

It is always difficult to evaluate the legacies, lessons, and implications of the wars in which the United States has been involved, and for a number of reasons this is even more difficult with the wars on terrorism and in Afghanistan and Iraq. In many ways, World War I set the stage for the ensuing drama of the twentieth century; the empires of the Romanovs in Russia, the Hohenzollerns in Prussia, the Ottomans in Turkey, and the Habsburgs of Austria-Hungary were destroyed by the war, and new technologies—the “revolution of military affairs” of that day—both prolonged the war and made it more devastating than previous wars. The conclusion of the war halted the fighting and killing, but it did not bring peace to the world. Woodrow Wilson’s attempt to establish a new system and organization for managing power in international relations, the League of Nations, faltered and ultimately failed due in part to the refusal of the United States to join the new international organization.

The vindictive peace treaty following World War I contributed to the onset of the worldwide depression and the crippling of the international economy and the rise of hyperinflation, which, in turn, increased the desperation that led the people of one of the most advanced countries in the world, Germany, to turn to a marginally sane, racist megalomaniac, Adolf Hitler. The “second Thirty Years War” (1914–45) ended with the detonation of the most destructive weapons ever invented over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the shadow of the nuclear mushroom clouds, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence was developed which, contrary to the predictions of many, resulted in the “long peace” of the cold war. Nuclear deterrence was supplemented by the farsighted programs of the Marshall Plan, which enabled the victorious and vanquished countries of Europe to rebuild and develop, contributing to the cohesion and stability of the Western alliance of democratic, capitalist states.

For more than four decades, the cold war between the United States and the

Soviet Union dominated the attention of policymakers, academics, analysts, and members of the public. As observers of the U.S. at least since the time of Alexis de Tocqueville have noted, most Americans are neither knowledgeable about nor interested in international relations. U.S. cold war policy, however, provided a simple equation for understanding foreign policy: communists were bad, and anticommunists were good. One did not need to know where a particular communist country was or even who its leader was; the important thing was whether it was communist or part of, as it was known during the cold war, the Free World.

The central objective of American cold war policy was to contain the spread of communist influence throughout the world. In pursuit of this goal, the United States concluded both bi- and multilateral alliances with many noncommunist countries, the most important of which was the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). When North Korea attacked South Korea, a U.S. ally, in June 1950, the United States and the United Nations responded by sending troops. This was the first modern, limited war in which the U.S. was involved, and it resulted in a stalemate. In fact, even today the war has not formally been ended; only an armistice exists. Ultimately, more than 36,000 Americans were killed in the Korean War.

Despite warnings from many quarters, the U.S. became involved in a second major war in Asia during the cold war, Vietnam, and although the stalemated outcome of the Korean War was frustrating to Americans, the loss of the Vietnam War was even more traumatic. Up until that time, the Vietnam War had been “America’s longest war,” and it was the first war that the United States had lost. The outcome of the war had a number of implications. More than 58,000 Americans were killed in this war, which was costly in both human and economic terms: it literally and figuratively broke the American military. It took more than a decade to repair the damage that was done. In addition, it affected, as all wars do, the way that Americans thought about war. To many, the Vietnam War showed that the U.S. should not intervene in foreign conflicts in almost any circumstances. The war, in the words of General David Petraeus, who wrote his doctoral dissertation on the lessons of the war, was “indelibly etched in the minds” of those who had fought in it.¹

After more than four decades, the internal stresses and strains of communism, ironically the very things that Marx would have called the “internal contradictions” of capitalist countries, resulted in genuine proletariat revolutions, with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 followed by the disintegration of the world’s first communist state, the Soviet Union, in December 1991.

With these two events, the four and a half decades-long cold war came to an end, and academics and policy analysts scrambled and competed with one another to develop a new paradigm for explaining and prescribing the next U.S. strategy for dealing with the rest of the world. These new ways of thinking included Francis Fukuyama's "end of history," Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations," Kenneth Waltz's "neo-realism," Robert Keohane's and Joseph Nye's "neo-liberalism," and other approaches as well. Although each of these approaches had its supporters, none gained majority support. As a result, the period following the disintegration of the cold war was known for what it was not, namely, the cold war. The new era was labeled the post-cold war, but there was no agreement on what that meant.

The New Age of Terrorism

Former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and later Colin Powell, who served two tours of duty in Vietnam, developed criteria to be met if the United States were to involve itself in a war: vital national interests of the U.S. were involved, there should be clear, achievable objectives, there was significant public and congressional support for doing so, military force was to be used with the intent of winning, the use of military force should be a last resort, and there was an exit strategy for the war. In January of 1991, these principles of the Weinberger-Powell doctrine were applied spectacularly successfully when the United States and more than thirty other countries forced Saddam Hussein's Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait following its invasion and occupation of that country. Public opinion supported the coalition of forces; massive force was used; and Iraq was forced out of Kuwait. But the coalition stopped short of Baghdad and left Saddam in power. There were several reasons for this, most notably that the United Nations coalition did not have a mandate to change the regime in Iraq. Most American officials, including President George Herbert Walker Bush, believed that removing Saddam and overthrowing his Baath Party would create a power vacuum in the region that Iran would fill. Americans nervously recalled the takeover of the American embassy and taking of U.S. hostages in Tehran in November 1979, and they did not want to see Iran achieve regional hegemonic status. In addition, the United Nations and the U.S. coalition partners had not approved of a policy for changing the regime in Iran. There were, however, some U.S. officials, most notably Paul Wolfowitz, who called for the overthrow of Saddam from the time of the first Gulf War.

The September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States definitively ended the post–cold war epoch of U.S. foreign policy and changed everything. The U.S. was no longer invulnerable to attack on its continental homeland, as it had been since 1812. In addition, the attacks were waged by what international relations specialists call a “nonstate actor,” and this meant that the attackers had no territory of their own, no permanent “return address.” In al Qaeda’s case, however, the Afghan government under the Taliban had provided sanctuary and refused to turn over its leaders according to the American demand. On October 7, 2001, U.S. military forces attacked Afghanistan, destroying al Qaeda’s terrorist training camps and overthrowing the Taliban government.

In March 2003, the United States invaded Iraq and quickly defeated Iraqi military forces. What the military calls the “kinetic phase” of the war was akin to Thomas Hobbes’ state of nature: “nasty, brutish, and short.” The postwar phase of the war proved to be far more difficult than anyone had expected or predicted. When the U.S. reacted to the September 11 attacks by attacking both Afghanistan and Iraq, a new era of American foreign policy had clearly begun, and policymakers, analysts, and journalists have already written many articles and books about these challenges to the United States (see the bibliographies in Appendix C).

This book examines the ways in which, and to what extent, these conflicts were related. In many respects, the wars on terrorism, and in Afghanistan and Iraq are separate and discrete, but on another level, they are integrally linked; it is likely that in the future they will be viewed in that way. The underlying premise of this book is that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq can only be understood in relation to 9/11 and the ensuing war on terrorism, just as the wars in Korea and Vietnam can only be understood in relation to the cold war.

The Organization of the Book

This book is divided into three major parts. Part I focuses on the history and background of the principal countries involved in the wars against terrorism, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. Part II focuses on the major issues concerning these conflicts including assumptions, intelligence, war plans, postwar reconstruction, policymaking, allies, and strategy. Part III of the book draws conclusions concerning the lessons to be learned from these conflicts for the future.

The central focus of this book is on U.S. policy toward terrorism, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The book does not focus in great detail on each of the countries

involved in South Asia; rather, it focuses on U.S. policy toward that vital region. In order to explain contemporary American policy, it is important to provide the historical context.

Therefore, Chapter 2 describes U.S. dealings with Islamic countries with particular emphasis on American policy toward the Middle East and the epochal changes that took place in 1979, including the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, the conclusion of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, the rise of radical Islamism, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Chapter 3 focuses on Afghanistan and Pakistan, and particularly the Soviet-Afghan conflict from 1979 to 1989, the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the development of nuclear weapons in Pakistan, and the relationship of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence organization to Islamic radical groups.

Chapter 4 describes the geography, demographics, economics, and politics of Iraq during the reign of Saddam Hussein. It also focuses on the first war with Iraq in 1990–91 and the aftermath of that war.

Chapter 5 focuses on the development of terrorism in the 1991–2001 period, with particular emphasis on the rise of Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. In addition, several opponents to al Qaeda are examined, including Afghanistan's Northern Alliance headed by Ahmed Massoud. The chapter concludes with a description of another day that will "live in infamy," September 11, 2001.

Chapter 6 describes the foreign policy of the George W. Bush administration, both before and following the attacks of September 11. The chapter describes the principal elements of the Bush Doctrine and the policies for attempting to deal with the threats posed by terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

In Part II, the focus changes from a consideration of history to the central issues of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, including assumptions, intelligence, war plans, postwar reconstruction operations and planning, policymaking and the interagency process, relations with allies, and the strategies of the two wars.

Chapter 7 outlines the assumptions of the Bush administration, including the linkage of 9/11 and Iraq, the duration of military operations, Iraqis' reception of American soldiers, the role of expatriate leaders, the establishment of democracy, the costs of the wars, and best case assumptions.

Chapter 8 focuses on intelligence issues concerning the conflicts, including intelligence failures, intelligence regarding Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq, and U.S. governmental investigations of the use and abuse of intelligence. Information and analysis concerning supposed weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq is examined.

Chapter 9 focuses on the ways that the U.S. government considered dealing with al Qaeda, Afghanistan, and Iraq, including containment and deterrence, assassination and coups, the use of Special Forces, conventional military attack, or the utilization of mobile, lightly armored forces. This chapter focuses on the acute phase of military conflict, what the military refers to as the “kinetic” phase of conflict.

Chapter 10 focuses on Phase IV of the military operations—postwar reconstruction issues, programs, and problems—in both Afghanistan and Iraq. The shortcomings of U.S. postwar planning in both Afghanistan and Iraq are examined. In addition, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) are described and assessed.

Chapter 11 describes policymaking coordination and problems in the conflicts under investigation. The chapter focuses on the interagency process within the executive branch, the National Security Council, and the role and involvement of Congress. The coordination between and among these agencies, departments, and governmental branches is evaluated.

Chapter 12 describes the support for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq by various allies of the United States. In addition, the ways in which the United States dealt with its allies in these conflicts and the withdrawal of non-American forces from Afghanistan and Iraq are described.

Chapter 13 describes the significant change in strategy from a conventional counterterrorist strategy to a counterinsurgency approach in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Some observers have noted that this change marked a strategic counterrevolution. The “surges” of U.S. military forces in both Afghanistan and Iraq are described.

In Part III of the book, the conclusion presents a number of the strategic lessons to be drawn from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. These lessons are presented as twenty-six articles, an approach borrowing from T. E. Lawrence. In addition, the likely legacies of these two wars are described.

The three appendices to the book are integral parts of it. Appendix A contains maps of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and the Middle East region. Appendix B is a chronology of the major events related to the subject of the book with an emphasis on the period since September 11, 2001. Appendix C contains selected bibliographies on: (1) terrorism, counterterrorism, and counterinsurgency, (2) Afghanistan and Pakistan, and (3) the Iraq War.