine of limited war (Lewis 2012, 203; R. Osgood 1982, 6). Firstly, there was the idea that the Korean War had shown how the U.S. military and the American people were ill-equipped for dealing with the Cold War environment and the demands of limited war. Although Secretary of Defense George Marshall would label the Korean War a "limited war" during the MacArthur hearings in 1951, the war was disconnected from the explicit limited war theorisation that would follow (Halperin 1963, 44). Limited war strategists not only

wanted to *explain* the Korean War, but also to *delineate* the lessons that could be learnt from the conflict for the future of the Cold War. Secondly, the response of the Eisenhower administration to the Korean War – especially the doctrine of 'massive retaliation' (Brodie 1959, 317; R. Osgood 1957, 205) – prompted an outpouring of limited war theory, which was then later incorporated into the John F. Kennedy campaign and administration (Halperin 1962, 2–3; Lewis 2012, 209; R. Osgood 1982, 7). The Eisenhower administration attempted to deter Soviet aggression largely by the threat of "massive retaliatory power" (i.e. nuclear weapons), as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles (1954) put it. This doctrine unnerved contemporary scholars of the time; as Kissinger argued in his extremely popular book (Halperin 1962, 7), 'it should be the task of our strategic doctrine to create alternatives less cataclysmic than a thermonuclear holocaust' (Kissinger 1957, 19). Likewise, the recent Army Chief of Staff Maxwell Taylor (1960) devoted a whole book to critiquing the doctrine of 'massive retaliation' and instead proposing the strategy of 'flexible response'. Taylor returned to the U.S. government when he was appointed the Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1962, illustrative of the way that American policy in Vietnam had clear links with limited war strategies espoused after the Korean War (Bacevich 2005, 156; Buley 2008, 57; Herring 1994, 3; Lewis 2012, 208; R. Osgood 1982, 7; Rosen 1982, 96; Stoker 2019, 42; Weigley 1973, 474).

Before moving onto the arguments put forward by limited war strategists, however, how did these theorists define the concept they were describing? After all, wars have been and continue to be limited in many senses: geography, longevity, number of participants, weapons used, targets aimed at, and so on (W. Kaufmann 1956, 108; Lewis 2012, 203). One can see broad three camps in limited war theorists as to how they defined the term in terms of ends, means, and *both* ends and means.

For members of the first camp, the important point about limited war was that the warring parties had war goals below the threshold of total war, which was assumed to be the modus operandi for great power rivalry in the context of World Wars I and II. Instead, limited war theorists argued that in the nuclear era, the U.S. had to learn to fight for goals below the overthrow of the enemy. As William Kaufmann (1956, 126) declared, '[i]t is axiomatic that a limited war requires limited objectives'. The logic behind this, as one more recent commentator on war observed, is that 'in the absence of restraint in the objectives of war, it is difficult to see how any other forms of limitation can be made to hold' (Clark 2015, 57). Another recent scholar has also advocated for this conceptualisation of limited war, arguing that it gives us a base for analysis that does not depend on the unenviable task of determining the extent to which the *means* of an organisation are being used as part of a war effort (Stoker 2019, 4).

In contrast to this first approach, Bernard Brodie (1959, 312) maintained that the recognition of the connection between 'limited war and limited objectives … was originally

an important insight, but it distorts importantly the character of that relationship.' Instead, for Brodie, the crux of the issue was 'that the restraint necessary to keep wars limited is primarily a restraint on means, not ends' (ibid). Whatever the end goals of the organisation in question, it was the restraint of the means of warfighting that ultimately prevented the escalation of conflict to total war. Also emphasising the importance of means, Kissinger (1957, 137) argued that some wars were inherently limited for at least one side 'because of the disparity in power between the protagonists', giving the example of a theoretical war between the U.S. and Nicaragua. It is on this basis that Kissinger contended that every war the U.S. had fought in the Western Hemisphere until 1957 was a limited war, 'in the sense that it did not involve a mobilization of all our material resources' (ibid, 136). Alternatively, some wars were historically limited because of issues of supply preventing both belligerents from making a total war effort (ibid, 137).

The third group of definitions referred to the importance of limited means *and* ends in their conceptualisation of limited war. Osgood (1982, 3) asserted that a limited war was 'to be fought for *ends far short of the complete subordination of one state's will to another's*, using *means that involve far less than the total military resources of the belligerents* and leave the civilian life and the armed forces of the belligerents largely intact' (emphasis added). Similarly, Morton Halperin (1963, 2) defined limited war 'as a military encounter in which the Soviet Union and United States … in which the *effort* of each falls short of the *attempt* to use all of its power to destroy the other' (emphasis added). Whilst Osgood's definition trivialises the extent to which limited wars were fought for 'ends far short' of total war goals and Halperin's definition is too specific to the Cold War context (R. Osgood 1982, 3; Stoker 2019, 28), both descriptions capture the extent to which ends and means are intimately connected, as Gaddis' definition of strategy offered in Chapter 1 attested to.

This point is made all the more salient given the issues with describing *un*limited or total wars. Osgood (1957, 3) defined total war as a form of unlimited war 'in which *all* the human and material resources of the belligerents are mobilized and employed' (emphasis added), which is potentially impossible (Stoker 2019, 26), if not entirely alien from the American experience in its international wars. Even in World War II, '[f]or the vast majority of Americans', the war 'meant not starvation, terror, and desperation but prosperity and national pride' (Craig and Logevall 2009, 352). Osgood's idea of total war seems increasingly redundant as wars have become increasingly indecisive and far less 'total' in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, as discussed in Chapter 5 (Coker 2009, 177; Holmqvist 2014, 45; Howard and Stark 2018, 169; Toft 2010, 13–15). Accordingly, the conceptualisations of total and limited war – especially in direct opposition to each other – are too binary. Limited and total war are better conceived as a spectrum, but the issue remains as to what this spectrum should measure.

So far, there seems to be no one suitable definition for limited war; limited means and limited ends are certainly part of the picture, but these distinctions seem to vary by conflict, and there are also different levels of restriction (in Korea it was at the strategic level, in Vietnam it was at the operational and even tactical level; Lewis 2012, 202–3). Kissinger's (1957, 137, 139) identification of four different types of limited wars speaks to this; as he argued, 'there exists no way to define a limited war in purely military terms'. Similarly, Osgood (1957, 2) contended that limited war 'is not a uniform phenomenon'. Donald Stoker's (2019, 9) definition of limited wars as *anything* under the remit of the goal of regime change goes against this acknowledging this variety, which reduces the analytical usefulness of the term, as well as falling into the binary trap mentioned above.

Instead, what I propose here – and in line with the focus of this research on the relationship between the American people and the wars waged in their name – is a definition of limited war that looks to incorporate the discussions of war as a 'total relationship' from Chapter 3. All the definitions above – even those that focus on the means of warfighting – effectively focus on this realm and largely ignore the generative cycle of war and society. I place the passing references by limited war theorists and more recent authors regarding the limited impact of war at home to the forefront of my conceptualisation of limited war. As various scholars summarised, limited wars were 'limited accordingly in political significance' (W. Kaufmann 1956, 118), limited in the sense of 'the emotions, passions, and intellectual commitment of its people' (Lewis 2012, 2), limited in the sense that they 'permit' the continuation of 'economic, social, and political patterns … without serious disruption' (R. Osgood 1957, 2), 'limited in the risks they create for Western polities, economies and societies' (Shaw 2006, 72), and could 'be waged on a business-as-usual basis' (Herring 1994, 9). Appreciating this crucial commonality allows us to move beyond the troubles caused by the binary distinction between limited and total wars; instead, war in the American context can be interpreted via the three themes of the normalisation framework.

Implementing Limited War

Having discussed the issue of conceptualising and defining limited war, this subsection narrows in on the exact type of military strategy that limited war theorists were proposing, and how this related to the idea of selling limited wars to the American public. Based in rationalist assumptions, limited war looked to surpass the idea of war as a zero-sum game and instead presented war as the realm of the calibrated and precise application of force to change the cost-benefit calculations of the parties involved regarding specific political objectives (Bacevich 2005, 155–56; Kissinger 1957, 140). As one aide of then Defense Secretary Robert McNamara aptly summarised the logic of limited war theory, American 'military forces must be used in a measured, limited, controlled and deliberate way, as an instrument to carry out our foreign policy' (Gaddis 2005, 241). In practical terms, this meant an emphasis on

signalling to the enemy one's intentions via graduated pressure in order 'to *affect* the opponent's will, not to *crush* it' (Kissinger 1957, 140). Limited war, then, was 'essentially a political act' with 'no "purely" military solution' (ibid, 141), with the aim being – as Thomas Schelling put it – 'to exact good behaviour' from the opponents in war (Herring 1994, 5). Logically, this rested on a certain image of the enemy in war: 'a calculating individual with a multiplicity of values, aware of cost and risk as well of advantage, and capable of drawing significant inferences from symbolic acts' (W. Kaufmann 1956, 117). As Brodie (1959, 334) put it, '[i]t takes only one to start a total war, but it takes two to keep a war limited.' Hence, diplomatic channels were also an important part of limited war strategy (W. Kaufmann 1956, 117).[33]

Therefore, limited war theorists were arguing explicitly against the dominant conceptions of war in the U.S. reviewed in the previous chapter: the goal of these wars was not total and rapid victory in the name of far-reaching moral aims, but specific and graduated political objectives to be achieved via the precise application of force. At the broadest level, these scholars were proposing a thoroughly Clausewitzian image of war, with Osgood (1957, 15; 1982, 2) describing Clausewitz as the prototypical limited war scholar because of his 'principle of political primacy' in war decision. As Osgood (1957, 15) contended, Clausewitz proposed a model where

> the nation's utilization of military power, military means should be subordinated to the ends of national policy through an objective calculation of the most effective methods of attaining concrete, limited, and attainable security objectives.

This ran in direct opposition to the conventional picture of the American way of war, hence Osgood's call for a 'fundamental rethinking of traditional American attitudes concerning the nature of war and the relationship between force and policy' (ibid, 1). Similar, Kissinger (1957, xi–xii) noted how '[m]any familiar [American] assumptions about war, diplomacy and the nature of peace will have to be modified' in the Cold War era.

In making these arguments, limited war theorists effectively subscribed to the flawed empirical account of the American way of war critiqued in Chapter 3. Osgood (1957, 28, 39), for example, argued that 'the basic propensities' of American military policies were 'formed during the protracted of nineteenth century innocence', and that America's anti-war stance stemmed 'from a profound moral and emotional aversion to violence' based in the values 'of Christianity and the Enlightenment', both of which fail to match up to reality. Likewise,

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[33] These kind of methods and language also appear in discussions of 'crisis management' during the Cold War, which concerned how communication and persuasion could be used to protect core interests without resorting to war (Freedman 2014, 12–13). McNamara once claimed that crisis management had usurped strategy during the Cold War (ibid, 7), which is testament to the prominence of rationalist thinking in this period in contrast to the American way of war.

Halperin (1963, 19) referred to how 'Americans traditionally have not viewed war as a legitimate instrument of offensive action.' Osgood (1957, 133, 141) effectively recognised this issue when remarking that 'it is remarkable to what extent the American people have time and again acted contrary to their basic predispositions' when the U.S. has 'almost instinctively pursued limited political ends and limited military means in response to specific threats'. Put in the terms of this dissertation, Osgood observed the dualism of the American way of war: that oftentimes there has been a gap between the practices and the rhetoric of the American way of war.

How this gap has been managed is considered in Osgood's text, but crucially limited war theorists – with their focus on the precise actions of a foreign policy elite – tended to ignore the ways in which limited wars could be portrayed to the American public. Indeed, the domestic realm is largely neglected in limited war theory. As Stephen Rosen (1982, 85) commented, '[w]hen Osgood says that politics is primary, he meant international politics'. Whilst acknowledging that limited war theory ran against the American national traditions and ideologies with regards to war, Osgood nonetheless proposed that strategies of limited war should be adopted (ibid; Herring 1994, 124). Furthermore, in considering the viability of limited war strategy as a method of U.S. warfighting, limited war theorists – with their presentation of war as rational, precise, and calibrated – effectively ignored the passions and violence inherent in war and how this would impact the appeal of these conflicts (Lewis 2012, 205; Stoker 2019, 40).

This oversight was made more noticeable by the fundamental tension in limited war theory between the need to generate support for war and the limited nature of the warfighting itself. It seems intuitive that citizens would rather fight and support a war for grandiose and crusading aims rather than a limited objective, which is why American policymakers have legitimated wars in terms of existential threats and far-reaching political goals. This is one particular form of the dualism of the American way of war, which contrasts the need to generate resources for war with the desire to prevent significant escalation in limited war theory. And yet, as Herring (1990, 12) noted, '[o]ne of the most interesting and least studied areas' of the use of force in the Cold War is the efforts of American administrations to deal with the 'central problem of waging limited war … [how] to *maintain* public support without *arousing* public emotion'. This tension is described in further detail below during the analysis of the Korean War and the Vietnam War, but fortunately for limited war theorists, the forms of warfighting encouraged these wars to stay politically deprioritised. Because these wars relied in large part on airpower to (in theory at least) deliver precise signals to the enemy which would be the basis of secret diplomacy, they oftentimes avoided the significant degree of mobilisation that would have increased the chances of these wars becoming politically prioritised. This is one part of what Osgood failed to acknowledge (and why he found the

disconnect between American rhetoric and policy regarding war so puzzling): that the representation and prioritisation of war are malleable, especially when the concrete impact of war policies is limited domestically. And yet, even now, literature on the American limited war experience has tended to look 'almost exclusively on what the public will accept rather than what the government can do' (Casey 2008, 359). It is the success and failures of governmental efforts to manage and justify the Korean and Vietnam wars to the American public that the two following sections analyses.

Limited War in Practice

In line with the framework offered in Chapter 2, the second part of this chapter focuses the chronologically structured analysis around the themes of mobilisation, legitimation, and prioritisation. Ultimately, the goal of these sections is to establish the lessons that can be learnt from the Korean War and the Vietnam War in terms of the permissibility of the deployment of American force overseas and how this relates to the normalisation of war during the War on Terror. Whilst caution is needed to prevent washing over key differences between these three wars, both cases here suggest the success that American governments have had in terms of normalising the use of force, but also the limits associated with this process, as both these wars eventually became the two most unpopular U.S. conflicts in the twentieth century (Buley 2008, 37). Although I do not make explicit comparisons to the War on Terror at this point, later chapters draw upon the analysis in this chapter.

The Korean War

June 1950 – October 1950: "Don't make it alarmist"

The beginning of the Korean War makes for an interesting case of rhetorical non-prioritisation by the U.S. government, particularly given the extent to which the speech announcing the Truman Doctrine three years prior was designed to "scare the hell out of the people" (to quote Republican Senator Arthur Vandenburg's advice; Sherry 1995, 128) and the success this approach achieved (Craig and Logevall 2009, 80). This difference reflected the Truman administration's recognition that whilst it was one thing to exploit a small incident such as the events in Greece to generate support for increased defence spending, 'it was quite another to magnify a major crisis' like Korea (Casey 2008, 71). In particular, the administration feared that a warmongering public would decrease the chances of preventing a larger conflict with the Soviet Union (ibid, 20). Truman's statement to the press the day after the North Korean invasion – "don't make it alarmist"– was an apt summary of the early tactics of his administration in this period (ibid).

Truman justified all U.S. military activity in Korea under the remit of executive action, effectively reducing official discussion over the issue. The decision to justify the use of

force under executive action – rather than securing an AUMF or a declaration of war from Congress– reflected the administration's desire to avoid a prolonged debate regarding the conflict, rather than any concerns about losing a vote (Stoker, 74). As then Secretary of State Dean Acheson later reflected, the potential issues posed by a congressional debate appeared 'to far outweigh the little good that might ultimately accrue' (McMahon 2010, 254). When it came to the explicit classification of the conflict, Truman (1950d) explicitly stated that the U.S. was "not at war", instead calling the American intervention a "police action", providing a telling example of the avoidance of the war label discussed in Chapter 2 as a deprioritisation effort. When it came to a July 1950 speech at Capitol Hill outlining the administration's policy, Truman refused to deliver this speech in person, fearing that it would give the impression that he was asking for war to be declared (Casey 2008, 72).

In terms of the legitimation of the Korean War, even despite the lack of a concerted public relations effort from the Truman administration, public opinion on American involvement was 'overwhelmingly favorable' to begin with (Mueller 1971, 361). As noted in Chapter 2, this rally-round-the-flag effect is normally a manifestation of certain legitimation dynamics at the time. In this case, the early popularity of the Korean War can be explained via four primary factors. Firstly, anticommunism – and the fears associated with that perceived threat (Lazzarich 2013, 45) – established an effective base of support for any foreign policy actions in this period. Using similar language to the presentation of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, the president claimed that the invasion of South Korea had "made it clear, beyond all doubt, that the international Communist movement is willing to use armed invasion to conquer independent nations" around the world (Truman 1950a). Anti-communism also had the effect of reducing the viable political space for dissent, as the rejuvenated success of Senator Joseph McCarthy and his followers after the beginning of the Korean War attests to (Craig and Logevall 2009, 124; Stueck 2002, 236–37). Secondly, the Korean War began with a recognisable and sudden moment in the form of the North Korean invasion of South Korea. Although Jentleson's (1992, 50) 'principal policy objective' theory was based in the post-Vietnam era, the case of the Korean War fits the idea of 'force [being] used to coerce *foreign policy restraint* by an adversary engaged in aggressive actions against the United States or its interests'. There was an element of recognisability to the beginning of the Korean War: as Marilyn Young (2010, 115) put it, the beginning of the conflict 'fit more or less comfortably' into the 'template' of the American way of war.

Thirdly, American actions were bestowed with the official support of the newly founded United Nations (UN), helping to increase the perceived legitimacy of the use of force. As Truman (1950a) stated, the invasion was evidence for the communist "contempt for the basic moral principles on which the United Nations is founded", and that "[o]nly a few countries have failed to support the common action to restore the peace" (Truman 1950c). As

Osgood (1957, 166) observed, with the U.S. leading the UN Command, the Truman administration was able to present itself as being 'above power politics'. Fourthly and finally, it was assumed that the Korean War would be very short and that costs would accordingly be low. In opinion polling, only four percent of respondents in July 1950 believing that the war would last for more than a year (Mueller 1971, 361). At an elite level, one can see a similar level of confidence in MacArthur's October 1950 statements, wherein he declared that the U.S. would be going on "a general offensive" to "win the war" (R. Osgood 1957, 172) and that he wanted to "make good" on his previous claim that American troops would be eating "Christmas dinner at home" (MacArthur 1950). Given America's recent success in World War II and the presumed racial inferiority of the North Korean opposition, this is probably not entirely unsurprising. Unfortunately for MacArthur, it was only four days after these statements that China intervened and the nature of the Korean War would be transformed, as is discussed further below.

In terms of mobilisation, the legitimated status of the Korean War during this period allowed the Truman administration to mobilise successfully without much political contestation (Cappella Zielinski 2016, 30). With widespread concerns about the inflationary effects of the Korean War, the Truman administration was set on financing the conflict entirely via taxation, which Congress and the public strongly supported (ibid; Rockoff 2012, 246). Having just weeks before decided to return taxes to pre-World War II levels, after the outbreak of war the House then voted by a remarkable majority of 328 to 7 to raise personal, corporate, and excise taxes as part of the 1950 Revenue Act (Kreps 2018b, 119; Rockoff 2012, 246–47). This was followed by the 1950 Excess Profit Tax, which was noted at the time for how such 'a major revision in the federal tax law had been pushed through with so much speed' (Keith 1951, 193). Combined, these measures raised more than $5 billion in new revenue, which was necessary to not only fund the war but also pay for the participation of allies in the Korean War (Cappella Zielinski 2016, 31, 36–37; Kreps 2018b, 118). At the level of the American public, a contemporary polling report concluded that it had "rarely … found such heavy majorities expressing a willingness to pay more taxes for any public purpose" (Kreps 2018b, 116).

One can see a similar dynamic in terms of military mobilisation. With the Selective Service System being placed on standby by Congress, it was the outbreak of the Korean War that ensured the continuation and extension of the draft (Rostker 2006, 26). Congress voted for the full extension of military conscription, with 219,771 Americans being drafted in 1950, up from 9,781 in 1949 (Selective Service System 2021). Throughout the entirety of the war, it was predominantly young (50 percent of draftees were under the age of 21) and poor men who were enlisted to fight (Lewis 2012, 134). As General Alexander Haig (1992, 69) recalled in his memoirs, the 'army in Korea was not a cross-section of America, as the armed services

had been in earlier wars', which Haig deemed to be 'one of the important reasons why the whole nation's emotions and convictions were never fully engaged' with the war. There was also a small mobilisation of National Guard and Reservist personnel and units to fill the gaps left by the extension of the draft (Lewis 2012, 132).

October 1950 – June 1951: "An entirely new war" and the MacArthur saga

As quoted above, by October 1950 MacArthur (then Commander in Chief of the UN Command) had his sights on an invasion of North Korea to reunify the Korean peninsula. Thereby, the Truman administration changed its war aims from a 'limited war objective' (to repel North Korean forces out of South Korea) to 'a total war objective' (to effectively destroy North Korea as a separate entity) (Lewis 2012, 91). For Stephen Casey (2008, 100), there were important political motives in this decision: *not* aiming for the reunification of Korea would have been a 'political catastrophe' for the Truman administration, attesting to the dominance of the conventional understanding of the American way of war (see also Lewis 2012, 86; Stueck 2002, 218). These political dynamics produced a military catastrophe, as the crossing of the 38th parallel by UN troops led to a direct response from China whose soldiers entered the Korean War for the first time in late October 1950, producing 'massive headlines' at the time (Young 2010, 115). As MacArthur remarked, the Chinese intervention meant that the U.S. faced "an entirely new war" (Casey 2008, 127). China's intervention meant that American objectives returned to the 'limited war objective' of defending South Korean sovereignty (Lewis 2012, 91–92), though policymakers were cautious to publicly express as much for reasons of political credibility (Casey 2008, 226). Even after the entry of China into the Korean War, Acheson still avoided classifying the conflict as a "war" to avoid the unwanted prioritisation of this altogether more complex conflict (ibid, 362).

This deprioritisation makes sense given the increase in mobilisation costs associated with the Chinese intervention in the Korean War, as there were almost 10,000 American casualties between August and December 1950 in what was becoming a bloody infantry war (Feaver and Gelpi 2004, 137). For Mueller (1971, 365), the corresponding decrease in war support between August and December of 27 percentage points reflected the logarithmic relationship found in both the Korean and Vietnam cases: that '*every time American casualties increased by a factor of 10 … support for the war dropped by about 15 percentage points.*' However, in line with Feaver and Gelpi's (2004, 137) argument that battlefield success is the key determinant of U.S. public opinion, it is also notable that Chinese forces inflicted a set of devastating defeats between November 1950 and January 1951, including successfully capturing Seoul. In one poll in January 1951, 66 percent of respondents wished to see U.S. forces pull out of Korea altogether (Casey 2008, 205), which was a far cry from the idea that 'losing' countries to communism was politically unfeasible at this time (cf., Craig and Logevall 2009), or that the American way of war might demand victory. There was a slight

increase in support for the war when the Chinese advance was halted and Seoul was recaptured in March 1951 (Feaver and Gelpi 2004, 138), but support remained consistently around the 40 percent mark for the duration of the war *after* the Chinese intervention (Mueller, 1971, 361). This also provides further evidence that the American public's view of war was not as crusading as the conventional wisdom suggests, with 50 percent of respondents to one March 1951 poll believing that neither side could win a final military victory in the Korean War (Larson 1996, 22).

The tensions between limited war strategy and the tropes of the American way of war were publicly played out during the MacArthur hearings after his dismissal in April 1951, which not only brought into question the legitimacy of U.S. conduct in Korea but also made the Korean War a significant political priority. Even before these hearings, however, MacArthur's first return to the U.S. in fifteen years managed to generate a significant furore, with welcome parades attracting millions of Americans to the streets (Casey 2008, 236). MacArthur's keynote speech before a joint session of Congress – wherein he claimed that his proposed war policies would promise a path "to defeat the new enemy as we had defeated the old" (Lewis 2012, 130) instead of a "long, indecisive war and the needless sacrifice of many American boys" – was watched on television by around twenty million Americans (Casey 2008, 236). In June 1951, 58 percent of respondents to one poll believed that in the disagreement between Truman and MacArthur, it was the latter that was correct (Cappella Zielinski 2016, 43). More broadly, polling showed that throughout most of 1951, around 55 to 60 percent of respondents supported the idea that "United States airplanes should … cross the border and bomb Communist supply bases inside China" (Mueller 1973, 103). As such, the incoherencies of the American way of war mentioned in Chapter 3 can be seen in polling on the Korean War.

In the hearings, MacArthur argued on behalf of the dominant conceptions of the American way of war. Despite being "a 100 per cent disbeliever in war", MacArthur felt that the US needed "strike with all the power we can mount to support and protect those who now fight out battles in distant lands" (MacArthur 2000, 177–78). To do otherwise, he believed, would

> introduce a new concept into military operations—the concept of appeasement, the concept that when you have force, you can limit that force … To me, that would mean that you would have a continued and indefinite extension of bloodshed, which would have … a limitless end (R. Osgood 1957, 35).

Young (2009) found ordinary citizens espoused similar views: as one man with a son serving in Korea remarked, "I'm against this idea that we can go on trading hills in Korea indefinitely … Naturally I'd like peace. But if it's a war that we're in let's fight it with everything we've got. If it's not a war, let's get out of there".

Although elites may have eventually disagreed with MacArthur's recommendations, his dissent gave Republicans in Congress a figure (and argument) to rally around. After the hearings, a Republican minority report encapsulated the conventional view of the American way of war:

> [w]e believe that a policy of victory must be announced to the American people in order to restore unity and confidence. It is too much to expect that our people will accept a limited war. Our policy must be to win. Our strategy must be devised to bring about decisive victory (Halperin 1963, 46).

Accordingly, one of the reasons that war support dropped to around the 40 percent mark was because the elite consensus that marked the initial response to the crisis in Korea was dissipating (Larson 1996, 86). In terms of mobilisation, Congress began to object to the taxation requests of the Truman administration. Having taken just forty-five days to pass the 1950 Revenue Act, it took Congress nine months to pass the corresponding bill in 1951, with only half the requested additional income taxes being approved (Cappella Zielinski 2016, 40, 45; Kreps 2018b, 119–20). With the success of the Truman administration's anti-inflationary measures at the beginning of the war, both Congress and the American public felt that any further taxes to combat inflation were unnecessary (Cappella Zielinski 2016, 40–41). Given the prominent military failures in Korea and broader legitimation challenges, Truman had little political capital to generate support for the increased taxes that his administration felt were still necessary (ibid, 44).

Legitimation issues surrounding the issue of limiting the use of force were particularly noticeably given the kind of civilisational rhetoric that Truman had previously espoused. If "[t]he future of civilization" was on the line and "[o]ur homes, our Nation, all the things we believe in, are in great danger" (Truman 1950b), then why were Americans not fighting with all their military might? In a long profile of one American soldier in Korea, journalist George Barrett noted how the question "what are we doing over here" was about the only one that really concerned him, and it wasn't being answered by the 'high-sounding declarations put out by generals' (Young 2009). In this way, the Korean War is an illuminative example of the tension mentioned above with regards to limited war theory: how does one justify American casualties and deaths for a *limited* war aim? In this particular case, Michael Sherry (1995, 187) argued that the Korean War and its justifications 'apparently fit no script' in the 'American imagination'. This can be seen in the regularly high levels of 'don't know' responses to questions asking citizens if they dis/approved of the government's handling of the Korean War: the average percentage of respondents who chose this option was more than 15 percent, which is even higher than the equivalent figure in Vietnam (Baum 2003, 21).

<u>July 1951 – December 1952: A military stalemate and the 1952 election</u>

By the early summer of 1951, there was a well-entrenched military stalemate in the Korean trenches, hence the beginning of negotiations in July 1951 (Lewis 2012, 143). With the fighting now taking the form of trench warfare, 'the conflict became less newsworthy' in the U.S., with fewer high-profile journalists still working in Korea (Casey 2008, 307, 362). Furthermore, by this time, the Eighth Army in Korea had established a rigid censorship programme, so that even when there was a series of bloody UN-instigated battles from late August 1951, 'little of … [the] reality was relayed home' (ibid, 309). In the first week of October 1951, when there were more than 2,000 American casualties, the *U.S. News & World Report* recounted that while the rate of battle deaths was increasing, 'the war [was] almost forgotten at home, with no end in sight' (Young 2010, 131). In terms of military strategy, General Matthew Ridgway – then the head of the Eighth Army – changed tack to 'active defense' in late October 1951, avoiding any further significant ground offensives to minimise casualties (Larson 1996, 59).

This is not to say that all was politically peaceful on the home front. In terms of mobilisation, although the Revenue Act of 1951 had resulted in some further tax increases, by 1952 Truman had experienced a degree of political backlash that resulted in a public abandonment of his intentions to raise taxes further in that year (Kreps 2018b, 119; Rockoff 2012, 248). Also in 1952, Congress reduced the administration's proposed budget for defence by more than 20 percent (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 13). This appears to have been linked to the classification of the Korean War as a "police action", given that Senator Walter George stated in January 1952 that "[b]arring a war", any proposals for new taxes to fund U.S. activity in Korea "will be very coldly received" (Kreps 2018b, 119). Consequently, the classification of Korea as a *non*-war not only deprioritised the conflict but also decreased economic mobilisation, even despite the highly bloody military stalemate that existed at this point. Considering only 33 percent of respondents viewed Korea as one of the gravest issues facing the country in January 1952 (Casey 2009, 334), this appeared to affect the salience of the conflict.

A flare-up of fighting in Korea in October 1952 brought the Korean War back onto the political radar, with around 9,000 UN casualties in October alone (ibid). In answer to the same question as above, by October 1952 a small majority of Americans now answered that the Korean War was one of the gravest issues facing the country (ibid). Up until this point the Korean War had been a largely uncontroversial topic during the 1952 election, but given the developments in Korea, Republican nominee Eisenhower now took a partisan stance on the issue with his infamous "I shall go to Korea" speech (Casey 2008, 335). Eisenhower's address began with the statement that "[i]n this anxious autumn for America, one fact looms above all others in our people's mind … This fact, this tragedy, this word is: Korea" (ibid).

Having lamented the Truman administration's record on Korea, Eisenhower's first pledged to make "a personal trip to Korea … [to] learn how best to serve the American people in the cause of peace" (ibid), marking a notable rhetorical shift away from *war* and towards *peace*. By personalising policy, Eisenhower was not only able to take advantage of his popularity from his military service, but he also managed to avoid binding himself to any policies once in office.

More than anything, however, Eisenhower's intervention helped cement the Korean War as an electoral priority, which was damaging to the chances of Democratic nominee Adlai Stevenson (who even described the Korean War as a "miserable stalemate" in his final speech as a candidate; ibid, 335-36). Statistical analysis has shown that the Korean War 'had an *independent, additional* impact on President Truman's decline in popularity' which led to his decision to not run for re-election and also contributed to Stevenson's loss (Mueller 1973, 231). Qualitative studies have also observed the same phenomenon, as Casey (2008, 5) referred to how the Korean War 'largely wrecked the Truman administration … and helped to ensure the election of a Republican for the first time in more than twenty years' (see also Stueck 2002, 238). As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 then, wars have significant domestic political effects of wars when legitimation efforts fail and mobilisation costs are high.

January 1953- July 1953: Eisenhower goes to Korea

Eisenhower ended the Korean War far short of America's triumph in the conflict, whilst simultaneously winning 'broad public approval' for these actions (A. Campbell et al. 1960, 546). Albeit writing in 1973, Mueller's (1973, 234) analysis found that '[f]rom the standpoint of public opinion', Eisenhower's securing of an armistice agreement 'may well have been the most favorable achievement turned in by any postwar president'. This is somewhat unsurprising given that in July 1953, one poll reported that the American public was in favour of an armistice instead of war continuation by a five-to-one ratio (Larson 1996, 58). The fact that the armistice was 'settled on terms far short of complete victory' (A. Campbell et al. 1960, 546) suggests not only the scale of opposition to the Korean War by 1953 but also the extent to which the cultural dominance of an American way of war is possibly overstated, especially with regards to the idea that there was – to quote MacArthur – "no substitute for victory" (Weigley 1973, 391).[34]

As well as this flexibility in terms of what war policies Americans will support, other factors made Eisenhower's efforts more likely to be politically successful. In terms of the conflict itself, the death of Joseph Stalin brought increased uncertainty to Chinese policymakers, and combined with the aforementioned stalemate, made the armistice more

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[34] For Eisenhower, the threat of nuclear armageddon meant that 'victory' was ensuring that a wider conflict between the U.S. and the Soviet Union never emerged (Coker 2009, 122).

likely (Lewis 2012, 146). From the American perspective, the recent election of Eisenhower meant that he was able to end American involvement without fears of diminished credibility and accusations of failure as he was not 'culpable' or did not 'own' the conflict in the same way that Truman did (Croco 2015, 4; Sherry 1995, 198). In this way, the acceptability of the use of force is an acutely political phenomenon.

At the time, the Korean War seemed to sound the death knell of limited war; Irving Kristol contended that the war 'was unpopular to a degree that makes it inconceivable for any future Administration to contemplate that kind of limited, rigorously defensive military action' (Waltz 1967, 276). This dynamic was particularly salient given the MacArthur saga. However, it was also the case that the Korean War quickly became the 'forgotten war'. Ex-servicemen Samuel Hynes' reflections captured this ambivalence: 'I have nothing to say about the war in Korea, a war that came and went without glory, and left no mark on American imaginations' (Young 2010, 114). This kind of mood was partly a consequence of the end of the conflict; as *Life* contemporarily put it, '[s]ince there was no real victory, there was no occasion for celebration' (ibid, 132). This forgettability was contrasted by the consolidation and growth of the national security state and a global containment policy (Casey 2008, 5; Sherry 1995, 182, 187; Young 2005, 190). As discussed in the first section of this chapter, the conflict was followed by an outpouring of limited war theory which suggested the continued relevance of the use of force in the Cold War era. In this sense, whilst public opinion may have forced policymakers' hands in Korea, it did not have a more binding long-term effect, as could be seen in the conflict studied next: the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam War

<u>January 1961 – January 1965: Gradualism in practice</u>

This dissertation's study of the Vietnam War begins in 1961, but one could arguably start this investigation even earlier, given the scale of the U.S. involvement in French foreign policy in Vietnam in the 1950s, providing some $785 million in 1954 alone to assist their European ally along with B-26 bombers and air technicians (Osgood 1957, 214-15). That being said, the extent to which the Kennedy administration was influenced by limited war strategising that was so clearly rejected by the Eisenhower administration makes this date is a more apt starting point. Hence, this section covers more than four years before the public Americanisation of the Vietnam War under the Johnson administration in March 1965. This period marks a gradual increase in the scale of American intervention, but throughout there were deliberate non-prioritisation efforts regarding the conflict. Generally speaking, 'Kennedy was … concerned, as was every president of the Vietnam era, to keep the war out of domestic politics' (Hallin 1986, 29). This was because of "the reluctance of the American people … to see any direct involvement of US troops in that part of the world" after the Korean War, as Kennedy

acknowledged (Mumford 2013, 37–38). Still, it is also worth noting that the intervention in Vietnam during this time was largely legitimated at an elite level, albeit rarely in an explicit fashion. As Zaller (1992, 102) summarised, in 1964 'American elites nearly all supported the Vietnam War'. Like in Korea, this base level of support must be understood in constitutive terms, as foreign policy elites agreed on the merits and methods of preventing communist expansion (Larson 1996, 25). As Hallin (1986, 61) argued, 'the continuing strength of the Cold War consensus' was 'no doubt the most important reason' that the Kennedy and Johnson administrations were initially 'able to contain the debate over Vietnam policy.' This meant that the Vietnam War was both legitimated and deprioritised at this time.

In terms of mobilisation, although costs increased during this period, none triggered any heightened sense of attention to Vietnam policy. In the first year of the Kennedy administration, troop numbers more than quintupled from around 700 to 3,200 (Gelb and Betts 1979, 80). In 1962, troop numbers increased nearly fourfold to 11,300 (ibid), before they then again rose in 1963 to 15,600 (Kane 2004). Not only did the Kennedy administration go well beyond the limits of 'adviser' numbers allowed by the 1954 Geneva Conference, these personnel often saw direct military action outside of their remit (Schuessler 2015, 62; Welch 2005, 130). Yet, the Kennedy administration was able to successfully downplay these troop increases with deliberate non-prioritisation efforts. At times there were no public announcements on the matter (Gelb and Betts 1979, 288), whilst Kennedy's last public statement on the issue of Vietnam in November 1963 was duplicitous, as he stated that "I don't want the United States to have to put troops there" (Schuessler 2015, 146; Welch 2005, 130). Although there were 17,200 American troops in Vietnam in 1964 (Kane 2004), the American public was 'strikingly ignorant' of the war, with one Gallup poll finding that 63 percent of the public afforded 'little or no attention to developments' in Vietnam (Mueller 1971, 363–64). This is made more striking by the fact that there were some 400 U.S. casualties (along with more than 2,000 wounded) before the escalation of March 1965 (Mueller 1973, 37).

In the area of legitimation, one significant exception to the deprioritisation of this period was the passing of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution in August 1964 (Herring 1994, 125), which authorised the Johnson administration to 'take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression' by North Vietnamese forces (Yale Law School 1964). Four things are worth recognising here. Firstly, even though the Johnson administration did go to Congress, the historical record shows that Johnson was wary of doing so 'for fear of increasing the conflict's salience' without a change to the status quo (Saunders 2015, 493). Put differently, non-prioritisation would remain barring changes on the ground. The second key point here is how the administration's account of events was misleading in several fashions: the attack on the US destroyer *Maddox*

was far from unprovoked, the second attack on 4 August 1964 'almost certainly did not occur', and 'a plausible case can be made that the administration tried to provoke the second incident, if not the first' (Schuessler 2015, 79–81). By contrast, '[t]he public … was left in no doubt that on August 2 and 4 there had been totally unprovoked attacks on the U.S. navy, and that the U.S. retaliation had been thoroughly justified' (Moise 1996, 235 in Schuessler 2015, 79). As such, this is a telling example of the type of informational advantages available to the government discussed in Chapter 2. Thirdly, the manner in which the resolution passed Congress is significant, as the resolution received only two dissenting votes between the House of Representatives and Senate combined (Zaller 1992, 188). This suggests both the effect of the government's representations of events, but also the extent of elite agreement on Vietnam policy at this point. In this sense, U.S. citizens were unlikely to have been exposed to anti-war positions. Fourth and finally, the resolution was significant because of the extent to which it gave the Johnson administration flexibility to enact almost any policies in Vietnam, as can be seen in the wording above.

And yet, in his 1964 presidential campaign, Johnson portrayed his Republican opponent, Senator Barry Goldwater, as an irresponsible hawk, arguing that "[s]ome others are eager to enlarge the conflict … They call upon us to supply American boys to do the job that Asian boys should do … Such action would offer no solution at all to the real problem of Vietnam" (Welch 2005, 136). As Fredrik Logevall (1999, 253 in Schuessler 2015, 71) summarised, 'the dominant impression left by LBJ … was that … if they wanted to avoid a larger war in Vietnam, he was their man'. Yet, these statements were made while the Johnson administration was planning for scenarios that would involve U.S. soldiers fighting in Vietnam (Stoker 2019, 77). Accordingly, this final event neatly encapsulates the public relations strategy of this period: to play down the current or future role of the U.S. in Vietnam as much as was possible. Crucially, however, this period established the U.S. presence in Vietnam.

January 1965 – August 1967: The Americanisation of Vietnam in 'cold blood'

The Johnson administration made a series of significant decisions regarding America's strategy in Vietnam in early 1965. In January, Johnson had informed congresspeople that any fighting would be committed by Vietnamese soldiers, despite recent administration investigations into introducing U.S. ground troops to Vietnam (Saunders 2015, 494). Indeed, on 26 February 1965, the Johnson administration made the decisions to commit U.S. ground forces to South Vietnam (McMaster 1997, 324–25). Earlier that month on 9 February, the decision was made to begin limited airstrikes against North Vietnamese targets, which were only announced via deliberately "inconspicuous background briefings", as Johnson put it (ibid; Herring 1994, 126). As per the type of gradualism that characterised limited war theory, diplomat William Sullivan had previously outlined a policy of "very slow escalation" of

bombing against North Vietnam, arguing that a military "presence" short of "heavy forces" would be able to maintain the support of the American public indefinitely (Caverley 2014, 184). In March 1965 the administration sent 3,500 U.S. marines to South Vietnam with an expanded remit from base security to combat operations against the Viet Cong, but this was just the first step in the implementation of a 175,000 troop increase that had been authorised by Johnson (McMaster 1997, 324–25; Schuessler 2015, 77, 86). Nevertheless, even at this point the Johnson administration elected to deprioritise these policies. To begin with, Johnson attempted to persuade McNamara to call the Marines being sent to Vietnam 'security battalions', which the latter refused because he did not want to be seen as 'falsifying the story' (Pach 2010, 173–74). When the policy regarding troop decisions was made, administration memorandums stated that the changes being made be kept as quiet as was reasonably possible and that the 'movements and changes should be understood as being gradual and wholly consistent with existent policy' (Schuessler 2015, 86). As then National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy insisted, "the President does not want this depicted as a change in policy" (Welch 2005, 130). Noticeably, however, the same restriction was not applied to the bombing campaign (Caverley 2014, 188), suggesting the way that the Johnson administration wished to deprioritise issues that might have resulted in American casualties.

In line with the administration's public relations strategy, Johnson's televised press conference announcing the troop increase in Vietnam was scheduled at noon, rather than the evening when the audience would certainly have been larger (Gelb and Betts 1979, 159–60; Herring 1994, 131). Moreover, the press conference was also concerning the president's nominations to the Supreme Court and the U.S. Information Agency (Bator 2008, 317). Johnson's address outlined that there would be a deployment of 50,000 American troops "almost immediately" with 125,000 troops being the eventual increase, even though the president had authorised 175,000 troops to be deployed to Vietnam by the end of 1965 (Herring 1994, 131; Pach 2010, 174). When questioned in this press conference, Johnson maintained that there was no "change in policy whatsoever" as to whether the South Vietnamese or American forces would be carrying out offensive operations, which was again disingenuous (Schuessler 2015, 78). Put simply, Johnson 'escalated the war without appearing to do so' (Herring 1994, 126). Although it was expected that there would be a congressional debate in early 1965 to discuss these policies, this debate did not come to fruition because of the Johnson administration's efforts to thwart it via diplomacy with key figures in the Senate (Saunders 2015, 492). All in all, it was, as former Secretary of State Dean Rusk has since reflected, an attempt to fight the Vietnam War in "cold blood" without creating "a war psychology" (Rosen 1982, 95).

Four key reasons explain these deprioritisation efforts: limited war strategising, the faith in the idea that the conflict in Vietnam would be deemed legitimate without explicit

government attempts to foster this, military strategies and demobilisation efforts, and domestic political concerns. Firstly, fighting a limited war gave the Johnson administration two reasons to deprioritise the Vietnam War, in line with the discussions in the first half of this chapter. Much like the Korean War, the Johnson administration had concerns about what effects a warmongering public might have on the efforts of the U.S. to fight a limited war (Lewis 2012, 243). This concern was especially relevant given the way that the Vietnam War was fought in line with the contemporary writings on limited war strategy. As McNamara observed in 1965:

> [t]he greatest contribution Vietnam is making – right or wrong is beside the point – is that it is developing in the United States an ability to fight a limited war, to go to war *without the necessity* of arousing the public ire (emphasis added; R. Osgood 1969, 45).

Put another way, the type of wars that limited war strategists and members of these two Democratic administrations believed was essential in the geopolitical environment of the Cold War were meant to be fought without public support. They were meant to be precise and manageable, rather than needing the passions, mobilisation, or focus of the entire country (Herring 1994, 16). Again, McNamara put it in such terms when he claimed that democracies needed to learn "to cope with a limited war" (R. Osgood 1969, 45). On that basis, the Vietnam War was "almost a necessity in our history, because this is the kind of war we'll most likely be facing for the next fifty years" (ibid).

The Johnson administration also had concerns about the prospects of selling a limited war strategy, as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs William Bundy wrote that '[a]s we saw in Korea, an "in-between" course of action will always arouse a school of thought that believes things should be tackled quickly and conclusively' (Rosen 1982, 95). Here, Bundy was alluding to the tropes of the American way of war that had raised their head so clearly in the MacArthur saga. In this case, an important group of Southern Democrats who were naturally disposed against the more progressive elements of Johnson's domestic agenda 'believed that once the United States was committed, it should follow through with all-out effort' to win the war (Saunders 2015, 489). It was exactly these pressures that the administration was attempting to avoid. Yet, Bundy did also acknowledge the 'other side' of the coin: that 'the continuation of military action and a reasonably firm posture will arouse sharp criticism in other political quarters' (Rosen 1982, 95). Part of the reason that the Johnson administration adopted a limited war strategy was precisely because they seemed to be low in political risk (Herring 1990, 4) and manage the dualism of the American way of war. Limited war strategies were both designed to be – and probably had to be – low-profile affairs domestically.

The second factor behind the deprioritisation of the Vietnam War relates to the legitimation of Vietnam policy, even despite the Johnson administration's lack of efforts in

this area. Herring (1994, 128) explains the lack of attention to domestic attention in the run-up to the Americanisation of the conflict as a consequence of the 'complacency' of policymakers, which was based on the successes of previous American governments before Korea in manipulating and generating public support. Additionally, American policymakers assumed that Hanoi would easily be enticed or intimidated into negotiating, which could have reflected this oversight (ibid, 130). As it were, much like the Korean War, the Vietnam War was broadly popular when it began to appear on the political scene in 1965 at both an elite and popular level, with 62 percent of Americans approving Johnson's handling of the war (Herring 1994, 23, 128; Mueller 1971, 363). Given that the Johnson administration was aware of the rally-round-the-flag effect (Schuessler 2015, 69), in some ways it is unsurprising that the administration avoiding creating a "war psychology", especially given the nature of limited war strategies. As Johnson put it to his advisers, "I think we can get people to support us without having to be provocative" (Herring 1994, 16). Again, the role of constitutive beliefs as part of the Cold War consensus is worth stressing here as the foundation for any public support.

The Cold War consensus is detailed in Hallin's book devoted to television and news media coverage of the Vietnam War. According to Hallin (1986, 10), '[i]n the early years of the Vietnam [W]ar, particularly before the Tet Offensive … most news coverage was highly supportive of American intervention in Vietnam'. This can be explained by dominant journalistic conventions of 'objectivity', whereby the news media would report – 'more or less at face value' – the perspectives put forward by government authorities (ibid). In written news, there was often a disconnect between how the editorials and columns used to diverge from official government statements, whilst the news columns and the front pages used to report official pronouncements without ambiguity. For example, in the *New York Times*' coverage of Johnson's speech, whilst a report on the inside page noted that U.S. troop levels were likely to reach the 200,000 mark by the end of 1965, the front page of the newspaper said nothing about the future except Johnson's declaration that more troops would be sent "as needed" (ibid, 101). Furthermore, television reporting largely failed to engage with political debates during this period, with reports on the controversial bombing campaigns of North Vietnamese avoiding political issues and instead focusing on personal experiences of American pilots, the technology being used by these pilots, and the like (ibid, 136). All things considered, in war reporting, '[o]nce the war was under way, its political purposes were taken for granted and public attention focused on the effort to win it' (ibid, 142). In this way, television media effectively assisted with the legitimation and deprioritisation of the Vietnam War *before* the Tet Offensive, whereby the media began to mirror the elite-level fissures that took hold after 1968. Before then, the elite consensus remained strong, as could be seen in the defeats of proposals to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin resolution in 1966 (by 92 votes to 5 in

the Senate) and to bar funds for military operations over North Vietnam in 1967 (by 372 votes to 18 in the House of Representatives) (Zaller 1992, 189–90).

Deprioritisation was also made possible by the mobilisation decisions of the Johnson administration. When it came to the March 1965 escalation, the Johnson administration avoided calling up the reserves on the basis that it would provoke 'considerable debate, that a lot of minority votes would result, [and] that there was certain to be a strong vote against a call-up' (Schuessler 2015, 77). Instead, the administration 'chose to deplete and weaken US forces stationed in Europe and America and to increase draft calls' which peaked in 1966, meaning that '[t]he burden' – like in Korea – 'fell on the young and poor', with 'political opposition to the war … congeal[ing] around these groups and their legislative allies' (Gelb 1972, 464-45 in Caverley 2014, 197). When troop numbers were increased in Vietnam, the Johnson administration did so gradually in decisions that seemed 'so small that they were difficult to argue against' (Gelb and Betts 1979, 288). More generally, the Johnson administration opted for a suboptimal military strategy that revolved around the use of airpower to reduce ground troops and American casualties (Caverley 2014, 186–87; Herring 1994, xii). As McNamara asserted in 1965, "the thing we prize most deeply is not money but men", and thus the U.S. sought to achieve its aims in Vietnam "with the lowest possible loss of lives and not necessarily with the lowest expenditure of money" (Caverley 2014, 177, 185). Consequently, by 1966 the number of combat sorties flown had exceeded the number of American troops in Vietnam, with this 'sorties-to-personnel ratio' only increasing throughout the war (ibid, 186-87).

In terms of economic mobilisation, unlike during the Korean War, the Johnson administration largely financed the conflict in Vietnam via domestic debt (Cappella Zielinski 2016, 30). Between 1965 and 1972, for example, less than 20 percent of the war's finances came via taxation (ibid, 132). In part this reflected Johnson's belief that the American economy could absorb spending increases without having to raise taxes; as he put it in his 1966 budget message, the U.S. could "afford to make progress at home while meeting obligations abroad" (ibid, 51). The decision to avoid raising taxes also emanated from political concerns. 'Across-the board tax increases, as President Johnson knew from his long experience in politics … would undermine support for his war and his domestic policies' (Rockoff 2012, 287). As such, when Johnson did acquiesce to his economic advisers' requests for increased taxes to pay for the war effort, the 1966 Tax Adjustment Act 'was modest at best' in terms of its impact (Kreps 2018b, 132). Although it restored excise taxes on transportation and telephone services, these were deliberately meant to avoid provocations, and the bill also included 'sweeteners' such as extending Social Security to almost 2 million citizens (ibid; Rockoff 2012, 287). In addition, when the Johnson administration became increasingly wary of inflationary pressures, Johnson's calls in January 1967 for a surcharge on both individual

and corporate income taxes fell on deaf ears in Congress (Cappella Zielinski 2016, 54). This reflected Congress' lack of substantive concern regarding inflation, but also because of decreasing public support at this time, with just 19 percent of Americans polled in October 1966 approving a potential tax increase to fund the Vietnam War (ibid, 57). At an elite level, Johnson repeatedly refused to label these increases as 'war taxes', although then chair of the House Ways and Means Committee Wilbur Mills later claimed that a "war tax" would have met "few obstacles in Congress" due to a stronger elite consensus at this point (Rockoff 2012, 288). This echoes the policy debates from the Korean War, illustrating how limited war strategies made mobilisation increases challenging for governments short of total war.

The fourth key reason the Johnson administration deprioritised the Vietnam War was domestic politics. That is, there were detailed plans made for a completely different public relations approach, wherein a presidential message to Congress was drafted, McNamara proposed creating a task force to generate public support, and presidential aides suggested the idea of forming a citizens' committee to generate elite support, much like the Committee for the Marshall Plan (Herring 1990, 15). Johnson rejected these proposals, at least in part because the president feared that a significant debate around his administration's Vietnam policy would place major pieces of Great Society legislation – at that time pending in Congress – in peril (ibid). Johnson put forward this kind of zero-sum logic in May 1964 in conversation with Senator Richard Russell, noting that if he was being criticised for not defending Vietnam, "[t]hey won't be talking about my civil rights bill, or education, or beautification ... they'll push Vietnam up my ass every time" (Saunders 2015, 487–88). Johnson's later reflections came to similar conclusions, as he emphasised the binding effects of constitutive discourses regarding communism:

> [i]f I left the woman I really loved—the Great Society—in order to get involved with that bitch of a war on the other side of the world, then I would lose everything at home … But if I left that war and let the Communists take over South Vietnam, then I would be seen as a coward and my nation would be seen as an appeaser and we would find it impossible to accomplish anything for anybody anywhere on the entire globe (Kearns Goodwin 1991, 266).

Scholars have echoed this argument; McMaster (1997, 309) labelled the Great Society as 'the dominant political determinant of Johnson's military strategy', whilst Francis Bator (2008, 309) suggested that Johnson had 'no good choices' that would have ensured the continuation of the Great Society programmes. Deprioritisation reflected the middle path adopted in Vietnam to ensure domestic programmes could continue.

However, Bator overstates this idea: politicians always have choices, and it should not be suggested that the Americanisation of the Vietnam War was an unescapable preordained destiny. Firstly, it is not clear that Johnson was ever as pessimistic as Bator suggests; the

president believed that American policies in Vietnam could be successful in 1965, even if he did have doubts (Woods 2008, 343). Secondly, it is not clear that the issue of Vietnam was important enough to place Johnson in the political catch-22 outlined by Bator. After all, the Democrats had majorities in both the House and Senate after their electoral successes in 1964, and a great many of these Democrats – aligned with moderate Republicans – objected to the escalation in Vietnam of 1965 (Logevall 2008, 356). Moreover, it is not clear that there were any significant forces at a societal level that restricted the administration. Johnson himself acknowledged after the Americanisation of the war that "I don't think the people of the country know much about Vietnam and I think they care a hell a lot less" (Woods 2008, 343).

To build upon previous comments, the fact that the Johnson administration explicitly deprioritised America's involvement in Vietnam only added to the conceptualisation issues regarding Vietnam: in 1967, only 48 percent of those polled answered positively to the question "[d]o you feel you have a clear idea of what the Vietnam War is all about – that is, what are we fighting for?" (Mueller 1971, 374). As Sherry (1995, 251, 287) claimed, Americans 'were not so much polarized by the war as simply perplexed by it … Never had an American war been so hard to conceptualize', particularly as the war was conceptualised in psychological or political terms such as falling dominoes and damaging American credibility. If not emotionally engaged with this unfamiliar conflict that ran at odds with the American way of war, most U.S. citizens were also not affected by the mobilisation requirements of the conflict at this time. Although some 451,572 American troops served in Vietnam in 1967 alone with over 11,000 casualties, one poll in the summer of that year revealed that a small majority 'did not feel affected by the war in *any meaningful way*' (emphasis added; Caverley 2014, 42). It is in this context that the Johnson administration was able to Americanise the war in 'cold blood', rather than being forced to intervene on account of 'no good choices'. In other words, the issue was not too little governmental control, but too much.

August 1967 – January 1969: The 'progress offensive' and the Tet Offensive

That being said, by the summer of 1967 disillusionment with U.S. policy was emerging on a significant scale. In early 1967, *CBS Evening News* and the *New York Times* both reported a military stalemate was emerging in Vietnam, providing an eery reminder of the Korean War (Pach 2010, 171). As the *Times* report put it, despite 'millions of artillery shells', 'billions of rifle bullets', and the efforts of almost 500,000 U.S. soldiers, 'victory' was 'not close at hand' and was potentially 'beyond reach' (ibid). Alongside the increasingly sceptical media coverage, the anti-war movement was gaining ground with prominent new leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr (Herring 1994, 141). In opinion polling, only 34 percent of respondents in July 1967 felt that the U.S. was making progress in Vietnam, whilst Johnson's approval ratings reached a new low in August 1967, with just 33 percent approving his handling of the conflict (Larson 1996, 27; Pach 2010, 171). Part of the explanation of these

ratings, the Johnson administration felt, was that the American public were 'skeptical, cynical, and—more often than not—uninformed' (Pach 2010, 171).

As a result, in the early autumn of 1967, Johnson felt that his administration had to "do something about Vietnam quick" to preserve the Democrats' electoral fortunes in 1968 (ibid, 185; Herring 1994, 122). The Johnson administration launched a 'large-scale, many-faceted' campaign to try and, as the president put it, "sell our product to the American people"[35] by demonstrating the progress the U.S. was making in Vietnam (Herring 1994, 145; Pach 2010, 185). The administration established the Vietnam Information Group, a White House committee devoted to coordinating the new public relations strategy and measuring public opinion regarding the war (Herring 1990, 21). Alongside other actions, the group wrote speeches for members of Congress to deliver and prepared reports that could be leaked to sympathetic members of the press (Pach 2010, 184). To add weight to the administration's 'progress offensive', Johnson urged American officials in Vietnam to 'search urgently for occasions to present sound evidence of progress' in Vietnam (Hallin 1986, 165; Pach 2010, 184–85). To that end, both Republican and Democrat politicians were flown to Vietnam to report back positive news to the American public, whilst Westmoreland was flown back to Washington to offer reassurances on America's successes, and he infamously declared in November 1967 that "[w]e have reached an important point where the end begins to come into view" (Hallin 1986, 165; Herring 1994, 147). This position was supported when *CBS News* broadcast a special programme with the two living five-star American generals (Eisenhower and Omar Bradley) who both insisted that Westmoreland understood the issue at hand in Vietnam and deserved the nation's support (Pach 2010, 186). In even more decisive language, another high-profile soldier – Lieutenant General Leonard Chapman – told reporters that "[w]e are winning. And I say that with no doubt whatsoever" (Gelb and Betts 1979, 316).

The results of this public relations campaign were 'mixed'; many of the claims of 'progress' were met with scepticism in Congress and the news media, but approval ratings for Johnson's handling of the war did begin to increase (Herring 1994, 148). Ultimately, however, the administration's 'progress offensive' was shattered by the Tet Offensive of 30 January 1968 and how this was interpreted domestically (ibid; Pach 2010, 173), even if this campaign was actually a military success for U.S. and South Vietnamese forces (McFate 2019b, 224–25). As it had followed such a clear legitimation attempt designed specifically with emphasising the scale of U.S. progress, the Tet Offensive brought into question the credibility of such reassurances, especially as there were several hundred U.S. deaths per week for the first half of 1968 (Mueller 1973, 37). Instead, it seemed, as Walter Cronkite of *CBS News* famously put

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[35] This language is significant for the way it echoes scholarship reviewed in Chapter 1 on the process of *selling* war to the American public.

it, indicative of how the U.S. was "mired in [a] stalemate" in Vietnam (Pach 2010, 189). For Johnson, this was a significant legitimation crisis, and the president reportedly stated that "[i]f I've lost Cronkite, I've lost middle America" (Lustig 2002, 76). When asked in June 1968 whether the U.S. was making progress in Vietnam, only 18 percent responded positively; 16 percent less than the figure a year before (Larson 1996, 25). The Tet Offensive and its political aftermath occurred amid broader splits amongst both the elite and the American public (Hallin 1986, 162), with 'increasingly strident criticism of the war' coming from 'members of Congress and other opinion leaders' (Larson 1996, 86) and the emergence of a mass anti-war movement (Heaney and Rojas 2015, 36). After Tet, the 'don't know' response rate on the handling of the Vietnam War was at its lowest point after Tet since questions began in 1965 (Baum 2003, 21), and casualties had a more significant impact on war support than before January 1968 (Feaver and Gelpi 2004, 137), suggestive of how concrete opinions had begun to form on the issue of Vietnam. In terms of prioritisation, by 1968 some 38 percent of respondents felt that the Vietnam War was the 'most important problem facing the nation' (ibid, 23).

Having originally decided to increasingly prioritise the Vietnam War to try and legitimate the administration's policies, Tet had called the administration's public relations efforts into question and created a case of unwanted prioritisation. This legitimation crisis was made worse by the fact that the Johnson administration was undergoing an extended policy debate in the wake of Tet, consequently remaining 'mostly silent' on the issue of Vietnam for two months after the events (Hallin 1986, 169). The administration's silence in the wake of Tet was broken by Johnson's (1968) speech on 31 March 1968, wherein he not only announced that he would not be running for re-election as president (like Truman before him) but also declared that there would be a bombing halt in North Vietnam. In the drafting of the speech, Johnson's aides persuaded him to change his opening line from "I want to speak to you of the *war* in Vietnam" to "I want to speak to you of *peace* in Vietnam" (emphasis added), signifying a marked rhetorical shift that would echo the shift in Korea and continue throughout the rest of the Vietnam War (Hallin 1986, 178). As Hallin put it, after Tet, 'a new national consensus of sorts had been formed: everyone agreed the country wanted out of Vietnam' (ibid).

Nixon's presidential campaign in 1968 attempted to tap into this newfound consensus, as he pledged that "new leadership will end the war" in Vietnam (Lewis 2012, 282). The promise to *end*, rather than *win* the war, emphasises the important rhetorical change identified above. And yet, much like Eisenhower's rhetoric regarding Korea, Nixon's statements were noticeably vague, offering no clear plan on how to achieve the end of the Vietnam War; it was instead electioneering designed to appeal to as many of the American electorate as possible (Schmitz 2014, xii). Furthermore, Nixon's campaign team even went to

the extent of conspiring against the peace negotiations occurring in Paris by promising Nguyen Van Thieu that he would be able to negotiate on better terms with Nixon as president, which speaks to the political utility that Nixon felt he could gain from the Vietnam War continuing until election day (ibid, 36-37).

<u>January 1969 – August 1973: Nixon's Vietnam War</u>

In a January 1968 interview, Nixon appealed to the American way of war by claiming that it was "necessary" for the U.S. government to "mobilize public opinion … behind the war effort" and that the Johnson administration's failings had "been most marked in this area" (ibid, 26). And yet, the Nixon administration's conduct in the Vietnam War was in many ways like its predecessors in terms of deprioritisation and legitimation strategies. One crucial part of this was Nixon's attempts to create the impression that he was ending the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, which consisted of three main components: Nixon's speeches on peace, the administration's Vietnamization strategy, and American troop withdrawals (ibid, xiv; Rockoff 2012, 283). Whilst the first component was entirely rhetorical, it is also worth noting that the second and third parts – although clear examples of demobilisation – also relied on rhetorical legitimation efforts. I have already discussed the shift from war to peace in the context of the Johnson administration above, so I will move onto Vietnamization here.

Vietnamization is a noteworthy example of the phenomena discussed in Chapter 2, where U.S. governments have used non-American fighters to maintain the pursuit of strategic objectives whilst reducing mobilisation costs to reduce political risks. According to Westmoreland, Vietnamization actually preceded the Nixon administration, and that it "was the only strategy that I could come up with that was viable if there were no change in policy, if we were not going to widen the war, and if we were not going to call up the reserves" (Caverley 2014, 206). The effects of Vietnamization were clear: in 1968 there were around 14,000 American deaths in Vietnam; by 1972 the equivalent figure was approximately 300 (Hallin 1986, 182). Vietnamization also resulted in reduced economic costs, and there were no tax increases for the rest of the war (Rockoff 2012, 289, 300). For David Schmitz (2014, 117–18), Vietnamization was the antidote for the unpopularity of limited war strategies, in that it provided a way for the U.S. to remain committed to the grand strategy of containment at acceptable domestic costs. The third component here – troop withdrawals – also had a clear political logic, and Nixon referred privately in January 1969 to how a withdrawal of 50,000 American troops would "buy time" for his desired policies in Vietnam (ibid, 43). Indeed, troop withdrawals were often spoken about by Nixon in his addresses on the Vietnam War as an indication of both success and the ending of the conflict.

Combined, these three strands of policy again accounted for a deprioritisation effort from a U.S. government in Vietnam, especially given the actual conduct of the Nixon

administration in terms of still attempting to win the war. In terms of media attention, this appears to have worked, as although there were 637 accredited journalists in Vietnam at the time of the Tet Offensive, by 1972 there were only 295 in the country (Carruthers 2011, 6). This had an impact at the level of public opinion, as although 70 percent of respondents to a 1970 poll answered that the Vietnam War was 'very important' to them, just 46 percent claimed to be paying a 'good deal' of attention to the conflict, while 15 percent stated that they were not following the war at all (Baum 2003, 20). Additionally, there was an increase in 'no opinion' responses to polls regarding Vietnam in 1971, and by this time just 18 percent of respondents felt that Vietnam was the 'most important problem facing the nation' (ibid, 21; Zaller 1992, 205). These deprioritisation efforts were essential because the support for the Vietnam War never reached above 40 percent during the Nixon administration (Mueller 1973, 54–55). Moreover, 1969 and 1970 were marked by significantly sized and heavily covered protests against the Vietnam War (Zaller 1992, 190). By 1969 there were as many as 17,000 anti-war organisations of varying size across the U.S., many of whom came together to organise the Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam protest in Washington, D.C. on 15 October 1969, which Cronkite described as "historic in its scope" (Hallin 1986, 188; Heaney and Rojas 2015, 36). As Hallin (1986, 15) noted, it was the 'most favorably covered' anti-war protest yet, and it 'penetrated into the hinterlands of America as no previous protest had done.' The size and reception of the demonstrations led the Nixon administration to shelve plans for Operation Duck Hook, which would have suddenly escalated U.S. military actions in North Vietnam as Johnson's policy of a bombing halt remained (Schmitz 2014, 66). Duck Hook was taken so seriously that there was originally a date set for a press conference announcing the operation; instead this address was changed to Nixon's infamous appeal to the "great silent majority" in an effort to "win the peace" (ibid, 67; Nixon 1969). Not long after, the Moratorium organised the March on Washington on 15 November, which had an estimated 500,000 people in attendance on the Washington Mall alone (Schmitz 2014, 70).

It is this legitimation context that gave Nixon a particular incentive to demobilise and deprioritise his administration's strategy, which resulted not only in the Vietnam War lasting until March 1973 but also included some of the heaviest bombing campaigns of the whole war. Nixon secretly expanded the use of American force to Cambodia and Laos, which was kept from even some high-ranking officials within the administration, let alone the American public (Sherry 1995, 289). The campaigns in Cambodia and Laos were part of Nixon's 'madman theory', whereby the president attempted to use his colleagues such as National Security Adviser Kissinger to convince his North Vietnamese counterparts that Nixon was untamed by traditional boundaries in the use of force to produce better negotiation results (Schmitz 2014, 46). Whilst this was unique to Nixon, it also goes some way to capturing the tensions of limited war strategy, in that Nixon was attempting to portray to the North

Vietnamese government that his commitment to South Vietnam was *unlimited*, whilst also trying to convince the American public that the U.S. commitment to South Vietnam was *limited* and *ending* (Hallin 1986, 36, 181).

When the invasion of Cambodia was made public on 30 April 1970, it generated exactly the type of legitimation challenges that the administration had feared when abandoning Duck Hook the previous year (Schmitz 2014, 76). Senator Frank Church argued that the Nixon administration had to "acknowledge the futility" of its efforts to win the war in Vietnam and abandon its strategy of "war without end" (ibid, 90). Although Congress had voted to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin resolution in June 1970, this democratic control was made irrelevant as the Nixon administration maintained it required no such authorisation to use force in Vietnam (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 14). More importantly, the Senate passed the Church-Cooper amendment in December 1970 prohibiting any American troops in Cambodia (including 'advisers', to return to the Kennedy era), which effectively forced the Nixon administration to withdraw the soldiers before the vote was cast in the House of Representatives to claim the invasion of Cambodia had been a success (Schmitz 2014, 90). At a popular level, 'protests erupted on college campuses' across the U.S. in response to the invasion, leading to the Kent State shootings on 4 May 1970, which sparked the shutdown of some 500 higher education institutions and to further protests in Washington D.C. the following weekend (ibid, 91). The effect of these developments was significant; up until this point, Nixon had remained genuinely committed to *winning* the war in Vietnam, hence Schmitz's comparisons between this moment and the Tet Offensive's impact on Johnson in 1968 (ibid, 75, 90, 104).

Much like the aftermath of the Tet Offensive, it was an important domestic political crisis that had a significant effect on the mindset of U.S. policymakers and elites on the use of force. And yet, for all of this, Nixon's approval ratings remained impressive during his first term, resulting in a landslide victory in the 1972 presidential election against Senator George McGovern, whose campaign was largely centred around the issue of Vietnam and bringing U.S. troops home (Holsti 2004, 237). Part of this can be explained by the impact of partisanship on war support in this period, as Democrats and Republicans switched their stance on the Vietnam War with the election of Nixon in 1968 and the noticeable partisan differences that marked this period (Mueller 1973, 120–21). Like in 1968, Nixon ran as a peace candidate, illustrating the ongoing efficacy of this position. Nixon did so by announcing during the campaign that Kissinger had been holding secret meetings with North Vietnamese representatives (Schmitz 2014, 138). However, Nixon was again misleading the American public, given that he planned on the day after the 1972 election to "bomb the bejeezus" out of North Vietnam, regardless of the election result (ibid, 137). Albeit with a slight delay, this is essentially what happened, with Operation Linebacker II carrying out eleven days of

around-the-clock air attack on the cities of Hanoi and Haiphong in December 1972 (ibid, 141).

Ultimately Nixon's manoeuvring caught up with him: Linebacker II undermined his domestic credibility, and 1973 onwards marks one of the high points of congressional activity regarding foreign affairs. The Case-Church amendment passed in June 1973, cutting off all funding for military affairs in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos without fresh approval from Congress (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 14). Although initially rejected in the Senate in August 1972, the amendment passed both chambers after the post-election actions of the Nixon administration and the burgeoning Watergate scandal (Schmitz 2014, 144). The War Powers Resolution passed later that year, before in December 1974 Congress enacted legislation that specifically restricted the number of U.S. personnel allowed in Vietnam (ibid; Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 14). By this point then, Congress was having a meaningful effect on the conditions that allow for the deployment of force, providing restrictions to the flexibility available to Nixon and later, Gerald Ford.

Although not necessarily significant at the time, another notable congressional action in this period (albeit in this case supported by Nixon) was the abolishment of the draft, with Public Law 92-129 being passed in September 1971 and dictating that the draft would only continue for two more years. Other explanatory factors have been identified in the shift to an all-volunteer force, but certainly, the unpopularity of the Vietnam War must be considered here (Rostker 2006, 2). As Senator Sam Nunn argued in 1973, the abolishment of the draft was "a clear resolute of the Vietnam [W]ar which, because of its unpopularity … caused the President and Congress to yield to the tremendous pressure to end the draft at almost any price" (ibid, 15). This argument is particularly salient given that one of the defining features of the Vietnam anti-war movement was that it was galvanised by students and student organisations affected by draft calls (Heaney and Rojas 2015, 37). Although the draft had a limited impact on society more broadly conceived, the transition to an all-volunteer force was indicative of Nixon's attempts to loosen the connections between American society and war's mobilisation demands.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the conditions that made the deployment of U.S. troops more or less contested during the wars in Korea and Vietnam. Beginning with a theoretical discussion of limited war strategy, the chapter outlined its paradoxical consequences for war support: although limited wars have a reduced impact on domestic society, they are inherently hard to sell because of their gradual, calibrated, and precise nature. The specific challenge facing American policymakers in this era was the need to generate resources without arousing the

passions of war, which I argued was a particular form of the dualism of the American way of war.

The wars studied here may attest to the impossibility of this task, given that these conflicts resulted in the political declines of Truman, Johnson, and to some extent, Nixon. Yet, what this chapter has shown are the ways that policymakers were able to manage the relationship between the American public and the use of force. At the broadest level, Truman and Johnson 'did not face substantial pressure to end the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam until popular support for the wars had fallen well below 40 percent', despite significant battlefield failures and mounting casualties (Feaver and Gelpi 2004, 114–15). The continued use of force in Vietnam is all the more remarkable given the animosity towards the Korean War and the fact that less than 40 percent of Americans felt that Vietnam would be worth costs equivalent or higher to that conflict (Larson 1996, 27). If McGeorge Bundy wrote in a memorandum to Johnson in 1968 that '[i]t is a miracle, in a way, that our people have stayed with the war as long as they have' (Hallin 1986, 211),[36] then he surely would have been staggered by the ability of the Nixon administration to continue the Vietnam War for as long as it did. How, then, can this be explained?

The primary tactic of the governments studied here was to deliberately deprioritise the use of force. Fearing the consequences of warmongering publics along with legitimation challenges, U.S. administrations rhetorically deprioritised the use of force (such as the "police action" label or the fighting of the Vietnam War in "cold blood") and adopted military strategies that attempted to reduce American casualties (such as the use of airpower and Vietnamization) and successfully manage the dualism of the American way of war. In many ways, the U.S. governments studied here aimed to render public and congressional opinion as irrelevant as possible to the deployment of force. The legitimation of these conflicts were both based in the Cold War consensus. As mobilisation costs increased and military failures emerged, however, elite dissensus (such as the MacArthur saga) and the emergence of mass anti-war opinion (such as the anti-Vietnam War movement) meant that these discourses alone could not justify the use of force. Therefore, these wars provide important lessons about the abilities *and* constraints of American governments to make acceptable the use of force overseas. In fact, American policymakers applied these lessons in the next period under study, from 1989 to 2001.

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[36] This position is echoed in scholarly analysis by Herring (1994, 150): 'it is perhaps remarkable that it held public support as long as it did.'

5: In Between Wars: 1989-2001[37]

Chapter Outline

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first part outlines the concepts of Beck's 'risk society' and risk management strategies as they have been applied to the realm of war by IR scholars. This section also assesses how risk management strategies could be implemented and legitimated, particularly regarding the American way of war. The second part of the chapter looks at risk management strategies in practice, focusing upon eight cases studies between 1989 and 2001. This half of the chapter is divided into the three subsections of the normalisation framework (mobilisation, legitimation, and prioritisation), highlighting how these three themes interacted to explain the extent to which the conflicts in question were accepted (or not) by the American public. In this way, although the conflicts in question differ from the War on Terror in terms of their scale and longevity, this chapter derives lessons for Part II regarding how the use of force can be normalised.

Risk Management Strategies in Theory

Risk Management Strategies as War

Like limited war strategies during the Cold War, risk management strategies arguably represent the modus operandi of American wars of the post-Cold War era. Whilst risk management strategies are less of a concrete set of prescriptions for warfare by strategists and more an academic theory, just like limited war strategies, risk management strategies advance a 'war logic' with a specific way of conceptualising and rationalising war (Holmqvist 2014, 3). Additionally, similarly to the dominant paradigm beforehand, risk management strategies run at odds with the traditional conception of the American way of war outlined in Chapter 3. Thereby, this chapter again studies how the dualism of the American way of war was managed by American policymakers in this period.

To begin with, what is meant by 'risk' and 'risk management strategies'? These concepts are grounded in sociological scholarship which emphasised the consequences of a 'second modernity' from the 1980s onwards, particularly vis-à-vis the concept of risk (Beck 1992, 10; Beck, Bonss, and Lau 2003, 6). Definitional issues surround this term, but the common definition of risk is used here, which 'describe[s] phenomena that have the potential to deliver substantial harm, regardless of whether probability of harm is estimable' (Heng 2006, 45). As social constructions, some organisations 'have a greater capacity to define risks than others', such as the state in national security matters (Beck 2006a, 333). As the adopted definition implies, risks are inherently futuristic: when they are actualised they are no longer risks but

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[37] This title is taken from Derek Chollet and James Goldeiger (2008).

'catastrophes' (Beck 1992, 33–34, 2009, 9–10). For Beck (1992, 12-13), the defining feature of Western society's second modernity was that the gains from industrialisation and globalisation were 'increasingly overshadowed by the production of risks' that these advances had produced (see also Beck 2009, 4, 142). Although Western societies had become objectively safer than ever before, this was irrelevant because of the simultaneous rise in the prevalence of risks and the attempts to combat them (Beck 1992, 49; 2006a, 332; 2009, 4, 11; Coker 2001, 52–53; Krieg and Rickli 2019, 56). As such, risk was not a new phenomenon, but was novel in its impact because of its global salience and its inherently modern causes (Beck 1992, 21; 2009, 142). In this manner, risk became the central idea of the second modernity, with the central challenge of 'risk society' being how to minimise or prevent the risks posed by modernisation (Beck 1992, 20; 2006a, 330; 2009, 7-8). The solution to this challenge was risk management strategies, defined here as 'any government activity designed to reduce risk or reallocate it' (Heng 2006, 52).

Because risks are futuristic, risk management strategies are inherently preventative, mirroring the 'precautionary principle' that emerged in environmental policies in the risk era (Rasmussen 2006, 93). This principle argues that shortages of scientific proof of a causal relationship should not justify policy inaction (Coker 2009, 99). Consequently, risk management strategies exhibit a shift from an instrumental to a reflexive rationality (Heng 2006, 12-13). Instrumental rationality suggests that policymakers can calculate the appropriate means to *attain* their desired positive goals, whilst the idea of reflexive rationality (or reflexivity) dictated that policymakers in the risk society were perpetually attempting to *prevent* risks from emerging in a more cyclical and minimalist fashion (ibid; Beck 1992, 49). For example, whilst crime was previously viewed as a sickness or an aberration to be eradicated via rehabilitative institutions, rising crime rates in the risk age resulted in a shift in aims in the late 1980s, as crime was instead viewed as an inevitable risk that should be managed (Coker 2009, 137; Heng 2006, 37; Rasmussen 2006, 107). Therefore, crime prevention was dissociated from its previous moralistic and instrumental logic in favour of a reflexive rationality and 'post-heroic objectives' with modest aims (Coker 2009, 134; Heng 2006, 37). In practice, this meant a shift to increasingly proactive policing measures and attempts to manage contextual factors that may lead to criminal activity, such as the emergence of closed-circuit television cameras (Coker 2009, 137; Heng 2006, 37; Rasmussen 2006, 108). This example illustrates Beck's (2002, 40–41) claim that 'the hidden central issue in world risk society is how to feign control over the uncontrollable – in politics, law, science, technology, economy and everyday life.'

In line with the idea from Chapter 3 that wars reflect society and vice versa, IR scholars applied the notion of risk management strategies to the realm of war (Coker 2009; Heng 2006,

2018; Krieg and Rickli 2019; Rasmussen 2006; M. J. Williams 2009).[38] As Christopher Coker (2009, 26) argued, as risk had become 'the language of business, politics and public policy … we should not be surprised that it should also have become the language of war'. Beck (2009, 149-50) himself outlined the concept of 'risk wars', which were characterised by their attempts to control a global risk whilst simultaneously reducing risks to Western troops; this final dynamic is discussed further below. As well as the domestic rise of the risk society, developments in international politics resulted in a turn to risk management wars. If interstate industrial war had been made unlikely by the advent of nuclear weapons, then it was the end of the Cold War that truly signified to scholars and practitioners alike that war – as traditionally conceived – 'no longer exis[ted]' (R. Smith 2007, 13; see also Mandelbaum 1996; Mueller 1990).[39] Rather, wars in the post-Cold War era have been characterised by their indecisiveness; they have not begun and ended but rather hibernated and smouldered (McFate 2019c). The binary distinctions between war and peace 'have always been an illusion', but this became clearer with the end of the Cold War (McFate 2019b, 74). More broadly, the end of the Cold War marked the start of the decline of the power and sovereignty of the state in the international system, with an at least partial 'de-statisation' of war (Berndtsson and Kinsey 2016a, 313; McFate 2019a, 16–17). Although this trend would emerge more fully in the twenty-first century – by 2015 some 70 percent of the world's 178 internationally recognised states were classed as 'fragile' by the *Fragile States Index* (McFate 2019b, 32) – even at the end of the Cold War states began to lose control of their territory (e.g. the Balkans) or failed altogether (e.g. Somalia) (McFate 2019a, 16–17). The world increasingly resembled Hedley Bull's 'neomedieval' world system, with competition occurring between state, supra-state, and non-state actors (Krieg and Rickli 2019, 195; McFate 2016b, 67).

This was made clear by the growing number of conflicts in the post-Cold War period. In the context of globalisation and increased activity across borders, the dangers posed to the U.S. were more diverse and disconnected from the Westphalian order. The lines between public security and global security became increasingly blurred, resulting in enhanced momentum for the U.S. to intervene in these unfamiliar conflicts during its supposed 'unipolar moment' (Krauthammer 1991; Krieg 2016b, 184; Krieg and Rickli 2019, 40–41). Western strategic planners changed their focus away from the *threats* of inter-state conflict and towards a variety of *risks* such as migration flows, transnational terrorism, and nuclear proliferation (Beck 2009, 39; Heng 2006, 10, 21, 146; Singer 2004, 49; R. Smith 2007, 239).

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[38] Although not written from a risk management perspective, Rupert Smith's (2007) influential account of 'war in the modern world' takes 'a very risk-age view of politics' (Coker 2009, 171), and there are many similarities between his account and those of risk management scholars. Accordingly, Smith's analysis is used here when relevant.

[39] In reality, as McFate (2019b, 28) argued, this was largely a reflection of a Western conception of war.

Much like limited war strategies then, risk management strategies were fundamentally another way of making the use of force relevant in response to changing geopolitical conditions. This shift in strategic thought was explicitly acknowledged during the Bill Clinton administration before it was epitomised during the Bush presidency (Heng 2006, 2; M. J. Williams 2009, 2, 95-96). As the 2001 *Quadrennial Defense Review* stated, "managing risk" had become "a central element of the defense strategy" (Rasmussen 2006, 52).

During the Cold War, defence strategy revolved around the measurement of threat, defined as military capabilities plus intent (Coker 2009, 94; Heng 2006, 23; Rasmussen 2006, 4). However, this instrumental approach does not apply to risks. At the broadest level, because risks are not 'real' in the sense that they are perceptions of *future events*, they cannot be knowable in the same way that military capabilities are (Rasmussen 2006, 4). Put another way, if risk management strategies are successful, they prevent risks from becoming real (ibid, 115; Heng 2006, 25). More specifically, it is unclear that policymakers would be able to identify the components of 'threats' in the post-Cold War era (Heng 2006, 10). As Beck (2009, 40) argued, one of the key differences between the security agenda of states during the first and second modernities was the problem of 'non-knowing'. For example, risk problems normally transcend state boundaries, making the identification of relevant actors' capabilities and intentions a far more challenging task (Beck 2006a, 334). As Powell put it with regards to the issue of transnational terrorism, it "respects no limits, geographical or moral; the frontlines are everywhere" (Coker 2009, 74). Indeed, around a third of terrorist attacks are committed by 'unknown' sources (Price 2012, 23–24). Even where a group and its intentions are relatively clear (such as al-Qaeda's), their members and capabilities are still vague, with box-cutters being used on 9/11, rather than more traditional threat measurements such as tanks or ships (Heng 2006, 94-95). As Coker (2009, 95) stated, 'we no longer have actuarial measurements to hand even to assess the risks posed by terrorism' (see also Beck 2009, 40), and the same can be said of risk problems more generally.

The critique was made by Luca Trenta (2016, 3, 22) that U.S. foreign policymaking has *always* been about risk management and that the group of IR scholars cited above 'rely on a rough simplification of the Cold War, which appears as a simple 'bean counting' exercise between the superpowers'. In some senses, Trenta was correct: the perception and management of risk have always played a role in decision-making. Furthermore, he was right to point out that the Cold War was still marked by disagreements over the intentions or capabilities of the Soviet Union (Coker 2009, 94; Heng 2006, 20). Threat, like risk, is not an objective concept but is again influenced by cultural differences (M. J. Williams 2009, 22). What Trenta understated was the degree to which *risk thinking* now permeated defence strategy and the degree to which understandings of dangers changed. Conceptions of risk as a 'form of rationality' (Rasmussen 2006, 5) or 'way[s] in which we govern and are governed'

(Adam and van Loon 2000, 2 in Amoore and de Goede 2008, 9) are illuminating in this regard: if risk thinking defines the means, ends, and values which dictate how we act and govern, then there is a paradigmatic shift. The Cold War, as Janice Gross Stein (2008, 554) argued, 'gave structure and meaning to global politics … and this structure and meaning define[d] what constituted a threat.' By contrast, risk thinking largely offers uncertainty and requires policymakers to take exceptional actions to prevent risks from emerging. As discussed in Part II, the post-9/11 era epitomises these differences, as illustrated by then Vice President Dick Cheney's infamous one percent doctrine, which dictated that "[i]f there's a one percent chance that Pakistani scientists are helping al Qaeda build or develop a nuclear weapon, we have to treat it as a certainty in terms of our response" (Suskind 2006, 62). In the era of the risk society, it is possibilities rather than probabilities that dictates policy, and 'better safe than sorry' effectively becomes an organising principle of foreign policy (Coker 2009, 16; Danner 2016, 53).

Implementing Risk Management Strategies

Given their preventative logic, risk management strategies encourage the use of force (Rasmussen 2006, 73; M. J. Williams 2009, 90). This can be seen in the case studies of this chapter as well as the growth of counterterrorism operations after 9/11. Because risk management strategies have even more *minimalist* aims in war than even limited war theory (Heng 2006, 7), the proclivity to use force again increased. Rather than fighting in the name of state survival or grandiose objectives such as justice and order, risk thinking takes the existence of disorder for granted (Coker 2001, 56, 2009, 35; Heng 2006, 14; R. Smith 2007, 28; Staniland 2018). This is because, as argued above, 'risk problems are characterised by having no unambiguous solutions', and certainly not in a short time-frame (Beck 1997, 8-9 in Coker 2009, 10). It is on this basis that the definition of risk management above used the verbs *reduce* and *reallocate* rather than, say, *defeat*. Unlike previous eras, warfighting became 'but another activity of the state', and non-events (e.g. the prevention of risks becoming catastrophes) emerged as a metric of success in a routinised process of risk management as war (Heng 2006, 14; R. Smith 2007, 261). Withal, the Cold War model of intentions and capabilities were increasingly outdated when it came to the issue of war termination, precisely because of the ambiguous capabilities of groups such as al-Qaeda (Coker 2009, 120–21). With their ongoing nature, risk management strategies blur the political and legal understandings of war and peace (Kessler and Werner 2008, 290), as reflected in the debates as to whether archetypal risk management campaigns (such as the NATO intervention in Kosovo) were in fact 'wars', or something less than that (Heng 2018, 549).

As well as aspiring for minimalist goals in war, risk management strategies also aim to reduce the political risks associated with war. Again, this reflected wider societal changes of the risk age, as these wars took place during a time where 'almost all risk-taking is [perceived]

as abnormal, or pathological' (Coker 2009, ix),[40] but it also reflected the legacies of previous uses of force. As Martin Shaw's (2006, 1, 73) account of 'risk-transfer war' summarised, the primary lesson derived from the Vietnam War was that for war to be acceptable domestically, it must be 'considerably more limited than ever before', not just 'military and geopolitically, but in its domestic, political, social and economic ramifications' (see also Beck 2009, 150–52; Ignatieff 2000b, 164; G. Simons 1998, 24; Stevenson 2020). For Shaw (2006, 6), the 'process of managing risks … [was] all about transferring them' to other actors. After all, although Chapter 4 showed how U.S. policymakers were disposed towards reducing the effects of limited war strategies on the American public, the citizenry ultimately rejected this kind of conflict, making limited war just as problematic as the model of total war that these strategies were meant to resolve (ibid). As per the definition of limited war offered in Chapter 4, risk management strategies effectively go one step further, and it was oftentimes the legacy of Vietnam that affected policymakers' decisions more than any specific attitudes of the public regarding war policies in this period (Martel 2011, 222; G. Simons 1998, xxiv; Sobel 2001, x). The impact of risk management wars was limited via four primary means: adapting economic mobilisation costs, relying on the revolution in military affairs (RMA), focusing on force protection, and transferring risks to proxy forces.

Although Shaw (2006, 73) repeatedly asserted that risk-transfer warfare must occur 'simultaneously with 'normal' economics, politics and social life in the West', his text offered little explicit theorising on economic mobilisation. As argued in Chapter 2, military costs are more visible and impactful on levels of war support. Thereby, the technological developments of the RMA made it easier to translate financial wealth into military capabilities and reduce the domestic impact of war (Krieg and Rickli 2019, 75). Especially as debt financing became more common during the end of the twentieth century and into the millennium, this dynamic was effectively another way of transferring risk in the risk management era. The RMA is discussed further below in the context of mobilisation, but the key point here is that the reliance on high-altitude bombing inevitably reduced risks for American personnel whilst *transferring* these risks to citizens who may be killed because of targeting and delivery errors (Shaw 2006, 86). Further, as airpower can only realistically contain and manage problems, the weapons of the RMA were particularly well-suited to the tasks of risk management (Coker 2001, 59).

The risks posed to the American all-volunteer army of this period were also reduced with the rising importance of 'force protection'. Smith (2007, 27) reflected that with this development, the West now fought 'so as not to lose the force, rather than fighting by using

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[40] Linguistic changes are illuminating here, given that the positive associations with risk (bold financial investments, psychological thrill-seeking, etc.) have fallen out of common usage (Beck 1992, 21; Heng 2006, 45).

the force at any cost to achieve the aim' in question. The issue of force protection was sometimes sidestepped completely with the use of proxy forces, whether that be via local allies or PMSCs. The use of proxy forces represented another form of risk-transfer, as it delegated responsibility to those willing to take risks in the pursuit of strategic objectives that American citizens would have been reluctant to expend significant military costs for (Carmola 2012, 137; Krieg and Rickli 2019, 52; Mumford 2013, 41; Shaw 2006, 81; Waldman 2018, 188). PMSCs, for example, 'suddenly became significant actors in international security' with the end of the Cold War (Kinsey 2007, 610), reflecting both domestic and international changes. PMSCs are intertwined with the risk society, as they work to assess, advise, and manage risks (Carmola 2012, 138; Krahmann 2016, 98). As Beck (1992, 46 in Krahmann 2016, 97) put it, risks were 'no longer the dark side of opportunities, they … [were] also market opportunities', and certainly the fortunes of PMSCs were improved by broader economic shifts towards neoliberalism (Kinsey and Patterson 2012, 2). Defence spending was cut not just in the U.S. but also globally, offering states an enormous pool of recently decommissioned military personnel to help with a geopolitical environment marked by diverse and proliferating risks, as argued above (ibid, 2-3; Krieg 2013, 347–49; Mandel 2012, 14–15; Mumford 2013, 81; de Nevers 2012, 61). Finally, because of the increased reliance on technologies associated with the RMA, training and the maintenance of weapons systems became increasingly specialised, leading to a surge in PMSC usage more generally (Kinsey 2009, 28–29; Krieg 2018, 5).

Legitimating Risk Management Strategies

Much like limited war strategies, risk management strategies cannot be deprioritised successfully all the time, as the below case studies attest to. If this is the case, then the issue of legitimation is salient. The legitimation of risk management strategies is structured by another variation of the dualism of the American way of war: the paradox between the stringent security demands of the American public and the aversion to incurring significant costs in the pursuit of these interests. This has been observed at the media level (who put forward 'a simultaneous demand for assertive, interventionist leadership … and chastisement of U.S. leaders when interventions turn costly or give signs of turning into quagmires'; Entman 2004, 96) and amongst the mass public (who expect 'more security with fewer major combat operations'; Krieg and Rickli 2019, 67). Because the precautionary principle asks citizens to comprehend what we do not know, the boundaries between 'rationality and hysteria' have become 'blurred', increasing the scope of risks that policymakers are expected to manage (Beck 2006a, 335). This is especially because of the growing intolerance of risks in everyday life, which means that 'the political costs of omission are much higher than the costs

of overreaction' (ibid; Krieg and Rickli 2019, 48).[41] As the state's fundamental purpose is to provide security for its citizens, policymakers cannot simply wish away dangers, and instead must attempt to manage a wider range of global risks to meet public demands (Krieg and Rickli 2019, 48). And yet, war 'is no longer cherished as a glorious act of virtue but as an avoidable horror' associated with 'inhumane barbarism of uncivilized yesteryears' (ibid, 49), which is only exaggerated by globalised media coverage of civilian casualties (Hallin 2013, 103). As a result, Western policymakers increasingly emphasised the *humane* nature of warfare in this period (Coker 2001). The unenviable situation facing policymakers outlined in Chapter 2 is even more evident in the modern era, where a multitude of insoluble and intangible risks cannot be ignored even whilst war had lost its appeal, adding to the likelihood that presidential candidates will campaign against the use of force before reversing this position when in office.

Much like limited war strategies then, risk management strategies are directly opposed to the tropes of the American way of war. Risk management wars do not pursue total victory in the name of far-reaching political objectives, but rather aim to manage risks in an ongoing and deprioritised fashion. Because 'in an age of risk victory is no longer possible … one of the toughest problems' facing policymakers is how 'to convince public opinion both at home and abroad that the 'failure' to achieve a decisive result in a battlefield encounter … should not be seen as a setback, still less a defeat' (Coker 2009, 121). 'War' in the popular Western imaginary, with its emphasis on end points, is simply 'conceptually different' from risk management strategies (Rasmussen 2006, 138). Further, these conceptual differences are exaggerated because the media continues to report wars in terms of the 'conventional war' model of the first modernity (R. Smith 2007, 240, 257).

Precisely because of their normality, risk management wars are not conducive to rhetorical legitimation, especially in the American context given that the 'the notion of 'managing risks' evokes painful memories of a 'managerial' or 'calibrated' approach to war' that existed in Vietnam (Heng 2006, 154). Moreover, the more abstract risks are, the less likely they are to be accepted by Western publics as a legitimate cause for mobilisation costs (Krieg and Rickli 2019, 125). This is a reoccurring challenge in the case studies in this chapter where vital national interests were not obviously at stake, especially as patriotism could less readily be invoked by policymakers after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Entman 2004, 96). Given that risk management is often associated with the idea of pre-emption, the difficulty exists in persuading public opinion as to the prominence of these risks without necessarily having clear cut evidence of capabilities and intentions (Rasmussen 2006, 135). It is for all these

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[41] Glennon (2015, 19-20, 50) showed how unelected national security officials had incentives to exaggerate threats and pass potential costs of omission onto Congress, who were also unlikely to object to threat assessments given their lack of expertise, thus furthering this dynamic.

reasons that Rumsfeld argued during the War on Terror that the Bush administration needed to "change the psychology of how Americans viewed war" (Buley 2008, 101) and "fashion a new vocabulary and different constructs for what we are doing" (Heng 2006, 90).

It is not simply the case that policymakers face a hopeless task in terms of the legitimation of risk management wars. As this dissertation shows, there have always been ways for policymakers to attempt to manage the impact of war on the American people. More specifically to risk management strategies, these wars are increasingly malleable in terms of their legitimation. Inspired by the work of Jean Baudrillard, Coker (2009, 9) noted how the less we are military committed to a definitive outcome in war, the more the result is a matter of 'spin'. Similarly, Michael Ignatieff (2000b, 177, 196) contended that as the wars of this period were increasingly physically distanced from the American public, representations of war policies were increasingly crafted based on polls and focus groups, resulting in wars being 'won by being spun' (see also Robinson 2002, 120). This relates to the security demands of Western publics in terms of countering specific risks but can also be applied beyond individual conflicts: because of the indefiniteness of risk management strategies, the more the whole enterprise is liable to 'spin'. This broadened concept of 'spin' in risk management strategies helps to explain the varying ways in which the presidents of the War on Terror have managed to invoke the trope of progress in the conflict despite their previous criticisms made whilst campaigning. All things considered, there is a degree of similarity in the paradoxes and challenges in legitimating risk management strategies as there was in the Cold War era, which is reflective of both the picture of policymaking outlined in Chapter 2 and the dualism of the American way of war. Like Chapter 4, this chapter is devoted to looking at how policymakers handled this dualism before the War on Terror.

Risk Management in Practice

This section analyses eight uses of force by the U.S. in the period between 1989 and 2001: the invasion of Panama (1989-1990), the Gulf War (1990-1991), the regular use of force against Iraq (1992-2003), the interventions in Somalia (1992-1993), Haiti (1994-1995), and Bosnia (1994-1995), the cruise missile strikes against Afghanistan and Sudan (1998), and the NATO intervention in Kosovo (1999). Given the volume of conflicts under study, these uses of force are investigated simultaneously as per the three themes of the normalisation framework in separate subsections. Whilst Coker (2009, 2) describes the Gulf War as the 'first conflict of the risk age', I also include the invasion of Panama here because it was the first use of force since 1945 that was unrelated to the Cold War, the first major military operation since Vietnam, and it was at the time when risk management strategies began to emerge in national

security thinking (D'Haeseleer 2019, 1195; Gilboa 1995, 539; Heng 2006, 30).[42] As the dates of these conflicts show, there is an obvious difference to the War on Terror regarding the longevity and intensity of these conflicts. However, it is also worth appreciating their regularity: when averaged out over the entirety of his presidency, Clinton launched a cruise missile every three days (Coker 2001, 59). In this way, whilst these wars are different to the War on Terror (which is part of the uniqueness of its normalisation), they also demonstrate new options and challenges to policymakers in terms of the management of war in the risk age. As has been contended by many, the regular use of force in this time goes some way to explaining the increasing normalisation of war in the twenty-first century (Bacevich 2005, 18; Bacevich and Cohen 2001, xii; D'Haeseleer 2019, 1209; Ignatieff 2000b, 168; Lewis 2012, 302, 312; Peffley, Langley, and Kirby Goidel 1995, 329).

Mobilisation

Looking at the theme of mobilisation, one can identify three different categories to classify these eight conflicts: those with 1) a significant degree of mobilisation (the Gulf War); 2) some U.S. combat casualties (Panama, Somalia); and 3) zero U.S. combat casualties (Iraq, Haiti, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Sudan, Kosovo).

This period was marked by two important developments relevant to the theme of mobilisation: the RMA and the casualties hypothesis. The RMA can be defined by its emphasis on information (Bacevich 2005, 167; Coker 2015, Chapter 3), its use of precision weapons to target the centre of the enemy's control capabilities (Bacevich 2005, 167; Buley 2008, 3; Rasmussen 2006, 57–58), and its ability to use these weapons with near impunity to American soldiers (E. Cohen 2001, 55). In its essence, the RMA could be captured in the use of unprecedentedly precise long-range weapons systems against specific targets deciphered from increasingly complex surveillance and reconnaissance techniques. Although the idea of the RMA in the U.S. is best associated with the 1990s, the political and material impact of these technological advances had deeper historical roots. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, strategists such as Albert Wohlstetter highlighted the potential significance of the increasing precision of contemporary weapons (Bacevich 2005, 161). Similarly, the AirLand Battle doctrine unveiled by the U.S. Army and Airforce in 1982 relied on 'advanced technology' to provide 'concentrated force from unprecedented distances with overwhelming suddenness and violence' (ibid, 45). As such, the RMA was more of a *continuation* than a *revolution* of technological developments and their interaction with warfare in the American context.

Whilst almost all weapons and their development can be considered devices of risk management in that they attempt to increase risks posed to enemies whilst reducing the user's

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[42] It is on the same basis that the military actions against Grenada, Lebanon, and Libya during the Reagan administration are not studied here.

risks, this is the crucial point of the RMA and then the growth of lethal drones discussed in Chapter 7: that they enable precise targeting *without projecting vulnerability* (Chamayou 2015, 12; Heng 2018, 550; Kessler and Werner 2008; Shaw 2006, 81, 87). As Secretary of Defense in the Clinton Administration, William Cohen (1997) argued that "this technology will transform the way our forces fight … We don't want a fair fight – we want a decisive advantage". Because of the way that the RMA reduced the likelihood of American casualties, it was well suited to American governments continually attempting to manage a post-Cold War order without generating dissent at home. This is what Wohlstetter grasped regarding the potential importance of precision weapons systems; fortunately for him, 'by any historical standard the technological advance in weapons accuracy … [was] immense' during the 1990s (E. Cohen 2001, 55). Furthermore, precision offered policymakers a discourse that helped to mask the horrors of war, with '[c]laims of precision … [being] essential to all the ideas that sanitize war' (Shaw 2006, 88).[43] Particularly after the Gulf War, policymakers became increasingly prone to using airpower in overseas interventions to reduce the political risks associated with the use of force (Bacevich 2001, 180; 2005, 170; E. Cohen 2001, 53; Ignatieff 2000a; Shaw 2006). Accordingly, the RMA re-established the relationship between the use of force and the pursuit of national objectives after the decline of total and limited wars (Buley 2008, 3).

This had a paradoxical effect: whilst the RMA made it easier to deploy force, it created higher standards of success, especially vis-à-vis casualty aversion (Rasmussen 2006, 78). This period was marked by the popularity of the 'casualties hypothesis' discussed in Chapter 1, with it becoming 'an article of faith in political and media circles' in the U.S. (Larson 1996, iii). American enemies in this period also subscribed to the casualties hypothesis. For example, one captured Iraqi general told U.S. officers that Hussein had said that "Americans would not be able to stand the loss of even hundreds of soldiers" whilst "Iraqis were prepared to sacrifice thousands" (Feaver and Gelpi 2004, 4–5). This idea was given further credence by the events (reviewed below) that preceded the American withdrawal from Somalia, and Louis Klarevas (2000, 528) asked if policymakers would have to accustom themselves to a 'Somalia Syndrome' where the American public would not tolerate *any* U.S. casualties in peacekeeping operations. Although the casualties hypothesis has been refuted by academics, it is not so much the *reality* of a nation intolerant of casualties that is important, but the *belief* held by policymakers that this was true, and the impact this had on mobilisation decisions (Mandel 2012, 15 in Phelps 2016, 14; Smith 2005, 493 in Walsh and Schulzke 2018, 88). As discussed

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[43] This created higher standards in terms of avoiding civilian casualties in target states to both domestic and international audiences, but not to the extent that the fundamental insignificance of civilian casualties to public opinion and the use of force had changed (Shaw 2006, 86).

in Chapter 1, this chapter shows how suboptimal policies were chosen to reduce the potential of American casualties to legitimate and deprioritise the conflict in question.

Significant degree of mobilisation: Gulf War

For the American armed forces, the Gulf War represented a mobilisation effort on a scale and rapidity that had not been seen since the Cold War. Noticeably, the original mobilisation of 200,000 U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia to prevent an Iraqi invasion of the country – codenamed Operation Desert Shield – occurred without consultation with Congress (Kreps 2011, 68). This was because of the Bush administration's perception of the need to act rapidly (at this point there was also no international approval), but it is also significant as an example of the governmental advantages of setting policy first, as this not only could have realistically led to conflict but also made opposition to future mobilisation more unlikely (ibid, 57, 68; G. Simons 1998, 28–29). Just two days after the congressional elections of November 1990, Bush deployed another 200,000 U.S. soldiers to Saudi Arabia, which 'profoundly transformed the crisis' by quickening the movement towards war (Zaller 1994a, 196; 1994b, 257). All in all, approximately 2.2 million Americans participated in the duration of the war, with the U.S. Army deploying more than half of its personnel at the time (Lewis 2012, 340; Rockoff 2012, 306). Unlike Vietnam, this included a sizeable mobilisation of the National Guard and Army reservists, with around 220,000 citizens being summoned to active duty for up to twelve months (Lewis 2012, 340). A significant number of casualties were expected: just before the launching of the air war against Iraq in January 1991, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Powell warned that U.S. casualties could be "in the several thousand" range (Jentleson 1992, 68). In Congress, Senator Edward Kennedy warned that the conflict would be "brutal and costly … The administration refuses to release casualty estimates, but the 45,000 body bags the Pentagon has sent to the region are all the evidence we need of the high price in lives and blood" that the war would entail (Achenbach 1991). All in all, nearly 80 percent of Americans expected 'heavy' or 'moderate' casualties in the conflict (Jentleson 1992, 67).

This decision to mobilise the reserves was in line with the way that the Gulf War was fought as a 'back to the future' moment designed to act as the antidote to the Vietnam War (Buley 2008, 63; Lewis 2012, 300–301). During his term as the Army Chief of Staff between 1972 and 1974, General Creighton Abrams went out of his way to establish the so-called 'Golden Handshake', meaning that whenever American military force would be deployed after Vietnam, the calling up of the reserves would be a necessity (Buley 2008, 70). With the abandonment of the draft in 1973, any reserves would be working alongside an all-volunteer army, another clear indication of the ongoing legacy of the Vietnam War (Barkawi 2011, 713). More broadly, the conflict was synonymous with the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine. Among other criteria discussed below, this doctrine dictated that the use of force should be a last resort and that if force was used, it should be a wholehearted effort aimed at victory with

clearly defined objectives (Weinberger 1986). In this way, the second most significant legacy of the 'Vietnam Syndrome' – a desire to use force decisively to prevent protracted wars – was somewhat at odds with the first (to make war more limited than before; Simons 1998, 24-25). At this time, it was the RMA that allowed for a military strategy that could potentially achieve the exacting standards of the American way of war, as Powell avoided a frontal attack against Iraqi defences in favour of a long air campaign before the ground war (Casey 2014, 207).

This strategy resulted in American military success: the ground war lasted just 100 hours, with just 148 U.S. casualties in combat (alongside 235 non-combat deaths; DCAS 2021b). Despite more bombing sorties being flown in the Gulf War than by American air forces throughout the entirety of World War II, no more than a handful of planes were lost to enemy fire (Reiter and Stam 2002, 177). Indeed, this casualty aversion reflected the Bush administration's reading of public opinion polling and the legacies of Vietnam, which suggested that public tolerance for the number of casualties described above was 'quite low' and that public 'support would probably have dwindled quickly' (Mueller 1973, xvi). These casualty figures also reflected the limited aims of risk management strategies contra the American way of war, as the U.S. did not aim for regime change or even the destruction of Iraq's military forces because of the unwanted consequences this might have produced in the region (Coker 2009, 9; Ignatieff 2000b, 209; Lewis 2012, 322). As a result of these minimalist aims, the 'problem' of Iraq would continue in this period and beyond.

In addition, the Gulf War's impact on the American economy was insignificant. The war's total cost was $102 billion, equating to 14 and 30 percent of the costs of the Vietnam and Korean Wars respectively when adjusted for inflation (Kreps 2018b, 6). More importantly, however, the U.S. only funded just over 13 percent of the costs of the war, as contributions by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Japan, and Germany covered most of the expenditure by effectively employing U.S. troops (Coker 2009, 3; Rockoff 2012, 309). Operation Desert Storm was a truly multilateral intervention, with 38 states contributing more than 200,000 soldiers, 1,200 tanks, 750 aircraft, and 600 warships alongside the U.S. mobilisation (Kreps 2018b, 50, 53). Suggesting the importance of multilateralism and levels of war support, then Secretary of State Baker claimed to allies that he would not be able to generate domestic support without this kind of burden-sharing (ibid, 67). Because of the successful diplomacy of the Bush administration, the Gulf War 'exerted only a moderate impact upon the private economy or the public budget' (Ignatieff 2000b, 190). Therefore, whilst the Gulf War did result in a scale of mobilisation long unseen in American history, the ultimate consequences were minimal because of the speed and nature of America's military triumph in the Gulf.

<u>Some U.S. casualties: Panama, Somalia</u>

In the December 1989 invasion of Panama, just under 26,000 combat troops were deployed (D'Haeseleer 2019, 1198). Combat operations consisted largely of 26 coordinated strikes around Panama City and were completed in just under 24 hours (ibid). As Brian D'Haeseleer argued, this campaign was somewhat of a precursor to the strategy of 'shock and awe' in the War on Terror, as the U.S. used a small invasion force[44] alongside heavy aerial bombardment, with the University of Panama's seismograph reporting 400 plus major explosions during the first twelve hours of the conflict (ibid, 1198-99). Even as the earliest conflict studied here which preceded official documents alluding to the RMA, the same tactics which reduced the risks to American troops at the costs of Panamanians were present. The only significant military objective that was not achieved on the first day of the conflict was the capture of General Manuel Noriega (who later surrendered in January), and there were just 23 American casualties in combat (Congressional Research Service 2020, 4; Larson 1996, 41).

In Somalia, the intervention was more complex and lengthier, with U.S. troop numbers peaking at around 25,000 soldiers as part of the Unified Task Force (Western 2005, 133). As part of the United Nations Operation in Somalia II (UNOSOM II), American casualties rose in August and September 1993, before the costliest one-day battle for the U.S. since the Vietnam War, with 18 casualties in the Battle of Mogadishu (Klarevas 2000, 252, 256). Unsurprisingly, this event generated a significant degree of media attention and set off a 'firestorm of opposition' at the elite political level (Ignatieff 2000b, 191; Jentleson and Britton 1998, 406). Overall, there were 29 American casualties in combat in Somalia, along with 14 non-combat deaths (Congressional Research Service 2020, 4).

<u>Zero U.S. Combat Casualties: Iraq, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Sudan</u>

In these uses of force, there were zero U.S. casualties in combat (Eichenberg 2005, 169), making mobilisation costs irrelevant for almost the entirety of the American public in these conflicts. How this was achieved did vary, but the political logic behind these zero-casualty campaigns was clear, with the Clinton administration pursuing suboptimal strategies that would minimise the risks posed to American personnel. The Bosnia case is instructive in this regard; as Secretary of Defense William Perry asserted in 1995, deploying American troops to the Balkans was a "non-starter" and that there was "no support for this idea among the public or in Congress. American casualties undoubtedly would be high" (Sobel 2001, 225–26). From a scholarly perspective, Trenta (2016, 178) argued that at every key stage of the Bosnian crisis, 'the decisions made [by the U.S.] had more to do with managing the risks inherent in

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[44] The number of American troops would later prove to be problematic, as Panama City descended into rioting and looting after the U.S. invasion (M. Miller and Meyer 1989), suggesting that reduced mobilisation costs had been chosen instead of the optimal strategic option.

transatlantic, or great power, relations, and those inherent in domestic criticism, than with ending the war in Bosnia' (see also M. J. Williams 2009, 69).

When the U.S. did intervene in Bosnia in August and September 1995, it was thus part of a NATO campaign that employed local fighters of the Croatian Army and the Bosnian Fifth Corps in support of the airpower campaign against the Bosnian Serbs called Operation Deliberate Force (Krieg 2013, 348). When American troops were sent to Bosnia to enforce peacekeeping arrangements in December 1995, the risk of casualties was decreased by making force protection their primary mission. As the director of the U.S. Air Force then put it, "force protection … is now as important as projecting our combat power" (Gentry 1998, 179). This appeared to have worked in terms of deprioritisation and legitimation, as this troop presence became effectively permanent (E. Cohen 2001, 49), providing a telling reminder of the flexibility afforded to policymakers outlined in Chapter 2, especially when there the estimated 50 casualties a year did not come to fruition (Banks and Straussman 1999, 209).[45] This flexibility can also be seen in the economic realm. That is, when the troop deployment to Bosnia was ordered, no agreement existed on funding, with this situation eventually being resolved by drawing upon lump-sum funds, such as $2.5 billion from previously appropriated funds in an obscure National Reconnaissance Office fund (ibid, 204-07).

The primary method of non-mobilisation to reduce political risk in this period, as the Bosnia example illustrates, was the exclusive use of long-range weapons systems or aerial bombing in kinetic actions, which was also the case in Iraq, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Sudan (Krieg 2013, 349). In the military actions against terrorist bases in Afghanistan and Sudan, Clinton explicitly ruled against putting any servicepeople in danger (Krieg and Rickli 2019, 89). In Kosovo, pilots were restricted to flying above 15,000 feet to avoid ordnance from handheld surface-to-air missiles, which inevitably led to errors in targeting (Coker 2001, 57). Similarly, the 44 cruise missiles launched as part of Operation Desert Strike in Iraq in 1996 were ill-suited to the task they were given, but the use of non-stealthy aircraft to deliver these strikes was deemed too risky to American personnel (Byman and Waxman 2000, 63). Despite the absence of American casualties, there was a significant amount of firepower used in these conflicts. NATO forces were responsible for more than 38,000 air raids in the 78-day airpower campaign in Kosovo (Chamayou 2015, 128; Chapman and Reiter 2004, 902), with the U.S. providing between sixty-five and eighty percent of the aircraft and ordnance used (Ignatieff 2000b, 92). Between 1991 and 2001, an average of 34,000 sorties per year were flown in the no-fly zone operations in Iraq, equivalent to flying the Gulf War every three years (Ricks 2006, 43). Moreover, between 1998 and 2000 alone, the bombing missions in Iraq exceeded the

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[45] This shift to a permanent presence did create some legitimation issues; Senator John McCain accused the Clinton administration of having a credibility gap as "wide as the Grand Canyon" (Banks and Straussman 1999, 211).

total tonnage dropped in Kosovo (Ignatieff 2000b, 190-91). As such, these conflicts epitomise the risk-transfer element of risk management strategies, as the deployment of power had essentially become one-sided in terms of the risks posed to participants.

Even where ground troops were used in Haiti, the relative dominance of the U.S. military meant that there were no casualties and the invasion cost less than 0.15 percent of the annual military budget (Kreps 2011, 82). Elsewhere, where troops were used, their presence was supplemented by non-U.S. military forces. In Kosovo, although 7,000 U.S. troops were deployed, the overall mission had participants from 18 other NATO members (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 147; Kreps 2010, 194). Furthermore, instead of having to call up around 9,000 American reservists to support the troops in this conflict, PMSCs were employed to assist with crucial logistical tasks such as maintaining weapons systems in 'one of the quiet triumphs of the war' (Singer 2004, 6). Especially after the Gulf War, every military intervention studied here involved significant levels of support from PMSCs carrying out tasks that the U.S. military traditionally performed themselves as a way of using force around the globe in the context of a reduction in post-Cold War military spending (ibid, 16, 53).

Legitimation

This section is split into two, analysing the respective successes and failures that governments had in this period in their legitimation efforts. The former category focuses mostly on the Gulf War and the ensuing actions against Iraq, whilst the latter focuses solely upon the Bosnian and Somalian cases. Unlike the previous and the following section, the empirics are more ambivalent, hence the avoidance of explicit categorisation.

Legitimation Successes

These conflicts were marked by the demonisation of American enemies, in accordance with the American way of war. In Panama, Noriega was heavily linked to the American drugs trade, which was the preeminent concern of most of the American public at the time (Gilboa 1995, 557; Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 134–35). After Noriega's indictment by two American federal grand juries in February 1989 for counts of racketeering and drug trafficking, the *New York Times* mentioned his involvement in the drug trade on 150 occasions in the 21 months that followed (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 135). Noriega was such an infamous figure that the Bush administration's decision to not support the coup against the Panamanian general in October 1989 was heavily criticised by Congress, providing a rare case of this body driving the charge to war (Gilboa 1995, 555). As Representative Pat Schroeder put it, "I, as many other people, applauded his [Bush's] statement that he wanted a kinder and gentler America. But I did not know that that was going to extend to Noriega" (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 135). Thus, when the invasion of Panama occurred in December 1989, Bush received bipartisan support for the invasion, with the media being

equally as approving (Mermin 1999, 42, 45), despite its classification by Jentleson (1992, 64) as an example of internal political change.

In the most significant mobilisation effort studied here, Bush (1991a, 1449) described Hussein as "Hitler revisited", with his regime displaying "a totalitarianism and a brutality that is naked and unprecedented in modern times". To illustrate this, Bush (1990c) often mentioned stories of human rights violations, such as the false allegation that Iraqi soldiers in Kuwait had "unplugged the oxygen to incubators supporting 22 premature babies" and then "shot the hospital employees" (Gardner 2010, 232). Continuing his comparisons to World War II, Bush claimed that not punishing Hussein would result in the crisis spiralling into greater conflict in the region, stating that "[a]ppeasement does not work" (G. H. W. Bush 1990b). Similarly, Hitler metaphors and comparisons to the crimes perpetrated by Nazi Germany were also used to generate war support during the interventions in Somalia and the Balkans (E. Cohen 2001, 46; Sapolsky and Shapiro 1996; G. Simons 1998, 287; Young 2005, 183).

More generally, the Gulf War was portrayed as a corrective to the Vietnam War and a return to the American way of war. In November 1990 for example, Bush (1990d) argued that should military action be required, "this will not be another Vietnam. This will not be a protracted, drawn-out war." This aligned with the clear distinction between war and peace in the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine and the American way of war (Bacevich 2005, 42). Like in the Korean War, this idea was present amongst the American public: one citizen of West Virginia explained in the build-up to the Gulf War that what truly bothered him most about Vietnam was how so much money and effort had been spent for no results (G. Simons 1998, 8). Hence, this member of the public charged that the Bush administration should remember that "if you fight, you … fight to win" (ibid). As noted above, the minimalist aims of the Gulf War reflected the desire to clearly differentiate the conflict from the Vietnam War.

Bush (1990a) turned to far-reaching political objectives to legitimate the Gulf War, telling Congress how the crisis offered "a rare opportunity to move toward a historic period of cooperation" and establish "a new world order". Before that, the invasion of Panama – designed to prevent Noriega from continuing to cause the U.S. trouble – became a crusade to "defend democracy in Panama" (E. Cohen 2001, 47). Likewise, Clinton spoke of how the intervention in Kosovo aimed to create "a future in which leaders cannot keep, gain or increase their power by teaching their young people to hate or kill others simply because of their faith or heritage", and a "future in which young Americans … will not have to fight in yet another major European conflict" (ibid). For both the Gulf War and Kosovo, it was effectively legitimation attempts in overdrive: there were eight different reasons given for the U.S. intervention in the Persian Gulf (Lewis 2012, 320) and ten for the intervention in Kosovo (M. J. Williams 2009, 48). As one contemporary commentator observed in the context of the

Gulf War, '[t]he problem isn't that he [Bush] hasn't stated some reasons … the problem is that he jumps among the reasons' (Sherry 1995, 466).

This reflects the points made above: risk management strategies are at odds with the rhetorical American way of war, but their indeterminacy also offers policymakers a great deal of flexibility in their legitimation efforts. In both cases, the logic here was that *more was better*: the more reasons offered, the better chance the administration would have in convincing Congress and the American public as to the worthiness of the cause. This legitimation tactic is made more noticeable because of the disconnect between the explanations for intervention offered to the American public and the probable reasons for intervention. In the Gulf War, the Bush administration intervened primarily to ensure that vast resources of oil would not be in the hands of Hussein's Iraq, with the regional balance of power being an important secondary concern (Lewis 2012, 320). The emergence of the "Hitler revisited" and "new world order" rhetoric reflects the administration's attempts to suppress the accusations that the war was about oil (Kreps 2011, 62). This was because oil and the balance of power could not 'be translated into a cause for which Americans would be willing to fight' (Lewis 2012, 320). In Kosovo, the main reason for intervening was to prevent adverse consequences elsewhere, but as Eliot Cohen (2001, 48) argued, this was almost exactly the same as the domino theory in Vietnam and accordingly could not be used as a legitimation strategy.[46]

In their multiple attempts to rationalise the interventions in the Persian Gulf and Kosovo, and especially because of the contrast between the lofty justifications of the use of force and the actual risk management strategies being employed, the Bush and Clinton administrations created a sense of disconnection in their legitimation efforts. As Stephen Hurst (2004) detailed in the case of the Gulf War, the Bush administration – by repeatedly demonising Hussein and then beginning to mention his nuclear programme after November 1990 – helped to inadvertently create a sense of disillusion with the outcomes of the conflict, as Saddam stayed in power and managed to potentially keep his supposed nuclear weapons. This disenchantment was despite how both objectives were, at most, secondary objectives for the Bush administration (ibid, 377). As Hurst elucidated, this could have reflected the incoherence of the rhetoric of the Bush administration demonstrated above: one poll found that 51 percent of respondents felt that the president had not explained clearly enough why exactly American troops were in the Persian Gulf (Jentleson 1992, 66). Another potential factor in this disillusionment was also noted in Chapter 2: that although the Gulf War was in many ways a 'back to the future moment' that reignited dominant tropes in the American way of war, crucially the U.S. avoided pursuing total victory to eradicate the cause of issues.

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[46] For the disconnection between NATO's rhetoric and the military strategies deployed, see Ignatieff (2000b, 111).

Although Bush encouraged Americans to understand the Gulf War via the lens of World War II (including a victory parade in Washington, D.C.), ultimately the Gulf War 'war seemed transient, forgettable', and certainly not on the scale of the so-called 'good war' (Sherry 1995, 475). There was a similarly anticlimactic atmosphere after the war in Kosovo when force was 'applied in such a way that the method and its purpose' was 'difficult to explain to … the public at large' (R. Smith 2007, 16; see also Ignatieff 2000b, 111). In the words of General Wesley Clark, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO during the war in Kosovo, the aftermath of the intervention "didn't feel like a victory" (Heng 2006, 81). Both cases reflect the nature of risk management strategies outlined above, wherein notions such as victory are outdated, but also the dualism of the American way of war.

Still, the cases of the Gulf War and the invasion of Panama are illustrative of the phenomenon mentioned in Chapter 2: that rapid *military* success will bring approval to the use of force on the basis that the dynamics behind the rally-round-the-flag effect do not have time to dissipate. Although Congress had been fully supportive of the Bush administration's initial mobilisation decision in Operation Desert Shield (with no member vocalising any objections to the policy), the second deployment of 200,000 U.S. soldiers was more contested (Zaller 1994b, 256). This was mirrored by anti-war protests at the level of the mass public in January 1991, organised in large parts by the group Vietnam Veterans Against the War (G. Simons 1998, 29). Congressional objections were much narrower, as they largely concerned the issue of timing: Democrats felt that sanctions and diplomacy should have been given more time to bear fruit (Zaller 1994a, 196–97). Thus, whilst the 'American public was divided just about exactly 50-50 on the eve of the Gulf War' (Hallin 2013, 97), it is noticeable that the shift from elite consensus to elite dissensus had no significant impact on polling asking whether the Bush administration had done the 'right thing' in sending U.S. troops to Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Shield (Zaller 1994a, 197).

Although the Bush Administration's AUMF did pass by the narrowest margin of victory for a war vote since 1812 (250-183 and 52-47 in the Senate and the House of Representatives respectively), Democrats' objections were also tempered to avoid being seen as obstructionist or unpatriotic once war began (Berinsky 2009, 24; Rockoff 2012, 308). Democratic Speaker Tom Foley spoke strongly against the merits of the Gulf War but ended his speech with the appeal to members that "however you vote … let us come together after the vote with the notion that we are Americans here, not Democrats and Republicans, all anxious to do the best for our country" (Zaller 1994b, 268). Similarly, Nunn – who had sponsored a counterproposal calling for continued sanctions against the Bush administration's AUMF – stated that upon the war's beginning, it was "time for America to stand together" (Sherry 1995, 464). This was reflected in media coverage of the conflict, as only 33 percent of respondents to one poll knew that Democrats had been more critical of

the Bush administration than Republicans (Entman 2004, 89). '[W]ithin about a week' of the beginning of Operation Desert Storm, public 'opinion had shifted to about 80 percent for the war' (Hallin 2013, 97). Reflecting on the Gulf War, one military official explained that "[l]ow levels of public support for war before the war started were no problem" as "[w]e felt that … as soon as the fighting started, there would be a surge of increased support" (Zaller 1994b, 264). As noted in Chapter 2 then, the Gulf War is illustrative of how, 'if the war could be won quickly enough, public support would never become an issue' (ibid). In terms of media coverage then, '[h]ad the Gulf War gone badly, it is reasonable to suspect that the press would have become critical … Without failure in the war, the media remained frozen in advocacy' (Mueller 2011, 677). Although the Bush administration did not adopt official censorship as in previous American wars, the restrictions on American journalists – much like those imposed during the invasion of Panama – effectively achieved the same goal (Collins and Glover 2002, 1; Ignatieff 2000b, 196; Lewis 2012, 360; G. Simons 1998, 335–36; Western 2005, 20). This reflected another important perceived lesson from the Vietnam era: that the management of media coverage in risk management wars would be essential to maintaining fragile political support (Holden Reid 2002, 45; Ignatieff 2000b, 191; Shaw 2006, 11; G. Simons 1998, 335–36; R. Smith 2007, 225).

In the case of Bosnia, although the deployment of peacekeepers occurred without any explicit authorisation, Senator Bob Dole would effectively invoke the rally-round-the-flag effect by arguing that it was "time for a reality check in Congress" and that "[i]f we would try to cut off funds, we would harm the men and women in the military who have already begun to arrive in Bosnia" (Banks and Straussman 1999, 214). Congress was also bypassed regarding the missile strikes against Iraq (Fisher 1998, 794) and the invasion of Panama (D'Haeseleer 2019, 1204). Especially given that these actions were limited enough in scope and duration, Congress had no real opportunity to contest these actions (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 7). Whilst this dissertation does diverge from the idea in democratic exceptionalism scholarship that democracies cannot fight lengthy wars, it also seems noticeable that short military affairs are more likely to be approved both during and after the event. Especially when Congress is sidestepped, there is very little stopping the administration from being able to legitimate their policies *by virtue of conducting them successfully*, which is particularly significant for theories that stress the role of Congress in the formulation of public opinion. Regarding Panama, for example, opinion polls averaged 32 percent approval for an American intervention before Operation Just Cause, and 82 percent after the event (Jentleson 1992, 55).

A similar dynamic could be observed in polling responses which seem to suggest that *doing something* – in itself – can be a legitimating factor in the use of force under the appropriate circumstances. For example, in various opinion polls, over 75 percent of respondents approved Clinton's decision to send cruise missile strikes to targets in

Afghanistan and Sudan (Baum 2003, 2–3). In his speech announcing the strikes, Clinton (1998) invoked the language of risk when stating that "[t]he risks from inaction, to America and the world, would be far greater than action", but he also emphasised the precision of this action: "[o]ur target was terror; our mission was clear: to strike at the network of radical groups affiliated with and funded by Usama bin Ladin, perhaps the preeminent organizer and financier of international terrorism in the world today." Given the low level of knowledge of foreign affairs amongst the U.S. public, it can hardly be claimed that Americans were thinking in terms of 'ends and means' in such a short-lived action, as per Larson's (1996, 10) framework for explaining levels of support for the use of force. Rather, this case speaks to how mobilisation interacts with legitimation and the inbuilt advantages of the U.S. government. Put another way, what circumstances would lead to a citizen objecting to a risk-free cruise missile strike against terrorists believed to be responsible for the death of American citizens?

Even though they existed over a far longer period (and were thus increasingly ambiguous in terms of results), the military actions against Iraq were also very popular, recording an average approval rate of 62 percent from 244 polls between 1992 and 2003 (Eichenberg 2005, 157). This reflected how Hussein had been successfully demonised as the number one enemy of the U.S., with between 96 and 97 percent of respondents between 1998 and mid-2002 viewing him unfavourably in opinion polls (Kreps 2011, 138), hence why the Clinton administration felt that they couldn't appear 'soft' by making any concessions to Iraq (Byman and Waxman 2000, xii, 35). The idea of *doing something* was present in Clinton's speech announcing 23 cruise missile strikes against Iraq in June 1993 as a response to the discovery of a previous plot to assassinate former President Bush: Clinton had ordered the strikes "to send a message to those who engage in state-sponsored terrorism" (Fisher 1998, 794). As the actions against Iraq resulted in no casualties, the same dynamic as above is present, but just over a much longer period. In this manner, the actions against Iraq were an important precursor to the normalisation of the War on Terror: a routinised war that had little material effect on the American public against an opposition that was uniformly disliked domestically.

Another way of assisting legitimation efforts seen in these conflicts is by securing international approval, as mentioned in Chapter 1. In the Gulf War, the legitimacy of the actions of the Bush administration was bolstered not only by a UNSC resolution allowing for the use of 'all necessary means' to remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait (Lewis 2012, 319), but also by the presence of Arab states within the military coalition (Ignatieff 2000b, 205). The successes of the Bush administration in this regard effectively 'cornered Congress', as voting against the AUMF to use force in the Persian Gulf would have looked like sabotage of both American and international efforts (Kreps 2011, 68). Indeed, in its vote on the AUMF,

Congress cited stated that the authorisation was in line with UNSC Resolution 678 (ibid). The Bush administration was equally diligent in the case of Somalia, as Bush insisted before the U.S. intervention that it would have to be endorsed by the UNSC alongside Muslim and African nations (Baum 2004, 209). As Matthew Baum noted, '[e]ach of these demands was consistent with a mission explicitly designed, at least in part, to minimize the political downside risk to the president' (ibid). In Kosovo, acting as part of NATO provided international legitimacy, especially as there had been no UNSC approval (ibid, 206).

During the Clinton presidency, although the U.S. defence budget was 20 times Haiti's GDP, the administration went to great efforts to secure authorisation from the UNSC to 'use all means necessary' to restore democracy in Haiti, as well as assembling a coalition of 19 states for the military intervention (Kreps 2011, 74, 77). Tellingly, the invasion itself was very much led by the U.S., with American troops making up 97 percent of the invasion force, whilst the post-conflict peacekeeping force was truly multilateral after March 1995, suggestive of the way that the Clinton administration wished to avoid any resemblance to the Vietnam War that had been invoked by elites (ibid, 75, 79). This appears to have worked, as in opinion polls, support for an invasion of Haiti increased by between 40 and 50 percent when a theoretical multilateral intervention was mentioned (ibid, 90). Similarly, any of the higher approval ratings for airstrikes in Bosnia were dependent on military campaigns being jointly undertaken with European allies, which effectively ensured a limited U.S. intervention (Sherry 1995, 482; Sobel 2001, 186). Undoubtedly, the marked and regular disagreements between the U.S. and its allies at least partly explains the middling strategy that the Clinton administration adopted (Trenta 2016, 178). In the end, American troops made up just 23 percent of the original deployment to Bosnia, and Bosnia policy averaged 46 percent approval across 141 polls (Eichenberg 2005, 157). Contrarily, the invasion of Panama – which was very popular by its conclusion – was internationally disapproved, with the UN General Assembly passing a measure (by a margin of 75-20) demanding the immediate withdrawal of American troops (D'Haeseleer 2019, 1208). These mixed results show how international approval can be a contributing factor in legitimation, but by no means a determining or necessary one.

Finally, it is worth noting the impact of partisanship on these legitimation attempts at a congressional level. In almost all the cases studied here with congressional votes, partisanship ruled the day, with congresspeople voting in support of their party if they were in government and vice versa if not (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 38–39). This dynamic is best illustrated in the case of Somalia, where Republicans supported and Democrats objected to the U.S. intervention during the Bush administration, only for this scenario to be directly reversed during the Clinton presidency (ibid). As such, partisanship exhibits a significant effect on elite legitimation, which was likely to influence public opinion more generally. Before partisanship is assumed to be an explanatory silver bullet, it is worth remembering the

broader focus of this dissertation, especially given the tendency for congresspeople to support military action once troops are committed to battle regardless of their vote. In other words, partisanship does not tell the whole story in explaining the relationship between the American public and the acceptability of the use of force, even if might tell us about the likelihood of elite approval.

<u>Legitimation Struggles</u>

Regarding Haiti, opinion polls showed the intervention to be the most unpopular use of force since the Vietnam War, with just 23 percent of respondents in one poll approving the invasion a week before its launch (Kreps 2011, 85–86). This was primarily because of the nature of the crisis in Haiti, which many felt did not concern key U.S. national interests. As Holsti (2004, 243) noted, 'the links between core American interests and the … post-Cold War conflicts such as those in Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Kosovo [were] harder to establish' than in the limited war era (see also Krieg and Rickli 2019, 47). In Somalia, for example, 'the strategic stakes … were arguably as small as they have ever been in a U.S. military deployment overseas' (Baum 2004, 197). Even officials in the Clinton administration were unable to outline a threat being posed to U.S. national security interests by the crisis in Haiti, making '[c]ongressional opposition … extraordinarily broad' in its scope, including opposition from Clinton's own party (Kreps 2011, 81, 85, 158; Mermin 1999, 118). Just one month before the invasion, only one percent of respondents in one poll felt that events in Haiti were the 'most important problem' facing the U.S. (Kreps 2011, 85). Even once the invasion began, only 24 percent of respondents felt there were national interests at stake in Haiti, showing an insignificant rallying effect (ibid). Similarly, during the NATO air campaign in Kosovo, four polls during March 1999 found that an average of just 37 percent of respondents felt that U.S. vital interests were at stake (*ABC News* 1999). Most drastically, even after the Battle of Mogadishu on 3 October 1993, only 3 percent of respondents felt that Somalia was one of the two most important issues facing the Clinton government (Klarevas 2000, 525).

Nevertheless, it is also worth acknowledging that contrary to theories that argue that the 'willingness to use troops overseas is closely related to perceptions of vital interest' (Rielly 1987, 7 in Jentleson 1992, 50), there was no correlation between the perception of vital interests and the levels of support for the use of force in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Rwanda (Jentleson and Britton 1998, 406). Whilst the perception of vital interests is certainly useful in legitimating the use of force, this perception is by no means determining or necessary as to levels of public support. Furthermore, a perceived lack of national interests does not prevent the use of force. In Haiti, for example, the intervention was made possible by avoiding any consultation with Congress as the administration was not 'even close' to securing enough prospective votes (Dieck 2015, 113), but also because there was a vocal minority in that

institution that was supportive of the eventual actions of the Clinton administration: the Black Caucus and the 'New York-Florida' lobby which had large Haitian constituencies (Kreps 2011, 86-87). Crucially, these congresspeople played an important role in supporting the domestic policies of the Clinton administration, suggesting the interplay between domestic and international politics described in Chapter 2. Although the case of Haiti does suggest the type of intervention that may not be conducive to legitimation, it also reminds us of the flexibility afforded to policymakers to conduct war policies, even if elite and popular support may be very limited. This is especially so given the nature of events that unfolded: although the mission led by Jimmy Carter was successful in arranging for the ruling junta to step down and making the invasion a largely peaceful affair, the historical record and Clinton's rhetoric suggests that this mission was primarily dispatched as a precursor to an invasion that would encounter military resistance (Morley and McGillion 1997, 380, 382).

Similarly, the political context was unconducive to an overseas military intervention when the Bosnian War began in 1992, as the economy was struggling and the Bush administration felt that any American casualties would have been a banana skin in an election year (Dieck 2015, 96; Sobel 2001, 181). In this manner, the Bush presidency provides an example of how an administration – if it 'unwilling to spend political capital on solving the conflict' – 'will try to lower the expectations and the acceptability of the intervention or ignore the problem altogether' (Dieck 2015, 186). In the case of Bosnia it was essentially the latter, as the Bush administration felt that any meaningful military action would require significant mobilisation costs in the form of American ground troops (Sobel 2001, 181). As Sobel noted, 'the salient reason for not using ground troops was the lack of support of the American people' (ibid). Certainly then, there is reason to doubt Bush's (1991b) public statement at the end of the Gulf War that "the specter of Vietnam has been buried forever in the desert sands of the Arabian Peninsula". The Gulf War had certainly restored the faith in the U.S. military as an institution and showed a model of military intervention that would be acceptable to the American public (Bacevich 2005, 57; Ignatieff 2000b, 168; Lewis 2012, 312, 364), but the legacy of the Vietnam War remained strong in political discourse and the commitments of ground troops remained taboo. One poll in March 1991 reported that more than half of respondents felt that the military success in the Persian Gulf had failed to erase the memory of defeat in Vietnam (Casey 2014, 208), and the Bush administration themselves regularly invoked the memory of Vietnam to quell any demands for a potentially costly mobilisation effort in an election year in Bosnia. Describing the crisis in the Balkans as a "very complicated, ethnic, historically ethnic battle out there", Bush argued that the area looked "like Dien Bien Phu" (Sobel 2001, 198). For Bush, he did not "want to see the U.S. bogged down in any way into some guerrilla warfare" having "lived through that crisis" in Vietnam (ibid, 195).

However, as more media sources became available in Bosnia, the previously paradigmatic framing of the Bosnia crisis as a conflict rooted in ethnic tribal hatreds began to be challenged (Western 2005, 149, 155–56). In particular, the media provided evidence that violence against civilian populations could not be equally blamed on both sides, and one *New York Times* editorial board piece stated that '[t]he war in Bosnia is not a fair fight and it is not war. It is slaughter' (ibid, 167). Although entering the White House having called for more action in the Balkans, Clinton was unable to generate support among European allies for its 'lift and strike' plan. This was problematic as although the U.S. public did want the Clinton administration to do more throughout the crisis, they remained sceptical of any unilateral military intervention (Trenta 2016, 159). Clinton was consistently clear that U.S. troops would only be used to enforce a peace agreement, rather than to create one (Casey 2014, 208; Daalder 1998). In this context, the policy of the Clinton administration essentially became to avoid pushing for military action in Congress and delay U.S. policy 'until the killings in Bosnia reached such proportions that they could no longer be ignored' (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 143). This occurred slowly: after the Sarajevo marketplace bombing in February 1994, one poll found that 57 percent of respondents approved of airstrikes in conjunction with European allies, and this figure continued to rise in the spring of that year (Sobel 2001, 214). The actions of Serb forces taking UN peacekeepers hostage, as well as the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995, both contributed to the idea that the status quo policy was not working, and support for airstrikes reached levels as high as 71 percent in June 1995 (ibid, 189-90). Media coverage played an important role here: by focusing on the plight of refugees and emphasising Western failures, 'coverage was of a critical 'do something' nature' (Robinson 2002, 82).

Even where there was clear support for a change in U.S. policy, the Clinton administration remained keen to avoid any potential legitimation issues by downplaying risks that would be posed to U.S. soldiers as per the model of risk management strategies discussed above. In response to the Sarajevo bombing, Clinton (1994) announced that "that the risks" posed to U.S. forces participating in Operation Deliberate Force were "minimal". Similarly, after the Dayton Agreement, members of the Clinton administration would only gain the approval of Congress with promises that all 22, 000 troops would be removed within a year of their arrival (Banks and Straussman 1999, 202, 210; E. Cohen 2001, 49; Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 13; Peceny and Sanchez-Terry 1998, 13). This was to counter the concerns regarding this policy, with 58 percent of Americans believing that troops should remain at home (Peceny and Sanchez-Terry 1998, 13). Implicitly invoking the idea of an open-ended quagmire à la Vietnam, Clinton would state that the Dayton Agreement was "fashioned" so "that there would be a limited, defined, strictly military mission" for U.S. peacekeepers (Sobel 2001, 218). Finally, the Clinton administration attempted to legitimate its policies in drastic

humanitarian terms that had been avoided during the failures to generate European support for intervention. As Secretary of State Warren Christopher put it, although there would be "considerable national debate" over the administration's policies, "[i]t is important that the people of America remember the … terrible images of the last four years of people dying … hungry … in camps" (ibid, 223).

Another case that demonstrates legitimation struggles in this era is Somalia. Despite a July 1992 congressional resolution calling for an intervention to combat the emerging humanitarian crisis in Somalia, the Bush administration again avoided any intervention because of domestic political fears in an election year (Baum 2004, 189). After Bush's electoral defeat in November 1992 however, the administration performed a U-turn, deploying 25,000 U.S. troops as part of Operation Restore Hope in December 1992 (Western 2005, 133). Similarly, in January 1993, Bush enacted a more interventionist policy in Bosnia by initiating the enforcement of NATO's no-fly zone policy that had been announced previously in October 1992 (Sobel 2001, 199). Given the timing of the second 200,000 strong troop deployment in the Persian Gulf crisis (two days after the midterm congressional elections), these are telling examples of how legitimation concerns interact with the decision to use force or not. Thus, when Bush became a lame-duck president, public opinion became far less relevant given that there were no electoral pressures to consider. Western (2005, 137) has argued that Bush and Powell believed that the incoming Clinton administration would use the bully pulpit to promote U.S. intervention in Bosnia, which the outgoing administration felt was less conducive to military intervention than the crisis in Somalia. Accordingly, 'Bush and Powell decided that if the United States were going to intervene, it should be in Somalia' (ibid), effectively attempting to bind policies for the next administration.

Support for the initial humanitarian relief effort in Somalia in December 1992 was high amongst political elites and the American public (Baum 2004, 189; Burk 1999, 74; Klarevas 2000, 526). Yet, much like in Bosnia, any support for U.S. policies was conditional, with the Senate passing an AUMF for Somalia in February 1993 only based on American troops participating in a narrowly focused humanitarian operation (Burk 1999, 74). In addition, support amongst the American public for actions in Somalia was crucially *time-dependent*, with polls in the winter of 1992-93 showing that the majority of Americans believed that U.S. troops would not be in Somalia for more than a year (Klarevas 2000, 527). Indeed, the frailty of public support was exposed as the situation developed in Somalia during UNOSOM II. In June 1993, 24 Pakistani peacekeepers were killed by forces working under the warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid, followed by the death of 7 American soldiers in August and September (Feaver and Gelpi 2004, 135). In response to these events, Clinton sent 400 U.S. Army Rangers to Somalia to capture Aidid, but these attempts not only failed but at times dramatically so, such as accidentally capturing UN aid workers and killing around 200

Somalian citizens on 9 September (ibid, 136). By mid-September 1993, only 36 percent of respondents believed that the American mission was 'under control', with 52 percent believing that the U.S. was 'too deeply involved' in Somalia (Burk 1999, 68-69). Additionally, '[t]he number of people expecting the United States to get bogged down in Somalia increased significantly' by this point, again conjuring up memories of Vietnam (Klarevas 2000, 527). Therefore, although the 18 American casualties at the Battle of Mogadishu impacted levels of public approval, the damage was largely done before, with Burk's (1999, 67) analysis of opinion polls regarding Somalia showing that the drop in support after Mogadishu only represented 23 percent of the withdrawal of support before October 1993. Nonetheless, these events did have concrete effects, with the Clinton administration deciding to withdraw all troops just three days after the Battle of Mogadishu (Delaney 2004, 37), and later Congress passing an act in November 1993 that set the date for U.S. troop withdrawal for March 1994 (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 16).

Feaver and Gelpi (2004, 135) contended that '[h]ad the White House sought to mobilize support' for American policies in Somalia policy *after* Mogadishu, 'this effort would have most likely succeeded.' That is, in the aftermath of the Battle of Mogadishu, there was increased support for the capturing or punishment of Aidid, which was the exact mission that American public opinion had been ambivalent about before (ibid). Again, this speaks to the idea of doing *something* as a viable legitimation strategy, especially when the U.S. has been a 'victim' of an attack. What's more, this case again highlights that mobilisation costs do not necessarily speak for themselves as the casualties hypothesis dictates, for there were an almost identical amount of U.S. casualties in Panama and Somalia. For Feaver and Gelpi, the case of 'Somalia confirms that if the president … does not attempt to mobilize public support in the midst of a costly military operation, then the public support will not long be mobilized on its own' (ibid). It is not hard to highlight the failings of the Clinton administration in the legitimation of its Somalia policies, especially as administration officials had stated one week before the Battle of Mogadishu that the U.S. was moving away from a purely military goal of capturing Aidid (Mermin 1999, 116). Similarly, regarding Bosnia, the Bush administration originally highlighted the conflict as a major international crisis before deciding not to intervene (ibid, 139-40). Put simply, legitimation chances are increased when the government has a consistent and coherent policy.

Prioritisation

In this section, three different categories are outlined in terms of their respective prioritisation: deliberately prioritised conflicts (the Gulf War, Haiti, Panama, Afghanistan and Sudan), unwantedly prioritised uses of force (Somalia, Bosnia), and non-prioritised actions (Iraq, Kosovo).

Wanted prioritisation: Gulf War, Haiti, Panama, Afghanistan and Sudan

The Gulf War became an event of great significance in U.S. politics, 'transcend[ing] normal political discourse' to become 'the mother of all media events' (LaMay 1991, 44 in Mueller 1994; see also Baum 2003, 20; Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 193). Over the thirteen months of the crisis, there was a daily average of 24 minutes of coverage devoted to the events in the Persian Gulf on *NBC*, *CBS*, and *ABC* news channels (Knecht and Weatherford 2006, 720). In opinion polls, 63 percent of respondents answered that the conflict was 'very' or 'extremely' important to them, and 90 percent responded that they had paid 'quite a bit' or 'a great deal' of attention to the Gulf War (Baum 2003, 20). This was not just the case in terms of the ground war itself, but rather for the entirety of the Persian Gulf crisis, meaning that public opinion was also relevant before conflict began. The average figure for 'don't know' answers in terms of the approval of government policies over the entirety of the crisis was a mere 7 percent (ibid). Given that this figure is almost exactly half of the average response regarding the Vietnam War between 1965 and 1973, and the 'don't know' average is even slightly higher during the Korean War, what explains this degree of salience (ibid)?

For Baum, these differences reflected the changing fashions in which American citizens absorbed political information (ibid, 21, 40). Because the Gulf War became a media event and was covered in immensely popular 'soft news' programmes, an increased number of Americans were exposed to war and thus took an opinion on the issue. Yet, there are also differences to the limited war era that Baum does not explore, such as the Bush administration's deliberate prioritisation attempts. In line with the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine, the support of Congress and the American people would have to be secured before American forces were deployed overseas to prevent the mission creep of Vietnam (Lewis 2012, 301). In Weinberger's (1986, 685) words, 'never again should the imperative of public support be ignored'. As such, the Gulf War was necessarily prioritised to attain the perceived necessity of public approval. Government-led prioritisation to generate support for military interventions can also be seen in the cases of Panama and Haiti (Mermin 1999, 3). In December 1989, for example, Bush mentioned Panama some 103 times in 19 public statements and documents, which almost equals Bush's rhetoric in January 1991, when Iraq was referred to 139 times in 34 statements (Baum 2004, 207). Like the Gulf War then, the invasion of Panama 'attract[ed] sustained and intense public scrutiny' (ibid, 191). The intervention in Haiti was also 'the focus of major White House efforts to win public support' (Mermin 1999, 3), leading to a high degree of saliency in the media, with an average of 30 minutes per day devoted to the issue across 167 days on *NBC*, *CBS*, and *ABC* news channels (Knecht and Weatherford 2006, 720).

Particularly in the Gulf War, one might point to the intuitive relationship between prioritisation and mobilisation. Yet, as also noted in Chapter 1, the relationship between

these two themes is by no means predetermined. Although there was hardly a significant mobilisation effort in the case of the cruise missile strikes against Afghanistan and Sudan, 79 percent of respondents to a poll which took place the day after the strikes answered that they were following the story 'very' or 'fairly' closely (Baum 2003, 1). In part this reflected the extraordinary timing of these strikes, as they occurred just three days after Clinton had testified to a federal grand jury concerning the Monica Lewinsky affair (ibid, 1). Although one does not have to believe the argument put forward at the time in the style of diversionary war theory (i.e. that these strikes were a deliberate distraction from the Lewinsky scandal; ibid, 1-3), it would be hard to disagree with the idea that the Clinton administration would not have wanted to move the political narrative onto a new focus. More generally, these cases demonstrate how the deprioritisation theoretically associated with risk management strategies is not an absolute rule, but rather reflects the necessity of legitimation demands and the wider political context of the time.

Unwanted prioritisation: Somalia, Bosnia

Kennan (1993) published a previous diary entry from December 1992 in which he argued that the initial bipartisan and public support for the newly launched Operation Restore Hope had been fostered by 'the exposure of the Somalia situation by the American media, above all, television.' Similarly, Cohen (1994, 8–9), stressed that by 'focusing daily on the starving children in Somalia … TV mobilized the conscience of the nation's public institutions, compelling the government into a policy of intervention'. Cohen also posited that 'by concentrating almost exclusively on the eminently pictorial human-interest aspects of the fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina', television coverage had increased consideration of an intervention in the Balkans (ibid, 10). Particularly in Somalia, this assertion is not empirically supported, and research showed that television coverage was predominantly *in response* to government action (Larson 1996, 45; Mermin 1999, 121; Robinson 2002, 52-54; Western 2005, 162). As Baum (2004, 208) noted, 'right up until the moment the Bush administration informed the press of its intent to launch Operation Restore Hope, neither the media nor the public was particularly attentive to Somalia', and in fact had paid more attention in August of 1992 when Bush chose not to deploy troops. Furthermore, when the decision to deploy American troops was taken, media coverage was overwhelmingly supportive, leading Robinson (2002, 59) to conclude that the intervention in Somalia is better evidence for indexing or hegemony models than it is the CNN effect. In this way, even in the post-Cold War era the U.S. government has more flexibility to determine the relative prioritisation of any particular issue than the CNN effect model suggests.

There is a similar phenomenon in the other cases here; although some 82 percent of Americans were following events in Bosnia 'very' or 'fairly closely' in January 1996 (Kohut 1997, 11) and media interest did peak during humanitarian crises, media coverage was not

consistent enough to force the Clinton administration to take decisive measures regarding the conflict (Trenta 2016, 159). This more general lack of prioritisation was part of the logic of the Bush administration's stance before the 1992 presidential election. At an October 1992 meeting, Cheney noted that "if we listen to the pundits and the public opinion polls, nobody gives a damn about foreign policy and national security. If you look at it, it's down to 1 or 2 percent in the polls in terms of what people rate as important considerations facing the country this day" (Sobel 2001, 206). This position was supported by the polls more generally, as 'a majority of Americans did not know how to evaluate the president's handling of the situation [in Bosnia], indicating little real understanding or interest' (ibid, 180).

These non-prioritisation efforts were not flawless, as the concentration camp controversy in August 1992 propelled Bosnia into the news. After a *Newsday* report of Serb concentration-style camps, a State Department spokesman initially affirmed the existence of the camps before the very next day the Assistant Secretary of State told the House Foreign Affairs Committee that the existence of the camps could not be confirmed (Western 2005, 157). Over the next ten days, the incoherency of the Bush administration led to a significant increase in media coverage, with 48 television news stories, in comparison to only ten stories in the previous twelve days (ibid, 158). After this ten-day period, the Bush administration announced that U.S. AC-130s would be sent to Somalia to assist famine victims, which had the effect of diverting media attention from critical coverage of Bosnia and towards sympathetic stories of Somalia (ibid, 162). This appears to have been part of the logic of the Somalian intervention, and Scowcroft later reflected that the Bosnian camp issue "did have a significant influence" on policy to Bosnia, as the administration did not wish to be seen as "wholly flinthearted" and the airlift to Somalia was "a lot cheaper … to demonstrate that we had a heart" (ibid). Finally on Bosnia, events on the ground – and the sheer duration of the crisis by this point – again increased the prioritisation of the crisis by 1995. As noted above, the taking of UN hostages and the Srebrenica massacre not only increased the legitimacy of any potential U.S. intervention but also concurrently raised the salience of the conflict, as Srebrenica became a media 'event of preeminent importance' (Robinson 2002, 78).

Even after the deployment of U.S. troops in Somalia, Bush relatively deprioritised the U.S. intervention as would be expected of a risk management strategy. In comparison to the one-month figures for Panama and the Gulf War cited above, when Bush deployed U.S. troops in December 1992 as part of Operation Restore Hope, Somalia was only mentioned 38 times in that month in 10 public statements or documents (Baum 2004, 207). Like Bush, Clinton attempted to 'minimize the public profile' of his administration's policies in Somalia to avoid creating any significant political costs (ibid, 189). Crucially in terms of legitimation, this deprioritisation strategy appears to have worked, with opinion polls giving Clinton high marks for Somalia policies in this period, suggesting how the American public largely assume

foreign policy competency among new presidents (ibid, 194, 213). Nevertheless, as discussed previously, events on the ground in Somalia meant that media attention was drawn towards Somalia (ibid, 213). The failure to capture Aidid drew attention to the failings in U.S. policy, which were visually crystallised in the Battle of Mogadishu. One poll reported that nearly 60 percent of Americans had seen the footage of a dead U.S. soldier being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu (ibid, 218), and after this event 'a vast majority of Americans were monitoring the situation in Somalia' (Klarevas 2000, 525). In October, nearly 15 percent more of respondents claimed to be following events in Somalia 'very' or 'fairly' closely than in September (Baum 2004, 218). Significant debates about the worthiness of U.S. policy in Somalia, sparked by visually provoking images from Mogadishu, combined to make Somalia a political priority, despite the best efforts of the Bush and Clinton administration. This case acts as an indication of how military failures and legitimation disputes can often provoke unwanted prioritisation.

Non-prioritisation: Iraq, Kosovo

These final two cases can be defined by how they failed to become prioritised, contrarily to the conventional wisdom on the American way of war. Ricks (2006, 13) noted how Operation Northern Watch – the no-fly zone in northern Iraq which ran from 1997 to 2003 – 'was typical of U.S. military operations' of this period: 'small-scale, open-ended, and largely ignored by the American people'. In the largest U.S. military strikes since 1991 consisting of nearly 2,000 missiles and bombs, the Clinton administration insisted that Operation Desert Fox was insufficient for the definition of war (ibid, 19; Bacevich 2001, 180). According to then Secretary of State Madeline Albright, this was "an important distinction" (Fisher 1998, 796). Like Operation Just Cause in Panama, these actions occurred without congressional approval, helping to deprioritise these operations. Furthermore, this *non*-war stance was consistent with the position taken throughout this period; as Cohen argued in 2002, 'the Gulf War did not end in February 1991. For a decade now, we've been fighting this low-level war without calling it such' (Heng 2006, 118; see also Coker 2001, 58-59). Here, Cohen alluded to the deprioritisation of these uses of force against Iraq, and even George W. Bush observed in 2001 that these bombing missions had become "routine" (Heng 2006, 132). This non-prioritisation reflected how there were neither significant legitimation nor mobilisation efforts from the Clinton administration, but it also had a legitimating effect: as the bombing became 'routine, it also became non-controversial' (Bacevich 2002, 166 in Heng 2006, 7-8). In comparison to the anti-war movement against American involvement in Vietnam, only 'modest resistance' emerged to the continued use of force against Iraq in 1998 (Heaney and Rojas 2015, 39).

The domestic political situation was an important context for the non-prioritisation of the intervention in Kosovo. Similarly to the cruise missile strikes against Afghanistan and Sudan in August 1998, the debates over the merits of NATO airstrikes in Kosovo were

overshadowed by the Lewinsky affair (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 148). As a staffer on a congressional foreign affairs committee put it in October 1998, "I think we've waited too long on Kosovo … And let's face it. We're in the middle of this other mess [of] a debate about impeachment" (ibid). As it were, once the NATO airstrikes begin in March 1999, the Clinton administration again went to efforts to describe the use of military force as something other than war (Bacevich 2001, 156). For Clark, the conflict was "not, strictly speaking, a war" (Ignatieff 2000b, 3), whilst Defense Secretary Cohen was unwilling to declare whether the conflict fulfilled "a classic definition of war" (Heng 2006, 64). The administration's attempts to avoid the term war reflect the different standards of success in risk management strategies; *shaping* the international environment was simply incompatible with the traditional conceptions of *victory* in the popular imaginary (Bacevich 2001, 156; M. J. Williams 2009, 160). This is also apparent in the case of Iraq above. In this manner, this was an attempt to not only deprioritise the conflict in the same way that American policymakers during the Cold War avoided the language of war, but also to prevent the type of disconnection issues that can be associated with the legitimation of risk management strategies. Lastly, the seemingly inconclusive ending of the NATO intervention in Kosovo meant that the campaign's presence in the news was particularly short-lived (Bacevich and Cohen 2001, xii). As Bacevich (2001, 159) put it, '[b]y the time the war finally wound down … Americans had effectively decided that it no longer merited their attention.'

Conclusion

To begin with, this chapter outlined risk management strategies in theory. Given the minimalist aims of managing risks rather than defeating threats, it was argued that risk management strategies face legitimation challenges given their diversion from the traditional conceptions of the American way of war and war in the Western imaginary more generally. Again, however, the risk-averse nature of these military strategies made the use of force possible, as per the dualism of the American way of war. The second half of the chapter applied the theoretical insights from IR scholarship on risk management strategies to eight case studies between 1989 and 2001. Although these individual case studies differ in scale and longevity from the War on Terror, as the first conflicts of the risk age they give us important insights into how the War on Terror has become normalised.

Firstly and foremostly, these case studies were defined by their non-mobilisation efforts as U.S. policymakers repeatedly attempted to reduce the material impact of these wars on American society. Crucially here, the RMA gave American policymakers a method of using military force with an even more limited impact on U.S. society than the limited wars before them. In particular, the legacy of the Vietnam War remained strong in this period. Like in that war, examples were given here as to how policymakers opted for suboptimal military strategies to avoid mobilisation effects that would bring legitimation issues into contention.

Where legitimation was necessary, these case studies still showed the language of the American way of war being used, such as the demonisation of enemies and the predilection for far-reaching political objectives. However, doing so created disconnections between this rhetoric and the reality of risk management strategies, which have far less ambitious objectives. Especially with the Gulf War and the NATO intervention in Kosovo, this had an impact in terms of the long-term memory of these conflicts. Nonetheless, what lots of these conflicts showed were the inbuilt legitimation advantages of the state: by having little effect on the American populace, these cases were often approved of or simply ignored. As examples such as the continued use of force against Iraq show, conflicts could be successfully non-prioritised in accordance with ideal risk management strategies. Finally, prioritisation had a clear relationship to the issue of legitimation, in that where governments believed the use of force would be popular – such as the Gulf War – they explicitly chose to prioritise these conflicts, with the inverse being true for conflicts where legitimation was doubted such as Somalia. In this way, the interaction between these three themes in the potential normalisation of war is again evident, with this being further explored in Part II.

Part II: The War on Terror

The second half of this dissertation applies the normalisation framework to the War on Terror. Although counterterrorism was certainly a concern of administrations before the Bush presidency, it was the events of 9/11 and the ensuing War on Terror that made counterterrorism the central strategic priority and drove 'the most rapid and dramatic change in the history of U.S. foreign policy' (Walt 2001, 56). In the process, counterterrorism was the justification for the most significant uses of force since the Vietnam War, and even in 2020, all deployments of force were legally justified under the remit of counterterrorism (Hall 2020). Whilst the Reagan and Clinton administrations did use the "War on Terror(ism)" labels, this rhetoric was not 'was not matched by 'warlike' responses from the Pentagon' which was a central part of the Bush administration's "War on Terror" and the counterterrorism campaigns that followed (Michaels 2013, 25, 27).[47] For Mark Danner (2016, 37–38), part of the clear shift to the war paradigm by the Bush administration was to differentiate themselves from the Clinton administration and reduce their political culpability for the 9/11 attacks. Whilst the previous chapter has shown the advent of the risk management era in the 1990s, '[i]t was in the days, weeks and months following 9/11 that transatlantic relations truly entered the age of risk' (M. J. Williams 2009, 2; see also Beck 2006b, 147).

After all, terrorism is in many ways the embodiment of a risk problem. Unlike other acts of violence, terrorist attacks are focused primarily on the symbolic level, 'to be seen, [and] to strike fear in the hearts of the observer' (Bousquet 2006, 741). As stated in the previous chapter, risk is ultimately a matter of perception, and the threat of terrorism is particularly prone to misperception due to the availability heuristic (M. J. Williams 2009, 2). This dynamic was only heightened after 9/11; as Coker (2009, 14) put it, 'the attack hit home where it mattered most – the imagination.' For Beck (2006b, 149–50), 'the perception of risk' was the key driver of the War on Terror and its continuation, and this has only increased with the advent of social media as transnational terrorist organisations have effectively recruited and generated fear via this platform (Krieg and Rickli 2019, 97, 108). Whilst terrorism has always been a problem to states, it has become globalised because of the second modernity, making unambiguous solutions to terrorism increasingly unfeasible (Heng 2006, 13). Put another way, 'war has become boundless' and 'postnational', meaning that state boundaries had limited meaning in preventing the risks posed by transnational terrorist organisations (Beck

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[47] The strikes against terrorist bases in Afghanistan and Sudan discussed in Chapter 5 were an exception to the rule in this regard. For example, the Pentagon had no role in the Clinton administration's response to the 1993 attack on the World Trade Centre and was restricted to only increasing defensive measures after the Khobar Towers attacks in 1996 (Michaels 2013, 27).

2006b, 132). Moreover, as argued in Chapter 5, the comparative components of threat as intent and capability do not apply to the issue of terrorism: as the Bush administration's 2003 *National Security Strategy for Combatting Terrorism* summarised, 'the shadowy nature of terrorist organisations precludes an easy analysis of their capabilities or intent' (Heng 2006, 94).

If transnational terrorism was the embodiment of a risk problem, the response of the Bush administration was also in many ways an archetypal risk management strategy. As Beck (2009, 9) reflected, his previous works seemed to 'read like descriptions of the world' after 9/11. At heart, the logic of the War on Terror is preventative: whereas previous counterterrorism efforts had consisted of either defensive counterterrorism measures or offensive retaliatory actions against terrorist groups, it was dictated after 9/11 that the U.S. would go overseas to prevent terrorist attacks at home. According to Jenkins (2017), although the 'War on Terror did not begin with a clearly articulated strategy', it was bound together by 'a desperate effort to prevent another attack of equal or greater magnitude. *Prevent* was the key word' here, as it is for risk management strategies more broadly. As such, the Bush administration also moved away from the logic of deterrence that dictated U.S. Cold War policy. The problem, as Beck (2006b, 139; 2009, 40) asked, was 'how can you threaten suicide bombers with death?' Thus, the Bush administration adopted a preventative risk logic, with Bush (2004a) reflecting in 2004 that after 9/11 he "made a decision: [o]ur country will not sit back and wait for future attacks; we will prevent those attacks by going after the enemy." This risk thinking has been also put forward by each administration studied in this part of the dissertation. The Obama administration's *National Counterterrorism Strategy* (The White House 2011) reaffirmed how the U.S. 'remain[ed] committed … to disrupt, dismantle, and eventually defeat al-Qa'ida and its affiliates and adherents to ensure the security of our citizens and interests', whilst the equivalent document from the Trump administration declared that '[s]ince September 11, 2001, we have learned that winning the war on terrorism requires our country to aggressively pursue terrorists' (The White House 2018). Because terrorism cannot realistically be eradicated, these quotes attest to the central idea of the risk society outlined in the previous chapter: 'how to feign control over the uncontrollable' (Beck 2002, 41). Finally, as the three following chapters show, the War on Terror has been fought as a risk management strategy in terms of both its risk-aversion and its routinisation.

The following three chapters focus individually on the Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations. To briefly summarise the overall position put forward, it is argued that the Bush administration launched an effective rhetorical campaign in the wake of 9/11 to establish and prioritise the War on Terror discourse. Most importantly, this discourse established the base for any legitimation efforts during the beginning of the military conflict, such as establishing the common-sense status of counterterrorism *as war* and the nature of

the terrorist enemy being fought. In doing so, the War on Terror discourse reduced the chances of dissent against the Bush administration's legitimation efforts, as best seen in the pre-war debates over Afghanistan and Iraq. Although, as Chapter 6 shows, the Bush administration was acutely aware of the potential for its legitimation efforts to be brought into question as mobilisation costs increased, hence the encouragement of normality domestically and the adoption of risk-averse military strategies overseas. Accordingly, although this chapter reveals the legitimation challenges that arose particularly vis-à-vis Iraq, this chapter also establishes the context for the normalisation of war during the Obama and Trump administrations. In particular, from the lead-up to war with Iraq onwards, the Afghanistan War drifted to the margins of American politics, especially as mobilisation costs remained relatively low in comparison to the Iraq War. Even the Bush administration – which originally put the War on Terror at the front and centre of its political strategy – would oversee the routinisation of the use of force to some extent.

Primarily, however, the growing mobilisation costs of the War on Terror set the base for the discontent that Obama channelled in his 2008 presidential campaign, leading his supporters to believe that his election would result in the end of the War on Terror and the beginning of a new era in U.S. foreign policy (McCrisken 2011). As it were, the Obama administration would 'continue… almost all of his predecessor's counterterrorism policies' (Goldsmith 2012, x; see also Desch 2010, 425; Glennon 2015, 1–2; Gregory 2011, 247; R. Jackson 2014, 76–77; R. Jackson and Tsui 2017, 73; P. Neumann 2019, 15; Rubin 2020, 83; Scheuerman 2013, 525), including a significant troop increase in Afghanistan in 2009 and a return of troops to Iraq in 2014. Although existent scholarship suggests that these policies represent the continuity of the War on Terror discourse, Chapter 7 argues that the *changes* implemented by the Obama administration played a vital role in the *broad continuity* of the War on Terror. Obama's ability to repackage the War on Terror to his liberal supporters was of crucial importance in the continuation of the use of force, such as the surge of U.S troops to Afghanistan in 2009. This rebranding was later accompanied by the adoption of a light-footprint approach to counterterrorism, relying on airpower such as lethal drones, special operations forces (SOF), and proxy forces (Staniland 2018). Such an approach reduced the mobilisation costs that encouraged legitimation challenges during the Bush presidency, but they also allowed Obama to deprioritise counterterrorism campaigns to what he deemed the appropriate level. Combined, Obama's legitimation efforts, along with the demobilisation and deprioritisation of the light-footprint approach allowed for the normalisation of war.

In contrast to Obama, Trump heavily prioritised the issue of (counter)terrorism during his first year in the White House. This prioritisation reflected Trump's attempts to generate a sense of crisis amongst the American electorate as populism requires, and then latterly to exaggerate the Trump administration's effects on counterterrorism efforts upon taking office.

In addition, towards the end of the Trump presidency, the president also attempted to take credit for abiding by the American way of war and ending the War on Terror. As shown in Chapter 8, Trump's claims belie a more nuanced picture. That is, although the Trump administration's mobilisation strategies were largely marked by an initial intensification before a shift towards withdrawal, the concrete progress towards the latter goal did not constitute an end to the War on Terror. Indeed, contrary to the president's rhetoric, the Trump administration's military strategies crucially stayed within the dominant paradigm of the light-footprint approach, as best evidenced in the counter-ISIS campaign (Biegon and Watts 2020, 50; Dombrowski and Reich 2018, 58; Miriello 2017; P. Neumann 2019, 2; Rubin 2020, 106). Where changes occurred in counterterrorism operations, these were largely unexplained or kept secret from the American public. Whilst the politics of (counter)terrorism resurged during the Trump administration, the core logic of the War on Terror became increasingly consolidated and normalised outside of political discussion. The following three chapters trace in detail how this situation came to be.

6: George W. Bush's War on Terror: Dominance and Decline

Chapter Outline

This chapter consists of three main sections. The first looks at how 9/11 shattered existing national security discourses, along with the discourse that the Bush administration put forward to fill this void. The key components of the War on Terror discourse are outlined, which set the base for any legitimation efforts in this period. The second part of the chapter analyses the Afghanistan War, particularly in terms of how its relative deprioritisation allowed for the continued use of force without significant legitimation challenges. This contrasts with the conflict studied in the third section of the chapter, which is the Iraq War. This final section is split into two parts, with the former analysing the Bush administration's legitimation attempts in the lead-up to the Iraq War, and the latter looking at the mobilisation costs and legitimation challenges that occurred in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq. Despite these issues, the chapter finishes by analysing the Iraq 'surge', which is a telling reminder of the flexibility afforded to U.S. policymakers regarding matters of war and peace.

9/11, Economic Non-mobilisation, and the War on Terror Discourse

As noted in Chapter 2, events do not speak for themselves, including 9/11. Nonetheless, certain incidents can challenge dominant discourses and create discursive spaces for meaning to be established, which is what happened in this case (Bousquet 2006, 740; Solomon 2014, 118). In particular, the idea of the U.S. homeland being invulnerable or disconnected from the security troubles of the rest of the world was shattered (Der Derian 2001; Holland 2012, 84–85). In Gaddis' words, '[i]t was not just the Twin Towers that collapsed on that morning of September 11, 2001: so too did some of our most fundamental assumptions about international, national, and personal security' (Croft 2006, 40). This can be seen by the initial reactions to 9/11, which suggested a lack of relevant cultural discourses for understanding the day's events: as one citizen put it, "first I wasn't angry, because I couldn't believe it was happening" (Solomon 2014, 118).

Even with these comprehension issues, there is evidence to suggest that 9/11 had an instant impact on the potential legitimation of the use of force. Polls before 9/11 had shown strong support for using armed force against transnational terrorist groups (Page and Bouton 2006, 103), but this increased significantly and immediately, with a poll conducted on 11-12 September 2001 finding that 80 percent of respondents favouring military action against those responsible for 9/11 *even if this led to war* (Kreps 2011, 108). More broadly, Bush's approval ratings skyrocketed from 51 percent days before 9/11 to 90 percent by 21 September (Gallup 2009). Therefore, even before the Bush administration began to make the case for war against Afghanistan, they 'were receiving signals from the domestic audience that indicated full and unconstrained support for military force' (Kreps 2011, 108), and that Bush's

legitimation efforts would most likely be effective (DiMaggio 2015, 18). There was also support for the administration's immediate mobilisation efforts as the U.S. attempted to prevent another terrorist attack, much like the beginning of the Korean War. Although not entirely concerning the military, a $20 billion budget increase was authorised as quickly as 13 September 2001 (Croft 2006, 109), indicative of the extent to which mobilisation decisions were possible in this permissive political climate. Additionally, 50,000 reservists were called up for homeland defence on 14 September 2001 (ibid), a scale of enlistment which had been avoided during the Vietnam War.

Still, this period also set the boundaries for the mobilisation costs that the American public would have to endure because of the War on Terror. Although 9/11 'was not just a crisis for the elite' but was 'one felt throughout society' (ibid, 65) and it appeared that 'we' mattered more than 'me' (Vennesson 2011, 258), the Bush administration gave 'no special tasks' to ordinary people, unlike previous wartime mobilisation efforts (Murphy 2003, 616; Stearns 2006, 43). Bush's (2001g) 15 September 2001 radio address stated that his administration would have "much to ask of the American people", but by his landmark 20 September address to Congress, the sacrifices being asked of the American people were reduced to praying for the victims' families and for "continued participation and confidence in the American economy" (G. W. Bush 2001a). On 27 September, Bush explicitly encouraged a return to normality, encouraging citizens to "[f]ly and enjoy America's great destination spots. Go down to Disney World in Florida, take your families and enjoy life the way we want it to be enjoyed" (Engels and Saas 2013, 226). Whilst this rhetoric was aimed at preventing 9/11 from triggering significant negative economic consequences, it ultimately encouraged the normalisation of the use of force and set the tone for the limited economic mobilisation that has characterised the span of the War on Terror, even more so than previous major conflicts in Chapters 4 and 5.

Unlike the limited war era, the all-volunteer army in this period has meant that less than 0.5 percent of the American adult population have served in the War on Terror, effectively distancing the deployment of force from American society (Achter 2016, 80; K. Eikenberry and Kennedy 2013; Fallows 2015; Jervis 2003, 318; Lewis 2012, 5). Observing the contrast between those troops deployed overseas and the normality of life in America, one widely circulated photo from Iraq showed a U.S. marine next to a whiteboard which stated that 'America is not at war. The Marine Corps is at War; America is at the mall' (Barkawi 2016, 202). That Americans could continue their lifestyles normally was made possible by the method of financing for the War on Terror. In noticeable contrast to the Korean War in particular, the War on Terror has been funded 'entirely' via borrowing (Bacevich 2018c; Cappella Zielinski 2016, 4; Kreps 2018b, 1; Stiglitz and Blimes 2008, 6–7), and even surpassed the minimal economic impact of previous wars by being accompanied with tax cuts (Lewis

2012, 5). The decision to avoid mobilising the American public via taxation was a deliberate attempt to reduce the impact of the War on Terror because of future legitimation fears, as polling in 2002 showed that 67 percent of respondents would be willing to support tax increases as 'an act of patriotism' (Kreps 2018b, 149).

The War on Terror Discourse

Although the Bush administration attempted to decrease the material impact of the War on Terror on American citizens, the administration also made the new conflict its central political priority. In the period between 11 September and 6 October 2001, Bush averaged at least two public statements on the War on Terror per day, 'most with extensive media coverage' (R. Jackson 2005, 163). This prioritisation was reflected in public opinion polling, as well into December 2001, around half of respondents in one public opinion poll answered that they were following the War on Terror 'very closely', which amounted to 'the highest level of sustained public in the news in more than a decade' (Hutcheson et al. 2004, 29). In 2001, eight of the ten most popular news stories of the year concerned the 9/11 attacks and the War on Terror (Holsti 2004, 284–85). The phenomenon of deliberate prioritisation did not end there, with Jackson (2005, 163) finding that there was an average of ten speeches, interviews, and broadcasts *per day* from members of the Bush administration about the War on Terror between 2001 and 2005.

As discussed in Chapter 2, one logic for deliberate prioritisation is to generate necessary political and material support for the War on Terror, which is discussed in the context of the Bush administration below. Another reason for the deliberate prioritisation of the War on Terror was political, as the Bush administration felt that they could exploit the perceived weakness of Democrats on issues of national security (Trubowitz 2011, 89). Bush's chief political strategist, Karl Rove, argued in anticipation of the 2002 midterm elections that "[w]e can go to the country on this issue because they trust the Republican Party to do a better job of protecting and strengthening America's military might and thereby protecting America" (ibid). Similarly, in 2004, Bush (2004d) mocked those who "question[ed] if America is really in a war at all", instead claiming that his administration – in contrast to the Democrats – would "fight a real war, with the goal of victory" (G. W. Bush 2004a). As such, the prioritisation of the War on Terror was not strictly restricted to legitimating the conflict itself but also as a part of generating electoral support, another conspicuous difference to the Vietnam War.

Having established the War on Terror was a political priority, what did members of the Bush administration have to say about the conflict in their legitimation efforts? As IR scholarship has detailed, the Bush administration established a carefully constructed War on Terror discourse – in both the rhetorical and material sense of the term – that outlined a

certain socio-political reality that was challenging to remain neutral against, let alone contest (Croft 2006; Hodges 2011; Holland 2012; R. Jackson 2005, 2006; Krebs and Lobasz 2007; Murphy 2003; Nabers 2009; Silberstein 2002; Solomon 2015). Accordingly, the War on Terror quickly attained accepted status in American politics, with debates centring around *how* to fight the War on Terror, rather than *whether* to fight a War on Terror (Ackerman 2004, 1876; Krebs and Lobasz 2007, 423). Much like anti-communism during the limited war era, the War on Terror discourse established a base for all legitimation efforts to occur from, especially as the War on Terror was used to incorporate a variety of foreign policy areas and objectives under its label (Hodges 2011, 41). Hence, the content of the War on Terror discourse and the role of other actors in its establishment is outlined here.

The War Paradigm

As discussed in the introduction to Part II, one of the most significant parts of the War on Terror was its adoption of the war label. Bush's rhetoric on 11 and 12 September 2001 indicated this shift, as his description of the day's events changed from "deliberate and deadly terrorist acts" (G. W. Bush 2001b) to "acts of war" (G. W. Bush 2001e). By describing the events of 9/11 as "war", members of the Bush administration not only suggested that "war" would be the appropriate response, but also that the U.S. had been thrust into war against its will, as per the American way of war. As Rumsfeld put it, "[w]e did not start this war" (R. Jackson 2005, 36). Yet, as the definition of war in Chapter 3 makes clear, wars 'do not begin with an attack. They begin with a counter-attack' (O'Connell 2006, 538).

The war label 'was not simply rhetorical flourish, but a reference that directly shaped the nature and scope of US foreign policy' since 2001 (Bentley 2014, 93). Whilst the war label may have held a metaphorical quality like previous wars on "poverty" and "AIDS", it also went 'far beyond metaphor to acquire a strategic reality' (Andréani 2004, 31 in Bentley 2014, 93). Nowhere would this 'strategic reality' be clearer than in the AUMF passed just three days after 9/11. Like the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, this AUMF was extremely well-received, passing by 98-0 in the Senate and 420-1 in the House of Representatives (Milligan 2001). This AUMF not only legitimated the emerging war paradigm by sanctioning the use of force against terrorist organisations but also afforded the Bush administration an 'unprecedented' degree of flexibility to wage war without oversight from Congress – even in comparison to the Gulf of Tonkin resolution (Cronin 2014, 175; Kitchen 2017, 15; Kreps 2011, 109).

If the war label had obvious legitimation and prioritisation advantages, it also had a set of accompanying rhetorical requirements, namely the tropes of the American way of war. Consequently, the tensions of the dualism of the American way of war have been apparent throughout the War on Terror. Although Bush (2001a) warned the American electorate in his landmark address to Congress that the conflict would be "a lengthy campaign, unlike any

other we have ever seen", Bush's rhetoric remained committed to the idea that the U.S. would attain a total victory against terrorism. As Bush put it, the War on Terror would "not end until every terrorist group of global reach had been found, stopped, and defeated", and that although "[t]he course of this conflict is not known … its outcome is certain" (ibid). These statements were not dissimilar to other pronouncements from Bush in 2001: that "we will lead the world to victory" (G. W. Bush 2001f) and that "there can be no doubt how this conflict will end" (G. W. Bush 2001d). As Jackson (2005, 137) summarised, the idea of victory in the War on Terror was 'constantly reiterated' in administration rhetoric, and 'in virtually every case', this was 'stated grammatically as a certain fact'. This language might be explained by the proximity of Bush's landmark address to 9/11, as a harking to dominant cultural tropes in a time of uncertainty. However, even as the number of fatalities from terrorist attacks around the world increased between 2003 and 2006, the goals outlined by Bush remained aligned with the American way of war, with the president stating seven times between October 2005 and July 2006 that "we will never accept *anything less* than *complete victory*" (emphasis added).[48]

To reassure the American public of the likelihood of achieving total victory, Bush – like his father before him – incorporated the War on Terror into a timeline of conflicts salient in the American way of war (Noon 2004). In his address to Congress, Bush (2001a) stated that the terrorists facing the U.S. were "heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the twentieth century … follow[ing] in the path of fascism and Nazism and totalitarianism … to where it ends, in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies." The regular comparisons made by the Bush administration to World War II and the Cold War not only suggested that the War on Terror would be successful (R. Jackson 2005, 46) but also helped in efforts to invoke the unity of these previous conflicts in the American memory (Krebs and Lobasz 2007, 429–30). Moreover, these analogies helped make the novel War on Terror more comprehensible to the American public (Winkler 2006, 166).

These historical analogies also aligned with another trope of the American way of war: that wars should be fought in the name of far-reaching political objectives. In his landmark speech, Bush (2001a) described the conflict as a "struggle of freedom against fear", using the word "freedom" thirteen times in the address. Later in his presidency, Bush (2006b) called the War on Terror "the decisive ideological struggle of the" twenty-first century. For Bush (2006a), the issue of terrorism could only be resolved by encouraging changes in governance models around the globe, hence why his administration was "committed to a historic, long-term goal … the end of tyranny in our world" to win the War on Terror. Although this presentation of the War on Terror as "an ideological conflict" meant that the

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[48] As per the 'all of these terms' search function on the American Presidency Project (2021) website.

conflict was "going to take a long time" and could not be resolved by military matters alone (G. W. Bush 2006c), it also meant that Bush could legitimate the War on Terror by precisely because of America's ideological superiority. This ideological depiction of the conflict also allowed Bush to transcend the challenges of legitimating the minimalist aims of risk management strategies (Krebs 2015, 38; Rasmussen 2006, 20).

Nonetheless, much like in the case studies in Chapters 4 and 5, this grandiose language also ran the danger of exaggerating the disconnections between the language of the American way of war and the realities of fighting risk management strategies where 'total victory … is a fantasy' (Cronin 2014, 189). Even if Bush did offer warnings about the uniqueness of the War on Terror, even by just adopting the war label, the Bush administration invoked ideas of what the conflict would look like. Rumsfeld acknowledged as much when stating that the war label established "a level of expectation of victory and an ending within the 30 or 60 minutes of a soap opera" (Michaels 2013, 21). Thus, although invoking the language of the American way of war undoubtedly helped to legitimate the War on Terror in its early stages, it also exposed the tensions of the dualism of the American way of war and fostered unrealistic expectations which would create legitimation challenges as time progressed.

The Terrorist Enemy

As noted in Chapter 2 and demonstrated in Chapters 4 and 5, U.S. governments have *othered* the enemy during wartime by portraying them as malevolent and threatening. The Bush administration was no different in this regard, outlining both what the War on Terror was being fought for, but also who the U.S. was fighting against. This revolved around two main themes: demonisation of the enemy, and threat inflation.[49]

Demonisation

Concerning demonisation, the Bush administration relied upon two historically prevalent tropes of American political discourse identified in Chapter 2: the ideas of *good versus evil* and *civilization versus barbarism*. There were 'literally hundreds of references to "evil"' by the members of the Bush administration when discussing the War on Terror, and Bush used 'the term in almost every speech [he made] about terrorism' to describe bin Laden and al-Qaeda (Baum and Potter 2008, 50; R. Jackson 2005, 66). The term invoked fear amongst the American public, generating more flexibility for policymakers (R. Jackson 2005, 69–70;

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[49] Though the War on Terror has been fought as a risk management strategy, the language of 'threats' was also still used by the Bush administration. This can be explained by the legitimation issues of using the language of risk, but also because of how the Bush administration attempted to present the dangers of terrorism as imminent and predictable. Given that scholarship on this era uses the term, I also use 'threat inflation' in this chapter.

Rediehs 2002, 76). Furthermore, as a description that aligned with previous war discourses, it was particularly difficult for sceptics to challenge, let alone move beyond (Baum and Potter 2008, 50; Porpora 2010, 93). The evil label became widespread, being used by the media (DiMaggio 2015, 21) and even by academics cited approvingly so far. Ignatieff, for example, described how the terrorism of 9/11 did 'not express a politics' but rather exhibited 'ever-escalating acts of violence which culminate in a final battle between good and evil' (Der Derian 2001). The term 'evil' took away any legitimate rationale for terrorist activity (and thus legitimated preventative America's military response) but also reduced the discursive space for opposing the War on Terror. The use of the term 'evil' also helped Bush to appeal specifically to his conservative Christian supporters because of its theological undertones (Holland 2012, 114), which mirrored Bush's religious invocations more generally. Given Bush's personal convictions and the fact that one-third of Americans defined themselves as evangelical in 2005, it made political sense to use religious discursive tropes (Croft 2006, 32, 204), such as Bush's (2001a) claim in his landmark address that "God" was "not neutral" in the war between "freedom and fear".

The second trope used by the Bush administration was the idea that the U.S. was engaged in a war against barbarism. Again, this had historical precedents, as the idea of a 'historic struggle' between civilisation and barbarism was 'deeply embedded in American political discourse' (R. Jackson 2006, 172). Bush stated that "a group of barbarians … [had] declared war" on the U.S. on 9/11, and that America would "need… to win a war against [such] barbaric behavior" (Llorente 2002, 40). Going even further, the U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Howard Baker, referred to how 9/11 was directed against "enlightened, civilised societies everywhere", acting as "a strike against those values that separate us from animals – compassion, tolerance, mercy" (R. Jackson 2007, 362–63). This portrayal of terrorists as being against civilisation allied with the explanations of 9/11 put forward by the Bush administration: that the U.S. was attacked "because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world" and that terrorists "hate[d] freedom" (Holland 2012, 150; R. Jackson 2005, 54). The description of terrorists as barbaric not only again reduced the discursive space for opposition, but also allowed the Bush administration to return to far-reaching political objectives as a legitimating factor in the War on Terror.

Threat Inflation

As argued in Chapter 2 and 5, the informational advantages of the U.S. government are especially noticeable with regards to the issue of terrorism. The Bush administration not only portrayed terrorists as evil and barbaric, but the threat of terrorism was inflated by emphasising three factors: the scope of the threat posed by terrorism, the deadliness of terrorist groups, and the newness of the threat they posed. After 9/11, transnational terrorism was described by the Bush administration as a "threat" "to established governments" (G. W.

Bush 2001c), "to the peace of the world" (G. W. Bush 2002b), "to our way of life" (G. W. Bush 2001a), "to civilization" and "to the very essence of what you do" (Powell 2001). This was despite the low prioritisation given to terrorism by the Bush administration before 9/11: National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice's scheduled speech on national security on 11 September 2001 did not mention al-Qaeda or the threat of terrorism (Croft 2006, 59). In terms of the deadliness of al-Qaeda, Bush's (2002a) State of the Union address recalled how, despite the success of the invasion of Afghanistan, it had "confirmed" the "worst fears" of the U.S. government, revealing the scale of training camps and how "thousands of dangerous killers, schooled in the methods of murder … are now spread throughout the world like ticking timebombs, set to go off without warning". In other speeches, Bush described how al-Qaeda wished to not only "kill Christian and Jews" and "women and children" but also "kill all Americans" (Murphy 2003, 615). As has been noted, however, '[i]t was unlikely that al-Qaeda would, could, or even wanted to' carry out such actions (ibid). The final strand of threat inflation was to emphasise the newness of the threat posed by transnational terrorist groups in the twenty-first century, claiming that terrorists wished "to hide", use "different kinds of weapons", and that they constituted a new level of barbarism in warfare (Winkler 2006, 159–61). Yet, as Carol Winkler detailed, these factors all had historical precedents and were far from new (ibid). Rather, threat inflation served to emphasise the risks posed by transnational terrorism and legitimate the War on Terror, particularly its global scale and unprecedented actions (R. Jackson 2006, 167; 2007, 356). In this way, the War on Terror has been correctly identified as a successful case of securitisation for securitising the threat of terrorism to legitimate emergency measures both domestically and overseas (Mabee 2007, 390-91; M. McDonald, 581-82; Salter 2011, 121; Vultee 2010, 44).

Research in political psychology has shown that a heightened fear of terrorism lends itself to a renewed sense of patriotism, increased deference to leaders, and intolerance of dissent (R. Jackson 2014, 84). Accordingly, 'fear … [was] programmed into the War on Terror' (Coker 2009, 169), and perhaps no example illustrated this more clearly than the colour-coded threat scale of the Homeland Security Advisory System, which was designed to alert the American public as to the current threat levels of a terrorist attack. At the top three levels ('severe', 'high', and 'significant'), there was no obvious distinction between the levels of risk being posed (Stearns 2006, 44). Referring to the 'significant' tier which was coloured yellow, the police chief of Washington, D.C., stated that "[w]e will never been at green ['low risk'] again. Normal was redefined on 9/11. Normal is yellow.'" In this sense, the colour-coded terror scheme was an embodiment of the risk society and its focus on potential risks. There is a case to be made for informing the American public of the dangers facing them, but establishing a 'significant' level of risk of terrorist attack as a new 'normal' inflated the threat posed to assist the Bush administration's legitimation efforts. Indeed, ex-Secretary of

Homeland Security Tom Ridge later lamented the political pressure on his department to raise threat levels (DiMaggio 2015, 75). As Paul Achter (2016, 82) summarised, the 'Bush administration frequently raised the specter of a shadowy future attack in order to reach its political goals' (see also Rothkopf 2014, 109).

<u>Media Support</u>

Though the Bush administration played a central role in the establishment of the War on Terror discourse, it is also worth noting that 'media sources amplified and looped the official narration' of 9/11 and the War on Terror (Holland 2012, 2; see also Croft 2006, 189; R. Jackson 2005, 167; Silberstein 2002, xii). This reflected both the informational advantages of the government with regards to transnational terrorist organisations and the bipartisan agreement behind the War on Terror (Hutcheson et al. 2004, 36, 46). The media aligned almost entirely with the War on Terror discourse, repeating and effectively endorsing the Bush administration's legitimation efforts. For example, in terms of the war paradigm, during the first three weeks following 9/11, 44 out of relevant 46 op-ed pieces in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* argued for a military response to the attacks (DiMaggio 2015, 20–21; Rediehs 2002, 89). This was not exclusive to the news media; as Croft (2006) illustrated, popular culture such as novels, music, television, and film helped to consolidate the ideas of the War on Terror 'on a daily basis'.

Once military conflict began, the news media reinforced the idea that it would be unpatriotic to criticise the conduct of the War on Terror (Walsh Stoddard and Cornwell 2002, 183). During the early stages of the Afghanistan War, the chairman of *CNN* issued a memorandum to members of staff instructing reporters to always recall the victims of 9/11 when mentioning Afghan civilian casualties to prevent coverage from seeming unpatriotic (Carruthers 2011, 222; R. Jackson 2005, 171). Similarly, a television advert in Utah that featured a mother of a soldier killed in Iraq questioning the war's rationale was taken off the airwaves for being 'incompatible with the marketplace' (Croft 2006, 231). When the *Washington Post* published articles disapproving of Bush's policies, Dana Priest recalled that the newspaper received "tons of hate mail and threats, calling our patriotism into question" (Carruthers 2011, 222). In this way, the media not only helped to establish the prioritisation of the War on Terror discourse, but also complied with its boundaries around dissent.

<u>Democratic Support</u>

Much like the media, the Democrats publicly subscribed to the core tenets of the War on Terror discourse, thus assisting the Bush administration's legitimation efforts as per theories on the role of partisan politics on support for war policies. Clinton asserted on 7 November 2001 that not only did he "support the efforts of President Bush" in the War on Terror but also that he "believe[d] we all should" (Croft 2006, 116-17). When Democrats did proffer

critiques in the early stages of the War on Terror, they were subject to ardent criticism. Senator Tom Daschle argued in February 2002 that the War on Terror lacked focus and would only succeed if bin Laden was captured; in response, Senator Trent Lott contended "*how dare Senator Dalsche criticize President Bush* while we are fighting our war on terrorism, especially when we have troops in the field" (emphasis added), whilst Representative Tom DeLay simply called Daschle's comments "[d]isgusting" (Mann 2010, 190). Perhaps consequently, when asked what role the War on Terror would have in the November 2002 midterm elections, Rumsfeld was confident enough to state "I don't think it is a political issue at all" (Croft 2006, 153), effectively securitising and thus depoliticising the conflict.

Although by the time of the 2004 presidential election bitter partisan disputes had returned, the contested discursive space was very small. Put another way, critiques of the War on Terror were not made on their own terms, but rather within the boundaries of the established discourse (Croft 2006, 44; R. Jackson 2005, 160–61; Krebs 2015, 271). For example, in what was probably a slip of the tongue during the 2004 campaign, Bush strayed away from the War on Terror discourse when stating that "I don't think you can win it [the War on Terror]" but instead only "create conditions so that … those who use terror as a tool are less acceptable in parts of the world" (*CBS News* 2004). As a consequence of straying away from the War on Terror discourse and the dominant tropes of the American way of war, this remark sparked an avalanche of Democratic critique. Senator John Edwards contended that the "War on Terrorism is absolutely winnable", whilst Biden declared that "to suggest the War on Terror can't be won is absolutely unacceptable" (Bumiller 2004). Going even further, Senator John Kerry stated that "with the right policies, this is a war we can win, this is a war we must win, and this is a war we will win … because the future does not belong to fear, it belongs to freedom" (Halbfinger 2004). Crucially then, these critiques existed within the terms of the War on Terror discourse, with Kerry's quotation almost a word-for-word repetition of Bush's previous rhetoric. Thereby, the War on Terror discourse was consolidated even when it was being critiqued.

The Afghanistan War

Beginning in October 2001, the legitimation of the Afghanistan War was underpinned by the events of 9/11 and the Bush administration's success in securing the meaning of the events of that day. The invasion was framed in close association with 9/11: as Bush put it, "the first objective is to bring people to justice who we feel like committed this particular set of atrocities" (Kerton-Johnson 2011, 90). Afghanistan was quickly designated by the news media as the 'vital front' in the War on Terror, and there was also an almost complete absence of criticism of the war from Democrats in Congress (Carruthers 2011, 215; Western 2005, 194). The 2001 AUMF suggested that congresspeople would be willing to incur significant mobilisation costs in the pursuit of the widely accepted U.S. objectives, which was mirrored

by the American public. Polls in September and October 2001 found strong majorities for sending U.S. ground troops to Afghanistan to capture or kill bin Laden even if there were 'several thousands' of American casualties (Mann 2010, 160; McCrisken 2012, 1001), revealing a noticeable contrast to at least perceived public opinion in Chapter 5.

As it were, the relative lack of mobilisation suggested by Bush in September 2001 was essentially confirmed by the nature of the invasion of Afghanistan in the following month, with mobilisation costs being limited for two key reasons. Firstly, risk management strategies were employed to reduce the risk of American casualties. One-sided aerial bombardment played a central role in the invasion of Afghanistan, meaning that only a limited ground force was necessary (Shaw 2006, 81). To prevent exposing American soldier troops, proxy forces were employed in the shape of PMSCs and the Afghani Northern Alliance, meaning that just 0.4 percent of U.S. SOF were required in the invasion (ibid, 102; Krieg 2013, 348; Krieg and Rickli 2019, 75; Singer 2004, 17; Stevenson 2020). As Priest put it, '[j]ust over three hundred men were pivotal' in the invasion of Afghanistan (Buley 2008, 108). Secondly, like some of the military campaigns reviewed in Chapter 5, the invasion was conducted extremely quickly. The inauguration of the Afghani interim government occurred on 22 December 2001, which was just 78 days after the launch of military operations (Kreps 2011, 95).

The initial military strategy employed – 'fought by clandestine operatives and from on high' – did not lend itself to proximate and memorable media coverage (Carruthers 2011, 217). Once the war began the Bush administration portrayed the war not just as retaliation for 9/11 but also as a rescue operation for those oppressed in Afghanistan (McBride and Wibben 2012, 201). For example, in a November 2001 radio address, First Lady Laura Bush argued that "the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women" (ibid), and that "our hearts break for the women and children in Afghanistan … because in Afghanistan we see the world the terrorists would like to impose on the rest of us" (Shepherd 2006, 20). The passive position of these actors in the rhetoric of the Bush administration enabled the U.S. war effort to be legitimated along these lines. As Sonali Kolhatkar asked, '[w]hat good is it to flaunt images of Afghan women marching militantly with fists in the air, carrying banners about freedom, democracy and secular government? Those women wouldn't need saving' (ibid, 27). This rebranding of a realpolitik mission was crafted to specifically appeal to liberal audiences who were less likely to approve of war that was perceived either as a 'payback' for 9/11 or a manhunt for bin Laden (Carruthers 2011, 26), as well as appealing to the tropes of the American way of war.

This line of argument would become increasingly relevant given how the Afghanistan War developed after the initial invasion. With the establishment of the interim government in December 2001, the International Conference on Afghanistan laid the groundwork for the formation of the International Security Assistance Force to attempt to establish security and

stability in Afghanistan. Not only were U.S. troops increasingly focused on issues of stabilisation, peacekeeping, and reconstruction, but they were also part of a genuinely multilateral approach (Kreps 2011, 98–100). By March 2002 then, the U.S. had just 5,200 combat troops deployed to Afghanistan, which was fewer than had been sent to the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics a month prior (ibid, 102). Given the reduced mobilisation costs and the responsibilities of U.S. troops, the Afghanistan War quickly became deprioritised as early as the middle of 2002 (DiMaggio 2015, 26). Topics such as incremental changes in Afghani governance were not typical news stories, leading to a reduction in press coverage and the perception that the war in Afghanistan had been won (Robertson 2003).

Perhaps the most significant factor in the deprioritisation of the Afghanistan War, however, was the Iraq War (Carruthers 2011, 218–19; Kreps 2010, 194; McHugh 2015, 10). This was true even before the conflict in Iraq began, as between June and November 2002 the 'nation was fixated on the prospect of war' with Iraq (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 167). In the 16 weeks between 11 September 2001 and the end of that year, Afghanistan was the most popular story on the three American broadcast television networks nightly newscasts for some 11 weeks of this period (Tyndall 2002). In 2002, Afghanistan was the most covered story for just under three weeks of the year; the comparative figure for Iraq in 2002 was already five weeks (Tyndall 2003). By 2003, Iraq was the top news story for 23 weeks (Tyndall 2004), whilst the issue of Afghanistan received only 80 minutes of coverage over the entirety of the year, which was just one-fifth of airtime it had been given in 2002 (Carruthers 2011, 6). By 2005 then, there were only two full-time reporters from U.S. news organisations stationed in Kabul, and events on the ground 'were reported in low-key fashion, as the war appeared almost forgotten' (ibid, 219; Heng 2006, 102). Even in the Washington D.C. think-tank world, the Afghanistan war became 'the forgotten war' between 2005 and 2007 (Rothkopf 2014, 16). Polling organisations asked 'only a smattering of questions' about the Afghanistan War after April 2002 (Berinsky 2009, 26), whilst the Bush administration stopped any private polling on the conflict after the beginning of the Iraq War (Dieck 2015, 124). One database returned 1,000 matching polling questions regarding Iraq between March 2003 and December 2008; the comparative number for Afghanistan between September 2001 and December 2009 was 275 (Kreps 2010, 194). Whilst the question was tellingly not asked between March 2003 and August 2008, the "don't know" responses to a *CBS*/New York Times poll asking how well the Afghanistan War was going increased from 2 to 11 percent between December 2001 and March 2003, indicative of deprioritisation even over this period.[50]

More generally, public opinion was largely positive towards American involvement in Afghanistan, as controversies over the Iraq War overshadowed debates over Afghanistan.

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[50] As per the iPoll search function on the Roper Center's (2021) website. In August 2008, the "don't know" figure was 14 percent.

When asked if the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan should be retrospectively viewed as a mistake, at least 60 percent of Americans answered that it should not in every Gallup poll during the Bush administration (Gallup 2014). In part this reflected the different mobilisation costs of the war in Afghanistan vis-à-vis Iraq; by the beginning of 2005 there had been 161 U.S. casualties in Afghanistan and 1,335 in Iraq (DCAS 2021a; 2021c). When legitimation challenges did arise as conditions on the ground worsened from 2005 onwards with the growth of the Taliban insurgency (G. Jacobson 2010, 586; de Nevers 2012, 64), the Bush administration returned to a rhetorical theme used by the Johnson administration in Vietnam: progress. Rumsfeld's memoirs showed that he received 'unusually dire warnings' from Afghanistan in June 2006, but just months later he declared that there was "a multitude of good news" in Afghanistan and that "the facts belie[d] the myths" regarding rumours that "the United States had lost its focus" (Whitlock 2019). Similarly, in September 2008, General Jeffrey Schlosser – then commander of the 101st Airborne Division in Afghanistan – asserted that the U.S. was "making some steady progress", even as he was privately requesting a troop influx to cope with the escalating Taliban insurgency (ibid). This appeared to have worked, as even though 2007 was the deadliest year for U.S. forces in Afghanistan up until that point with 117 casualties, the six major debates amongst Democratic presidential candidates before the primaries in 2008 did not feature a single question or candidate specifically addressing the Afghanistan War (Berinsky 2009, 27). Thus, for most of the Bush presidency, the legitimation and relative lack of mobilisation costs of the Afghanistan War meant that the conflict was politically deprioritised, with the use of force being increasingly normalised.

The Iraq War

Legitimation and the Path to War

In the build-up to the Iraq War, around 90 percent of Americans stated that they were following the situation either 'closely' or 'very closely', which is noticeably comparable to a similar question asked during the Gulf War (Baum 2003, 20; Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 167). This political prioritisation only increased as the Bush administration 'launched a concerted public relations campaign designed explicitly to rally public support for the war' at the end of 2002 as the anti-war movement rose in prominence (DiMaggio 2015, 59; Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 219; Mann 2010, 165). As such, this is a good example of the interaction between legitimation and prioritisation when there are significant prospective mobilisation costs, much like the legitimation campaign that preceded the Gulf War. Furthermore, there were no overt acts of aggression made by the Iraqi regime towards America (Lewis 2012, 428), making this legitimation campaign more necessary than the wars in Korea and Afghanistan. By attaining majority support amongst elites and the U.S. public for the invasion of a country that had nothing to do with 9/11 attacks, had no weapons of mass destruction, and would later dissolve into a bloody civil war, it is clear that the Bush administration's legitimation

efforts were vital in explaining the Iraq War. To deconstruct this legitimation success, several factors must be considered: American perceptions of Hussein, the threat inflation of the Bush administration, the restrictive power of the War on Terror discourse, and previous military successes in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Hussein in the Popular Imaginary

As discussed in Chapter 5, 'Hussein was well known to Americans' after he had 'played the villain role with such consummate skill' in the Gulf War, before also repeatedly violating UNSC resolutions in the 1990s (Mueller 1994, xv; Western 2005, 192). In his speech at the UN in September 2002, Bush described how Hussein's regime carried out "summary execution … torture by beating, burning, electric shock, starvation, mutilation and rape" (DiMaggio 2015, 64), whilst in congressional debates over the AUMF against Iraq, members echoed Bush 41's rhetoric by comparing Hussein to Hitler (Lewis 2012, 429). Even before 9/11 however, 52 percent of Americans in one poll in February 2001 expressed their approval for using ground troops to force regime change in Iraq (ibid). This polling could reflect the ongoing salience of the American way of war, given the somewhat anticlimactic nature of the Gulf War as a risk management strategy (Coker 2009, 5; Halberstam 2001, 16; Sherry 1995, 475). Certainly, 9/11 and the establishment of the War on Terror only furthered animosity towards Hussein's Iraq, with a November 2001 poll finding that 74 percent of respondents approved of 'invading Iraq with U.S. ground troops … to remove Saddam Hussein from power' (Western 2005, 192). The Bush administration took advantage of this conducive legitimation environment, successfully securitising Hussein in September 2002 by shifting from describing him as a despicable tyrant to the most pressing national security issue facing America (Baysal 2019, 382-83; Hughes 2007, 84; O'Reilly 2008).

Threat Inflation

The second key factor in the legitimation of the Iraq War was the threat inflation of the Bush administration, which occurred via three interrelated means: deception, the adoption of risk thinking in public discourse, and utilising the administration's informational advantages. Concerning deception, Mearsheimer (2013, 5) identifies three 'major lies' put forward by the Bush administration: that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (WMD), that Hussein was allied with bin Laden and al-Qaeda, and that Hussein bore some of the responsibility for 9/11.

With regards to the first misrepresentation, the key point here was that the administration was adamant that Iraq had already acquired WMD. In a speech that set the tone for the Bush administration's legitimation efforts, Cheney stated in August 2002 that "there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction" and that he was "amassing them to use against our friends … and against us" (Ricks 2006, 49). Similarly, Rumsfeld declared that "we know where they [Iraq's WMD] are" (C. Kaufmann 2004, 29),

whilst Bush's (2003a) influential 2003 State of the Union Address referred to how British intelligence had "learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa" in the pursuit of WMD, even though the CIA had informed the Bush administration nearly a year prior that this assertion was baseless (C. Kaufmann 2004, 38). Indeed, the reference to British intelligence served as a way of avoiding culpability for the Bush administration (ibid). These claims were very effective, as one pre-war poll found that 69 percent of respondents thought that Iraq had WMD, with 80 percent of another poll thinking that 'this was likely' (ibid, 30; see also DiMaggio 2015, 96). At the congressional level, the idea that Iraq had nuclear weapons was commonplace. Even Senator Kennedy (who vocally remonstrated against the Iraq War) conceded how "[w]e have known for many years that Saddam Hussein is using and developing weapons of mass destruction" (Kreps 2011, 124). This view was so widespread that not one of the 30 senators or 100 representatives who attended the July-October 2002 hearings in Congress questioned the Bush administration's allegations regarding Iraq's intentions or WMD capabilities (C. Kaufmann 2004, 30).

There was a similar pattern of deception with the second key falsehood, as the Bush administration presented confidential evidence as indisputable when it was anything but. Administration officials claimed that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of the terrorist organisation al-Tawhid, was being sheltered by the Iraqi regime. Rumsfeld declared that he had seen "bulletproof evidence" of this association, whilst Powell's infamous address to the UNSC in February 2003 stated that Iraq had allowed Zarqawi, "a collaborator of Osama bin Laden … [to] establish a base of operations for al Qaeda affiliates" in the country (ibid, 17-18). However, intelligence agencies had taken issue with this account, and Powell later redacted these assertions in January 2004 (ibid, 18). Again, these legitimation efforts were effective: one poll found that some 87 percent of Americans believed it to be 'certain' or 'likely' that Iraq was connected to al-Qaeda (Kreps 2011, 138), with another study finding a 30 percent increase in such polling responses after Powell's widely covered speech (Carruthers 2003, 39; Entman 2004, 111).

The third key inaccuracy was that the administration 'made various statements that falsely implied that Saddam bore some responsibility' for 9/11 (Mearsheimer 2013, 5). This claim was primarily based on the assertion that Mohammed Atta, the pilot of the first plane to hit the World Trade Centre on 9/11, had met with an Iraqi intelligence officer in Prague in April 2001 (C. Kaufmann 2004, 17). Referring to this meeting, Cheney stated that intelligence was "credible", although both the FBI and CIA had previously concluded that the meeting had not taken place (ibid). Hence, this allegation was also later redacted, this time by Bush in September 2003 when he acknowledged that "[w]e've had no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved with September the 11th" (ibid). In sum, the administration 'deliberately and selectively used its executive advantages of intelligence collection and

analysis to frame a particular version of the [Iraqi] threat in order to influence public opinion', as the aftermath of the invasion made clear (Western 2005, 217). This case – like the Gulf of Tonkin resolution in Vietnam – is a telling example of the informational advantages available to American governments and how this can circumvent the assumptions of democratic exceptionalism.

Alongside deceiving the American public, the Bush administration publicly adopted the language of risk to emphasise the dangers posed to U.S. national security by Iraq. Although I argued in Chapter 5 that the legitimation of risk management strategies was challenging due to their contrast with the tropes of the American way of war, the lead up to the Iraq War does show the way that the language of risk, when closely related to threat inflation and the generation of fear, can be used as a way of generating war support. In a 7 October 2002 speech devoted to outlining the threat of Iraq, Bush claimed that Hussein "could decide on any given day to provide a biological or chemical weapon to a terrorist group or individual terrorists … without leaving any fingerprints" (Kerton-Johnson 2011, 107). Bush declared that "we cannot wait for the final proof, the smoking gun that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud"; a line that was also repeatedly used by Cheney and Rice (Lewis 2012, 428). In a case of 'rhetorical jujitsu' linking Hussein and 9/11 in his 2003 State of the Union Address (C. Kaufmann 2004, 43), Bush (2003a) maintained that

> [b]efore September the 11th, many in the world believed that Saddam Hussein could be contained. But chemical agents, lethal viruses and shadowy terrorist networks are not easily contained. Imagine those 19 hijackers with other weapons and other plans – this time armed by Saddam Hussein. It would take one vial, one canister, one crate slipped into this country to bring a day of horror like none we have ever known.

Much like Cheney's one percent doctrine that disavowed probabilities for possibilities, Bush's public mindset in the wake of 9/11 was that "we have every reason to assume the worst" (Heng 2006, 129), which was given credence by Hussein's repeated attempts to prevent weapons inspections (Kinsey 2009, 40). Hence, in this kind of environment, Bush had stated that "the risk that … inaction will make the world safer is not a risk I'm willing to take" (Heng 2006, 125-26). In Bush's representation of the potential threat of Iraq, he clearly articulated the preventative logic of risk management thinking: that if the U.S. "wait[ed] for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long" (Kreps 2011, 128). The crucial shift then was in the mindset held by the Bush administration (and presented to the American public) in the wake of 9/11: that risks would not be allowed to materialise into concrete threats. As Anthony DiMaggio (2015, 99) summarised the prevalence of risk thinking, '[i]t was a significant victory for the president that Americans were convinced of the unimportance of evidence in building support for war.'

<u>The War on Terror Discourse</u>

As a clear illustration of both some of the media-government dynamics discussed in Chapter 2 and the War on Terror discourse, the U.S. media largely failed to dispute the threat inflation of the Bush administration. Given Iraq's secretive nature, it is a prime example of how the media has to rely on official government sources for information (DiMaggio 2015, 72; Western 2005, 178-79). An 8 September 2002 *New York Times* piece titled 'U.S. Says Hussein Intensifies Quest for A-Bomb Part' relied 'almost exclusively on administration sources and Iraqi defectors', providing no alternative positions on the issue of the Iraqi regime's pursuit of nuclear weapons (Western 2005, 206). This example also reveals the journalistic emphasis on 'objectivity' in the U.S. press: one of the co-authors, Judith Miller, would later defend her coverage of the Iraq War by arguing that her role wasn't "to assess the government's information", but "to tell readers … what the government thought about Iraq's arsenal" (L. Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2007, 37).[51] Where alternative perspectives were represented, they were often confined to the back pages, with newspaper editors assuming that because war was an inevitability, it was not worth exposing readers to contrary information in prominent positions (ibid, 23, 34). There was even explicit media support for the invasion of Iraq: after Bush's 2003 State of the Union Address and Powell's 2003 UNSC speech, the *Washington Post* published an editorial titled 'Irrefutable', which declared that it was 'hard to imagine how anyone could doubt that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction' (Western 2005, 213). In this manner, a clear link can be observed between elite rhetoric and the news media's legitimation of the Iraq War.

As noted above, part of the media's deference in the early stages of the War on Terror was the restrictive power of the dominant discourse established by the Bush administration. This was observed at the congressional level also. Croft (2006, 191-92) noted that alternative perspectives to war 'were largely drowned by those who demanded uniformity in the face of the national emergency' now supposedly facing the U.S. from Iraq. Similarly, Krebs and Jennifer Lobasz (2007, 409, 450) claimed that for *leading* Democrats considering a 2004 presidential election bid, they were 'unable to advance a politically sustainable set of arguments with which to oppose the war' once they had 'assented to the War on Terror' discourse and in particular, the meaning of 9/11 put forward by the Bush administration (see also G. Jacobson 2010, 590).

The 2002 AUMF Against Iraq is a particularly telling example of the politically coercive effect that the War on Terror discourse had. To begin with, the Bush administration pushed through this AUMF more than five months before the invasion of Iraq begun so as to

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[51] A similar pattern could be observed in television coverage: between September 2002 and February 2003, just 34 of the 414 stories on *ABC, CBS*, and *NBC* concerning Iraq had origins outside the White House (L. Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2007, 43).

pass the resolution before the November 2002 midterm elections. This was because the administration wished to force Congress' hand in voting for the AUMF for fear of the electoral consequences of opposing the resolution (Kreps 2011, 143; Porpora 2010, 99; Western 2005, 179). This seemed to have the intended effect, as a *Washington Post* article reported that more than a dozen Democrats had voted for the AUMF despite their misgivings because of fears of a potential "backlash from voters" (Western 2005, 207). Withal, the debate over the AUMF was largely robbed of its significance because of the support of Democratic House minority leader Dick Gephardt (Schuessler 2015, 100). The Biden-Lugar-Hagel Resolution – which would have dictated that the Bush administration could only attack Iraq after approval from the UNSC and with the specific purpose of destroying WMDs – was close to passing in Congress before Gephardt decided to support the Bush administration's AUMF in October 2002 which 'grant[ed] broad war powers' to the president (ibid). As Krebs and Lobasz's argument dictated, the reason for Gephardt's support was because of his plans to run for president in 2004, especially as he had voted against the Gulf War in 1991 (ibid). Consequently, the debate over the AUMF was 'foreordained', being comparatively short and poorly attended in comparison to other congressional debates over education, energy, trade, and so on (ibid). Once passed, the Iraq War Resolution had a legitimating and deprioritising effect, as dissenting perspectives 'completely disappeared' from both national and local media coverage after the AUMF passed (DiMaggio 2015, 83–84; Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 173–74). As a result, after the AUMF Bush was given 'considerable freedom to speak directly to the American citizenry' (Howell and Pevehouse 2007, 182), amplifying the significance of the Bush administration's public relations campaign in late 2002 and early 2003.

Both the limits and the power of the War on Terror discourse could be seen in the protests against the Iraq War in February 2003. The scale of these protests across major cities such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles was 'unprecedented' (Hodges 2011, x) and they represented an extremely powerful challenge to the War on Terror discourse (Croft 2006, 176). Built upon the work of groups such as the September 11th Families For Peaceful Tomorrow, these 'No War for Oil' protests went some way to establishing a narrative that could challenge the War on Terror discourse (ibid, 180; Hodges 2011, x). Crucially, however, 'the response of the political classes to this phenomenon was essentially to ignore it', with no nationally prominent politician offering their weight behind the anti-war movement (Bacevich 2005, *NAM*, 25). Mainstream media sources also offered little reporting about the anti-war protests that occurred around the world on 15 February 2003 (Carruthers 2011, 31). All in all, polling conducted on 16 February found no significant shifts in terms of public approval for military action against Iraq (Western 2005, 214-15). As such, the alternative discourse of 'No War for Oil' was 'unable to overthrow' the dominant discourse despite this

discursive challenge (Croft 2006, 186), and Bush simply stated in response that the "[t]he role of a leader is to decide policy based upon … the security of the people" (Mann 2010, 165).

Previous Military Successes and Downplaying Mobilisation Costs

Finally, previous military interventions had a legitimating effect (Kreps 2011, 131; Schuessler 2015, 111; Western 2005, 179–80). If the Gulf War had – to some extent – made the use of force again viable, this was particularly relevant in terms of the perceived mobilisation costs that the Iraq War would entail. As Western (2005, 179–80) put it, the U.S. experience in the Gulf War 'allowed the [Bush] administration to present a plausible prediction of [a] quick victory', especially as the enforcement of no-fly zones during the 1990s had also weakened the Iraqi air defence system (Lewis 2012, 436). A *Washington Post* article from Kenneth Adelman (Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in the Reagan administration and once Rumsfeld's assistant) encapsulated this idea:

> I believe demolishing Hussein's military power and liberating Iraq would be a cakewalk. Let me give simple, responsible reasons: 1. It was a cakewalk last time; 2. they've become much weaker; 3. we've become much stronger; and 4. now we're playing for keeps (Ricks 2006, 36).

The nature of the administration's success in Afghanistan also contributed to the idea that mobilisation costs in Iraq would be manageable.

In addition, the Bush administration downplayed the potential post-war mobilisation costs, much like the Clinton administration regarding Bosnia. Cheney infamously claimed in March 2003 that the U.S. would "be greeted as liberators", thus suggesting that post-war security costs would be minimal (Kreps 2011, 132). When in September 2002 then head of the National Economic Council Larry Lindsey predicted that the costs of the Iraq War would be between $100 billion and $200 billion, Rumsfeld dismissed such figures as "baloney" and Lindsey was forced out of the administration (Davis 2002; Stiglitz and Blimes 2008, 7). Instead, Rumsfeld suggested that the war would cost "something under $50 billion", part of which would be funded by American allies (Davis 2002). Going even further, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz argued in March 2003 that Rumsfeld's figure was too high, as oil revenues could be expected to accumulate $50 billion to $100 billion in a two or three-year period which would fund the reconstruction of Iraq (Stiglitz and Blimes 2008, 133). 'By understating the difficulty of remaking Iraq, the … [Bush administration] made it seem easier and less expensive than it would prove to be' (Ricks 2006, 59).

To some extent, however, this also reflected the administration's strategy for Iraq, which attempted to minimise mobilisation costs to maintain the support of the American public (Coker 2009, 111). Pre-existing plans for an invasion of Iraq dictated that some 500,000 U.S. troops would be deployed, which Rumsfeld described as "cumbersome" (Casey 2014,

214). Instead, the Rumsfeld Doctrine looked to move beyond the Weinberger-Powell doctrine's focus on overwhelming power and instead focus on the flexible force arrangements (including PMSCs) and the technological advantages of the RMA (ibid; Buley 2008, 107; Dunigan 2016, 244; Kinsey 2009, 34–35). Boosted by the successful light-footprint invasion of Afghanistan, the Defense Secretary proposed an invasion force of just 145,000 troops (Casey 2014, 214; Kinsey 2009, 36). Furthermore, in a reflection of the triumph of those within the administration who felt that post-invasion reconstruction efforts would only need to be minimal, the post-war approach emphasised minimising the number of U.S. troops required (Buley 2008, 124). Reportedly, Rumsfeld refused a request to deploy several thousand more U.S. troops in the post-invasion period because this decision would have required a further mobilisation of the military reserves (ibid, 128). Similarly to the above, there were public disputes over the number of U.S. troops that would be required, as Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki claimed in February 2003 that "something on the order of several hundred thousand soldiers" would be necessary for the post-war occupation of Iraq, which Rumsfeld described as "far from the mark" (Mowle 2007, 23–24). In sum, the Bush administration not only went out of its way to reassure the American public of feasible mobilisation costs but also crafted its military strategies to achieve this reduction in costs, as per the critiques made of democratic exceptionalism in Chapter 1.

The Invasion of Iraq and its Aftermath

Military and Media Success

The invasion of Iraq was another rapid military success for the U.S., hence reducing mobilisation costs in an immediate sense. The scale of this success is best illustrated by comparing the Iraq War to the Gulf War. The latter included a five-week airpower campaign, whilst the equivalent 'shock and awe' onslaught in 2003 was just nine hours (Casey 2014, 217). After this aerial bombardment and the accompanying ground invasion, Hussein's regime was on the verge of destruction within weeks, and Bush (2003b) was able to declare that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended" only 45 days after beginning in his infamous "Mission Accomplished" speech.[52] This was all achieved with less than half the size of coalition forces from 1991, with just 131 battlefield casualties, and at one-fourth of the overall cost of the Gulf War (Boot 2003a, 44; Casey 2014, 217; Stiglitz and Blimes 2008, xii).

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[52] At Rumsfeld's (2006) request, the original speech was edited to not include the phrase "mission accomplished". The speech also included future warnings such as "[w]e have difficult work to do in Iraq" and that "[t]he transition from dictatorship to democracy will take time" (G. W. Bush 2003b). Crucially, as Rumsfeld (2006) later reflected, "they fixed the speech but not the sign". In some ways then, this was a simple administrative error. More broadly, however, the internal debates over this speech show the contrast between the finality of the American way of war and the War on Terror as a risk management strategy.

The invasion unsurprisingly received favourable media coverage, with graphic pictures that might have emphasised mobilisation costs being largely absent in the first few weeks of the conflict (Carruthers 2011, 228; Casey 2014, 215). This was assisted by the presence of approximately 700 journalists embedded with U.S. military units as part of the administration's aim "to dominate the information market" (Baum and Potter 2008, 49–50; Casey 2014, 214–15). All things considered, the invasion of Iraq was an outstanding success for the Bush administration. Nevertheless, in failing to adequately prepare for the requirements of post-invasion Iraq, legitimation challenges would soon arise.

Legitimation Challenges and Hidden Mobilisation Costs

This section does not attempt to review the failures of U.S. policy in Iraq, but rather highlight key factors that increased legitimation challenges to the Bush administration. To begin with, the U.S. failed to find any WMD, which had been the central justification for the invasion of Iraq. Although the October 2003 report of the Iraq Survey Group stressed that it was an interim study, even at this point the lack of WMD prompted Senator Jay Rockefeller to state that "you just don't … put our nation's youth at risk based upon something that appears not to have existed" (*BBC News* 2003). In June 2004 the 9/11 Commission concluded that there were was no 'collaborative operational relationship' between al-Qaeda and Hussein's Iraq (Ricks 2006, 377), before the Iraq Survey group confirmed in October 2004 that no WMD had been found in Iraq (*BBC News* 2004). It is on that basis that the Iraq War has been identified as a case 'in which securitisation … backfired', in that claims regarding security threats were proven to be false and undermined the legitimation of the conflict (Oleseker 2018, 317). Other examples of unwanted prioritisation in 2004 were the brutal killing of four American contractors in March (one survey found that more than 80 percent of Americans had 'seen or heard something about the attacks'; Casey 2014, 227) and the Abu Ghraib revelations of April 2004. All this occurred in the context of a growing number of American casualties, which is discussed further below (DiMaggio 2015, 124).

Fortunately for the Bush administration, the decreasing security situation in Iraq in 2004 meant that there was a reduction in independent media reporting, meaning that in the lead-up to the 2004 presidential election, 'Bush's constant claims of progress started to stick' amongst some of the electorate, with approval ratings on Iraq policy increasing by almost 10 percent between May and November 2004 (Casey 2014, 228–29; see also L. Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2007, 31-32; Ricks 2006, 359–61). As yet more evidence for the legitimation advantages of an incumbent government, the Bush administration was also able to regain control over the interpretation of events at Abu Ghraib, as the government's preferred terms of 'abuse' and 'scandal' – as opposed to 'torture' – became the dominant frames adopted by the news media (L. Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2007, 91-95). At least in part, this framing resulted in the 'sharpest restoration of support' in opinion polls

across the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq (ibid, 78-79). By this point, however, public opinion regarding Iraq was highly partisan, meaning that there was a limit to Bush's legitimation attempts: Berinsky's (2009, 102) survey in late 2004 found a gap of more than 60 percent in war support between Republicans and Democrats. After the 2004 election, there was a significant escalation in sectarian violence in 2005 which made the Bush administration's transition plan look completely implausible to many sceptics (Lewis 2012, 467; Payne 2020, 176), with over half of Americans believing the Iraq War to have been a mistake and being in favour of withdrawal by the middle of 2005 (Casey 2014, 231; DiMaggio 2015, 135; Mueller 2005, 45). The support gap between Republicans and Democrats only remained around the 60 percent mark in 2005 and 2006 because Republican enthusiasm for the war decreased around this period (Berinsky 2009, 102). Opposition in Congress grew in strength in 2005 (Heaney and Rojas 2015, 174), exposing more Americans to anti-war positions and leading to an increased electoral salience of the Iraq War. According to one Republican consultant, Iraq was "[t]he really big issue" for the American public in the 2006 midterm elections and accounted for probably "80 percent" of the potential problems for the Republicans (Casey 2014, 234). Even Rumsfeld later reflected that "there was no mistaking in 2006 that Americans were losing confidence" in the conduct of the War on Terror, and the major debates that occurred during the 2006 midterm election campaign showed that (Dieck 2015, 3, 75).

As has been shown in Chapters 4 and 5, increased mobilisation costs set the base for legitimation disputes. In economic terms, Congress had appropriated some $800 billion on U.S. military operations alone in Iraq by the end of 2007, which doubled and exceeded the equivalent inflation-adjusted figures for the Korean War and the Vietnam War respectively (Stiglitz and Blimes 2008, 5-6). Alongside this, there had been 'unexpectedly high level of American casualties' (Mueller 2005, 45), with more than half of Americans answering that casualty figures were 'unacceptable' as early as July 2003 (Casey 2014, 223). By the beginning of 2006 there were some 1,701 U.S. deaths in combat, and this only increased, with another 704 and 764 combat casualties in 2007 and 2008 respectively (DCAS 2021c). While the number of casualties did remain significantly lower than the limited war era, these were significant mobilisation costs, especially in the context of the success of the initial invasion. Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 2, as American war casualties have decreased in comparison to previous wars, 'personal narratives have tended to receive far greater prominence', resulting in domestic political debates around war policies being even more firmly centred on the issue of casualties (Casey 2014, 205–6, 219). Perhaps consequently, unlike presidents who have acted as the nation's 'mourner in chief' by publicly acknowledging and commemorating casualties, Bush explicitly avoided this role (ibid, 222-

23). For example, on 3 November 2003, 17 U.S. soldiers were killed, but Bush did not make a statement for two days in an attempt 'to not dramatize the growing death toll' (ibid, 223).

There were other ways in which the Bush administration was able to downplay mobilisation costs and deprioritise the problems in Iraq. In line with developments in Chapter 5, around 10 percent of personnel involved in the invasion of Iraq were PMSCs (Avant and Sigelman 2010, 232). However, as the insurgency grew in Iraq and manpower requirements expanded beyond the resources of the all-volunteer force, the Bush administration increasingly relied on PMSCs to fill shortages when the alternatives (withdrawal or conscription) were politically unfeasible (McFate 2014, 25). As Alison Stanger (2012, 185) argued, 'outsourcing proved an attractive path of least resistance, one that enabled American policy makers to throw money at the problem without having to rally the American people to fully support the enormous scale of operations' in Iraq. The excesses and wastefulness associated with PMSC contracts in the War on Terror attracted insignificant levels of attention due to the shielding of the American public from these costs of war (ibid, 188). Furthermore, Rumsfeld's light-footprint approach towards Iraq was only made possible because PMSCs made up for the shortfall of post-invasion troops,[53] as the number of contractors increased from approximately 50,000 to 180,000 between May 2004 and January 2008 (Avant and Sigelman 2010, 255; Kinsey 2009, 33, 36). As the Bush administration began to increasingly rely on PMSCs, the number of contractor casualties also rose, from four percent of all casualties in 2003 to 27 percent between 2004 and 2007 (McFate 2014, 20).

The crucial point with these statistics, however, as argued in Chapter 2, is that these PMSC casualties were not politically salient. Between 2003 and 2007, the U.S. military was mentioned in around 2,800 different articles a year in the *New York Times*; for PMSCs the comparative number was 64 (Avant and Sigelman 2010, 246). This average figure of 64 articles per year included a six-month period with 138 articles referring to PMSCs in connection with the previously discussed events of 2004 (ibid).[54] This disparity in coverage is striking because of the casualty figures of the same period; whilst there were just over three times as many military casualties as contractor casualties, the military received nearly 44 times as much coverage in the *New York Times* (ibid, 256). In terms of mobilisation more broadly, the increase of 130,000 PMSCs between 2004 and 2008 'caused no scandal, uproar, or even notice' in the U.S., providing a clear example of how deprioritisation enabled the continued use of

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[53] There are similarities to the post-invasion situation in Panama here, but noticeably in that case the U.S. was not committed to long-term nation-building as it was in Iraq.

[54] The latter example speaks to how scandals involving PMSCs can sometimes generate more press attention than equivalent events committed by the U.S. military, such as the contrast in attention to killing sprees at Nisour Square and Hadith in Iraq (McFate 2019a, 8). More generally, however, PMSC activity is deprioritised and narrowly discussed, with opposition to PMSCs focusing on certain issues at the expense of broader strategic issues (McFate 2014, 9).

force (ibid, 252). After all, there is a clear example to the contrary in terms of the heated political debate that the surge of *28,000 U.S. troops* prompted in 2007, which is discussed further below (ibid, 252). Similarly, the employment of more than 100,000 'Sons of Iraq' on the U.S. military payroll in 2008 as part of the 'Anbar Awakening' to combat al-Qaeda in Iraq's influence provoked little dissent (Mumford 2013, 71). This epitomises the consequences of a more general trend in Iraq, as just 17 percent of all PMSCs employed by the U.S. government in Iraq in September 2007 were U.S. citizens (Schwartz and Swain 2011, 19).

The economic costs of war in Iraq were also hidden from Congress and the electorate. With regards to PMSCs, for example, the government failed to collect data on these actors in any systematic fashion until late in the second Bush term (Avant and Sigelman 2010, 244). Therefore, 'information which PMSC personnel … [were] deployed, where, and in what ways is (or was) de facto not available' to elites, let alone the general public (ibid). Similarly, congresspeople also criticised the government's costing of the war in Iraq. In a similar fashion to the Clinton administration's funding strategy for the intervention in Bosnia, the Bush administration financed the Iraq War via emergency appropriations, rather than through budgeting anticipated expenses in the baseline defence budget (Michaels 2013, 54; Stiglitz and Blimes 2008, 21). This funding method followed different procedures to other budgeting issues, and the requests were often kept secret for as long as possible, resulting in confusion as to how much the war was costing (Michaels 2013, 54; Stiglitz and Blimes 2008, 21). As the bipartisan Iraq Study Group put it in December 2006, the Bush administration's method of financing made 'it difficult for both the general public and members of Congress to … answer what should be a simple question: How much money is the President requesting for the war in Iraq?' (Stiglitz and Blimes 2008, 23). Similarly, David Walker, then U.S. Comptroller General, lamented how the lack of costing data made "it difficult to reliably know how much the war in Iraq is costing" (ibid). All in all, whilst mobilisation costs did continue to rise and pose legitimation challenges to the Bush administration, the government still employed strategies to downplay and hide mobilisation costs as occurred in Vietnam.

Claims of Progress and The Surge

As noted above, in attempting to justify the continued deployment of American troops, the Bush administration regularly emphasised American successes in Iraq. In 2005 the Bush administration launched a publicity campaign which Casey (2014, 231) explicitly compared to the 'progress offensive' studied in Chapter 4. This campaign was informed by the school of thought described in Chapter 1 that emphasises the importance of the belief in the prospects of eventual victory in determining levels of war support, even if casualties are rising (Feaver and Gelpi 2004; Gelpi, Feaver, and Reifler 2006, 2009). Thus, after Feaver joined the National Security Council as a special adviser in June 2005, the Bush administration

increasingly emphasised that despite the current struggles in Iraq, future victory was still attainable (Shane 2005). Bush's 30 November 2005 address on Iraq used the word "victory" some fifteen times, 'Plan for Victory' could be seen on the podium that the speech was delivered from, and the NSC's accompanying report was titled 'National Strategy for Victory in Iraq' (Berinsky 2009, 1). Likewise, some 40 percent of Bush's speeches in 2006 related to terrorism mentioned that the terror threat was diminished, a significant increase from previous years (Rubin 2020, 91).

This publicity campaign was accompanied by broader rhetorical shifts, with the "War on Terror" being rebranded or accompanied by other labels, namely "a global struggle against violent extremism" and then later as the "Long War" (Graham and White 2006). These changing terminologies reflected 'a new emphasis on reminding the public of the broader, long-term threat' to the U.S. in the hope that it would 'allow the administration to put into broader perspective the daily mayhem in Iraq and the American casualties' in that war (Schmitt and Shanker 2005). In his 2006 State of the Union Address, Bush (2006a) compared the conflict to the Cold War and claimed that "our own generation is in a long war against a determined enemy – a war that will be fought by Presidents of both parties". In many ways, it was one part of an attempt to make the War on Terror discourse salient again in the legitimation of the use of force, with 2006 featuring more Bush speeches mentioning "terror" more than three times than any year in his presidency barring 2002 (Rubin 2020, 90).[55] More than that, however, these historical tropes were invoked to legitimate the War on Terror beyond the Bush presidency, reflecting how the ongoing nature of risk management strategies contrasts with the two-term restriction on U.S. presidents (Rasmussen 2006, 138).

Nonetheless, much like in the Cold War, constitutive and overarching discourses could not legitimate all securitisations and subsequent uses of force, particularly in troubled warzones. In an echo of the failings of the 'progress offensive' in Vietnam, there was an obvious contrast between Bush's rhetoric and events on the ground in Iraq as the 'elasticity of reality' decreased (Casey 2014, 232).[56] As early as June 2005, Republican Senator Chuck Hagel claimed that "the White House has departed from reality with its optimistic assessments of Iraq" (ibid), whilst the February 2006 bombing of the al-Askari mosque undermined Bush's repeated assertions of progress (DiMaggio 2015, 138-39). One account alleged that Feaver "cringed" when Bush declared in October 2006 that the U.S. was "absolutely … winning" the war (Casey 2014, 232). Although the Bush administration's

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[55] This is the metric used by Rubin for a speech to be concerning terrorism and is also used when citing this text for the rest of this dissertation.

[56] In contrast to previous conflicts, overseas networks such as Al-Jazeera and increased communication from soldiers on the front line played a prominent role in challenging the U.S. government's account of the war in Iraq (Casey 2014, 216).

emphasis on progress did not have the significant self-defeating effects of the Johnson administration's 'progress offensive', it failed to generate any changes in public support (McHugh 2015, 5).

It was at this point that the Bush administration decided to discount public opinion by implementing the 'surge', which constituted a 28,000-troop deployment to Iraq in January 2007 (G. Jacobson 2010, 586; Payne 2020, 173). [57] In this sense, there is a clear contrast to Nixon's handling of the unpopularity of the Vietnam War which focused on demobilisation (Casey 2014, 234-35). This difference can primarily be explained by electoral dynamics, as Bush would not be on the ballot box again. In an echo of the Bush 41 administration and its timings with the policies towards Iraq, Bosnia, and Somalia, the surge was delayed by six months to allow for the 2006 November elections, with any discussions of alternative strategies being avoided because of the concern that it would show claims of progress to be untrue (Payne 2020, 165, 180). The 2006 midterm elections merely confirmed Iraq as an electoral problem, as Democrats won control of both houses of Congress for the first time since 1994 which 'owed to Democratic promises to end the war in Iraq' (McHugh 2015, 5; Saldin 2008, 6). The prospects for the surge were made more troublesome by the December 2006 report of the Iraq Study Group, which described the situation on the ground as 'grave and deteriorating' and recommended that the U.S. should begin withdrawing American troops (McHugh 2015, 5).

When Bush announced the surge in December 2006, one poll reported that just 6 percent of respondents were in favour of said policy (Payne 2020, 182). In Congress, Senator Obama introduced the 'Iraq War De-Escalation Act', which proposed abandoning the surge in favour of the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group (McHugh 2015, 2). However, as described above, the Bush administration was able to circumvent these legitimation concerns amongst Congress and the public. Firstly, like the Gulf War, this Bush administration enacted the surge of U.S. troops *before* asking Congress for funding, making opposition to the deployment less likely (Dieck 2015, 157). Secondly, although the Democrats had achieved majorities in Congress in the midterm elections and were increasingly active in terms of anti-war legislation between 2007 and 2009, they lacked a veto-proof majority in the Senate, meaning that Republican support would be needed in any attempt to curtail funding for the surge (Heaney and Rojas 2015, 202; McHugh 2015, 6). The Bush administration – via individuals deemed to be trustworthy such as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Rice, and the highly regarded General David Petraeus – was able to focus its elite legitimation attempts

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[57] It is worth noting that this number of troops was the maximum that the U.S. could deploy at this time. This speaks to how the Bush administration's continued to increase the burden of the Iraq War onto members of the all-volunteer army rather than incurring any broader societal mobilisation costs (Dieck 2015, 162; Lewis 2012, 482).

on any potentially sceptical Republicans (McHugh 2015, 8). Part of this included reassurances around mobilisation costs, with Gates telling Congress that troops could be withdrawn by the end of 2007, despite private discussions showing this timetable was improbable (ibid). Thirdly, and linked to the first point, Republicans began to claim that Democrats' objections to the surge were decreasing the chances of America's success in Iraq (ibid). Gates, for example, declared that objections to the surge would "embolden the enemy" to carry out more attacks against U.S. forces (ibid). A related argument made by the Bush administration was that withdrawing troops would be more harmful to the U.S. than staying the course, effectively providing another variation of the threat inflation that marked the Bush administration's pre-war legitimation attempts. As Bush put it in January 2007, the consequences of an American withdrawal from Iraq would be that "Radical Islamic extremists would grow in strength and gain new recruits" and "be in a better position to topple moderate governments, [and] create chaos in the region" (ibid, 7). Additionally, it is also worth noting at this point that there was a shift in the administration's rhetoric that mirrored the Vietnam War, as the Bush administration argued that the surge would make withdrawal possible by establishing conditions for a handover to Iraqi security forces (Carruthers 2011, 252).

When the House and Senate did successfully pass a funding bill in March 2007 that dictated that the withdrawal of U.S. troops should begin in October of that year, Bush predictably used his veto power to quash the bill (McHugh 2015, 9). In May 2007, the Democrats decided against another challenge to the Bush administration, authoring and passing a new funding bill with no mention of a withdrawal timetable (ibid). As such, much like the AUMF debate that preceded the invasion of Iraq, the eventual result of Democratic objections was preordained. Senator Biden had acknowledged this point in January of 2007, stating that "[a]s a practical matter, there is no way this [the surge] is going to be stopped" (Knowlton 2007). Withal, the Bush administration's arguments appear to have been successful; Obama stated that no Democrats wanted "to play chicken with our troops" and Senator Carl Levin acknowledged that he did not "want to send a message that we are not going to provide funding for the troops" (McHugh 2015, 9). Once the surge was enacted, after an initial increase in prioritisation because of increased casualties the Iraq War was increasingly deprioritised, with record low levels of attention being paid to the conflict according to poll respondents in April 2008 (DiMaggio 2015, 114). This reflected the relative success of the surge and the consequential stabilisation of Iraqi politics (as epitomised by the Status of Forces Agreement signed in 2008), as well as the growing prominence of other issues such as the financial crisis and the upcoming presidential election (ibid, 144; Achter 2016, 88; Kreps 2018b, 171). In 2008 no full-time reporters from the major television news networks were sent to Iraq, and there was a noteworthy 78 percent drop-off in network television coverage of the conflict between 2007 and 2008 alone (Casey 2014, 235). As Gates put it with

regards to Iraq in 2008, "I think the debate has moved on" (Kreps 2018b, 171). All things considered then, the surge in Iraq is an excellent example of how the Bush administration was able to ignore elite and public opinion and successfully circumnavigate the standards of democratic exceptionalism.

Conclusion

Focusing on the three key themes of this dissertation, this chapter has analysed the holistic relationship between the American people and the War on Terror during the Bush presidency. To begin with, although there were increased mobilisation efforts in the wake of 9/11 such as the calling up of 50,000 reservists, it was noted that Bush's declarations encouraging citizens to go shopping and holidaying set the tone for the minimal economic mobilisation during the entirety of the War on Terror. Furthermore, as has been shown throughout the chapter, the Bush administration regularly tried to minimise the impact of the War on Terror on the American public as per risk management strategies, whether that be in terms of the reliance on airpower during the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq or the increasing use of PMSCs in these conflicts.

The first section also looked at the War on Terror discourse, which represented the Bush administration's attempt to fill the void in national security discourses after the 9/11 attacks. The Bush administration carved out a powerful narrative that not only set the base for any legitimation attempts via its constitutive assumption but also made dissent and opposition noticeably trickier, especially with the assent of the media and the Democrats to key components of the discourse. The War on Terror discourse was heavily prioritised to achieve political success and legitimate the new conflict, and this dynamic was particularly salient during the Bush administration's publicity campaign in the lead-up to the Iraq War. As reviewed in the third section of the chapter, this multifaceted legitimation campaign was effective in reducing the political space for opposition via the manipulation of intelligence and threat inflation.

Nevertheless, as the same section of this chapter also showed, the initial political and military successes of the Iraq War did not last forever. With post-war reconstruction plans reflecting attempts to prevent long-term mobilisation costs, instability quickly emerged in Iraq. As casualties grew and specific issues in legitimation arose (such as the lack of WMD and Abu Ghraib), the Bush administration attempted to minimise direct mobilisation costs whilst convincing the American electorate of the progress being made in Iraq. When these strategies largely failed, Bush used his lame-duck status to effectively render public opinion irrelevant with the surge. By contrast, the Afghanistan War – the focus of the second section of this chapter – had long been distant to the American public. This was because of the nature of the risk management strategy being employed in Afghanistan, but also because of the shift

in focus of the Bush administration and the news media towards Iraq. Whilst the War on Terror was politically vulnerable by the end of this period (in 2007 a record low 29 percent of respondents felt that the U.S. was "winning the war against terrorism"; Newport 2011), the seeds for the normalisation of war during the Obama presidency had to some extent already been sowed.

7: Barack Obama's Overseas Contingency Operations and the Normalisation of War

Chapter Outline

This chapter consists of three main sections. The first part reviews and critiques the IR scholarship that has addressed the broad continuity in counterterrorism policies between the Bush and Obama administrations, particularly the dominant perspective which focuses on the endurance of the War on the Terror discourse. In this section, it is argued that this viewpoint presents an overly static picture of counterterrorism campaigns, and that rhetorical and material changes during the Obama administration should be understood as playing a crucial role in the continuity of the War on Terror more broadly. The second and third parts of the chapter review these alterations, analysing Obama's rhetorical rebranding of the War on Terror and how this generated a perception of change, before looking at the impact of the administration's adoption of a light-footprint approach. Considering how these actions deprioritised and legitimated the War on Terror, this chapter provides novel analysis of the continuity in counterterrorism policies during the Obama presidency.

Continuity and the War on Terror Discourse

Several different perspectives have attempted to explain the broad continuity of counterterrorism policies between the Bush and Obama administrations. Jack Goldsmith (2009; 2012, xii–xiii) argued both that the Obama administration was 'sobered by a terrorist threat they [only] fully appreciated once they assumed power' and that 'almost all' of the Bush administration's counterterrorism policies had been 'vetted, altered, and blessed … by the other branches of the U.S. government' during the Bush presidency, making counterterrorism policies 'woven into the fabric of national security architecture in ways that were hard if not impossible to unravel'. In a similar vein, Michael Glennon (2015, 5-6) asserted that policy continuity was an example of 'double government' in the U.S., meaning that Obama had 'little substantive control' over counterterrorism policies. Focusing on agency over structure, Trevor McCrisken (2011, 781) claimed that 'Obama always intended to deepen Bush's commitment to counterterrorism' whilst simultaneously attempting to end the Iraq War.[58] The most dominant account in IR scholarship, however, pointed to the War on the Terror discourse as the key explanatory factor in the ongoing nature of U.S. counterterrorism campaigns and their legitimation (Boyle 2011; Holland 2012; Holland and

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[58] One might question this account on the basis that Obama wished to downsize the significance of (counter)terrorism in his administration's policy and rhetoric (see below), but more broadly this account ignores the deeper process of normalisation that provides a more comprehensive explanation of continuity across administrations rather than focusing on personal opinions of the president in office.

Bentley 2014; 2017; Holland and Jarvis 2014; R. Jackson 2011). Some of these scholars acknowledged McCrisken's position that Obama was committed to the central ideas of the War on Terror discourse, whilst others sided with Goldsmith and Glennon and contended that Obama was unable to end counterterrorism campaigns because of the ongoing dominance of this discourse. In both cases though, the War on Terror discourse was the primary explanation of why the conflict had not ended with a new administration. For example, the continuation of the War on Terror discourse could be used to explain the high levels of support for the Obama administration's targeted killing programme, or the acquiescence in the face of the continued U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan and Iraq (Krebs 2013, 76; Solomon 2014, 120).

Most of these authors focused on the rhetorical continuity between the two presidents, arguing that the War on Terror discourse meant that Obama was unable to reframe or challenge certain arguments about (counter)terrorism. As Michael Boyle (2011, 420) put it, the War on Terror discourse had 'created a rhetorical box' that Obama had to operate within. Similarly, Jonathan Clarke and Amy Zalman (2009, 102) claimed that the War on Terror constituted 'an extraordinarily powerful narrative' that could not easily be abandoned. The continuing legacy of the War on Terror discourse was to some extent unsurprising given that so many of the key areas of the conflict that underpinned and defined the narrative – such as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq – were ongoing during Obama's tenure (Bentley 2017, 61). Although there might have been some rhetorical changes by the Obama administration, the argument from these scholars was that such changes were largely superficial and in fact, Obama's rhetoric drew on the same discursive frames as Bush's (Bentley 2014, 2017; Desch 2010; Oddo 2014).

In terms of the rhetorical components of the War on Terror discourse, a review of the existing scholarship shows five key continuities. Firstly, Obama continued to emphasise the events of 9/11 in his discussion of (counter)terrorism (Bentley 2017, 65; Holland and Jarvis 2014, 188). This occurred in two fashions: Obama (2013a, 2016e) argued that 9/11 changed the "course of history" and invoked the memory of those lives lost to legitimate his administration's actions. As Maja Zehfuss (2003, 526) contended as early as 2003, the ongoing memory of 9/11 – and what this event meant in American political discourse – had become 'an obstacle to critical debate' regarding the War on Terror. Secondly, Obama continued to describe counterterrorism as a "war" – even if he did largely restrict this terminology to the context of specific terrorist organisations rather than a more general "War on Terror". Notwithstanding, at times Obama's language echoed the tone of his predecessor, such as his address to the nation after the attempted Christmas day bombing in 2009 where he stated that "our nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred" (McCrisken 2011, 784). Linked to the above, Obama's rhetoric also slipped into this "war" pattern when

discussing 9/11, providing a telling illustration that – as Zehfuss previously claimed – '[i]n the memory of 9/11 … the war will never be over' (Bentley 2017, 66). Even where Obama used the war label in the context of specific groups, Bentley noted how the concept of war could not 'be used in a conceptual vacuum' but was intimately tied with the idea of the Bush administration's War on Terror (Bentley 2014, 97).

Thirdly, Obama reiterated the idea of American innocence and the consequential necessity of the War on Terror, giving counterterrorism campaigns a logic of inevitability. As Obama (2009) put it in his address announcing the second surge in Afghanistan, the U.S. "did not ask for this fight" but were instead "compelled to fight a war in Afghanistan" after "19 men hijacked 4 airplanes and used them to murder nearly 3,000 people." Similarly, as an example of Goldsmith's approach cited above (i.e. that Obama changed his policies when exposed to the reality of the terrorist threat), in the same speech Obama stated that military action in Afghanistan was necessary because "new attacks are being plotted as I speak" (ibid). Regardless of one's opinion on this rhetoric, the powerful legitimating options made possible by executive informational privileges are clear. This relates to the fourth rhetorical trope adopted by Obama, which was the continued use of the language of risk to inflate the terrorist threat to U.S. security. In the context of the rise of ISIS, although Obama explicitly acknowledged that intelligence had "not yet detected specific plotting" against the U.S., he also justified the use of force against the organisation as it could have posed a threat "if left unchecked" (Heng 2018, 549). Fifthly and finally, although Obama generally avoided the provocative description of terrorists than his predecessor (Rubin 2020, 84), he still described terrorists in vivid terms to legitimate the use of force, particularly in the context of ISIS. Obama (2014; 2016) described the group as "deranged killers", "evil", "barbarian", and a "cancer", arguing similarly to Bush that there could "be no reasoning … with this brand of evil". Much like in the Bush administration, these tropes from the War on Terror discourse made opposition to military intervention less likely.

Along with these rhetorical continuities, some scholars also highlighted the material embodiments of the War on Terror discourse as a restrictive force against change. For Jackson (2011, 392; 2014, 83), the War on Terror had 'become institutionalised in policy practices and institutions … thus providing it with a concrete material reality and a sense of legitimacy'. Similarly, Krebs (2015, 46) referred to how 'a dominant narrative may empower material and ideological interests in its reproduction', such as the sprawling growth of infrastructures focused on counterterrorism during the War on Terror. Priest and William Arkin's (2011) research found some 1,271 American government bodies to be working on counterterrorism, along with 1,931 private contractor companies, some of whom also worked for the government. Although these companies did not necessarily relate to America's foreign policy, the scale of this industry is illustrative of the position that counterterrorism had acquired for

itself in U.S. politics. As such, Jackson (2011, 392; 2014, 87) claimed that 'the possibilities for significant policy changes' in the realm of counterterrorism were 'highly circumscribed.'

As this chapter will show, the ideas and politics of the War on Terror discourse clearly did not dissipate when Obama entered office. Nonetheless, there are also problems with this dominant account. Firstly, the argument made by Goldsmith, Glennon, and discursive IR scholars that Obama could not have ended the War on Terror if he wished to is too deterministic (Desch 2010, 427). Secondly, this position renders public opinion irrelevant as a starting position. As argued in Chapter 1 and seen in this chapter in the crafting of policy to appease public opinion, the significance and relevance of public opinion is something that can be managed by U.S. governments, but its insignificance cannot be assumed. Thirdly, this scholarship overstates the power of the War on Terror discourse, with this approach being ill-equipped to explain the political contestation surrounding the Obama administration's counterterrorism policies if the War on Terror is conceived as a Foucauldian 'regime of truth' which 'places boundaries around what can be meaningfully said and understood about the subject' (Hodges 2011, 5; see also R. Jackson 2014, 79–80).

Fourthly and most importantly, this account of continuity is too static (Krebs 2015, 269). That is, part of the reason why the War on Terror was able to continue despite its legitimation crises at the end of the Bush presidency was because of the differences of the Obama administration. Put another way, it simply matters that it was the Obama administration making these decisions rather than an imaginary third term Bush administration. However, by focusing explicitly on the puzzle of continuity between the Bush and Obama administrations, any changes observed in the scholarship above are effectively meaningless in that they offer little to no value in explaining continuity. Jackson and Tsui (2017, 76), for example, 'explain the lack of substantive change in counterterrorism policy' by highlighting how 'the changes in public discourse and approach between Bush and Obama do not amount to a significant evolutionary change', thus overlooking how these rhetorical changes were a key driver of policy continuity. Similarly, the issue of military strategies adopted by the Obama administration is almost nowhere to be seen in this account of the continuation of the War on Terror, as these discursive approaches tend to overvalue rhetoric in their conceptions of discourse, as mentioned in Chapter 1. Adopting a broader approach, this chapter looks at these changes via the three themes of this dissertation, looking at how changes in legitimation, mobilisation, and prioritisation allowed for the continuation of the War on Terror.

Obama, the Perception of Change, and the Language of Risk

Rhetorical Alterations and the Perception of Change

Somewhat paradoxically then, in understanding the continued use of force during the Obama administration, the changes that consolidated the War on Terror when it was at its most vulnerable must be appreciated. Although the salience of the Iraq War declined at the end of the Bush presidency and the financial crisis became the primary issue in the 2008 presidential election, Obama undoubtedly profited from his anti-war positions, considering the centrality of the War on Terror to the Bush presidency and the extent to which Obama 'campaigned as the anti-George W. Bush' (Klaidman 2012, 1). Obama's long-standing record against the Iraq War stance was vital in his victory in the Democratic primaries (Heaney and Rojas 2011, 45; Saldin 2008, 8), and he 'was elected, in part, to wind down the wars of 9/11, to reduce America's global footprint, and to refocus national energies on challenges at home' (Klaidman 2012, 48). 45 percent of Americans in 2008 believed that reducing overseas military commitments should have been a top priority for the next U.S. president, even when public opinion on the war in Iraq was improving (Pew Research Center 2008). More broadly, it is hard to disagree with Mueller's (2005, 53) contention that an 'Iraq syndrome' had emerged regarding the use of force in the future. The annual Chicago Council on Global Affairs (2008, 3) report found a record 36 percent of respondents answering that the U.S. should stay out of world affairs since the question was first asked in 1947. Furthermore, 60 percent of respondents from another poll felt that it was more important for an incoming president to focus on domestic issues over foreign policy (Pew Research Center 2008). If 'President Barack Obama's foreign policy was the product of widespread war- and casualty-aversion exacerbated by the Bush legacy' (Krieg and Rickli 2019, 78), then this was also true of his rhetoric, which vitally fostered a reputation for change for his administration that enabled the continuation of the War on Terror.

> As Goldsmith (2009) concisely put it before the advent of the light-footprint approach,
>
> [a]lmost all of the Obama changes have been at the level of packaging, argumentation, symbol, and rhetoric. This does not mean that the Obama changes are unimportant. Packaging, argumentation, symbol, and rhetoric, it turns out, are vitally important to the legitimacy of terrorism policies.

This can be seen in the conduct of the Obama administration, as public diplomacy played a pivotal role in the attempts to change the "mood music" surrounding U.S. counterterrorism policies, as one advisor to the president put it (Baker 2010; Kitchen 2014, 69). More specifically, on the campaign trail Obama (2007a) had criticised the "color-coded politics of fear" that he felt characterised the Bush presidency. This critique consisted of two main points: that the threat of terrorism had been exaggerated to generate fear to legitimate

policies, and that this had led to a level of unnecessary prioritisation of the War on Terror at the expense of other issues (Krieg 2017, 9). Therefore, the Obama administration abandoned the colour-coded system discussed in the previous chapter (Allen 2011), avoided "playing to people's fears" on terrorism (Klaidman 2012, 176), and recast the threat of terrorism as 'only one of a number of vital challenges confronting America' (Baker 2010). The global financial crisis raised the political priority of issues other than the War on Terror, making America's economic problems 'a permissive cause' that reduced 'the political costs' of a decreased focus on the War on Terror in public discourse (Krebs 2013, 74).

This began with abandoning the term "War on Terror" in favour of the more neutral "Overseas Contingency Operations" (Kitchen 2014, 69). Further, because Obama wished to avoid the idea of a general war against terrorism in favour of a 'human-sized conflict' against 'reasonably well-defined' organisations (Clarke and Zalman 2009, 110), he often stated that his administration had "set a goal that was narrowly defined as disrupting, dismantling, and defeating Al Qaida" rather than a more general war against terrorism (Obama 2009). More concretely, within a few days of his inaugural address, Obama suspended the use of military commissions, reversed some of the Bush-era secrecy regulations, banned the use of torture, closed CIA black sites, pledged adherence to the Geneva Conventions, established a task force for alternatives to detention without trial, and promised to close Guantanamo Bay within a year (Goldsmith 2012, 4). In response to these orders, a *Los Angeles Times* article claimed that '[w]ith just a few words and strokes of his pen, the president ended the War on Terror' (Brooks 2009). Similarly, one *Washington Post* headline declared 'Bush's 'War' on Terror Comes to a Sudden End' (Priest 2009). As discussed in Chapter 2, Obama's recent inauguration meant that his legitimation efforts were particularly effective, especially as these actions aligned with the 'genuine and widespread expectations' that Obama's election 'would result in significant policy change, particularly in relation to America's much-criticised global War on Terror' (R. Jackson 2014, 76).

Part of the positive reaction to the policies enacted at the beginning of the Obama administration can be explained by the president's reputation. Obama was the former editor of *Harvard Law Review*, 'protégé of some of the U.S.'s most prominent liberal jurists' and had a strong legislative record on counterterrorism issues in the Senate (Scheuerman 2013, 525–26). This reputation was only furthered by the fact that the executive actions mentioned above were taken out of the Obama administration's own volition, marking a noticeable contrast to the Bush administration where alterations to counterterrorism policies had largely been forced upon them (Goldsmith 2012, 41). All in all, Obama's 'reputation helped legitimate the extraordinary powers' enabled the president during the War on Terror (ibid, 42).

Another relevant factor here is partisanship, which has been highlighted throughout the dissertation as playing a role in the approval of foreign policies in the American context. Whilst Obama's policies were quickly chastised by right-wing critics like Cheney and Rudy Giuliani for being 'soft' on terrorism, importantly the administration also managed to legitimate similar policies with those who had previously been against Bush's War on Terror (Scheuerman 2013, 519). Take, for example, the list of actions listed above that Obama instigated upon his arrival in the White House. Rather than producing a significant degree of change, military commissions were re-opened after the 120-day suspension, the Obama administration regularly employed the state secrets doctrine, CIA black sites were 'practically empty' for the last two years of the Bush administration and the executive order contained two loopholes for military and short-term detainees, detention without trial never ended, and Guantanamo Bay is still open today (Goldsmith 2012, 8–18). Yet, none of this prompted anything 'akin to the avalanche of critical books or journal articles burying' Bush's War on Terror, which can be explained via partisan leanings of academics which were confirmed by political attacks from figures such as Cheney and Giuliani (Scheuerman 2013, 519).

Strikingly, this legitimating effect seemed to hold true throughout the Obama presidency, even whilst the administration's policies did not match the expectations established by the 2008 presidential campaign. In August 2010, the press echoed Obama's representation of the withdrawal of the Army's Fourth Stryker Brigade from Iraq, with one MSNBC reporter stating that "[t]he combat mission is over; the war is over … wars end like this" (Dudziak 2012, 128). And yet, even at this time, there were still 50,000 U.S. service members stationed in Iraq, with military medals still being awarded as combat conditions were still present (Ricks 2010). In 2013, after Obama's first ever speech on the use of lethal drones, the *Wall Street Journal*'s headline affirmed that 'Obama Resets War on Terror – President Backs Limits on Drones, Use of Force; 'This War, Like All Wars, Must End'' (Barnes, McCain Nelson, and Entous 2013), whilst a *Washington Post* article stated that Obama had 'declared an end to a fearful chapter in American history' (Wilson 2013). Finally, when in 2016 when Obama announced that his administration would – contrary to previous statements – be leaving 8,400 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, a *Washington Post* article headline referred to 'Obama, the reluctant warrior' (Milbank 2016). Here then, the legitimation dynamics of media coverage displayed throughout the dissertation can be seen, but very specifically in this context to portray Obama as a hesitant war-wager and therefore legitimate the continued use of force amongst his liberal supporters.

This dynamic could also be seen in the decline of the anti-war movement, which was a noticeable contrast to the nadir of the Vietnam War under Nixon. Obama's election had a demobilising effect on the anti-war movement, despite the lack of substantive policy change (Heaney and Rojas 2011, 45). This was because Democrats, who had played a pivotal role in

the sizeable anti-war movement against Bush's War on Terror and in Obama's election, were no longer motivated to protest when a Democrat was elected president (Heaney and Rojas 2015, 4). As one study put it, '[f]rom 2007 to 2009, the largest antiwar rallies shrank from hundreds of thousands of people to thousands, and then to only hundreds' (ibid, 3). One particularly salient example is the United for Peace and Justice group, who organised protests at the Republican National Conventions of 2004 and 2005 that were attended by approximately 500,000 and 300,000 people respectively, but were "down to a couple of volunteers" by 2013 as a result of 'the withdrawal of Democrats from the movement' (R. Gray 2013; Heaney and Rojas 2011, 52, 58). Whilst in 2008 between 37 and 54 percent of anti-war protesters self-identified as Democrats, by late 2009 the equivalent range was between 19 and 22 percent (Heaney and Rojas 2011, 54). A similar phenomenon could be seen at the elite level, as 'congressional opposition to war dissipated once Obama entered the White House', with anti-war legislation dropping to post-9/11 levels when it was the heyday of the War on Terror discourse (Heaney and Rojas 2015, 178, 191). In short, the Obama administration was able to legitimate policies that the Bush administration would not have been able to.

The Afghanistan Surges and the Iraq War

One significant example of this legitimation dynamic was the Obama administration's surges of troops to Afghanistan in 2009. Inheriting 32,500 U.S. troops in Afghanistan (Congressional Research Service 2021), Obama approved two troop increases in his first year as president, with 17,000 troops being deployed in March 2009 before announcing a further increase of 30,000 troops in December 2009 (G. Jacobson 2010, 602). By May 2010 then, there were some 93,800 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, which was more than the number in Iraq at that time and twice the number that were ever stationed in Afghanistan during the Bush administration (ibid, 587; Congressional Research Service 2021). Like the Bush era, there was also a concurrent rise in PMSCs between January 2009 and May 2010, from 71,755 to 107, 479 (Congressional Research Service 2021). The number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan remained largely similar until the middle of 2012 and consequently, there was a rise in casualty figures, with more U.S. soldiers being killed in Afghanistan in the first three years of the Obama presidency than in the entirety of the Bush administration (Kreps 2018b, 160). Despite these significant increases in mobilisation costs, there was – much like during the Bush administration – little appetite for a surge in troop numbers in 2009: only 41 percent of Americans were in favour of a troop increase in Afghanistan, and just 30 percent of Democrats (McHugh 2015, 10). How, then, was Obama able to implement such a significant mobilisation increase without significant political costs that Bush could ignore as a lame-duck president?

Most broadly, the Obama administration's Afghanistan strategy was crafted with the tolerance of the American public in mind (Woodward 2010) and was accompanied by

legitimation efforts to persuade Americans – and particularly Democrats – as to the wisdom of the surge. To some extent, there was a base of latent public support for the Afghanistan War that the Obama administration could call upon, as one poll in 2008 showed that most of the Democrats who supported the conflict did so despite disapproving Bush's handling of it (G. Jacobson 2010, 597). Obama's rhetoric was designed to consolidate this support and bring other Democrats on board, given that Republicans were already more likely to support these policies. Accordingly, this period marked the most significant prioritisation of the Afghanistan War after its initial heyday (DiMaggio 2015, 53), with Gallup asking if sending American troops to Afghanistan in 2001 was a "mistake" more times in 2009 and 2010 than it did for the entirety of the Bush administration (Newport 2011).

Unlike Bush's typically optimistic tone, Obama's address announcing the second surge had a "very sober" tone, presenting the policy as a necessity, rather than a crusade (Dieck 2015, 167-68). For some members of the Obama administration, the optics of the time taken to come to a final decision on Afghanistan policy also differentiated the president from his predecessor, as Bush was perceived to be impulsive (ibid, 166). To emphasise the perception of change, this speech put a significant degree of emphasis on what the policy was not: that rebuilding Afghanistan was "beyond what we can achieve at a reasonable cost" and that "[t]he days of providing a blank cheque [to the Hamid Karzai] government are over" (McHugh 2015, 13). This aligned with Obama's attempts to appropriately prioritise the War on Terror: as he put it in the speech, the U.S. "troop commitment in Afghanistan cannot be open-ended – because the nation that I'm most interested in building is our own" (Dieck 2015, 168). Like Johnson in Vietnam and Bush in Iraq, this speech was framed in terms of withdrawal rather than victory per se, with the surge being targeted at establishing conditions for the Afghan security forces to be able to hold territory against the Taliban before an announced scheduled withdrawal by 2013 (Carruthers 2011, 252; Oddo 2014, 531). Obama also invoked the potential risks that a hasty withdrawal would incur, warning that "the danger [posed to the U.S.] will only grow if the region slides backwards, and al Qaeda can operate with impunity" (McHugh 2015, 13), despite al-Qaeda's significant decline in Afghanistan (DiMaggio 2015, 48). All this aligns with Goldsmith's (2012, 40) analysis that '[b]ecause the Obama policies played against type … they appeared more likely to be a necessary response', thus making the legitimation of the use of force more likely.

These legitimation efforts were effective, with Obama's account of the surge dominating the media narrative (DiMaggio 2015, 48-49) and persuading many Democrats to approve of an increase in American troop levels (G. Jacobson 2010, 503). After Obama's speech, 58 percent of Democrats in one poll were in favour of the surge, and as Republican support had remained consistent, 51 percent of the public approved of the policy (McHugh 2015, 13). This mirrored elite political dynamics earlier in the year: although some Democrats

expressed doubts about the Obama administration's spending requests for the Afghanistan War in May 2009, significant Democratic majorities in Congress voted to approve these policies whilst Republicans also voted 'almost unanimously' in favour despite some objections to the scheduled withdrawal date (G. Jacobson 2010, 590). These trends attested to the ongoing strength of the War on Terror discourse; whilst previous military interventions such as Somalia were subject to partisan switching, in this case, Obama only had to persuade Democrats as to the wisdom of his administration's policies. Furthermore, as Gabriel Rubin (2020, 87) argued, after the legitimation of the surge Obama 'did not need to speak much about' the Afghanistan War, again providing evidence for the flexibility afforded to American policymakers outside of sporadic legitimation efforts.

Another area of elite consensus was with regards to the Iraq War, as the Obama administration implemented the withdrawal plans that had been set by Bush. As mentioned in Chapter 6, by the end of the Bush administration a Vietnam-esque consensus had emerged on withdrawing American soldiers from Iraq, which was then consolidated by the perceived success of the surge (G. Jacobson 2010, 591). Although there were disagreements about the rate of withdrawal from Iraq, Republicans had little reason to object to the Obama administration's demobilisation policies as it followed the path laid out with Bush and aligned with their portrayal of the surge as a success story (ibid, 602). A combination of legitimation, demobilisation, and the rising salience of the Afghanistan War led to the deprioritisation of the Iraq War at this time, with television coverage exhibiting a marked shift from the Bush era. In 2009, there were 556 minutes of coverage devoted to the Afghanistan War on the nightly newscasts of the three American broadcast television networks; the equivalent figure for the Iraq War that year was just 80 minutes (Tyndall 2010). Consequently, as noted above, there was a significant degree of flexibility afforded to the Obama administration's Iraq policies: whilst the 144,000 troops in Iraq inherited by Obama were all withdrawn by December 2011 (as per the Status of Forces Agreement), soldiers were still deployed until this point to train Iraqi security forces and hunt down terrorists in the country without much political attention (DMDC 2020; Jacobson 2010, 589).

Where issues in Afghanistan arose, the Obama administration – like its predecessors – turned to the rhetoric of progress to generate support for the continued use of force and avoid any clear declaration about when American involvement might end (Gardner and Sewell 2011, 647). For example, during a press briefing in December 2010 to accompany the end of year review of the surge, the administration's representatives used the word "progress" 22 times (ibid, 663). Similarly, in 2010, General David Rodriguez stated that "we are steadily making deliberate progress", whilst Petraeus declared in 2011 that "[t]he past eight months have seen important but hard-fought progress" (Whitlock 2019). Indeed, a former senior National Security Council told government interviewers that there was constant pressure

from the White House and the Pentagon to find evidence for the benefits of the surge and that "[t]he metrics were always manipulated for the duration of the war" (ibid). Electorally, this appears to have worked, as Senator Mitt Romney failed to articulate any substantial critiques of the administration's Afghanistan policy during the 2012 presidential election campaign (Gelpi 2017, 1936), rendering the significant mobilisation costs of this period largely politically irrelevant. In 2012 and 2013, Obama mentioned the diminished threat posed by transnational terrorist groups in more than 50 percent of his speeches in an attempt to legitimate and deprioritise counterterrorism campaigns and create political flexibility. Much like in Iraq, Obama (2014c) announced in December 2014 that "our combat mission in Afghanistan is ending, and the longest war in American history is coming to a responsible conclusion", even whilst U.S. forces continued to conduct counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda in the country (Schmidt 2016).

The Language of Risk, ISIS, and the American Way of War

One of the ways in which Obama created a perception of difference from the Bush administration was a rhetorical repackaging of U.S. counterterrorism policies, emphasising their narrowness and precision in comparison to the broad-ranging nature of Bush's War on Terror. In a study comparing Bush's 20 September 2001 address to Congress and Obama's 1 December 2009 speech announcing the second surge, John Oddo (2014, 528) noted that whilst Bush referred to "terror" some 31 times, Obama only used the word "terrorist" on three occasions. In contrast, although Bush's speech mentioned "al-Qaeda" and the "Taliban" a combined 11 times, Obama acknowledged these organisations 34 times (ibid). Similarly, while Bush mentioned that al-Qaeda was present "in more than 60 countries" around the globe, Obama's rhetoric focused specifically on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, referring to these countries by name some 67 times (for Bush, this figure was seven) and terming the area "the epicenter of violent extremism" (ibid, 529). As such, Obama went to great effort to present his administration's counterterrorism policies as limited and restricted, despite the geographical expansion of the lethal drone war as discussed below (ibid, 530, 534). For Oddo, these rhetorical changes reflected the legitimation climate: 'an increasingly skeptical public, mounting casualties abroad, political pressure to produce "change"' (ibid, 522). We could see this dynamic throughout Obama's presidency; in another significant counterterrorism address in May 2013 at the National Defense University, Obama (2013b) stated that "we must define our effort not as a boundless 'global war on terror', but rather a series of persistent, targeted efforts to dismantle specific networks of violent extremists" (emphasis added), thus effectively describing the same policies but without the overarching ideological values put forward by the Bush administration.

As this quote suggests, Obama's rhetoric more openly embraced the language of risk management strategies than his predecessor who generally abided by the tropes of the

American way of war. In his speech announcing the death of bin Laden in May 2011, although Obama (2011b) declared that this was "the most significant achievement to date in our Nation's effort to defeat Al Qaida", he also cautioned that "his death does not mark the end of our effort … We must – and we will – remain vigilant at home". This comment reflected how the risk posed by terrorist activity cannot be eradicated simply by the elimination of any one leader (Heng 2006, 103; Holland 2012, 74), but also the need to continually legitimate risk management strategies. Two years later, Obama (2013b) argued that whilst "there have been no large-scale attacks on the United States" during his presidency, the U.S. was now "at a crossroads" whereby the country "must define the nature and scope" of its counterterrorism programs against an increasingly diffuse terrorist threat of "various al Qaeda affiliates" and domestic "radicalized individuals" who represented "the future of terrorism". Thus, Obama avoided the goal of total victory, stating that some degree of terrorism was inevitable as "we will never erase the evil that lies in the hearts of some human beings, nor stamp out every danger to our open society" (ibid). Whilst Bush regularly used the term "victory", this was the first speech that I could find Obama referring to the concept of "victory" in the context of the War on Terror, broadly conceived. For Obama, "[v]ictory against terrorism" would not be "measured in a surrender ceremony at a battleship, or a statue being pulled to the ground", but would be seen in life returning to normal: "in parents taking their kids to school; immigrants coming to our shores; fans taking in a ballgame; a veteran starting a business", and so on (ibid).[59] As the mention of accepting immigrants suggests, Obama's (2016d) picture of victory emphasised Americans staying true to "pluralism and … openness, our rule of law, our civil liberties – the very things that make this country great", as without this commitment, "the terrorists would have won". In this sense, whilst Bush's rhetoric emphasised American values as evidence that the U.S. would win the War on Terror, for Obama these values were *necessary* to 'win' the War on Terror.

Whilst Obama's rhetoric attempted to deal with the disconnections between the nature of risk management strategies and the language of the American way of war outlined in Chapter 5, it also opened space for criticism, with his speech at the National Defense University being subject to comments noticeably comparable to the critiques that followed Bush's remark in 2004 that the War on Terror could not be won. A *Wall Street Journal* (2013) editorial disparagingly argued that Obama's call for the U.S. to move off a war footing represented a return to how America 'thought about terrorism before 9/11'. Conservative commentators contended that Obama could not simply 'pretend… that the war is over' (Krauthammer 2013), and should instead do what 'America does best' by following history

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[59] The encouragement of a return to normality echoed Bush's statements in the wake of 9/11 regarding Disneyland and shopping, illustrating the way in which normalisation has been to some extent inherent in the design of the War on Terror.

and fighting 'its wars to a successful conclusion' (Stephens 2013). Most dramatically, Senator Saxby Chambliss – then the top-ranking Republican on the Senate Intelligence Committee – stated that Obama's speech would "be viewed by terrorists as a victory" (Baker 2013). All these critiques do fit within the War on Terror discourse established during the Bush administration, but they also reveal the endurance of the American way of war: terrorism was not an enduring risk to be managed but something to be warred against until total victory had been achieved.

This type of critique would reappear in the context of the rise of ISIS, especially given that Obama had characterised ISIS in January 2014 as a "jayvee [read: second tier] team" (Remnick 2014) to prevent (counter)terrorism from taking on unwanted saliency. By June 2014 however, ISIS had taken control of Mosul and declared a "caliphate" governed with an extreme version of Islamic law, meaning that 'Obama's rhetorical strategy collapsed' (Rubin 2020, 99; Wood 2015). As attention to the rise of ISIS increased (some 75 percent of respondents in September 2014 claimed to be following ISIS' actions 'very' or 'somewhat closely'; DiMaggio 2015, 301), Obama (2014b) even began to prioritise the issue of counterterrorism to legitimate the counter-ISIS campaign with a rare prime-time television address on 10 September 2014. This address was widely restated in the American media, and those paying increased attention to the media were significantly more likely to support military action against ISIS (DiMaggio 2015, 299-302). Obama's prioritisation continued in 2015 and 2016 as the salience of terrorism continued to rise in the American public's mind (Riffkin 2015), with the president making more speeches about counterterrorism in these years than any others in his tenure barring 2009 and 2010 when he was promoting a new version of American counterterrorism policies (Rubin 2020, 84). Additionally, Obama's rhetoric emphasised the necessity of counterterrorism in 2015 and 2016 more than in any other years (ibid, 90). Obama (2014a) also used increasingly harsh terms to describe ISIS in the years to legitimate this new military campaign, such as his assertion that "[t]he only language understood by killers like this is the language of force".

Even then, however, the Obama administration did use deprioritising rhetoric to describe ISIS and the counter-ISIS campaign to avoid the perceived excesses of the Bush administration and the contemporary Republican party. In his aforementioned televised address, Obama (2014b) stated that counter-ISIS operations would "be different from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan", instead describing these actions as a "counterterrorism campaign". When probed on this issue, Secretary of State John Kerry also refused to adopt the war label, stating that the U.S. was "engaging in a very significant counterterrorism operation" (Labott, Smith-Spark, and Sanchez 2014). In addition, even after the launching of the counter-ISIS campaign, Obama (2016f) declared that "groups like ISIL can't destroy us" and that he did not "consider it an existential threat" to America (Obama 2015c). This echoed Biden's (2014)

statement the previous year that the U.S. "face[d] no existential threat", reminding the audience that they were "twice as likely to be struck by lightning" as they were "to be affected by a terrorist event". Given that the CS adopts the 'fairly demanding criterion … that the [securitised] issue is presented as an existential threat' (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 24), this explicit desecuritisation challenges securitisation theory. The CS argues that desecuritisation – the shifting of issues from the realm of security back to normal political processes – is the preferred state of affairs (ibid, 4), but here we can see the desecuritisation/securitisation boundary is too binary (Hughes 2007, 88), and that both processes can occur simultaneously whilst a leader attempts to generate support without causing war fever (Austin and Beaulieu-Brossard 2017). In this particular case, desecuritisation led to deprioritisation and the normalisation of the use of force: separate polls in 2014 and 2015 showed that most Americans believed that the U.S. was 'not at war' with ISIS, despite the deployment of 5,000 U.S. troops to Iraq at this point (Kreps 2018b, 176).

And yet, this was also the very point that Republicans made in the 2015-2016 primary campaign, arguing that Obama had moved away from the war paradigm that had defined U.S. counterterrorism since 9/11. After Obama's (2015b) December 2015 speech which argued that his administration's principles and policies were working to "achieve a more sustainable victory" against ISIS without having to deploy "a new generation of Americans overseas to fight and die for another decade", Senator Jeb Bush (2015a) charged that 'this is the war of our time' and that 'it should not be as business as usual'. Instead, Bush contended that the U.S. 'need[ed] a war-time Commander-in-Chief who is ready to lead this country and the free world to victory' (ibid), whilst Senator Ted Cruz also asserted that 'this nation needs a wartime president' (Henry 2015). In the media, one article in *Forbes* proclaimed that 'the model George W. Bush developed for fighting this real global War on Terrorism is the only way to address the threat we face' (Basile 2015). In opinion polls after Obama's speech, 57 percent of respondents felt that the president was 'not tough enough in dealing with ISIS militants', which DiMaggio (2015, 300) sees as a consequence of 'right-wing rhetoric' such as the above.

Republican presidential candidates invoked the lessons of Vietnam by suggesting that political meddling in the Obama administration had resulted in "politically correct wars" (Carson 2015) where lawyerly standards were "so high that it's impossible to be successful in fighting ISIS" (J. Bush 2015b). Cruz (2016) cited the Gulf War by claiming that in that conflict, the U.S. had launched "1,100 air attacks a day" in comparison to how the Obama administration's figure of "between 15 and 30" a day. In sum, whilst Obama's rhetorical repackaging might have helped to deprioritise and legitimate the War on Terror amongst his liberal supporters, it also encouraged the type of Republican criticism that had occurred throughout his presidency along the lines of the American way of war. In 2009, Cheney

argued that Obama was "trying to pretend that we are not at war" (Klaidman 2016, 179) and had "moved to take down a lot of those policies … that kept the nation safe for nearly eight years … after 9/11" (Cheney 2009), even though the policies in question were almost identical to the administration he had served in. Goldsmith (2009) labelled this the 'Cheney Fallacy', arguing that essentially his invalid criticisms were only given the air of political legitimacy because the Obama administration attempted to downplay the idea of a War on Terror (Goldsmith 2012, 47), and this can be seen more generally in the critiques of the counter-ISIS campaign. For example, Cruz mocked the type of surgical language that Obama had previously used with regards to al-Qaeda by calling for "a commander in chief who makes clear that the object is not to weaken, it's not to degrade, it is to utterly destroy" ISIS, even though Obama had used the phrase "destroy ISIL" some 31 times at this point (Baker and Harris 2015).[60] Similarly, Trump claimed in November 2015 that the U.S. was "not bombing" ISIS, despite airstrikes occurring for more than a year at this point (P. Neumann 2019, 18). Whilst Obama's attempts to change the "mood music" of counterterrorism might have helped consolidate the War on Terror amongst his liberal supporters, the move away from the tropes of the American way of war also created legitimation challenges.

The Light-Footprint Approach

Accompanying the Obama administration's legitimation efforts was a shift in military strategy towards a light-footprint approach. Although American mobilisation in Afghanistan significantly increased in the first term of the Obama presidency, especially after 2011 there was a shift towards the light-footprint model that avoided 'boots on the ground' as Obama reduced the 200,000 U.S. troops he inherited in Afghanistan and Iraq to just under 15,000 by the end of his presidency (Landler 2016; Staniland 2018). Obama emphasised this demobilisation throughout his presidency. In his speech announcing the second Afghanistan surge, for example, Obama (2009) also mentioned how his administration was "bringing the Iraq [W]ar to a responsible end" by removing all combat brigades from Iraq by summer 2010. At the end of his first term, Obama (2011a) declared that his biggest "foreign policy success" was being "able to wind down one war, [and] to be on the path to ending a second war", whilst in 2016 he similarly boasted that his administration had "been able to wind down active combat" in Afghanistan and Iraq (Obama 2016b). Withal, Obama regularly invoked the costs of previous wars in his legitimation efforts. As he put it, "[o]ur efforts must be measured against the history of putting American troops in distant lands among hostile populations" such as Vietnam and Iraq (Obama 2013b). Towards the end of his presidency, Obama (2015d) described Somalia as "a model" for future counterterrorism operations, even if "al-Shabaab is still [t]here" and there were "still … bombs going on". Using the language

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[60] See Footnote 48. The Obama administration used the label "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" to describe the organisation; for a discussion of this, see Asaf Siniver and Scott Lucas (2016).

of risk, Obama explained that this was an exemplar case not because "defeating any of these terrorist networks is easy or that the problems in Somalia are completely solved", but because it represented "a model in which we are partnering with other countries … [that] does not require us putting boots on the ground" (ibid).

These quote touch on some of the three main facets of the light-footprint approach: a reliance on airpower (in particular, lethal drones), SOF, and the use of proxy forces (Staniland 2018). This strategy can be thought of as 'an extension of the Rumsfeld Doctrine' with its emphasis on a flexible and responsive military relying on advanced technologies to prevent the requirement of a significant number of troops on the ground (Krieg 2016a, 104; Wieseltier 2013). The key difference between the Bush and Obama administration was the goals given to the military, rather than the military approach per se. The light-footprint approach was the embodiment of a risk management strategy, in that it allowed for the routinisation of the use of military force to prevent risks from emerging whilst simultaneously decreasing the potential risks that the American military were exposed to. In 2015 for example, there were only 11 U.S. combat deaths across Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) and Operation Freedom's Sentinel (DCAS 2021d; 2021e). In this subsection, I begin by looking at the three components of the light-footprint approach individually, before situating these developments in broader rhetorical deprioritisation efforts.

Use of Airpower

The Obama presidency was marked by a significant expansion of the lethal drone program that began in the Bush presidency. During the Bush administration there were 52 lethal drone strikes; the equivalent figure for the Obama presidency was 540, killing nearly 3,800 people in the process (Walsh and Schulzke 2018, 13; Zenko 2017). Geographically, these strikes expanded from solely occurring in Pakistan during the Bush presidency to Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Libya, and Yemen, all under the remit of the 2001 AUMF (Bureau of Investigative Journalism 2021a; Purkiss and Serle 2017). Whilst it is worth appreciating that such a reliance on lethal drones was made possible by technological developments that occurred concurrently with the Obama presidency, the key points are that drones became a central part of U.S. overall counterterrorism strategy and that this development has had important consequences in terms of the government's ability to avoid deploying ground troops (Kitchen 2017, 18). For Christopher Fuller (2017, 134), the Obama administration's reliance on drones had become so significant that it was 'no longer a tool for counterterrorism strategy, but is counterterrorism strategy.' Whilst there has been debate over the efficacy of this state of affairs (inter alia, Byman 2013; Cronin 2013), lethal drones reflect the salience of suboptimal strategies and the age of risk, being aptly described by Coker (2015) as 'a technological quick-fix for a society that fears commitment'.

Indeed, the reliance on drone strikes has had notable consequences in terms of mobilisation costs. The lethal drone programme is far from costless in that it relies on geographically scattered bases around the globe, intelligence gathering on the ground, and significantly sized maintenance crews (for a Predator drone in 2012, 168 people were needed; Fuller 2017, 138). Crucially, however, these are not eminently visible costs to the American public. In terms of casualties, drone strikes are the final step in the one-sidedness of combat seen in the case studies of Chapter 5: a drone pilot in Nevada operating an armed drone in Pakistan cannot lose his life in that particular act of war. Lethal drones are, in effect, 'the first real technological surrogate' available to policymakers (Krieg and Rickli 2019, 90). As such, drone operations in the Obama administration were 'the most one-sided war in U.S. history', with no American casualties in any targeted killing operations (Zenko 2012b). In economic terms, although spending on lethal drones increased during the Obama administration, overall defence spending was able to decrease over the same period (Chamayou 2015, 13–14). At the height of the Vietnam War, the Pentagon's budget accounted for 45 percent of the federal budget; in 2013 the equivalent figure was below 20 percent, which Karl Eikenberry and David Kennedy (2013) put down to technological developments. In this sense, the type of mobilisation costs incurred because of lethal drone strikes is far less impactful on the American public than having troops on the ground.

Furthermore, the lethal drone programme was shrouded in secrecy for much of the Obama administration, leading to a deprioritisation of counterterrorism operations. Because lethal drone strikes outside of official warzones were carried out by the CIA for most of the Obama presidency, these actions occurred without congressional approval, with data being withheld from the majority of Congress on account of national security (Fuller 2017, 141–42; Gregory 2011, 241; Krieg and Rickli 2019, 150–51). In contrast to the public debates over the strategies that should be adopted in Afghanistan, military operations in places such as Yemen and Somalia began without notice were not officially confirmed until May 2013 when the Obama administration publicly released the criteria guiding U.S. drone strikes (Crawford 2015, 39–40; Shane, Mazzetti, and Worth 2010). Up until this point, the administration refused to openly acknowledge that CIA drone strikes were occurring anywhere outside of Pakistan, and this was only reluctantly conceded in 2012 (Brooks 2012). This had a significant impact in terms of accountability for policymakers, which 'is limited enough in the case of a declared war [as seen in the Nixon and Bush 43 administrations]; in an undeclared war it all but disappears' (Gregory 2011, 241). Whilst detractors of the drone program have correctly criticised this degree of secrecy, Steven Levine (2014 in Kaag and Kreps 2014, Chapter 5) has made an important intervention here, arguing that 'secrecy is not a contingent feature of US drone policy, but is endemic to the technology and its likely … use'. This secrecy had consequences in terms of both public knowledge and the prioritisation of the targeted killing

programme, and Jessy Ohl (2015, 614) referred to the period between 2008 and 2011 as the 'height of acquiescence in drone warfare'. In a January 2013 poll, for example, only 13 percent of respondents could correctly identify Pakistan as the country in which the most U.S. drone strikes had occurred, despite this then being the epicentre of the lethal drone programme (Kaag and Kreps 2013, 104). In part, this low level of knowledge reflected the unique nature of drone strikes: as Peter W. Singer (2012) put it, '[s]omething that would have previously been viewed as a war is simply not being treated like a war'.

Where drone strikes became a public issue, polling showed them to be widely approved by the American public, and Kathryn Olmsted (2018, 218) described the lethal drone programme as Obama's 'most popular policy'. Between February 2012 and May 2013, thirteen separate opinion polls found regular support for the use of drone strikes against suspected terrorists overseas, with the average approval rate being 67 percent and as high as 83 percent (Walsh and Schulzke 2018, 21). Where drones have been represented in popular culture, this is often via 'images of drone pilots, thousands of miles from the fray, coolly and safely dispatching enemies in their electronic cross hairs' (K. Eikenberry and Kennedy 2013), as per the U.S. government's portrayal of lethal drones as 'the humanitarian weapon par excellence' because of their precision, as discussed in Chapter 5 (Chamayou 2015, 17). The typically 'vibrant, poignant, and disruptive images' of war have been replaced by 'bland, forgettable, and ultimately, boring images of violence that help mollify the demos to light war' (Ohl 2015, 615). At an elite level, the lethal drone programme has 'evinced little criticism or even public oversight by members of Congress', meaning that '[a]t both the mass and elite level … there is a consensus across party lines' in favour of this tactic (Walsh and Schulzke 2018, 43). After all, lethal drone strokes not only minimise mobilisation costs but also play directly into the informational advantages of the executive branch in that they are essentially incontestable: without access to contrary information from alternative sources there is no room for challenging the death of a supposed terrorist. This can be seen in Obama's (2016c) statement at the end of his presidency: that "there isn't a president who's taken more terrorists off the field than me, over the last seven-and-a-half years", or the way that the Obama administration often leaked details of drone assassinations to journalists favourable when the lethal drone programme was not officially acknowledged (Klaidman 2012, 122; J. McDonald 2017, 78). Whilst James Igoe Walsh and Marcus Schulzke's (2018, 25) survey data indicate that 'drones are unlikely to cause a radical increase in support for military operations' as some have claimed, their analysis relies on the idea of public opinion being directly relevant to the use of lethal drones. In fact, as the above polling on levels of knowledge and the nature of drone strikes shows, public opinion has been made increasingly less relevant as a constraint on the use of force.

Admittedly, public acknowledgement and the growing awareness of drone warfare did lead to increased prioritisation of this part of the light-footprint approach by the second term of the Obama presidency. One study found a significant increase in media coverage from five major news sources, charting an increase from 326 to 625 articles discussing the drone programme from 2009 to 2012 respectively (Olmsted 2018, 219). Where there have been public legitimation challenges to the use of drones, this has largely centred around two issues: civilian casualties caused by lethal drones, and whether a drone strike could occur against an American citizen or on U.S. soil (Echevarria 2014, 153; Niva 2017). Public interest in drones arguably peaked in March 2013, when Senator Rand Paul delivered a thirteen-hour filibuster protesting against the Obama administration's refusal to definitively rule out drone strikes against U.S. citizens in America (Ewing 2013). However, the key point here is how these disputes failed to challenge the broader shift in counterterrorism strategy to the light-footprint approach (Echevarria 2014, 153; Niva 2017). For example, by 2012, twice as many suspected terrorists had been killed via drone strikes during the Obama administration than had ever been imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay (Klaidman 2012, 117–18), yet 'the shift in strategy was barely noticed' in comparison to the other disputes around drones (Echevarria 2014, 153). Fundamentally, this comes back to the nature of drone strikes and how they inevitably lend themselves to the deprioritisation of war. To build on Singer's observation, one scholar argued that drones are not 'merely transforming the character of war … but rather enabling a form of violence so fundamentally different in nature that it does not count as war' (Enemark 2013, 60 in Clark 2015, 133). The debates over the Obama administration's drone policies did not change this inherent deprioritising effect.

Special Operations Forces

The Obama administration's strategy was also marked by an increased reliance on SOF while conventional forces were returning from war zones (Byman and Merritt 2018, 83). At the end of the Bush presidency, SOF operated in 60 countries; by 2015 SOF were now deployed in 147 countries, representing around 70 percent of the world's countries (ibid). In line with this geographical expansion, United States Special Operations Command saw a rise in terms of personnel from around 56,000 to 70,000, and in its assigned budget, from $9 billion to $11 billion (Turse 2017). Again then, whilst mobilisation costs may have increased in some senses, it is the type of costs that were particularly important in the Obama administration's light-footprint model. Much like drones, SOF missions 'generally remained far removed from the rest of the U.S. military and public attention' and were subject to limited congressional oversight (Byman and Merritt 2018, 79-80). In popular culture, where there have been representations of SOF, these have been as 'superhuman teams … snuffing out their adversaries with clinical precision', helping to legitimate their use (K. Eikenberry and

Kennedy 2013). In short, SOF represent another component of the light-footprint approach that has allowed for the deprioritisation and legitimation of the continued use of force.

Use of Proxy Forces

According to Krieg (2016a, 104), 'the core principle' of the Obama administration's counterterrorism approach was 'burden-sharing, both strategically and operationally.' This was epitomised in the counter-ISIS campaign, which involved the U.S. working with a multiplicity of actors to prevent a significant deployment of U.S. ground troops. The U.S. provided indirect support to Shi'i militias and Iranian advisers in Iraq, trained and equipped Syrian rebel forces in Qatar, and deployed SOF to work with local fighters (ibid, 97, 107). These training missions 'remained largely out of the public eye' (ibid, 109), but even when the broader campaign was covered by the American media, 'America's light-footprint intervention in Syria barely found its way into public debate' except for the somewhat superficial critiques reviewed above (Krieg and Rickli 2018, 125). In this way, the Obama administration was largely successful in legitimating the use of force in Iraq and Syria, despite the clear public scepticism of intervening in these countries with ground troops (Krieg 2016a, 108; DiMaggio 2015, 302).

Much like during the Bush presidency, the Obama administration relied heavily on PMSCs, especially as U.S. counterterrorism operations expanded beyond designated war zones (Shane, Mazzetti, and Worth 2010). This was part of a noticeable about-face from Obama who had previously sponsored a bill in Congress in 2007 to make PMSCs more accountable before ignoring this in the White House (McFate 2019a, 25). In 2010, more PMSCs were working on behalf of the U.S. than American troops in the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan and for the first time in U.S. history, more contractor casualties than military casualties (Avant and Sigelman 2010, 233; McFate 2014, 19–20). This trend only continued throughout the Obama administration: by 2016 the ratio of PMSCs to troops in war zones was around 3 to 1 (McFate 2016a). These PMSCs offered a way for the Obama administration to circumnavigate its troop-level caps. As the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan decreased from 2011 onwards (and was capped at 10,000 in 2015), the number of PMSCs remained stable, meaning that by 2016, 72 percent of the personnel deployed by the Pentagon were PMSCs ensuring 9,800 American soldiers could still pursue U.S. objectives in the country (Krieg 2018, 8; Olsson 2016, 42). At the same time, more of the burden of the Afghanistan War was shifted onto the Afghan National Army and Police (Chinchilla 2019, 414). In Iraq, when the cap of 4,647 American soldiers was met in 2016, PMSC numbers surged to 4,970 (McFate 2016a). As McFate put it, 'a footprint of nearly 10,000 doesn't look so light' (ibid). Much like the lethal drone programme, there is a genuine bipartisan consensus in favour of the extensive use of PMSCs (McFate 2019a, 23; Stanger 2012, 185), so these actions failed to generate any legitimation disputes.

Rhetorical Deprioritisation

The light-footprint approach allowed the Obama administration to deliberately deprioritise the use of force. In contrast to previous legitimation efforts such as the wars in Iraq, Cohen noted how Obama had not "tried to mobilize the country" or "even tried to explain to the country what the stakes are, [and] why these wars have gone the way they have" (Landler 2016). Like previous military ventures in Vietnam, Bosnia, Somalia, and Kosovo, this deliberate deprioritisation can be explained in part by the administration's legitimation fears. This context was further complicated by the political situation mentioned above: left-wing supporters expected Obama to make significant progress in dismantling the War on Terror, whilst right-wing critics often criticised the president for not adopting more explicitly warlike responses to terrorism. As Daniel Klaidman (2012, 129) recapped,

> Obama's bouts of self-pity were rare, but he could be forgiven where his supporters were on terrorism — or if indeed he had any. While the ACLU and others on the left were castigating Obama as Bush Lite, Cheney was accusing him of being soft on terror and leaving the country vulnerable to attack.

Thus, one way to transcend these legitimation concerns was to deprioritise the War on Terror. As Peter Baker (2010) observed in 2010, Obama had 'given relatively few public speeches on the topic', and this remained the case until the rise of ISIS. Between 2011 and 2014 for example, Obama made only 45 speeches on terrorism, which was just one less than the comparative figure for Bush in 2006 alone (Rubin 2020, 83). Furthermore, the light-footprint approach represented a form of mobilisation that could be deprioritised and legitimated at an elite and mass level. Kreps (2018b, ix) summarised how Congress had been 'relatively silent' on the use of force during the Obama administration as 'their constituents are silent because they are shielded from the costs of war' due to the demobilisation of the Obama administration. Similarly, Paul Staniland (2018) argued that because the light-footprint approach meant that 'America's wars stay[ed] off the front pages' and flew 'below the domestic political radar screen', the adoption of this strategy had 'escaped real debate' domestically.

This was accompanied by rhetorical deprioritisation wherever possible, such as the aforementioned shift from the "War on Terror" to "Overseas Contingency Operations". Given the prioritisation that is associated with the war label, here there was a clear effort at deprioritising overseas counterterrorism campaigns. This appears to have worked, as the "War on Terror" dropped out of media coverage and has not been replaced by any term in popular discourse, essentially making U.S. counterterrorism operations a 'no-name war' (Bacevich 2018c; Hodges 2011, 160). During the Bush administration, American 'Major News and Business Sources' in the Factiva database featured an average of 2,638 articles per year between

2002 and 2008 including the term 'War on Terror', which includes a steady decline during the second Bush term from the peak figure of 4,232 in 2004. Between 2009 and 2016 however, the average number of articles per year featuring the same phrase was 747, whilst the equivalent figure for 'Overseas Contingency Operations' was just 57. This is unsurprising given that Obama (2012) himself only used the phrase "Overseas Contingency Operations" just once in his speeches as president.[61] Not only did the "War on Terror" phrase decline in its usage, but its replacement phrase failed to enter common terminology.

Another deprioritisation attempt was the Obama administration's refocusing on other national security issues. For example, the administration's 2010 *National Security Strategy* stated that terrorism was 'one of many threats' facing the U.S. and that counterterrorism could not 'define America's engagement with the world' (Krebs 2013, 72). Later in the Obama presidency, the military coined the term "four-plus-one" threats to describe the international security situation, referring to Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and transnational terrorism (Garamone 2016). This term encapsulates how counterterrorism campaigns – despite being the only threat that the U.S. was responding to with kinetic military activity – became increasingly deprioritised in favour of other international issues. In the context of the low level of knowledge of foreign affairs amongst the American public and the Obama administration's attempts to reorientate political attention to domestic issues, just 3 percent of Americans in July 2014 described an international issue as one of the U.S.'s most important problems, despite ISIS conquering large portions of Iraq and Syria, amongst other international issues (Kohut 2014). By comparison, international problems accounted for around 50 percent of participants' responses in the years following 9/11 (ibid). As the evidence in Chapter 1 showed, by this time war had become normalised.

Conclusion

This chapter has offered a new way of understanding the broad continuity in counterterrorism policies between the Bush and Obama administrations. As shown in the first section of the chapter, Obama's rhetoric did exhibit continuities in some of the key ideas of the War on Terror discourse, and this certainly provides evidence for *why* the War on Terror could continue. However, this alone cannot explain *how* the War on Terror was able to continue, particularly vis-à-vis public opinion. As such, it has been argued that somewhat paradoxically, change played a key role in the broad continuity of the War on Terror. Accordingly, this chapter has laid out the material and rhetorical changes that occurred during the Obama administration that allowed for the continued use of force.

The first area of change studied in this chapter was in terms of legitimation, as the Obama administration attempted to downsize and rebrand the War on Terror. By and large,

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[61] See Footnote 48.

this was a successful endeavour that created a perception of change in the media throughout the Obama presidency. By presenting U.S. counterterrorism campaigns in a narrow and focused fashion, Obama was able to effectively legitimate a significant increase in mobilisation in Afghanistan at both the mass and elite level despite initial scepticism. Moreover, the Obama administration was able to skilfully oversee a decline in anti-war sentiments from left-wing supporters and Democrats and Congress. For all that, the challenges of legitimating risk management strategies meant that Obama's adoption of the language of risk was subject to predictable critiques from right-wing voices calling for more explicitly warlike responses, even as Obama rhetorically prioritised counterterrorism policies with the rise of ISIS.

The second area of change concerned the theme of mobilisation, as especially after 2011, the Obama administration adopted a light-footprint model, consisting of a reliance on airpower, SOF, and proxy forces. This approach is the embodiment of a risk management strategy, as it allows for the routinisation of military force with minimal risks to American personnel. Indeed, in all three facets studied in this chapter, the key issue has been the nature of their mobilisation costs and their inherent deprioritising effects. Much like the fate of the Afghanistan War in the Bush era, these mobilisation costs have caused a degree of deprioritisation that made explicit legitimation largely unnecessary. This was the perfect situation for Obama, who wished to end the "politics of fear" and appropriately prioritise the War on Terror in U.S. domestic politics. In doing so, the Obama administration established a model for the normalisation of the use of force, and this would be carried on during the Trump administration, which is the focus of the next chapter.

8: Donald Trump's Counterterrorism Campaigns: Rhetorical Change and Policy Continuity

Chapter Outline

This chapter consists of four sections that examine the noticeably understudied topic of counterterrorism policy and its legitimation during the Trump presidency (P. Neumann 2019, 5). The first part of the chapter analyses Trump's rhetoric during his presidential campaign regarding (counter)terrorism, noting how his populist rhetoric both built upon and diverged from the War on Terror discourse to inflate the threat of terrorism. Secondly, the chapter looks at the continuation of Trump's crisis rhetoric whilst in the White House and how this has affected the legitimation and prioritisation of counterterrorism campaigns. The third section reviews the mobilisation trends during the Trump administration, showing how although there have been changes in the levels of force used, this has largely occurred within the boundaries of the light-footprint approach established during the Obama presidency. The final part of the chapter looks at Trump's repeated attempts to declare victory in counterterrorism operations and the controversies this has created, revealing the ongoing tension between the tropes of the American way of war and the realities of risk management strategies.

The War on Terror Discourse and Trump's Populist Campaign Rhetoric

On both the campaign trail and in the White House, Trump surpassed the boundaries of the War on Terror discourse. These divergences were often based on the same themes as the War on Terror discourse; as Jeanne Morefield (2019) put it with regards to Trump's 'Muslim ban', his rhetoric and policies were 'simply the War on Terror on steroids'. Trump's rhetoric thus challenges the idea that dominant discourses dictate the 'only plausible arena of struggle', as Krebs' approvingly quoted (Scott 1990, 103 in Krebs 2015, 14-15). Trump's traversal of established discursive boundaries was a populist tactic, allowing Trump to present himself as an anti-establishment candidate who would truly represent 'the people'. Trump's critiques of Obama's refusal to use the phrase "radical Islam" encapsulated this dynamic (Prokop 2016), with this section highlighting five key differences in Trump's rhetoric from the War on Terror discourse.

Firstly and most significantly, Trump consistently suggested an intimate connection between Islam and terrorism (P. Neumann 2019, 8; Rubin 2020, 106). Whereas Bush (2001a) stated that "[n]o one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith", and Obama (2015a) argued how "[i]t's our responsibility to reject proposals that Muslim Americans should somehow be treated differently", Trump (2015b) made a litany of Islamophobic comments during his presidential

campaign, eventually calling for "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what the hell is going on". Before that, Trump suggested that there were "thousands of people cheering" in New Jersey on the day of the 9/11 attacks and that the Muslim community "knew what was going on" prior to the San Bernardino attacks (P. Neumann 2019, 16, 34), thus reverting to the conspiratorial thinking of the 'Red Scare' during the limited war era. Whilst Ross Glover (2002, 220) was correct to note that the U.S. government was 'not looking for white terrorists' during the Bush administration's War on Terror, Trump transcended the discursive boundaries of this period by not only suggesting a direct connection between Islam (in its entirety) and terrorism, but also by blatantly ignoring acts of terrorism committed by non-Muslims (Bump 2017; P. Neumann 2019, 147; Rubin 2020, 106–7).

Secondly and related to the above, Trump portrayed the problem of terrorism to be intimately related to the issue of immigration. In the wake of a spate of ISIS-inspired 'lone-wolf' attacks in Western countries in 2015 and 2016, Trump (2016f) argued that

> [t]he common thread linking the major Islamic terrorist attacks that have recently occurred on our soil – 9/11, the Ft. Hood shooting, the Boston Bombing, the San Bernardino attack, the Orlando attack – is that they have involved immigrants or the children of immigrants. Clearly, new screening procedures are needed.

The fact that Trump highlighted "children of immigrants" as a cause of terrorist attacks within the U.S. represents the blurred lines 'between rationality and hysteria' of counterterrorism policies in the risk age, as discussed in Chapter 5 (Krieg and Rickli 2019, 48–49). This kind of rhetoric reached its natural conclusion when Trump called for a 'Muslim Ban' as quoted above, despite there being no empirical connection between immigration and terrorism (Thrall and Goepner 2017).

The third difference built upon the historically prevalent trope of civilisation versus barbarism in the legitimation of the use of force, such as Bush's language in the War on Terror. With the rise of ISIS, Trump used this kind of language to emphasise the scale of the threat of immigration and terrorism, as per the above. Just two days after the attacks in Brussels, Trump (2016a) tweeted that 'Europe and the U.S. must immediately stop taking in people from Syria. This will be the destruction of civilization as we know it!' Trump (2016e) promised to "unite the whole civilized world in the fight against Islamic terrorism" if he was elected president. Fourthly, although previous chapters have shown how the War on Terror discourse othered terrorists, Trump explicitly dehumanised these actors with his repeated descriptions of ISIS fighters as "animals" during his campaign (and occasionally when president), a term never used by either Bush or Obama (Bump 2018; Healy and Haberman 2015; Trump 2018a). As argued in Chapter 2, this kind of language – taken to its most extreme

level by Trump – inflates the threats posed to the U.S. and legitimates the use of indiscriminate force in response.

The final key difference reflects this kind of portrayal of the threat of terrorism, as Trump called for policy responses previously outside the boundaries of the War on Terror discourse. To begin with, Trump exclusively proposed militarised counterterrorism policies (P. Neumann 2019, 16). Although one of the central flaws of the War on Terror has been its highly militarised nature, both of Trump's predecessors did at least rhetorically emphasise how terrorism could not be solved by force alone. In his landmark address to Congress, for example, Bush (2001a) asserted that his administration's newly launched "War on Terror has many fronts, and military action is only part of our plan". Similarly, in Obama's (2013b) significant speech on counterterrorism in May 2013, he stated that his administration's strategy involved "addressing the underlying grievances and conflicts that feed extremism". By contrast, Trump's stance was best summarised by General Curtis LeMay's remark on the nature of war: "you've got to kill enough people, and when you've killed enough people, they stop fighting" (P. Neumann 2019, 77–78). As such, Trump claimed that he would "bomb the s**t outta" of ISIS (Engel 2015) and also called for the killing of family members of suspected terrorists in the counter-ISIS campaign (*Fox News* 2015). Furthermore, contrary to Bush and Obama who suggested links between democracy promotion and counterterrorism (Boyle 2011), Trump argued that Hussein "killed terrorists like nobody", Muammar Gaddafi was "really bad … but at least [he] killed terrorists", and Bashar al-Assad excelled in "killing ISIS" (P. Neumann 2019, 19). As both Bush (2003a; 2003b; 2004b) and Obama (2016a; 2016c; 2016d) boasted of killing terrorists to justify the ongoing use of force, Trump again built upon the ideas of the War on Terror discourse but eclipsed existing boundaries by praising leaders seen as antithetic to American values.

In line with the presentation of terrorism as a civilisational clash, Trump's political strategy was diametrically opposed to Obama's, as he made emphasising the threat of terrorism a central part of his political strategy (Rubin 2020, 106–7). Chief Executive of the Trump election campaign Steve Bannon maintained that the campaign "was pure anger" as "anger and fear is what gets people to the polls" (P. Neumann 2019, 31). With the rise of ISIS and the prevalence of ISIS-inspired attacks in 2015 and 2016, it was the threat of terrorism that formed the core of the Trump campaign's fearmongering. The first sentence of political content in Trump's (2015a) announcement speech was "how are they [other presidential candidates] going to beat ISIS? I don't think it's gonna happen". As noted above, Trump often conflated terrorism and immigration, but it was the terrorist threat that he ultimately portrayed as the greatest threat to national security during his campaign. In 2016, Trump declared that terrorism was "the big threat" facing the world and had inherited that title from "Fascism, Nazism and Communism" (Rubin 2020, 114; Sanger and Haberman 2016). Trump

also claimed that in the "very, very troubled times of radical Islamic terrorism", the world was actually "more dangerous now than it has ever been" (Nabers and Stengel 2019, 119).

Trump (2016d) accused the Obama administration's policies in the Middle East of being "a complete and total disaster". Trump alleged that Hillary Clinton had received and ignored intelligence that "the Obama administration was actively supporting Al Qaeda in Iraq" (L. Jacobson 2016), and repeatedly stated that Obama was "the founder of ISIS" (L. Jacobson and Sherman 2016). Trump also promised to provide the solution to the crisis that he emphasised, often personalising his proposed counterterrorism measures. After a terrorist attack in Pakistan, for example, Trump (2016b) tweeted that 'I alone can solve'. In another invocation of the War on Terror discourse, Trump (2016e) called for "all actions" in the Middle East to "be oriented around" the goal of defeating "radical Islam". This would require the end of "the era of nation-building" (Trump 2016e) and the generation of new alliances, with Trump speaking of how he would like to "get together with Russia" to defeat ISIS (Whewell 2016).

In this way, Trump's (2016d) populist anti-establishment stance applied directly to counterterrorism, with one major speech arguing that it was "time to invite new voices and new visions into the fold" rather than listening to "those who have perfect résumés but very little to brag about except responsibility for a long history of failed policies and continued losses at war". Although Trump espoused interventionist policies regarding ISIS, he concurrently put forward anti-interventionist arguments regarding U.S. foreign policy. Trump (2016d) stated that after the Cold War, U.S. "foreign policy veered badly off course", with "[l]ogic … [being] replaced with foolishness and arrogance", such as the idea that the U.S. "could make Western democracies out of countries that had no experience or interest in becoming a Western Democracy." For Trump (2016f), the Iraq War was a "[b]ig, fat mistake" and the 2011 intervention in Libya was a "[t]otal mess", and these actions had created "vacuums that allow[ed] terrorists to grow and thrive". Instead, Trump (2016d) proposed that American foreign policy "must be based on America's core national security interests", promising in his inaugural address that "[e]very decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs" would be "made to benefit" Americans (Trump 2017h).

Analysts of Trump's campaign speeches have referred to his 'decidedly populist crisis rhetoric' (Homolar and Scholz 2019, 345), given that Trump was both proclaiming a crisis and promising that he would personally be able to resolve this. The declaration of crisis – along with the identification of 'the people' and a nefarious 'establishment' – is inherent to populism as a form of political rhetoric, and thus has important consequences in terms of the legitimation of the War on Terror (Moffitt 2016, 29, 43, 45; Müller 2016, 2–3; Oliver and Rahm 2016, 191; Rooduijn 2014, 572). As Benjamin Moffitt (2015, 190) put it, 'if we do not have … crisis, we do not have populism'. This is because of the urgency that crisis brings to

populist politics; the 'concept of crisis etymologically subsumes a choice between stark alternatives and, thus, demands action' (A. Pirro and Taggart 2018, 257). Accordingly, crisis is determined by widespread recognition, rather than any objective criteria (Moffitt 2015, 194, 197). Although policy failure may establish favourable structural conditions for a crisis, there is no inherent link between the two terms (ibid, 197). Instead, 'crisis is very much what we make of it' (ibid, 195). Consequently, there is a challenge for governing populists in how to continually generate a sense of crisis whilst in charge of national policy, which is the focus of the next section.

Trump's Crisis Rhetoric as President, the Counter-ISIS Campaign, and Deprioritisation

During the first year of his presidency, Trump continued to proclaim the crisis of terrorism to America, making 39 speeches on terrorism, in comparison to Obama's yearly average of 17 (Rubin 2020, 117). Beyond official speeches, Trump also regularly used his Twitter account to promote a sense of crisis regarding terrorism, such as his response to the legal ruling preventing the enforcement of Trump's first executive order (i.e. the 'Muslim Ban'). In a series of tweets, Trump (2017a; 2017b) pronounced that 'many very bad and dangerous people may be pouring into the country' as a result, and that the judge in question had put the 'country in such peril'. The use of the term 'pouring' clearly evokes the civilizational tone quoted above, whilst these tweets also conform to a typically populist motif: that intermediary institutions conspire against the will of 'the people' (Destradi and Plagemann 2018, 288). Just the next day, Trump (2017g) claimed that "all over Europe", terrorist attacks were occurring "to a point where it's not even being reported and, in many cases, the very, very dishonest press doesn't want to report it." Similarly to the above, this conspiratorial tendency emerges 'from the very logic of populism itself' (Müller 2016, 32), as there is always something in the way of the true representation of 'the people'. Additionally, Trump continued to demonise Muslims with a series of retweets in November 2017 with the captions 'Islamist mob pushes teenage boy off roof and beats him to death!', 'Muslim Destroys a Statue of Virgin Mary!' and 'Muslim migrant beats up Dutch boy on crutches!' (Beinart 2017).

As well as emphasising the threat of terrorism, Trump also rhetorically prioritised some aspects of his administration's counterterrorism programme. For example, after his first overseas trip as president which included a visit to the Riyadh Summit aimed at countering terrorism in the Middle East, Trump (2017c) said that "people have said that there has really never been anything even close in history". With regards to the military policies of his administration, as early as April 2017 Trump (2017d) spoke of how the dropping of the 'Mother of All Bombs' in Afghanistan was indicative of "a tremendous difference" in American military results "to what's happened over the last eight years". Speaking of the counter-ISIS campaign, Trump (2017e, 2018e, 2019e) declared in 2017, 2018, and 2019 that

"almost 100 percent of the land" previously held by ISIS had been recaptured, and that this "all took place" since the beginning of his presidency (P. Neumann 2019, 94). According to Trump, the differences in results essentially stemmed from his own decisions. In one instance, Trump claimed that ISIS fighters were "now giving up … raising their hands … walking off" and that "nobody has ever seen that before … because you didn't have Trump as your president" (Cohen and Merica 2017).

However, Trump's rhetoric was disconnected from the reality of the counter-ISIS campaign, which largely carried on in the footsteps of the Obama administration and the light-footprint approach. As Rubrick Biegon and Tom Watts (2020, 37–38) summarised, '[f]ar from tearing up his predecessor's "remote" counterterrorism playbook, the Trump administration has embraced it'. After all, the light-footprint approach is well suited to the muscular isolationism proposed by Trump during the presidential campaign, which promised to both toughen counterterrorism policies to defeat ISIS as well as avoiding becoming embroiled in foreign adventures (P. Neumann 2019, 84). Hence, there was 'no large-scale recommitment of US forces', and the Trump administration continued to rely on proxy forces in Syria to reduce mobilisation costs (Dombrowski and Reich 2018, 65). Indeed, the U.S. military formally adopted a 'by-with-through' approach in January 2018 (Stevenson 2020). This is to some extent unsurprising given that several key individuals in the counter-ISIS campaign during the Obama administration were also present during the Trump presidency (P. Neumann 2019, 102). The two significant changes of the counter-ISIS campaign during the Trump administration were to delegate more authority to field commanders and to change the geographical approach taken against the terrorist group, both of which were tactical changes with no significant implications in terms of mobilisation costs (McKeon 2017).

In terms of legitimation, the continuing success of the counter-ISIS campaign and the decline of ISIS-inspired attacks in the West led to a shift in Trump's rhetorical focus, as per the populist requirement of crisis. In the lead-up to the November 2018 midterm elections and onwards, Trump increasingly identified immigrants – as opposed to Muslim terrorist immigrants – as the primary threat to U.S. national security, as demonstrated in Figure 6 (see also Lacatus 2021). Trump (2018b) described the Central American migrant caravan of 2018 as 'an invasion' of the U.S., claimed that the caravan had 'criminals and unknown Middle Easterners ... mixed in' (Trump 2018c), and suggested that the Democrats "had something to do" with the formation of the caravan for their own political purpose (Trump 2018f). Even after the November 2018 midterm elections, Trump's (2019d) State of the Union Address spent much more time on MS-13 – a group he now regularly described as "animals" and "criminal illegal aliens" (Bump 2018) – than it did on the threat of ISIS.

Figure 6: The shifting emphasis in Trump's tweets from terrorism to immigration (Hall 2021, 56)

	Tweets including 'ISIS', 'Radical Islam/ic', 'terror/ist/ism'	Tweets including 'border security', 'open border', 'illegal immigrant', 'immigrant', 'immigration', and 'MS-13'
November 2015- November 2016 (the final year of the presidential campaign)	164	82
January 2017- December 2017 (the first year of the Trump presidency)	68	66
January 2018- February 2019 (the second year of the Trump presidency plus the 2018-2019 government shutdown period)	52	446

Therefore, it is worth noting both the deprioritisation of the counter-ISIS campaign as time progressed and the fundamentally different purpose of Trump's rhetoric regarding foreign policy more generally. Although this dissertation has shown examples of legitimation towards specific audiences, elite rhetoric is assumed to be universally efficacious across the entirety of the U.S., which only Holland (2012, 35) has argued against in War on Terror studies. Given that Trump was deemed more untrustworthy than any previous American presidents (Shepard 2017), it is somewhat unsurprising that his rhetorical strategy was aimed towards polarisation rather than unification, such as his repeated decrying of the American news media (Simon 2017). Whilst previous chapters have shown the media to amplify presidential rhetoric, Trump (2020b; 2020c) directly attacked the sources that have been cited in this dissertation, describing the *New York Times* as 'an embarrassment to journalism' and the *Washington Post* as 'a political front for Amazon'. Similarly, despite the importance of garnering elite support for policy legitimation, Trump's presidential rhetoric continued in the vein of his campaign, surpassing discursive boundaries in his critiques of Democrats as co-conspirators against national security (Glasser 2018). Trump attempted to 'maintain a state of semiconstant political mobilization' (Wojczewski 2020, 305), reflecting the populist tendency whereby 'governing [is] a permanent campaign' (Müller 2016, 43). Furthermore, because of the fractious political and media environment which encourages politicians to appeal to the median *party member* as opposed to the median *voter* (Baum and Potter 2019, 754), Trump's rhetorical strategy was almost exclusively aimed at his supporters: when asked

about persuading Democrats to vote for him he responded that "'I think my base is so strong, I'm not sure I have to do that" (B. Bennett 2019). Thorsten Wojczewski (2020, 17, 21) has linked Trump's legitimation strategy to 'populist securitisation', arguing that his ability to securitise the American establishment and a foreign Other in a distinctly populist fashion enabled him to 'create and hold together a heterogenous electoral condition'.

In terms of securitisation, the Trump presidency also raises the issues of relevant audiences and the extent to which Trump could successfully 'speak security' (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 31). Research has shown Trump's inability to successfully speak across partisan boundaries with regards to the threat of immigration (Hall 2021, 56-57), and polling data suggests the same dynamic applies to terrorism. For example, in August 2017, though only 14 percent of left-wing voters believed that 'a large number of refugees leaving countries such as Iraq and Syria' was 'a major threat to the country', as many as 60 percent on the right stated as much (Poushter and Manevich 2017). More generally, the partisan gap on those who believe that 'defending the country from future [terrorist] attacks should be a top priority … has grown larger' during the Trump presidency (Hartig and Doherty 2021). As noted in Chapter 2 then, is not that presidents cannot successfully legitimate (in this case, securitise) policies in the hyper-partisan era, but that this is a much narrower process. This illustrates the merit of second-generation securitisation scholars on the importance of political context. The fundamental purpose of Trump's rhetoric should also be considered: because Trump's rhetoric was disconnected from his own administration's policy, Trump's counterterrorism rhetoric was not designed to accurately describe or legitimate policy, but instead to polarise and create a shared sense of crisis for partisan mobilisation (Hall 2021). The continuation of the use of force in the Trump era must then also reflect the administration's demobilisation and deprioritisation efforts.

In terms of deprioritisation, Trump's 'bluster' (Neuman 2019) meant that where changes occurred in counterterrorism policy, these largely occurred outside of official discourse, leading to the increased normalisation of the use of force. For example, the Trump administration reportedly replaced the Presidential Policy Guidance (PPG) established by the Obama administration with the Principles, Standards, and Procedures (PSP) initiative. Along with maintaining a global framework for the War on Terror and its different theatres of operation (ibid, 84-85), it was rumoured that the PSP abandoned 'the standard that a target must pose a continuing, imminent threat to U.S. persons' (Hartig and Tankel 2019). Nevertheless, nothing was officially announced in terms of the adoption of PSP (Savage and Schmitt 2017), and Secretary of Defense James Mattis (2017) even declared that there had been "no change to our rules of engagement", despite Trump's claims to the contrary (Nelson 2017). As reviewed below, the Trump administration did escalate the use of force in certain

combat areas, but this occurred without public explanation of the changes in policies (Rosenthal and Dejonge Schulman 2018).

Along with this lack of legitimation, the Trump administration also deprioritised counterterrorism operations by refusing to disclose previously publicly available information. As Trump (2017f) announced in his speech on Afghanistan, his administration would "not talk about numbers of troops or our plans for further military activities." As early as March 2017, the Pentagon did not publicise the dispatching of 400 marines to Syria and 300 Army paratroopers to Iraq, ending 'a decade-long policy of transparency' (Borger 2020; Hennigan 2017; E. Pirro 2019, 172). In a similar fashion, for the first time since the outset of the Afghanistan War, the Trump administration stopped issuing regular updates on the number of U.S. airstrikes occurring in Afghanistan (Everstine 2020). Although this was justified under the premise of the ongoing negotiations with the Taliban, the USAF also stopped providing figures regarding OIR in Iraq and Syria at the same time (ibid). More broadly, these deprioritisation efforts reflected two factors also present during the Obama administration: legitimation concerns about overseas engagements and the nature of risk management strategies. The isolationist strands of Trump's campaign rhetoric, combined with the politically unappealing character of routinised conflicts in countries such as Somalia, meant that most counterterrorism campaigns were deprioritised during the Trump administration, despite some of the president's rhetoric exaggerating his agency.

Another context that made these deprioritisation efforts possible also built upon a trend present in the Obama administration, namely the shifting priorities of the Pentagon and the defence community. As Mattis (2018) announced with the release of the administration's *National Defense Strategy*: "[w]e will continue to prosecute the campaign against terrorists that we are engaged in today, but great power competition, not terrorism, is now the primary focus of U.S. national security". Like during the Obama administration then, the deployment of force was less prioritised than the prospective use of force in the future, which could be seen at both an elite and mass level. After Trump's threats against North Korea, an October 2017 opinion poll found that 54 percent of Americans believed that North Korea was the 'greatest immediate threat' to America (Perry and Hartig 2017). Although ISIS was the second most popular response here, it is noticeable that only 12 percent of Democrats deemed the terrorist group to be the most significant present threat to U.S. national security, suggesting that the 27 percent of Republicans who chose this option would have been significantly influenced by Trump's prioritisation efforts at this point (ibid). Thus, when Trump shifted his rhetorical attention away from the issue of terrorism, it is unsurprising that attention diverted elsewhere. Much like the end of the Bush administration, this shift was exaggerated by the rise of other political priorities, in this case the COVID-19 pandemic. A similar question to the above in 2020 found that the 'spread of infectious diseases' was viewed by

Americans as the most significant threat to the U.S. (Poushter and Fagan 2020). In the three presidential/vice-presidential debates of 2020, there were merely six mentions of "terrorism", "Afghanistan", "Syria", "Iraq", or "ISIS", whilst the comparative figure for the same terms in the three presidential debates in 2016 was 112.[62] In sum, whilst Trump's rhetoric heavily emphasised the issue of terrorism during his campaign and his first year in the White House, this was disconnected from policy changes that occurred without fanfare, leading to the increased normalisation of the use of force.

Mobilisation Trends

The continuing normalisation of war in this period is made more noticeable because that there was a significant increase in the use of force during the early part of the Trump presidency. The general mobilisation trend of counterterrorism policies during the Trump administration was an intensification in kinetic activities before an ensuing decrease and a shift towards withdrawal. In Afghanistan, for example, Trump (2017f) announced that contrary to his "original instinct", his administration would be sending 3,500 additional troops to the country to defeat ISIS and al-Qaeda while "preventing the Taliban from taking over", taking the total number of U.S. troops to around 14,000. In line with this troop increase, U.S. Air Force (USAF) data showed a marked increase in the total number of weapons released in Afghanistan during the Trump administration. During the last three years of the Obama administration, the average number of weapons released per year was 1,550; the equivalent number for the first year of the Trump administration was 6, 382 (USAF 2020). Furthermore, the intensity and scale of airstrikes increased during the Trump presidency, with 7,167 U.S. airstrikes occurring in 2019 (Bureau of Investigative Journalism 2021b), before the 'maximum pressure' campaign launched in the first quarter of FY2020 as part of the administration's attempts to create a political agreement with the Taliban (Department of Defense 2020a).

In February 2020, a peace agreement was signed with the Taliban, resulting in the immediate withdrawal of around 4,400 American troops, with the remaining U.S. military forces to be withdrawn by April 2021 if the terms of the agreement were complied with (Department of Defense 2020b; O'Donnell 2020b, 3). Withdrawal levels were a month ahead of schedule when there were 8,600 troops in Afghanistan in June 2020 (Crowley 2020a; O'Donnell 2020b, 2), and between 1 April and 30 June 2020, the number of U.S. airstrikes fell by 80 percent in comparison to the previous quarter (O'Donnell 2020b, 9). There was also a decline in American casualty figures, with 4 deaths and 14 wounded in 2020; the corresponding figures for 2019 were 17 and 192 respectively (DCAS 2021e). After Trump's electoral defeat in 2020, Secretary of Defense Mark Esper was dismissed for his views on the

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[62] See Footnote 48.

withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan (Gibbons-Neff, Faizi, and Rahim 2020), with Acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller announcing and overseeing the reduction of official U.S. troop numbers to 2,500 by the end of the Trump presidency (Garamone 2021).[63]

OIR followed a similar pattern in terms of intensification and partial withdrawal. In terms of troop numbers, as noted above, at least 300 Army paratroopers were deployed to Iraq to assist in the recapturing of Mosul from ISIS, whilst around 2,000 more U.S. soldiers were deployed to Syria at the height of the counter-ISIS campaign (Crowley 2020b). Further, USAF records detailed a 28 percent increase in the number of airstrikes between 2016 and 2017 in Iraq and Syria. Airwars (2021a) data showed the peak of actions occurred in August 2017, with 1,755 airstrikes occurring and 5,075 munitions dropped in that month: these figures were almost exactly double the peak of the actions of the Obama administration in July 2015. Like in Afghanistan, the number of airstrikes reduced dramatically, this time after the territorial defeat of ISIS in March 2019. OIR (2021) data showed that between January and March 2019, there were 2,031 strike releases, but there have only been approximately 20 strikes per month since then.

Whilst there was a clear decrease in the number of airstrikes as part of OIR, the record on troop numbers was more mixed. In December 2018, Trump (2018d) sparked controversy in the Capitol when he unexpectedly announced that the U.S. had "won" against ISIS and that American troops in Syria were "all coming back, and they're coming back now". This pronouncement triggered widespread bipartisan criticism, along with the resignations of Mattis and Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS Brett McGurk (Specia 2019). Given the logic of public opinion scholarship which emphasises the importance of partisanship vis-à-vis the exposure of contradictory views to American citizens, it seems fair to assume that such public disagreements within the administration could only hamper policy approval. Trump's position was tempered – or at least paused – by this broad opposition, with the withdrawal initially being extended from 30 days to four months, before the White House announced in February 2019 that at least 200 soldiers would remain as small peacekeeping forces in parts of Syria (Karni and Gibbons-Neff 2019). However, as McGurk's replacement as the special envoy in the counter-ISIS campaign later stated, "we were always playing shell games to not make clear to our leadership how many troops we had there" (K. B. Williams 2020). This could be seen by how in October 2019 – nearly sixth months after the territorial defeat of ISIS – there were still around 1,000 troops in Syria (Stewart 2019).

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[63] In March 2021, it emerged that there were 1,000 more American troops in Afghanistan than previously disclosed (Gibbons-Neff, Cooper, and Schmitt 2021).

Perhaps consequently, Trump again returned his attention to withdrawing U.S. troops from Syria in October 2019, this time ordering a withdrawal of around 50 U.S. forces from the Syria-Turkey border which before ordering 'a full withdrawal' (Department of Defense 2019). Again, this policy was roundly criticised because of how it effectively greenlighted a Turkish attack on the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces who had been fighting alongside U.S. forces (Hall 2019). There were again significant caveats to the 'withdrawal' of U.S. troops, as U.S. forces largely moved to protect oilfields in northeastern Syria, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley asserted in November that around 600 U.S. troops would be needed for this task (Klar 2019). This was confirmed by Esper in December, who announced that "the number of troops [in Syria] will fluctuate around the 600-level for the foreseeable future" (Stewart 2019). In August 2020, after seven U.S. troops were injured when their tank was rammed by a Russian vehicle, the Pentagon deployed another 100 soldiers to Syria, taking the total number of American troops to 750: a higher figure than what Trump inherited despite his efforts and claims regarding Syria (Crowley 2020b). Trump had more relative success in withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq, as Miller's November 2020 announcement also stated that troops would be reduced to 2,500 in Iraq, which occurred in January 2021 (Garamone 2021).

In March 2017, the Trump administration declared three provinces of Yemen as 'areas of active hostilities' against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and an emergent branch of ISIS (Niva 2017). In effect, this designation made these regions 'temporary undeclared war zones where the military can launch up to six-month wars without congressional approval, and where less restrictive targeting rules applied (ibid). In 2017 there were 129 U.S. airstrikes in Yemen, more than three times the amount in the final year of the Obama administration (average from Bureau of Investigative Journalism 2021c; New America Foundation 2021a; Long War Journal 2021). Once the 'areas of active hostilities' designation had expired, however, there were 38, 9, and 3 U.S. airstrikes in 2018, 2019, and 2020 respectively, which represented a slight decrease from the levels of the Obama presidency (ibid).

Along with Yemen, the Trump administration also defined large sections of Somalia as 'areas of active hostilities' in 2017, resulting in an increase in the number of U.S. airstrikes in comparison to the Obama administration (Niva 2017). Unlike in Yemen, the number of airstrikes showed little year-by-year variance. On average, the number of airstrikes per year during the second term of the Obama presidency was 8; the corresponding figure for the Trump era was 47 (average from Airwars 2021b; Bureau of Investigative Journalism 2021d; New America Foundation 2021b; Long War Journal 2021). Commentators observed as early as 2017 that there was no congressional oversight on the intensification of the use of force in Somalia, and that due to the vacancies in the State and Defense departments, AFRICOM was "pretty much doing their own thing" in the region (W. Morgan and Bender 2017). The chief

of staff of the International Crisis Group stated that "[p]eople need to pay attention that there is this massive war going on" in Somalia and that the use of force appeared to be "on autopilot" (Savage and Schmitt 2019). Nonetheless, again the shift towards withdrawal in Somalia accelerated towards the end of the Trump presidency, as late 2020 included the longest period that American forces had not launched a lethal airstrike in several years (Vandiver 2020). The November 2020 order issued that established that troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan and Iraq also dictated that all of the 700 U.S. troops stationed in Somalia would leave before the end of the presidency, which occurred in January 2021 (Anna 2021). Crucially though, the same order was not applied to American forces in Kenya and Djibouti, which is where drone strikes against Somalia are launched from (H. Cooper 2020).

The example of Somalia is an indication of the nuances and paradoxes of the Trump administration's counterterrorism approach. Trump has had success in achieving concrete progress in troop withdrawals from Afghanistan and Iraq, but hardly to the extent to which he could claim that he had 'been actively getting our great and beautiful [c]ountry out of the ridiculous and costly Endless Wars' (Trump 2020d). In Iraq and Afghanistan for example, Pentagon officials stated that reduced troop numbers would still allow the U.S. to carry out counterterrorism operations, which echoes the situation in Somalia (Gibbons-Neff et al. 2020). As the light-footprint approach demonstrates, troop numbers do not necessarily speak for themselves in terms of the use of force. Moreover, as argued above, there were more troops in Syria at the end of the Trump administration than at its beginning, and the momentum of counterterrorism operations in Kenya begun to change at the end of the Trump presidency, with an increase in troop numbers and a request for the ability to carry out drone strikes in the country (Savage and Schmitt 2020). In terms of funding, the Department of Defense's budget request for Overseas Contingency Operations for FY2021 was $69 billion; a decrease from the $82 billion in FY2017 and FY2018 but still higher than the last two years of the Obama administration (O'Donnell 2020a, vii).

Finally, as noted above, when the intensification of the use of force occurred during the first years of the Trump administration, this was within the dominant paradigm of the light-footprint approach. This can be seen in the number of U.S. combat casualties during the Trump presidency, with 58 hostile casualties in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria between January 2017 and January 2021 (DCAS 2021d; 2021e). Much like during the Obama administration, the nature of mobilisation costs has allowed for the continued use of force without significant political attention, especially as these conflicts are still funded by borrowing and justified under the 2001 AUMF (Hellman 2017). In terms of the number of articles including either the phrase 'War on Terror' and 'Overseas Contingency Operations' in major U.S. news sources on the Factiva database, there were just 366 articles per year during

the Trump administration, which is less than half of the related figure for the Obama presidency of 804. Put simply, although Trump may have heavily prioritised the issue of terrorism to generate a sense of crisis, the nature of the light-footprint approach and broad policy continuity allowed for the continued deprioritisation of the use of force. The noticeable exception to this was regarding troop numbers in Syria and other countries, which is the focus of the next section.

Declaring Victory, The American Way of War, and Withdrawal

The most obvious evidence against the idea that counterterrorism campaigns were deprioritised during the Trump administration was the repeated political controversies created by Trump's efforts to withdraw troops from conflict zones. This is represented in Figure 7 below, which shows peaks of media interest in Syria unrelated to counterterrorism as airstrikes were carried out against the Assad regime in April 2018 and April 2019, before other increases around January and October 2019 with the Trump administration's troop withdrawal policies. Regarding Iraq, the peak in coverage of January 2020 was again largely unrelated to counterterrorism, as this coincided with the assassination of Qassem Soleimani and the ensuing political controversy this sparked. A similar prioritisation dynamic can be seen with regards to Niger: there was an average of 696 articles per year mentioning the country during the Trump presidency, but there were 689 articles in October and November 2017 alone after the death of four U.S. soldiers as noted in Chapter 1. In this way, exceptional events generated political prioritisation for counterterrorism issues during the Trump presidency, with Afghanistan being the perfect contrast to this. Contrary to the Obama presidency, Gallup asked just once during the entirety of the Trump presidency whether sending American troops to Afghanistan in 2001 was a "mistake".[64] In the news media, there was only one month during the Trump administration – August 2017 – with more than 1,000 articles referring to Afghanistan. This was when Trump publicly announced his administration's Afghanistan strategy, which is a testament to the extent that public legitimation efforts can generate interest, but also to the continued deprioritisation of the Afghanistan War in this period, with no peaks in interest with regards to either American intensification or withdrawal.

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[64] See Footnote 50.

Figure 7: Monthly figures of articles mentioning Afghanistan, Syria, or Iraq in major U.S. news and business sources

Monthly Articles from Major U.S. News and Business Sources
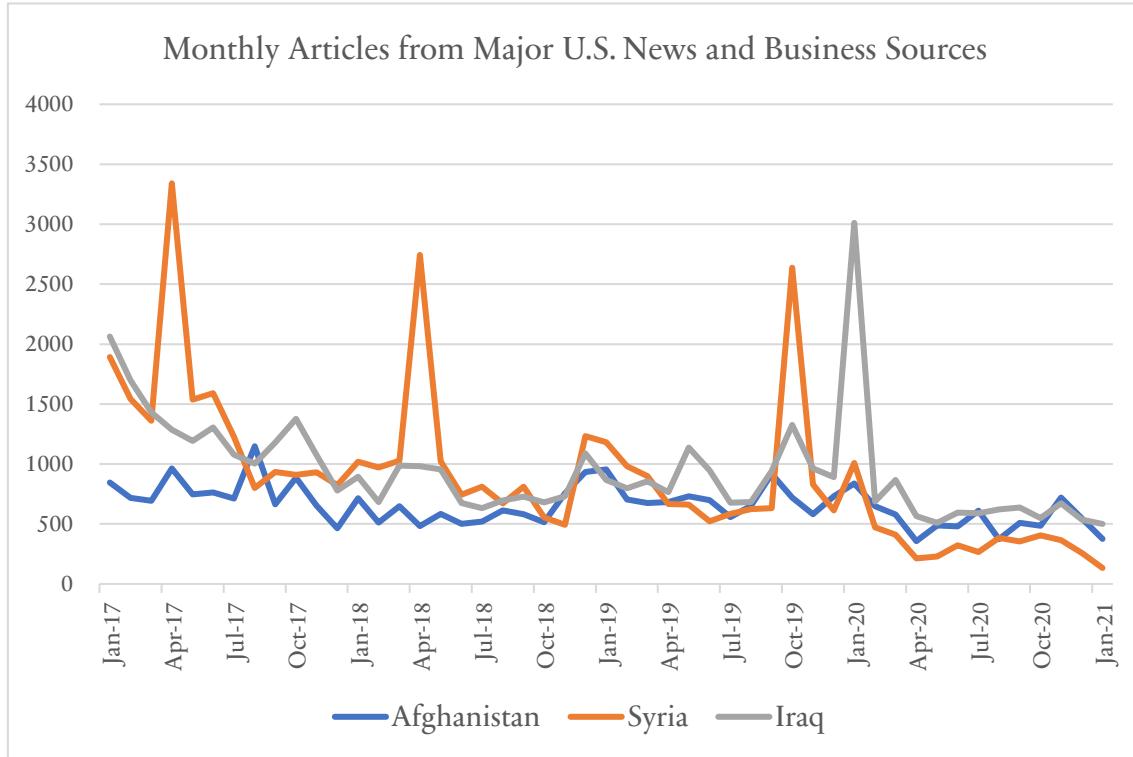
Given how previous legitimation struggles (such as Korea, Vietnam, Bosnia, Somalia, and Iraq) have resulted in increased prioritisation of wars, the lack of variance regarding Afghanistan policy is somewhat surprising, as the Trump administration's November 2020 announcements regarding Afghanistan sparked widespread and bipartisan criticism. In rare Republican criticisms of Trump, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell called the decision to reduce the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq a "mistake", top Republican on the House Armed Committee Mac Thornberry argued that the decision was "unjustified", and Senator Ben Sasse described the policy as a "weak retreat" that was "not grounded in reality" (Seligman 2020). This was not dissimilar to the controversy sparked by Trump's initial withdrawal efforts from Syria, which prompted the passing of a nonbinding amendment proposed by McConnell challenging this policy (Shabad 2019). Likewise, Trump's renewed withdrawal attempts in October 2019 led to a vote in the House of Representatives opposing Trump's actions by a remarkable margin of 354 to 60 votes (Edmondson 2019). As Trump has found, there is still elite support for American intervention in the warzones of the War on Terror, which could be evidence for the ongoing strength of the War on Terror discourse. In the November 2020 case, the lack of prioritisation most likely reflected the salience of Biden's recent electoral success, but more generally, these sudden announcements and the bipartisan backlashes they prompted only increased the political profile of counterterrorism operations under the Trump administration where otherwise they may have drawn little public attention.

Why, then, did Trump continue to push for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from combat zones? Certainly, Trump's personal views must play a significant role here, especially as his withdrawal efforts were at odds with members of his administration. Within the scope of this dissertation, there is also a legitimation dynamic that relates to the tropes of the American way of war. For Gray (2002, 34), 'it is distinctly American to believe that wars should be unmistakably militarily winnable', something that Trump – in contrast to Obama – has explicitly embraced. In his inaugural address, Trump (2017h) declared emphatically that his administration would "eradicate" the threat of "radical Islamic terrorism … completely from the face of the Earth", whilst the aforementioned speech on Afghanistan noted that "the American people are weary of war without victory" before reassuring the public that the U.S. would now "fight to win" (Trump 2017f). This kind of language was also evident in Trump's rhetoric regarding the counter-ISIS campaign, as Trump stated that he had "totally changed the attitudes of the military" who previously "weren't fighting to win" (Nelson 2017), and that "we have won against ISIS. We've beaten them, and we've beaten them badly" (Trump 2018d). Thus, supposedly concluding endless wars, as Trump claimed, represented an attempt to move beyond the War on Terror as a risk management strategy in favour of abiding by the ideas of the American way of war that dictate that wars can be won and ended. As the Syria example showed, however, Trump's portrayal of what the "defeat" of ISIS looked like was deemed 'not only inaccurate, but … also dangerously misleading' by some members of his own administration, congresspeople, and national security experts because of ISIS's morphing strategies (Warrick and Mekhennet 2018). Even after the physical destruction of ISIS' caliphate, the inconclusiveness of what 'victory' might look like in risk management wars harks back to the troubles for the Bush 41 and Clinton administrations in the Persian Gulf and Kosovo respectively.

In terms of legitimation, Trump's description of 'winning' in counterterrorism and 'ending' the forever wars not only enabled him to appeal to the dominant tropes of the American way of war, but also allowed him to differentiate his policies from his predecessors, as Bush's image of victory was a Cold War-like generational struggle, whilst Obama's was endless and routinised wars. Furthermore, this stance allowed Trump to link his administration's policies back to his electoral campaign by allowing for the withdrawal of American troops and putting 'America first'. As Trump (2019b, 2019c) put it during the October 2019 controversy over the withdrawal of American troops from Syria, 'I was elected on getting out of these ridiculous endless wars' and that because of his policies, '[t]he endless and ridiculous wars are ENDING!' This finality is particularly relevant in terms of the shifting focus of Trump's crisis rhetoric to immigrants: as the perceived threat of terrorism declined, it encouraged Trump to declare victory as a clear contrast to the failures of previous mainstream politicians who had overseen these counterterrorism campaigns for nearly 20

years. Indeed, Trump's supposed ending of endless wars was an effective appeal to the populist ideal of appealing to 'the people's' true interests having defeated 'the establishment' in the 2016 election. This can be seen in Trump's (2020a) presidential re-election campaign, where he argued that 'Biden is a globalist who spent 47 years outsourcing your jobs, opening your borders, and sacrificing American blood and treasure in endless foreign wars'.

Whilst it is hard to conclude the effect that Trump's posturing on ending counterterrorism campaigns had in his vote haul of 2020, it is noticeable that the disconnect between Trump's rhetoric and his administration's policies were only assisted by the deprioritisation of these campaigns. That is, the mass public's 'low general awareness about global affairs … enables Trump to obscure and misrepresent his record to voters' (Ahmed 2020), particularly in terms of low priority conflict zones such as Somalia. Although 'terrorism' was the second most important issue to American voters in 2016, the issue was not even given as an option for the same question in 2020 (Beinart 2020), indicative of a general trend towards deprioritisation during the Trump administration. Trump's legitimation efforts – this time in terms of ending counterterrorism campaigns to appeal to his domestic base – were encouraged and made possible by the concurrent deprioritisation of counterterrorism throughout the Trump administration. Crucially though, as this part of the chapter has shown, Trump's rhetoric was notably disconnected from his administration's counterterrorism strategy. As such, there was a paradoxical state of affairs, where the use of force was increasingly normalised in the background, even whilst Trump's actions occasionally made debates about counterterrorism a political priority. Trump's final actions as president in this area – reducing the number of American troops in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Somalia – but not necessarily ending the U.S.' counterterrorism capabilities in these countries – will most likely only contribute to the continued normalisation of the use of force.

Conclusion

Trump's rhetoric transcended the boundaries of the War on Terror discourse, particularly with his suggestions of the connections between Islam, immigration, and terrorism. By declaring that "Islam hates us" and calling for a ban on all Muslims entering the U.S. (J. Johnson and Hauslohner 2017), Trump's rhetoric provided a clear contrast to Bush and Obama who have stressed the peaceful nature of Islam. Trump's rhetoric also surpassed previous discursive borders in terms of both the extent of his threat inflation and in his *explicit* calls for illegal military responses against terrorist groups. In this manner, Trump's rhetoric effectively represented the excesses of the War on Terror discourse by building upon previous themes. These excesses relate to populism's inherent need for crisis, hence why Trump placed the threat of ISIS – and his proposed policy responses – at the heart of his presidential campaign. As shown during the Bush administration's legitimation efforts, fear

can be a powerful legitimation dynamic. The Trump campaign appeared to show that the War on Terror discourse – as a legitimating factor for U.S. counterterrorism campaigns – was alive and kicking.

However, as the second section of this chapter revealed, even if Trump did rhetorically prioritise (counter)terrorism in the first year of his presidency, he failed to accurately describe or meaningfully legitimate his administration's counterterrorism policies. For example, the counter-ISIS campaign largely continued as it had during the Obama presidency as a manifestation of the light-footprint model. With the declining salience of ISIS and ISIS-inspired attacks in the West, this chapter showed how the focus of Trump's crisis rhetoric shifted from terrorists to immigrants with the Central American migrant caravan in 2018. As a consequence of Trump's populism then, where changes occurred during the Trump administration – such as the adoption of the PSP and the areas of active hostilities designation – these largely took place without much political attention.

Other than Trump's speech on Afghanistan, there was little explicit legitimation of the intensification of counterterrorism policies that marked the first half of the Trump presidency. This dearth of legitimation related to both Trump's desire to be seen to reducing America's overseas footprint and the continuation of the light-footprint approach which made deprioritisation possible. The most notable exception to this deprioritisation trend was Trump's repeated attempts to declare victory and withdraw American troops from conflict zones, which prompted resignations, firings, and bipartisan criticism. These clashes represented the continued conflict between the War on Terror as a risk management strategy and the tropes of the American way of war. Nonetheless, were it not for Trump's political desires to position himself as an anti-establishment warrior who could achieve comprehensive victories in these conflicts, the deprioritised status of the War on Terror would have allowed for the continuation of counterterrorism campaigns without much political attention, as war has ultimately remained normalised in this period.

9: Conclusion

Chapter Outline

This chapter consists of three sections. Firstly, the arguments and research presented in the dissertation are summarised. This section reviews each chapter chronologically, as well as reviewing historical trends regarding the three main themes of this dissertation. The second section looks at the implications of these findings, outlining the contributions of this dissertation to the study of three areas: foreign policy and public opinion, the relationship between warfighting strategies and society, and the War on Terror. In each of these areas, the themes of the normalisation framework are emphasised as a corrective to the critiques offered of existent scholarship in Chapters 1 and 3. Lastly, the third part of the chapter notes the limitations of this dissertation, but also offers future research avenues related to these drawbacks.

Dissertation Summary

This dissertation began with the puzzle of the continuity of the War on Terror, despite its unpopularity and growing costs. For example, the three most recent American presidents explicitly campaigned against significant components of the War on Terror, with both Obama and Trump also voicing their doubts about ongoing counterterrorism campaigns whilst in office. Based on this political behaviour and polling results, this dissertation asked what could explain the continuity between the Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations in their overseas counterterrorism campaigns despite their politically unappealing nature. This question was answered with a specific focus on normalisation, arguing that the use of force has become, to an unprecedented extent, normalised amongst the American public, hence affording policymakers the ability to deploy force despite public scepticism. Traditionally associated with heroism, battles, and the passions of nationalism, war in America has instead become a background condition that affects few citizens ideationally or materially, despite its impact on a global scale. Consequently, lethal drone operations in Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen have continued throughout two presidential administrations with little political discussion or contestation. Even more significantly, this dissertation has shown the extent to which even the two main conflicts of the War on Terror – the Afghanistan and Iraq wars – became normalised as early as the Bush administration. Although this was not the primary purpose of this dissertation, detailing this development has significant normative value regarding democratic accountability in matters of war and peace.

As argued in Chapter 1, the observation that the War on Terror has become normalised poses a direct challenge to previous scholarship on American public opinion and U.S. foreign policy. If war had become a largely unnoticed background condition, then what did this mean in terms of the dominant quantitative and liberal approaches in IR scholarship?

Accordingly, this dissertation developed into a broader study into the relationship between the American public and the wars waged in their name. Part I of the dissertation was devoted to outlining a novel theoretical framework for understanding this relationship and applying this framework to historical case studies from the Cold War and post-Cold War period. Chapter 2 introduced the three themes studied in this dissertation (mobilisation, legitimation, and prioritisation), whilst Chapter 3 established the key concept of the dualism of the American way of war, which is discussed further below. Although the cases of the Korean and Vietnam Wars are normally treated as evidence for the relevance and importance of American public opinion given the political demises of Truman, Johnson (and to some extent Nixon), revisionist analysis in Chapter 4 had an alternative focus. More specifically, this chapter showed the military and political strategies deployed by American policymakers to manage the deployment of force for such continued periods and at such costs without agitating American public opinion. Similarly, although Chapter 5 reviewed wars that were generally brief and somewhat unpopular – with Bush criticising the Clinton administration's interventionism in the 2000 presidential campaign (Ricks 2006, 24-25) – it was claimed that these early risk management wars employed the type of non-mobilisation strategies that would set the base for the future normalisation of war.

Part II of the dissertation focused exclusively on the War on Terror, tracing how this conflict has become normalised. Although Chapter 1 argued that the normalisation of U.S. counterterrorism campaigns in the Obama and Trump eras was different to the salient and dominant normalisation of the War on Terror during the Bush administration, Chapter 6 nonetheless revealed evidence of normalisation as conceived in this dissertation, particularly with regards to the deprioritised status of the Afghanistan War. More generally, Chapter 6 detailed the growing legitimation challenges facing the Bush administration, culminating in the electoral victory of Obama, who was widely viewed as *the* anti-war candidate of the 2008 presidential election. In office, the Obama administration made rhetorical and material changes to the War on Terror, resulting in its consolidation and continuity when it was politically vulnerable. Although the Trump presidency was in many ways antithetical to his predecessor's, one significant area of continuity was overseas counterterrorism campaigns. As Chapter 8 detailed, for all of Trump's politicking around (counter)terrorism, paradoxically the use of force became increasingly normalised outside of political debate during this period. Although Biden (2020, 72) claimed that it is 'past time to end the forever wars', the most likely scenario remains a continuation of routinised uses of force against transnational terrorist organisations in the mould of the Obama administration (Hall 2020). Therefore, the normalisation of war looks set to continue whilst these conflicts are politically unappealing.

A historical approach was adopted to establish both the perceived lessons of policymakers and the ways that the relationship between American society and the use of

force has evolved over time. With regards to the former, this was a continual process: the Kennedy and Johnson administrations attempted to implement limited war strategies derived from the failures of the Korean War, the Gulf War was designed as the antidote to the uncertainty of the Vietnam War, whilst other military interventions of the post-Cold War period were conducted with the casualties hypothesis in mind. This legacy remained during the War on Terror, with the Bush administration being fully aware of the potential fragility of public support for the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. In particular, the decisions to fund the War on Terror via borrowing and to rely on the all-volunteer army alongside PMSCs reflected legitimation fears about significant mobilisation costs that would invoke the legacies of Vietnam. As detailed in Chapter 7, a large part of Obama's political strategy to ensure the continuation of the War on Terror was by presenting his administration's policies as a clear contrast to the Bush era, particularly vis-à-vis the use of ground troops. Similarly, while Chapter 8 details the disconnection between Trump's rhetoric and the legitimation of the War on Terror, it is also noticeable that his presentation of his administration's counterterrorism policies was exaggerated so as to appear as the corrective to the perceived indecisiveness of Obama's use of military force.

In terms of the trends exhibited over the studied period, this can be categorised via the three themes of the normalisation framework. In the area of mobilisation, policymakers have reduced or modified the nature of these costs whenever possible, especially in the wake of the Vietnam War and with the RMA. The shift to an all-volunteer army in 1973 crucially reduced the direct mobilisation costs on the American public, whilst from the 1990s onwards the burdens of war were increasingly externalised to PMSCs, which looks set to continue as wars prove increasingly indecisive (McFate 2016a; Mumford 2013, 5). As partially occurred during the Vietnam War, the War on Terror has been entirely funded by borrowing, providing an important distinction to previous wars funded by American taxpayers like the Korean War. Lastly, as outlined in the scholarship on the American way of war, military strategies have regularly been crafted to exploit technological developments and reduce American casualties, even if this resulted in suboptimal military strategies. In this sense, lethal drones are but just another example of the American search for costless warfare, with autonomous weapons systems being the next logical step (Krieg and Rickli 2019, 107). Crucially, each significant technological development had significant political implications in terms of the viability of the use of force, especially during the risk management era.

Much like the management of mobilisation costs, this dissertation has revealed governmental advantages in the legitimation of war policies, such as the ability to determine policy, which has normally led to rallying effects. In particular, governmental informational privileges have been crucial in generating domestic support for the use of force during the War on Terror, most notably with the Iraq War and the lethal drone programme. As Krebs

(2015, Chapter 9) convincingly argued, even the rise of alternative media forms has not taken away the informational advantages of the government and the mass public's desire for coherent narratives. In more explicit legitimation efforts, policymakers have been able to consistently call upon the tropes of demonisation, threat inflation, and far-reaching political objectives to generate political support. The problems with this, as shown in the dissertation, is when developments in war have failed to match these rhetorical justifications, such as during the Korean War or the wars in Iraq. Importantly, however, these problems tend to emerge after the initial use of force and do not necessarily result in the termination of military interventions. Indeed, the dissertation has also revealed rhetorical tropes repeatedly used to justify the continued use of force when challenges in legitimation have emerged: claims of progress, warnings of consequences of disengagement, and the shift in emphasis from war to peace. Whilst legitimation advantages do decrease over time, there are still options available to policymakers.

To avoid these legitimation disputes altogether, policymakers have attempted to deprioritise wars. This has been deliberately achieved in some contexts, whether that be in terms of rhetorically downplaying military escalations in the Vietnam War or conducting lethal drone strikes shrouded in secrecy during the Obama administration. At other times, the rising salience of other political issues and the ongoing nature of military conflicts has meant that war has become deprioritised in a contingent fashion, such as the latter days of the Bush and Trump presidencies. This dissertation has analysed cases where wars were deliberately and intentionally prioritised because of potential or incurred mobilisation costs (such as the wars in Iraq), but these have been exceptions that prove the rule. Given the challenging demands of the American way of war and the adverse political consequences that unpopular war policies brought for the Truman, Johnson, and Bush administrations, policymakers have generally attempted to reduce the salience of war policies to minimise any negative political costs. Combined, these three trends – demobilisation, legitimation, and deprioritisation – help to explain the normalisation of the War on Terror despite being at odds with American ideals.

Contributions to Study

Foreign Policy and Public Opinion

This dissertation has provided a novel and holistic approach for understanding the relationship between U.S. foreign policy and American public opinion that centres around the three themes of mobilisation, legitimation, and prioritisation. Based in a critical realist ontology and employing interpretivist process tracing, this framework incorporates both material and ideational elements. By analysing the importance of military strategies and their associated mobilisation costs, this dissertation has attempted to move beyond the

shortcomings of critical constructivist literature which sees foreign policy legitimation almost exclusively in terms of successful securitisations and dominant rhetorical discourses. Whilst this type of scholarship was particularly well-suited to Bush's War on Terror, the continuity of U.S. counterterrorism campaigns during the Obama and Trump administrations can only be explained by a broader analytical framework. After all, Obama countered and desecuritised large parts of the War on Terror discourse, whilst Trump deliberately transcended accepted discursive boundaries to appeal solely to his domestic base. Furthermore, as argued in Chapter 4 in the context of the Cold War, dominant constitutive beliefs do not necessarily legitimate all mobilisation costs, as also seen in the War on Terror. Rather, this dissertation has shown how policymakers have attempted to manage the mobilisation costs imposed on the American public *alongside* legitimation efforts. In some ways, it is peculiar that the ascent of critical constructivist foreign policy literature into mainstream IR (which in large was due to the scholarship on the War on Terror) has coincided with factors that might make legitimation less necessary or relevant, such as rising polarisation and declining political participation (Drezner 2017, 54–55).

Even with the successful establishment of the War on Terror discourse, the Bush administration attempted to shield the American public from the mobilisation costs of the War on Terror. As noted above, this shielding dynamic has been revealed throughout this dissertation, providing a compelling critique of democratic exceptionalism scholarship: if the democratic populace no longer bears the costs of the war, then the Kantian assumption at the heart of this literature is brought into question. This point is particularly prevalent given that rising mobilisation costs have often set the base for legitimation challenges studied in this dissertation. The plentiful examples of this shielding dynamic in this dissertation closely align with recent revisionist literature on Western states that has questioned the cost internalisation assumptions of democratic exceptionalism (Cappella Zielinski 2016; Caverley 2014; Kreps 2010, 2018b; Valentino, Huth, and Croco 2010). Hence, this dissertation contributes to this burgeoning literature that urges for a reconsideration of the assumptions of how foreign policy is in democratic states vis-à-vis public opinion.

Regarding legitimation, this dissertation responds to Goddard and Krebs' (2015, 35) call for further research in answering the following question: 'when does legitimation matter most centrally to political processes and outcomes in general and to national security politics and policy in particular?' Contrary to their argument that '[g]overnment officials … do not have incentives to keep invisible as much of the policy space as possible' (ibid, 18; Goddard and Krebs 2018, 74), this dissertation has shown that American policymakers have regularly deprioritised war policies, whether that be in terms of gradualism or deception. In some ways then, these examples significantly extend the boundaries of Goddard and Krebs' (2015, 7-8) hypotheses that the importance and necessity of legitimation 'depends on the government's

need for mobilization and a policy's *visibility*'. That is, whilst this dissertation has shown that the significant *prospective* mobilisation costs of the American wars in Iraq necessitated explicit legitimation campaigns, it is also the case that sizeable mobilisation costs occurred without legitimation efforts, such as the early stages of the Vietnam War or the lethal drone programme during the Obama and Trump administrations. As such, this dissertation – along with expanding the concept of legitimation to include crucial unstated political dynamics – has contributed to this important IR literature that analyses the understudied process of how legitimacy is created and established (Goddard and Krebs 2018, 68).

Perhaps the most important contribution of this dissertation to the study of the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy is with regards to prioritisation. Unlike the dominant quantitative approach which assumes the relevance of public opinion on American military interventions by focusing on polling data, this dissertation has situated these polls within a broader context that considers the varying saliency of these wars. It has been argued that since 1945, American policymakers have strived – and at times succeeded – to make public opinion largely irrelevant to the formulation of war policies. Whilst this has been a historical phenomenon that traverses the limited war and risk management eras, the changing character of warfare in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century has only furthered the ability of U.S. governments to conduct wars without – as McNamara aptly put it – "arousing the public ire" (R. Osgood 1969, 45).

The consideration of the relevance of American public opinion is perhaps best illustrated by a defining feature of contemporary risk management strategies: the lethal drone programme. As noted in Chapter 7, Walsh and Schulzke's (2018) study of drone warfare is devoted to refuting the idea that this weaponry might significantly change the calculus of policymakers when considering the use of force. To support this argument, the study relies on original survey data showing the American public's approval of the use of lethal drones to be relatively consistent with other military tactics. Crucially, however, at no point is the relevance of public opinion considered. As the Trump administration's counterterrorism policies show, this is a significant oversight: it is unlikely that Trump supporters would have supported military interventions in countries such as Somalia and Yemen, but that did not stop the use of force. Rather, war policies were deprioritised with the designation of 'areas of active hostilities' and the shifting targets of Trump's populist rhetoric. Put simply, these actions were simply not salient. Again, this critique speaks directly to the democratic exceptionalism literature and follows revisionist scholarship on this issue (Baum 2004; Knecht and Weatherford 2006; Staniland and Narang 2018). Not only have American governments been able to externalise the burden of warfare, but they have also made wars less salient, creating more flexibility for policymakers outside of the attention of the American public. At an elite level, over the period covered by this dissertation, Congress has largely failed to enact

practical and concrete actions to restrict this flexibility, as best personified by the Iraq surge at the end of the Bush administration.

As contended in Chapter 1, the normalisation of the use of force in the kinetic realm is a hard case for the argument that war has become ordinary in America. A related point is the problems that this may cause for the U.S., given how the lines between war and peace are becoming increasingly blurred in twenty-first century international politics (Kello 2017, 77). Lucas Kello's work captured this new dimension of competition in international affairs, as his concept of 'unpeace' referred to 'harmful activity that falls legally and conceptually below the threshold of war, though it may inflict more economic and political harm than a single act of war' (ibid, 145). For example, Russian strategic thinking in recent years has placed great emphasis on the role of information warfare in the twenty-first century media environment, seeing disinformation as an opportunity 'to manipulate Western public opinion to serve Russian interests' without declaring war or resorting to kinetic activities (F. S. Hansen 2017, 4; Krieg and Rickli 2019, 98-99; McFate 2019b, Chapter 11). Whilst Russian strategists are explicitly reconfiguring their notion of 'war' to emphasise the non-kinetic realm to portray their revisionist actions as defensive (F.S. Hansen 2017, 29), this dissertation has shown the struggle of American presidents to move beyond outdated conceptions of war without criticism. Consequently, barring a fundamental reconceptualization of what war is amongst American leaders and the general public, American strategic adversaries could continue to exploit the normalised state of war outlined in this dissertation without triggering a response from public opinion. Robert Mueller's claim to Congress that Russia's disinformation campaigns would be "the new normal" is a potential warning in that regard (Kreps 2020, 6).

Indeed, although this dissertation may seem to be putting forward a realist position on the (ir)relevance of public opinion to the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, the key point is that this irrelevance cannot be assumed. Rather, the normalisation of war has been a gradual process stretching from limited war theory to the perceived lessons of the Vietnam War in the early risk management period, and then the consolidation of the War on Terror. As this dissertation has shown with regards to the wars in Vietnam, Korea, and Iraq (amongst others), there have been occasions when wars have become significantly unpopular, with real strategic and electoral consequences. In the case of the disinformation example above, the American public have a significant potential role to play in twenty-first century great power competition. The varying importance of public opinion attests to the consistent interplay between the domestic and foreign realms in the conduct of foreign policy, which is overlooked by some realist analysis. Thereby, this dissertation has attempted to resolve the weaknesses of the constructivist, liberal, and realist accounts of the relationship between public opinion and U.S. foreign policy.

Limited Wars, Risk Management Strategies, and the American Way of War

As argued in Chapter 3, war is best conceived as a 'total relationship' that is both affected by and affects much of society. Accordingly, this dissertation broadened the concepts of limited war and risk management strategies beyond their traditional remit to consider how these strategies have related to society and public opinion. The analysis of limited war strategies and the tension between maintaining public support without creating pressures for escalation represents an understudied area of the use of force during the Cold War, as noted in Chapter 4. Similarly, with regards to IR scholarship on risk management strategies, this dissertation represents a more detailed investigation into the practicalities of waging risk management wars and how to manage public opinion when these strategies are diametrically opposed to conventional understandings of war.

To categorise these repeated tensions between military strategies and public opinion, this dissertation introduced the concept of a dualism of the American way of war. This idea speaks to the challenges that have faced American policymakers since at least 1945, furthering our understanding of how wars have been managed and justified to the American public. In Part II of the dissertation, there was a particular focus on notions of 'victory' in the War on Terror, given the ongoing nature of U.S. counterterrorism campaigns and how these contrast the American way of war's focus on rapid and discrete military victories. In different ways, it was shown that neither Bush, Obama, nor Trump were able to successfully outline an image of 'victory' that was not either unrealistic or prone to significant political critiques, which is an ongoing problem in the justification of these seemingly endless wars.

More broadly, this dissertation has engaged with the notion of an American way of war in a novel fashion by broadening the application of the concept from a way of warfighting to a set of 'ideal conditions' (E. Cohen 2001, 45), with Chapter 3 outlining a set of traits that characterised the model image of war in American political discourse. This not only represents a unique application of the concept of the American way of war to studies of public opinion but also meant that this dissertation was able to sidestep the debates about what the American way of war is and whether it has changed, instead basing its discussion in the tenets that have reappeared throughout the period under study. The dualism of the American way of war aligned most closely in the wars in Iraq, but for most of the time the challenge to policymakers was how to present these two conflicting dynamics – the American way of war in rhetoric and the American way of war in practice – in harmony. As reviewed above, decisions made in all three themes under study (in this case, demobilisation, non-mobilisation, and legitimation) have all contributed to the successful normalisation of the use of force despite pursuing military strategies at odds with the tropes of the American way of war. And yet, even as both military strategies and the nature of war in the international system have changed, the critiques prompted by the (non)use of the tropes of the American

way of war recounted in Part II attest to the ongoing struggle to successfully manage the American way of war. Hence, the treatment of the American way of war in this dissertation will most likely be relevant for years to come.

The War on Terror

Whilst Part I was devoted to providing a new understanding of the relationship between U.S. wars and American wars via the normalisation framework, Part II has provided clear and direct contributions to prior research on the War on Terror, especially in Chapters 7 and 8. Chapter 6 largely relied on secondary literature on the Bush administration, but even here the focus on normalisation meant that new aspects of the administration's approach could be highlighted as explanatory factors, such as initial non-mobilisation decisions and later deprioritisation efforts. Normalisation has been considered in the context of the War on Terror, but this concept has only been briefly discussed (Bacevich 2005, 18, 208; 2018c) or studied from a cultural perspective (J. Simons and Lucaites 2017a), rather than as part of a thorough process tracing investigation. The normalisation framework provides a clear contrast to previous studies on the War on Terror, such as the dominant account of the continuity of counterterrorism campaigns during the Obama administration as reviewed in Chapter 7. It was argued that by focusing on the War on Terror discourse, this account presented an excessively static account of the transition between the Bush and Obama administrations, therefore neglecting the significance of crucial changes that helped to consolidate the War on Terror when it was politically vulnerable. By employing the normalisation framework that incorporates both material and immaterial aspects of the War on Terror, this chapter was able to highlight the changes in legitimation and military strategies of the Obama administration that provide a fuller and more nuanced account of the continuity in counterterrorism campaigns. In this way, Chapter 7 provided a direct contribution to IR scholarship on this issue.

As stated in Chapter 8, there has been little research on counterterrorism during the Trump administration so far. As the works cited in Chapter 8 reveal, most of these have been devoted to assessing the degree of continuity in counterterrorism strategy between the Obama administration and the first two years of the Trump presidency. Whilst these accounts are valuable in terms of reviewing the extent to which the Trump administration continued the light-footprint approach inherited from the Obama administration, these studies are generally quite narrow in scope. In contrast, the normalisation framework ensures that Chapter 8 provides a holistic account of counterterrorism policies during the Trump administration, including analysis of the Trump administration's military strategies, the content and relevance of Trump's rhetoric regarding (counter)terrorism, and the continued deprioritisation of the use of force during the Trump presidency. Consequently, Chapter 8

offers novel analysis on an important and currently understudied component of the Trump administration's foreign policy.

Limitations and Future Research Avenues

As noted in Chapter 2, in attempting to capture the 'national mood', this dissertation takes an admittedly broad approach. This object of study was chosen to reflect the scope of the relationship being studied, but it also means that there is space for more specific applications of the theoretical frameworks put forward in this dissertation. For example, a case study that relies on elite interviews could provide more specific data on how the three themes of mobilisation, legitimation, and prioritisation interact, as well as the relative weight applied to each policy area in the attempted management of public opinion. Other more specific research avenues could focus on one of the themes in question. Given the oversight of the issue of saliency in writings on U.S. foreign policy and public opinion (as well as opinion polling more generally), surveys could be designed to test the saliency of certain foreign policy topics, which could then be compared back to mobilisation costs, governmental prioritisation efforts, and the legitimation of these policies. Whilst the difficulty of capturing deprioritised and normalised policy arenas undoubtedly remains, this simple example hopefully attests to the parsimony and applicability of the framework offered here. At a bare minimum, the consideration of these three themes offers a way for students and scholars of this topic to conceive of the relationship between public opinion and U.S. foreign policy. Indeed, the period covered by this dissertation attests to the flexibility of the normalisation framework.

That being said, a notable limitation of this dissertation is the one country focus, especially as this reinforces the Americentrism of studies of the relationship between foreign policy and public opinion in IR scholarship. Whilst it is a myth that one cannot generalise from an individual case study (Flyvbjerg 2006, 225-26), the post-positivist approach adopted by this dissertation entails that because of the specificity of cultural knowledge (in critical realist terminology, the intransitive realm), generalisability is better thought of as a responsibility of readers rather than researchers (Schwartz Shea and Yanow 2012, 47-48). With that caveat in mind, some preliminary suggestions can be made about the generalisability of the normalisation framework.

Because the framework incorporates both material and immaterial elements, this is something that could readily translate outside of considerations of the specificities of the American relationship with war. As has been implied throughout the dissertation with the critiques of democratic exceptionalism, there is little reason to suggest that the framework could not translate to non-democracies, with key dynamics outlined in Chapter 2 being present in non-democracies. Firstly, because leaders in non-democracies are oftentimes accountable to other elites, defeat in war is still likely to have significant effects on leaders

(Debs and Goemans 2010, 440; Rosato 2003, 593). Some have even claimed that because of the potential threat of being exiled, imprisoned, or killed, war leaders in non-democracies are actually more sensitive to the results of war (Debs and Goemans 2010, 440; Goemans 2012, 39-40). In the most nuanced and complete scholarship on this issue, Jessica Weeks (2014, 5) refuted this position, but still found that it was only in 'some extraordinarily centralized regimes' that nondemocratic leaders fulfilled the conventional view of dictatorships as unaccountable to either elites or public opinion (see also Croco and Weeks 2016). Instead, the majority of non-democratic states were marked by the same punishment dynamics associated with democracies.

Secondly, there is evidence that the general public in nondemocracies are sensitive to mobilisation costs. In their disapproval of the Second Chechen War Russian citizens were primarily concerned with the economic and military costs of the intervention (Gerber and Mendelson 2008, 39-40), whilst there were public protests in Iran in 2017 and 2018 against costly war policies when unemployment and poverty were rising at home (Krieg and Rickli 2019, 47). Further, survey data has shown that nondemocratic publics are not as warmongering as has been previously assumed (Bell and Quek 2018, 234; Gerber and Mendelson 2008, 48). Due to a lack of research on this specific issue, the relevance of this public opinion regarding the use of force remains unclear (Bell and Quek 2018, 234; Gerber and Mendelson 2008, 67). However, as this dissertation has shown, the relevance and importance of public opinion has varied, despite the U.S. being hailed as a hallmark of democratic accountability (Risse-Kappen 1991). Indeed, the third key point here is that it is now widely recognised from case study research that leaders in nondemocracies are influenced by public opinion in their policy formulation (Bell and Quek 2018, 232; Weeks 2014, 3-4). In the field of War Studies, Krieg and Rickli (2019, 173, 196-97) have shown that although the precise logic of 'surrogate warfare' may vary between states, 'the externalization of the burden of warfare … is a response of the state for dealing with the complexity of providing security in the twenty-first century', and hence can be seen in both democracies and nondemocracies as they attempt to reduce political criticism. Russia, for example, has increased its usage of PMSCs to alleviate concerns regarding its intervention in Syria (ibid, 9-10).

Given the centrality of changing military technologies in the light-footprint approach and the significance of this in the normalisation of war in the U.S. context, it would be interesting to see if there were comparable effects in other countries. The changing prevalence and focus of anti-war movements in the twenty-first century would be a particularly noteworthy object of inquiry, given the role that these movements have played in raising the prioritisation and challenging the legitimation of previous American wars. As discussed in Chapter 7, the anti-war movement underwent a significant decline during the Obama

administration and has shown few signs of recovery, so it would be worth interrogating whether this reflected the specific legitimation contexts of the Obama presidency or a wider phenomenon related to the characteristics of war in the twenty-first century. More broadly, the findings of this dissertation suggest that the implications of the changing characteristics of war on public opinion and the relevance of democratic exceptionalism should be further explored.

Along with being applied to other national contexts, the framework introduced in this dissertation could be applied to different policy areas. As Krasner's (1978) study revealed, the relationship between U.S. foreign policy and public opinion is not restricted to solely military issues. Given the assumed salience of war in democratic polities, other foreign policy arenas could also expose further deprioritisation that goes against the theories of democratic exceptionalism. There is little reason to think that the dynamics of managing the relevance of public opinion would not be seen in other areas of foreign policy. After all, this is one of the central tasks facing policymakers in democratic countries in their quest for electoral success. In this way, it would be interesting to see if policymakers have been as successful in the normalisation of certain policies as they have been in the realm of war.

10: Epilogue

In contrast to his recent predecessors, President Biden oversaw the complete withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan on 30 August 2021. Whilst polls showed that the American public disapproved of the execution of the withdrawal, surveys also showed that that majorities supported this policy both before and during the withdrawal (Newport 2021; Van Green and Doherty 2021). Perhaps most strikingly, in the annual Chicago Council Survey conducted in July 2021, 70 percent of respondents supported the decision to withdraw all American soldiers by 11 September 2021 (Smeltz and Sullivan 2021). Generally, polling results have shown that 'Americans at this point have significant doubts about the country's 20-year military involvement in Afghanistan', with perspectives becoming 'more negative as time goes on' (Newport 2021). In justifying the withdrawal of American troops, Biden (2021g) attempted to tap into this public sentiment, arguing that "[w]ar in Afghanistan was never meant to be a multi-generational undertaking … We went to war with clear goals. We achieved those objectives. Bin Laden is dead, and al Qaeda is degraded … in Afghanistan … it's time to end the forever war." Based on polling results and Biden's rhetorical strategy, one could argue that the Afghanistan withdrawal directly counters the normalisation thesis put forward in this dissertation and is better explained by the democratic exceptionalism framework.

However, much like the Trump administration, this reasoning belies a more nuanced reality. Firstly, the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan is not synonymous with a conclusive end to the broader War on Terror. Even with regards to Afghanistan, Biden (2021e) suggested that despite the withdrawal of American troops, the U.S. still could conduct "effective counterterrorism operations … in Afghanistan with our over-the-horizon counterterrorism capability" if required. Part of Biden's (2021g) justification of withdrawing from Afghanistan was the need to appropriately broaden the focus of American counterterrorism campaigns: "[w]ith the terror threat now in many places, keeping thousands of troops grounded and concentrated in just one country … makes little sense to me". In both the leadup to and during the withdrawal operation, Biden (2021a, b, d, f, c) repeatedly stated that "[w]e're going to retain a laser-focus on our counterterrorism mission" against a "metastasized" terrorist threat but reiterated that "[w]e … don't need to fight a ground war to do it." Despite ending the war in Afghanistan, Biden has simultaneously been a vocal proponent for the continuation of the light-footprint approach around the globe.

Secondly, as Kreps and Douglas Kriner (2021) argued, 'there are reasons to doubt that voters would punish President Biden for keeping U.S. troops in Afghanistan' because of the low political salience of the conflict covered in this dissertation. Their survey results from 2020 and 2021 hardly suggested an overwhelming mass of the American electorate ready to

punish Biden for not sticking to his campaign promises, with equal levels of approval and disapproval for withdrawal at 36 percent (ibid). Even more tellingly with regards to normalisation, 30 percent of respondents did not know whether they supported the policy or not, and 25 percent were unaware the Afghanistan War was still continuing (ibid). Democratic congressman Ruben Gallego (2021) put forward a similar logic in response to political strategist Steve Schmidt's claim that the errors made during the Afghanistan withdrawal could become a significant political problem for the Biden administration, with Gallego arguing that '[t]his is not the case … The American public stopped caring about Afghanistan years ago.'

These arguments echo the claims put forward in Chapter 9: that the sporadic bursts of attention and controversy associated with the War on Terror during this period reflected Trump's desires to withdraw American troops from combat zones, rather than a more substantive or enduring anti-war movement which sporadic opinion polls on specific issues may suggest. Moreover, the withdrawal from Afghanistan prompted similar debates about how defeat and victory should be viewed in the risk management era. On one hand, Biden's arguments received support from some Democrats, with Ilhan Omar thanking the president for 'learning from past mistakes and for clearly articulating the costs of endless war' (Edmondson 2021). On the other side, Republican congresspeople contended that 'American troops didn't lose this war — Donald Trump and Joe Biden deliberately decided to lose' (Sasse 2021), and that this kind of failure reflected a reliance "on hollow slogans like 'bring the troops home' and 'no more endless wars'" (Edmondson 2021). McConnell made the predictable argument that "[e]very terrorist around the world: in Syria, in Iraq, in Yemen, in Africa are cheering the defeat of the United States' military" (Sprunt 2021). As such, whilst the normalised light-footprint War on Terror does not look likely to end, the intermittent debates over what victory and defeat look like in this conflict look set to continue.

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