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The United States of America's Withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021: A Critical Analysis

By

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FROM AFGHANISTAN IN 2021: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS***

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to analyse the United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. To achieve this goal, this study had three subsidiary objectives. Qualitative research methodology was used in carrying this study. First, the researcher analyzed the United States of America's foreign policy towards a few selected countries in the Middle- East (Iran, Iraq, and Yemen). Second, the researcher assessed the major reasons leading to the United States of America's military intervention in Afghanistan. Third, the researcher established factors influenced the United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as the implications of such a withdrawal. In so doing, this chapter provides a summary of the factors that influenced the United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as the implications of such a withdrawal. It analyses the United States of America's foreign policy towards a few selected countries in the Middle- East (Iran, Iraq, and Yemen) visa vie Afghanistan. And the major reasons leading to the United States of America's military intervention in Afghanistan are also discussed. Finally, the study recommends that further research should be carried out on the United States of America's Withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021

DECLARATION

I, Time Matola (210060B), declare that the content of this dissertation is my own original work with the exception of such quotations or references which has been attributed to their sources and has not been previously submitted to any other university.

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my parents (Patuma Kanjila: Ali Muwamadi Gaffer Matola) and the rest of the Matola family for their unwavering support and unconditional love during the course of the study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONMYS

EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Funds
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IRD	International Reconstruction Development
NEMT	New Economic of Migration Theory
NETM	Neoclassical Economic Theory of Migration
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
USD	United States Dollars
US	United States
IEA	International Energy Agency
ILR	International Law Reports
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
Int'l Rel	International Relations
ITO	International Trade Organisation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NEA	Nuclear Energy Agency
OPEC	Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
PLA	Palestinian Liberation Army
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty (1968)

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The end of the cold war created a new international order defined by unipolarity (with the United States as the sole superpower) and the near universalization of an essentially liberal set of norms, rules, and institutions that it was believed would deliver perpetual peace, general prosperity, and universal democracy. With the advent of the “unipolar moment,” however, new threats also appeared. The existential menace of armed Soviet *hegemonism*, ‘rogue states,’ ‘global terrorism,’ and ‘state failure’ came to dominate the geopolitical imagination of the American foreign policy establishment. In response, the cold war grand strategy of containment gave way to a post-cold war grand strategy of “primacy,” the upshot of which was that unrivalled USA hard- and soft-power resources used to uphold, policy and defend the freshly minted “liberal international order” in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the middle east. As with containment before it, primacy became the fundamental logic that guided USA leaders seeking security in a complex and insecure world. It was an intellectual architecture that gave form and structure to American foreign and defense policy (Latham, 2021).

Specifically, in countries such as Iraq, Yemen and Afghanistan. From the perspective of liberal internationalism and its associated grand strategy of primacy, a USA invasion to eradicate al-Qaeda and its Taliban patrons, followed by a campaign to incorporate Afghanistan into the community of liberal (civilized) nations, was sensible. Indeed, viewed through the lens of the grand strategy of primacy, there could be no other rational course of action other than the use of military force (Latham, 2021). Despite the use of a prepondering military force for almost 20 years against the Taliban, the Americans did not make much headway in terms of maintaining stability, security and democratization in Afghanistan. Interestingly, Taliban forces of 75,000 overran the well-equipped 300,000 strong Afghan army, trained and supported by US-NATO military. In 2021 the world was shocked to hear of the toppling of the

USAfghan client regime which brought to a historic close that era of neoconservative USA foreign policy that symbolically began with 9/11 and the global war on terrorism(Latham, 2021). The above event caught most scholars unaware and so there is not yet much literature in response to the decline of war in Afghanistan as well as the current limitations of the American power. Scholars such as Latham (2021) and Tariq, et al (2021), Fried (2021), Wechsler (2021) do not give much emphasis on the declinism of war in Afghanistan as well as the shortcomings of American power. It is therefore imperative for this study to fill in this gap.

According to (Peters) 2021, the American withdrawal was messy and unplanned. The air lifting of American troops and well over 120,000 Afghan US supporters from Kabul airport was a huge challenge. (Peters) 2021 further highlights that many more Afghans who were part of the US war effort remain trapped in the country. Even with American support, the Afghan army was routed in a week and the Afghan government also collapsed. The embattled president Ashraf Ghani fled the country in a helicopter. His swift departure left the best possible opening for the Taliban, who later formed a government' which excluded women (Peters, 2021). There is not yet much academic literature as regards the reason behind the abrupt withdrawal of the USA from Afghanistan as well as the implication of such a withdrawal. Most of the literature is found in newspapers, online debates, opinion papers, political reports and media outlets such as (television, radios, YouTube and the internet) this study seeks to fill this gap by presenting strong academic arguments visa vie the withdrawal of the USA from Afghanistan as well as the implications thereafter.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As pointed out in the introductory section the logic of the American administration's global agenda has been to spread liberalism through advocating for democracy in different spheres of life. It is in this context that United States of America's foreign policies seek to democratize non -democracies. Over the years, the Americans have been very vocal and consistent in this regard many American Administrations specifically from George bush senior up to the current Biden Government have been

pushing for the democratization of non-democratic states. The USA believes that by imposing its own democratic system of government on non-democracies will eventually lead to a new world order where peace and security is guaranteed (Lynn-John, 1998). Scholars such as Keohane(1977)and Nye(1977)strongly believe that world peace can only be realized if all states were to be democratized.

In the 1990s Francis Fukuyama wrote about ‘The End of History’ whereby he argued that democracy had triumphed over communism/authoritarianism. His assertion was that the decline or the breakdown of the Soviet Empire in 1990 would usher in the birth of more democratic states in the international system. This democratization process has always been a core agenda of the American administration right after the Second World War. The world has witnessed the USA as been at the center of initiating democratic processes in non-democracies of the world. These have included countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. However, a problem arises when on one hand the American administration talks tough in terms of democratizing non- democracies yet on the ground the USA is failing to practice what it preaches. This has been a problem in the case of Afghanistan where we have witnessed an abrupt withdrawal of the USA in this central Asian country without achieving its democratic goal.

The problem therefore becomes multifaceted. Is American power in decline? is the American democratization initiative a façade or mere rhetoric? Is the world witnessing a comeback of authoritarian states? Has the clash of civilization between Christianity and Islam tilted in favor of the later? Inorder to answer some of these pertinent questions this study therefore seeks to critically interrogate the USA’s abrupt withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as to examine the implications of such a withdrawal. Similarly, it is in this context that this study also seeks to explore the influence of the United States of America’s foreign policy on its intervention in Afghanistan and its consequences.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study is guided by the following objectives:

1.4 MAIN OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the study is to make a critical analysis of American's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.

1.5 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

This study will be guided by the following specific objectives which are as follows:

1. To examine the United States of America's foreign policy towards a few selected countries in the Middle- East (Iran, Iraq, and Yemen).
2. To assess the major reasons leading to the United States of America's military intervention in Afghanistan.
3. To establish factors influencing the United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as the implications of such a withdrawal

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the United States of America's foreign policy goals towards Iran, Iraq and Yemen?
2. What are the major reasons leading to the United States of America's military intervention in Afghanistan?
3. What are the factors influencing the United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as the implications of such a withdrawal?

1.7 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

Every study has its own assumptions; the assumptions to this study are that:

1. United states of America's foreign policy intrude or violate rights, freedoms and peace of other member states in the international system.
2. Taliban's activities have their own policies based on Islamic law (theocratic form of government).
3. The United States of America views Islamic law (theocratic form of government) as a threat to their democratic principles.
4. The intervention of the United States of America and its allies in Afghanistan has had negative impact to the lives of the civilians in general.
5. USA's unipolarity is declining in the international system

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The findings of this study are aimed at contributing knowledge to issues around terrorism and its effects on peace and security. Therefore, this section articulates how these findings will benefit the following:

1. **Policy makers-** this study would be beneficial to the academia and researchers as it provides literature for references. More so, the findings from this study would be more useful as it sets a tone for policy implementation on issues concerning peace, security, rights of citizens as well as development at large.
2. **Governments** -is the sole provider of goods and services as well as act as the maintenance of peace and order. Its role in protecting its citizens cannot be underestimated as well. To that end, the findings from the study would provide literature which will be useful for the government especially the ministry of foreign affairs to pave a way forward towards the establishment of peace and relations between other member states.
3. **Mass Media** -is an important organ that provides information to the public and it ensures an effect to the public opinion. For example, the terrorist attack of September 11 2001 mass media played an important role in shaping people's perceptions on terrorism. Hence, the findings from

this study will be useful to the mass media in supplying or structuring a narrative from a well-informed perspective. More so, it will render information that will be fitting to issues of peace, security and conflict resolution.

4. **Researcher** -This study will enable the researcher to obtain skills in conducting research and to apply the research knowledge acquired from the research module (research methods) into practice. In addition, the research project is prerequisite for the current study of Master of Science degree in International Relations.

1.9 DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

1. **Democracy**- Derived from the Greek *demos* and *kratos*, democracy refers to rule by or sovereignty of the people. Yet the form that rule by the people has taken varies across nations. Even within our own nation, the meaning of democracy has varied across time, depending on the way it is practiced by the people at a particular historical moment (Love, 1998)
2. **Foreign Policy**- the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment. Foreign policy must throw light on the ways states attempt to change, and succeed in changing the behaviour of other states (Bojang, 2018).
3. **Liberalism**- is an approach to international politics that stresses the importance of moral values and ideals, rather than power and the pursuit of the national interest, as a guide to foreign policy-making. Liberalism is essentially a variant of liberal internationalism: it reflects a strong optimism about the prospects for international peace, usually associated with a desire to reform the international system by strengthening international law (Heywood, 2011).
4. **Terrorism**- The central feature of terrorism is that it is a form of political violence that aims to achieve its objectives through creating a climate of fear and apprehension (Goldstein &Pevehouse: 2009).

5. **Withdrawal-** The American Heritage College thesaurus (2004) defines withdrawal as the action of ceasing to participate in any activity e.g., the moving back of a military force in the face of enemy attack or after a defeat.

1.10 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study will focus on Middle East and Central Asia, specifically Afghanistan whereby the main religion is Islam, Afghanistan has experienced high incidents of terrorism and violent extremism. In addition, it is important to acknowledge that this region interacts with other regions or continents in terms of trade and cultural belief systems. And in this selected area of study the research is guided by the geopolitical, liberalism and realism theories and will gain insights into the implications of the withdrawal of United States of America's troops from Afghanistan after their military intervention from 2001-2021.

1.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Most, if not all researches carried out, are in one way or the other, affected by certain obstacles and this thesis is not an exception. Below, I highlighted some of the limitations.

Since the study have geographical distances, it will be difficult to obtain primary sources of data through the use of an open-ended questionnaires and the focus group discussion. The study has limited time and more so and the researcher has some commitments to attend such as formal work. Despite all these challenges, the researcher would make sure that he has to overcome them. For instance, on geographical issue the desktop research and use of secondary data sources will be used. Additionally, care intend to be taken to ensure that datelines are adhered to.

1.12 PROPOSED CHAPTER OUTLINE

1.12.1 Chapter One

In this first chapter, an outline of the research background and the statement of the problem were given.

This chapter also looked at the aims and objectives of the dissertation, the research questions,

significance of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study and the definition of key terms. The rest of the dissertation is organized into five Chapters

1.12.2 Chapter Two

This chapter explores existing geopolitical theory that embraces realistic philosophical thought in dealing with the issue under investigation.

1.12.3 Chapter Three

Chapter three gives an overview of the methodology of the study. It examines the research design, research methodology, sampling procedures, data collection, data analysis and some ethical considerations.

1.12.4 Chapter Four

This Chapter analyses the findings of the study pertaining to factors that influenced the United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as the implications of such a withdrawal

1.12.5 Chapter Five

Chapter five concludes the dissertation by discussing the implications of themes that emerged from the study, addressing the research question and making some assessments emanating from the study. It also identifies some areas for further research study

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

To develop a theoretical insight that might enhance the understanding of the United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, it is necessary to undertake a literature review. This chapter introduces the broader area of the USA's foreign policy with specific reference to the Middle East especially Afghanistan. The theoretical framework that will guide this study is based on the theory of

geopolitics. The chapter commences by discussing Washington's foreign policy goals towards a few selected countries in the Middle East that is: Iran, Iraq and Yemen. Second, the chapter goes on to analyse the major reasons that lead to the United States of America's military intervention in Afghanistan. Third, the chapter assesses the major factors that influenced the United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as the implications of such a withdrawal. A detailed discussion on Afghanistan is mainly left for Chapter 4

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theory of Geopolitics covers a wide range of goals and definitions which are so broad that divergent perspectives have come up on what it is or is not. Geopolitics is sometimes understood as the terrain of great power rivalry, the geography of choke points and shatter-belts in geo-strategy (Dalby, 2011; Cohen, 2015). At the level of international relations Geopolitics is sometimes understood as an approach to foreign policy analysis that understands the actions, relations and significance of states in terms of geographical factors, such as location, climate, natural resources, physical terrain and population (Heywood, 2011). Other times, is understood as the theory of the state as a geographical organism or phenomena of space (Kjellen cited in Cohen, 2015:15), and yet in other literature is understood as an approach to studying contemporary international affairs that is anchored in the study of history, geography and culture (Granieri, 2015:495). However, despite their differences, the above definitions of Geopolitics share a common emphasis on the meaning of Geopolitics as mainly referring to geographical influence, competition and power. The definitions are relevant to this study in that they help to explain and describe the USA'S foreign policy goals towards Afghanistan.

It is noteworthy that the modern founders of geopolitics range from Ratzel (1844–1904), Mackinder (1861–1947), Kjellén (1864–1922), to Mahan (1849–1914). The above scholars view Geopolitics as largely focusing on issues to do with nationalism, state expansionism, and overseas empire building. From the foregoing, it is clear that the perceptions of these leading theoreticians reflect ideas on social

Darwinism or politics of the survival of the fittest (Cohen,2015:17).For the purpose of this study the discussion in this section will only focus on the ideas of Ratzel and Mackinder the main argument is that the views of Ratzel and Mackinder help to bring out a clear picture of the American Administration's behaviour towards some selected middle eastern countries (Iran, Iraq Yemen including Afghanistan).

Ratzel developed his understanding of geopolitics upon theories of evolution and science by hypothesizing that states were like organisms as they were always expanding in pursuit of more territories outside their borders.He believed that this was a characteristic or a true reflection of what he termed a "health nation" therefore Ratzel saw "motionless states" that is states which do not expand in search of more territories as being in decline(meaning) becoming less powerful or less influential (Cohen,2015:17). One can argue that as according to Ratzel geopolitics is supposed to focus on expansionist or imperialistic policies inorder to achieve its intended goals. In this regard Ratzel's views become relevant to this study in that Washington's foreign policy seemed to be premised on imperialistic strategies.

With regards to Mackinder, it can be observed that he developed his geopolitical theory mainly driven by the realization that the once powerful British Empire was now losing its political and economic influence. His goal was therefore to help maintain both Britain's power and its landed gentry through a strong imperial bloc that could resist challengers while maintaining wealth and the aristocratic social structure (Flint, 2006:18). In other words, Mackinder's concern was about safeguarding the British Empire's political, commercial, and industrial primacy at a time when command of the seas no longer appeared to guarantee world supremacy. On the other hand, Mackinder wanted the British Empire to have control over the whole of Eastern Europe. Thus, he argued that 'who rules East Europe commands the Heartland. Who rules the Heartland or Pivot area commands the World Island. Who rules the World Island commands the World.Additionally, Mackinder also advocated for the formation of alliances thus making his arguments the basis for Cold War strategic thinking as well as ideas leading to the formation

of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)". Overall Mackinder's Geopolitical theory focused on maintaining the status of an empire which led 'to expansionism, formation of alliances, and overseas empire building' (Taylor Flint, 2004). Mackinder's arguments are relevant to this study in that the USA turns to follow an expansionist policy as regards its presence in Afghanistan dating from 2001 to 2021.

Building from the above insights it can be observed that some scholars have come up with some very interesting categories of geopolitics these include works Cohen (2015), and Agnew (2004). In Cohen's view there are five categories of geopolitics namely imperial hegemony, German *geopolitik*, American geopolitics, the Cold War-state centered versus universalistic geographical geopolitics; and the post-Cold War geopolitics (Cohen, 2015). Imperial hegemony is based on imperialism focusing on the dictum of survival of the fittest. Simply put imperialism is having "monopolies in other countries, the domination of financiers ...[the implementation of colonial strategies] ...[and] the scramble-rivalry between a number of great powers in... striving for hegemony" (Mazrui, 1977:109).

Germany imperial Hegemony denotes geopolitics which focuses on territorial enlargement through an expansionist policy supported by military power. In the case of American *geopolitics*, it is based on national prosperity- a destiny founded on mercantilist imperialism and the maritime dominance (control of the sea). This view forms the basis of American foreign policy whereby the USA's Economic and domestic prosperity is ensured by an aggressive foreign policy supported by military force. Looking at the Cold War-state centered versus universalistic geographical geopolitics it is premised on the control of the heartland/offshore island and foreign lands national interest. This means having spheres of influence abroad.

In the circumstances, of the Cold War-state centered versus universalistic geographical geopolitics American Administrators embraced geopolitics as a basis for a national policy aimed at confronting the Soviet Union and international Communism. Building on early geographically derived geopolitical

theories and holding static interpretations of global and regional spatial patterns, they introduced such political-strategic concepts as containment, domino theory, balance-of-power linkages, and linchpin states into the lexicon of Cold War geopolitics. As has been already stated, Mackinder's heartland theory played an instrumental for containment strategy, as the Soviet Union and China leaped across the heartland to penetrate parts of the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and Central America, and Southeast Asia. Western foreign policy therefore could not confine itself to containment of the Eurasian continental power along its heartland borders. Instead, it adopted a strategy of checking the spread of Communism throughout the Third World. The idealistic vision that had prompted the United States to support the freedom and democratization of colonial peoples quickly gave way to expedient *realpolitik*—propping up right-wing dictatorships in order to stop the threat of Communism wherever that threat was perceived to exist (Cohen, 2015:29).

Regarding the Post-Cold war geopolitics it focuses on Francis Fukuyama's ideas on "the end of history where he argues on the triumph democracy / capitalism over communism". This symbolized the USA and its western allies' intentions to democratize non-democracies in order to create liberal democracy and "*free marketism*" signifying a universal, homogeneous state (Cohen, 2015:31)

Agnew's (2004) views are based on three basic categories which include civilizational, naturalized and ideological geopolitics. The first indicates European predominance of other civilizations based on economic interests and racial identities. This type of geopolitics characterizes European imperialism. The second denotes the European's displacement of indigenous people/ primitive societies from their places of origin. This type of geopolitics symbolizes Darwinism or survival of the fittest/mercantilism. The third stands for Ideological influence based on dividing up the world between competing ideas largely common during the Cold War period. This type of geopolitics implies the creation of ideological spheres of influence. Observations from the above categories show that at the heart of geopolitical thinking there are issues to do with geographical and ideological spheres of influence, national interests, political and economic power, military and naval preponderance, imperialism, authority and control over indigenous people and their lands, empire building and the displacement of other people for

political and economic gain. The divergent views are relevant to this study because they echo some of the attributes of America's foreign policy towards other countries in the international system.

The ideas raised in the forgoing paragraphs clearly show that there is a strong nexus between the views of geopolitical thinkers and those of the realist school of thought. In this regard the study will also consider two realist perceptions which will help to inform a deeper understanding of the theory of geopolitics as guided by realist views of national interests and power. Looking at national interest it is premised on the idea put forward by Nuechtelein (1976:246) that:

It is assumed that the leaders of all nation-states act rationally in the pursuit of state objectives, i.e., that states adopt policies that leaders believe will advance the well-being of their societies, whatever the constitutional system. Most states in the international system are driven by a pragmatic need for self-preservation. In the global arena, there are no permanent friends or enemies but permanent interests. States are therefore more interested in pursuing their own interests at the expense of other states' interests. Morgenthau (1952:4) is therefore of the view that: if [a] particular nation does not take care of its interests, nobody else will. Hence ... to subordinate our national interests to some other standard is unworthy of a nation ... A nation which would take that counsel and act consistently on it would commit suicide and become the prey and victim of other nations which know how to take care of their interests.

In as much as the United Nations might try to discourage states from intervening militarily in other states such commitments can only be put into practice if these states have nothing to benefit/gain from intervention specifically in terms of their interests.

Arguments can therefore be that by militarily intervening in Afghanistan in 2001 the USA was taking care of its interests. Regarding power Goldstein & Pevehouse (2009:45) precisely explains that:

Power is the ability or potential to get another [states] to do what it would not otherwise have done...[or] not to do what it would have done. In other words,[some states] are powerful to the extent that they affect other states [in the international system] more than they affect others.

The USA currently has the [power] to get other member states in the international system to do what they are not willing to do. Basing on the above view it can be observed that the USA is seeking to dominate the whole world through its projection of military, political and economic power. The USA's

objectives is that through its power it will have full control over Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa. The USA wants to maintain its power at the international, continental, regional and local state levels. Morgenthau (1952) is of the view that, the quest for power is an inalienable part of human behaviour. This means that men want to dominate other men. Similarly, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) elaborates that human behaviour is self-centered and that individuals are always in search of power at the cost of others (Suthar, Shukia, Sing et al, 2016:24).

Likewise, this human behaviour is applicable in the international system whereby states are egocentric and constantly in quest for more power and interests at the expense of other states. As has been already stated, Geopolitical theory, as in realism, considers national power as an instrument of the expansionist and imperialist policies of a state (Kanapiyanova, 2020:58). Nonetheless, it is in this context that the realist concept of power will underpin this study by deconstructing how the USA maximizes its power and how it safeguards its interests in the Middle- East and Central Asia specifically in Afghanistan. In this study Geopolitical theory forms the framework that embraces a realistic philosophical thought in dealing with the issue under investigation. The theory of geopolitics has close link to the behaviour of Washington towards Middle-Eastern countries.

The geography and environmental factors, which are seen as the usual solution to international politics, have an impact on human and state behaviour (Ari, 2013). In other words, this theory is used in this study to understand the intentions of the United States of America in the Middle- East and Central Asia specifically (Afghanistan) whereby the USA military campaigns against the Taliban became evident. It should be noted that USA has been fighting terrorism in Central Asia on the pretext of repelling the September 11 2001 attack as well as in trying to democratise the perceived non-democratic central Asian states (Kanapiyanova,2020). It is in this context, that the study will examine the issue under study from the point of view of the approaches of geopolitical theorists of Ratzel and Mackinder.

2.3.1 THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS A FEW SELECTED COUNTRIES IN THE MIDDLE -EAST (IRAN, IRAQ AND YEMEN)

The logic of the United States of America's internationalism thrust is to spread liberalism through advocating for democracy in different spheres of life. It is in this context that United States of America's foreign policies seek to establish peace and security among other states. However, there is need to look at this in two folds namely: the effectiveness of these foreign policies in addressing peace, security and democratization among other states and the harm it has caused in the Middle East as evidenced in multiple cases of insecurity, terror and underdevelopment in countries such as Iran, Iraq and Yemen. (Chomsky, 2015; Walt, 2020).

Similarly, Markakis is of the view that (2016) the advancement of liberal democracy' to none democratic states has been at the core of the USA's foreign policy since the beginning of the twenty first century. In most cases, the USA has tried to spread liberal democracy around the world by creating a binary status quo with them been portrayed as good and others bad. For example, during the cold War period the USA Branded and categorized the Soviet Union as expansionist, brutal, and an evil empire which liked to conquer foreign peoples for no particular reason. More evidence indicates that the U.S. Therefore, has perceived the rise of any great power (China, Russia) or regional power (Iran, Iraq) as a threat to its world dominance/regional. Washington's strategy has been to counterbalance any rising power especially when the rising power is seen to undermine American economic and political interests. Under such conditions, one can argue that t the U.S. largely 'seeks either to keep power' (by maintaining its global status quo), 'to increase power' (by expanding its power beyond its borders), 'or to demonstrate power ... for the purpose of maintaining or increasing it' (for instance U.S. power projection in the Middle East region) (Morgenthau, 1948:21-22)

The USA's world dominance started from 1991 when it became the sole superpower in the international system after the dissolution of the once powerful soviet empire. Accordingly in main stream literature Phrases and words commonly used to define America's world status have among many others been 'the preeminent world power' (Mahbubani, 2020:5); 'the world's only superpower' (Haass, 2013:12); 'the global primacy of the United States' (Powaski, 2019:97); 'America's special role as the world's leader' (Rice, 2000:10); and also a perception of 'the United States as the "indispensable nation" responsible for policing the globe, spreading democracy, and upholding a rules-based, liberal world order' (Walt, 2018:2). The above phrases among many others denote a sense of American might, invincibility,

superiority, primacy, supremacy, indispensability, greatness and omnipotence. Mahbubani (2020) captures this strong feeling of American ‘indispensability’ when he says:

In short, can America lose? The thought seems inconceivable. Both in physical and moral terms, America has long seen itself as the strongest nation. The American economy, and consequently its military, has been the strongest in the world for over a century (Mahbubani, 2020:5).

Similarly, Fettweis, 2018:5) is of the view that ‘[not] only does the United States dominate all potential competitors in every traditional measure of power, but its influence also extends to many non-traditional ones’. There is a strong assumption that no state competes with Washington in areas of economic dominance, military preponderance, intellectual inventiveness especially in advanced technology, and moral excellence premised on democratic values and principles. Regarding liberal values, Zakaria (2020), Haass (2020), Ohnesorge (2020), and Rice (2008) among many others believe that it is only the U.S. that can master the position of being the ‘police man’ or ‘referee’ of the world when it comes to the spreading of democratic values and practices in relation to international trade and global politics. America’s global democratic agenda has seen it being largely viewed as a peaceful, responsible and indispensable superpower that helps to bring global peace and to maintain a rules-based world order (Allison, 2017; Walt, 2018; Mahbubani, 2020). The positive narrative of (a democratic/liberal) Washington has given it a huge advantage over its other international rivals (which are perceived as being authoritarian or illiberal). China, Russia, Venezuela, North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Yemen, among many others fit into this American illiberal lens.

From the forgoing it can be noted that in order for the USA to maintain its dominance in the Middle East it has used various strategies to do so. These include alliances, bandwagoning, balance of power, blackmail, bait and bleed, buck-passing, containment, pre-emptive Strikes as well aswar. As regards alliances Mearsheimer (2018) is of the view that these are groups of states/ a group of states that coordinate their actions to accomplish some end, or a desired end. For example, the western block has created a strong alliance made up of the European Union and other western democracies (UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand) in order to curb Iran’s nuclear ambitions. Relating to Bandwagon Heywood

(2011) denotes that it is an approach whereby one state side with a stronger state in the hope of increasing security and influence for example 'jumping on the bandwagon' here a good example would be Iran allying itself with Russia and China in order to counterbalance America's hegemony (Heywood,2011:236). With regards to the balance of power it means a condition of equilibrium among states either constructed by them or an outcome that emerges from the interactions of states over time (Viotti& Kauppi, 2013:519). Concerning, blackmailit signifies the use of force or a threat to get arival state to change its behaviour (Mearsheimer, 2001:459).Relating to, bait and bleed it signifies a tactic whereby a state tries to weaken its rivals by provoking a long and costly war between them for example the eight years between Iran and Iraq whereby the USA was supporting Iraq in order to weaken Iran. Regarding, buck-passing it implies that the endangered great power tries to get another state to shoulder the burden of deterring or defeating the threatening state (Mearsheimer,2001:13). In this regard Saudi Arabia is being used by the USA to deter or undermine Iran's influence in the region and Israel is also been used by the American administration to help deter any Iranian ambitions of becoming a nuclear power. In respect of containment, it denotes a strategy whereby one state or a group of states try to stifle or suffocate another state's political economic and social ambitions. Containment can also be carried out through diplomatic means backed up by the threat of force or by the use of military interventions (Viotti& Kauppi 2013). Regarding pre-emptive Strikes they represent military action that is designed to forestall or prevent likely future aggression. It is therefore a form of self-defence in anticipation of been attacked first by another state. (Heyhood,2011:225) For example, the USA carried pre-emptive strikes against Iraq in 2002 arguing that Saddam Hussein had intentions to attack Washington with nuclear weapons. Concerning war, itis referred to as a jewel between protagonists with the aim of subduing one's opponent to one's will": war can also be identified as a political instrument or a continuation of political activity by other means (Carl Von Clausewitz cited in Baylis, Wirtz, Cohen et al, and 2002:18). For example, due to the failure of diplomatic negotiations between the USA and countries such as (Afghanistan2001 Iraq2002 and Libya2011) Washington and its NATO allies had no option but to wage war against these three countries.

It is evident from the forgoing that, during the Cold War the United States of America's effort was to develop its presence in different parts of the world including Islamic countries to contain the Soviet Union. Likewise, the Soviet Union endeavoured to broaden its geopolitical influence in the same region. Hence, as will be highlighted below, the Middle East region is very important to the USA for wide-ranging reasons (Yazdani, 2008). Some of these reasons encompass three major interests depicted as follows: Firstly, the large oil and gas reserves of the region which plays a pivotal role in the USA'S industries. Secondly, importantly is the strategic location of the region, which has helped the USA to deter communist development. Lastly, the Arab-Israel conflict whereby the USA is using Israel to destabilize parts of the region. Therefore, below are three sub-sections highlighting American foreign policy towards Middle- Eastern countries namely Iran Iraq and Yemen.

2.3.2 THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA'S RELATIONS WITH IRAN.

Ever since the 1979 Iranian revolution relations between Teheran and Washington have remained strained the USA has portrayed Iran as a rogue state, an axis of evil and a terrorist sponsoring state (Heywood, 2011). It is therefore, in this context that this section of the study intends to examine how the USA exercise its foreign policy towards Iran. Under, Shah, Reza Pahlavi's government the USA was awarded oil concessions. Similarly, the Soviet communist threat provided the Shah with a reason to request American military aid and training for his intelligence service, SAVAK. In terms of Iran's military, the Shah bought modern weapons from the Nixon Administration (Ryan, 2018). For Washington, the Shah represented an adequate solution in containing Soviet expansionism in the Middle East. This helped to fulfil American energy needs. Likewise, Israel also benefited in training Iranian intelligence services (SAVAK personnel). Reza Pahlavi was able to maintain his grip on power by using SAVAK to terrorize those who opposed him as well as the Iranian populous in general. One can therefore argue that while the USA and Israel benefited from these early relations the Pahlavi

government was seen by most Iranians as being oppressive. This became one of the major reasons why the Iranian revolution of 1979 was successful.

An American international political commentator Sadjadpour (2022) indicated that the United States has three major foreign policy goals towards Iran and these are as follows: First To contain and counter Iran's nuclear ambitions, Second to Contain and counter Iran's regional ambitions. Last To champion democratic aspirations of Iranian people. Concerning the containment of Iranian's nuclear ambitions scholars such as Farhani and Qamadi (2016) ascertain that the Iranian nuclear program is the major the reason that ignited the conflict between Tehran and Washington. The USA in trying to contain the Islamic Republic's nuclear program the America Administration has resorted to the use of either hard (threats of military force or sanctions) or soft power (use of rewards for compliance). Under former President Barack Obama's term in office the USA used soft power as a strategy to contain Iran's nuclear ambitions. (Zoueiri and Suleiman (2018). The former American president called on Iran to renounce its nuclear program. The Obama administration had to keep open dialog channels and negotiation between the USA and Iran this was achieved by leaving a space for negotiation regarding Teheran's program (Nunlist (2016). According Katzman (2019) the Iranian nuclear agreement in Obama's era led to a convergence between Washington and Teheran. The agreement between the American Administration and the Islamic republic was seen to finish the ideological war between both states. This would result in the integration of Iran within the global community (Abdul Fattah 2014). An argument is that both Washington and Teheran benefited immensely from the nuclear deal.

First Obama saw the agreement as an advantage to Washington's interest in that it saved to get rid of Iran's nuclear danger (Zoueiri and Suleiman (2018). Second. Iran saw the deal (as) achieving its own interest in that it improved its economic relationship with the USA as well as investing in funds which had been frozen under American sanctions (Friedman, 2021:1). When Donald Trump came into power in 2017, he resorted to the use of hard power in containing Iran (sanctions). Trump had always been opposed to Obama's nuclear deal. His argument was that the nuclear deal was supposed to go beyond

nuclear weapons to the missiles that delivered them. Rather than using an incentive of further economic relations, he imposed significant sanctions on Iran and made their removal the incentive. In other words, Trump wanted Teheran to stop the manufacture of long range intercontinental ballistic missiles which could be used to carry nuclear war heads. Where Obama sought not to weaken Iran economically but to focus entirely on the issue at hand, Trump chose to weaken Iran economically in order to extensively contain its nuclear ambitions (Khalaf, 2020).

As regards the containment of Iran's regional influence the USA has resorted to the creation of alliances in order to curb Teheran's geopolitical influence. There is a realization that Iran's influence in the middle east can only be contained if Washington gets support from its traditional Western allies. The only way of neutralizing Iran's strong economic military and political influence in the middle east is for the U.S. to work on strengthening its 'trans-Atlantic relations ... [by] rebuild[ing] better alliances of democracies, starting with Europe' (Fried and Haddad, 19.11.2020). The idea is that two combined political and military entities of the U.S. and EU would be of unmatched proportion to that of Iran and therefore Teheran would be pressed to comply with international norms. In other words, a political and military juggernaut comprising of the U.S., as a superpower, and the EU, a grouping with great powers within its ranks, will form a formidable bulwark that will overshadow the Iran's political and military influence in the middle east region. Thus, forcing Iran to comply with international norms as dictated by the alliance of Western democracies. The USA has also sought to decrease Iran's influence, by supporting a system of relations, beginning with Egypt, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia expanding to other countries. This was designed to both isolate Iran and limit its ability to play off one Arab country against another. Notably, by the end of the Trump administration, the map of the region had shifted, and with-it Iran's geopolitical influence. Due to alliances formed by Washington in the Middle East the Islamic Republic's economy was in steep decline. Similarly, the hostility of the Arab world towards Iran was consolidated. The assumption was that between coalitions and economic costs, the Iranian political and military operations in the Arab world would decline. (Friedman, 2021:1).

Regarding the democratization of the Iranian political system Salehian and Mirzaei (2020) indicate that after the collapse of communism, the United States considered political Islam to be the most significant rival to liberal democracy. Since then, The USA has been taking steps to combat the geopolitical influence Islam (Salehian and Mirzaei, 2020:64).

Washington and its allies have taken initiatives of sponsoring various civil society groups in Iran. These groups include journalists, feminist movements, political activists, social media activists, and human rights groups among many others. Similarly, the American administration has also indirectly supported presidential candidates they deem moderate. The reason is that Washington sees the moderates as being compatible to Western goals and values. Despite the American administrations attempts to contain Iran politically economically and socially Teheran has also come up with its own strategies to counter those of Washington. Notably, Due to the high probability of conflict and tremendous ideological differences between the USA and Iran, the Islamic Republic's strategy against the United States is that of "Hard Balance. First, Iran has strengthened its defense and military capabilities deter any threats posed by the United States and its allies in the region. Second "Teheran formed alliances with Syria, Iraq, and Hezbollah in order to form an axis of resistance (Salehian & Mirzaei, 2020:70-71). Below is Washington's relations with Iraq.

2.3.3 WASHINGTON'S RELATIONS WITH IRAQ.

The Iranian revolution of 1979 provided the catalyst for the development of the US-Iraqi relationship, in the same year that Saddam Hussein formally assumed power. Much like the US-Egyptian relationship was founded on Israeli-Egyptian rapprochement; it was an external interest that spurred the US to nurture

relations with Iraq mainly to undermine the Islamic republic. It is in this context that the following subsection will therefore give an examination of the United States of America's foreign policy towards Iraq.

The USA first began to enhance its ties with Iraq under the Reagan administration supporting it in the war against Iran. In this war president Reagan supported a highly classified programme, 'in which more than 60 officers of the Defense Intelligence Agency were secretly providing detailed information on Iranian deployments, tactical planning for battles, plans for airstrikes and bomb-damage assessments for Iraq (Patrick,2002). A senior retired American Colonel Walter P. Lang, observed that both D.I.A. [Defense Intelligence Agency] and C.I.A. [Central Intelligence Agency] officials 'were desperate to make sure that Iraq did not lose' to Iran ... the president 's concern was about containing the Islamic revolution from spreading into Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (Patrick,2002). In the face of persistent Iranian advances, American support ultimately prevented an Iraqi defeat. It also helped ensure a protracted war of attrition that lasted until 1988, the longest conventional war of the twentieth century, with estimated casualties for both sides ranging anywhere from 500,000 to 1.5million (Markakis,2016)

This pattern of engagement continued through the early years of the G.H.W. Bush (senior) administration, which sought to maintain Iraq as a counterbalance to Iran. The nature of the US-Iraqi relationship changed irrevocably following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1991. A US-led coalition, acting under the authority of UN Security Council Resolution 678, forcibly expelled Iraq from Kuwaiti territory in 1991

The Clinton administration came to power following the Persian Gulf War, the first major conflict of the post-Cold War era. This was hailed as a defining moment for the emergent unipolar system, a test of the US's predominant position in the 'new world order'. The lack of a definitive end to the conflict, amidst Hussein's continued intransigence, meant Iraq remained a central concern for the USA. This then served as one of Washington's primary antagonists in the region over the following decade. The next decade

witnessed increasing tensions, with the Clinton administration pursuing a policy of ‘dual containment’ against both Iraq and Iran, explicitly advocating regime change in the case of the former. More evidence however indicates that, in a public letter to President Clinton in 1996, signatories such as Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Elliot Abrams and Richard Perle argued that:

“The policy of ‘containment’ of Saddam Hussein has been steadily eroding over the past several months. The only acceptable strategy is one that eliminates the possibility that Iraq will be able to use or threaten to use weapons of mass destruction. In the near term, this means a willingness to undertake military action as diplomacy is clearly failing. In the long term, it means removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power (Markakis, 2016:118).

Regarding regime change the Clinton administration opted to pursue the ‘dual containment’ of Iraq alongside Iran, replacing the previous strategy of ‘balancing’ one against the other, with their mutual isolation. In the case of Iraq this was enforced through an array of sanctions, as well as the use of occasional military force. For example, when Iraq announced that it would no longer cooperate with UN weapons inspectors in 1998, Clinton launched a series of preemptive strikes that targeted ‘Iraq’s nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs and its military capacity to threaten its neighbors’.

Ultimately the strained relations between Baghdad and Washington culminated in the invasion of Iraq under G. W. Bush (junior) in 2002, which precipitated the end of Saddam Hussein’s twenty-four-year rule. It also led to a long-term American occupation of the country, amidst efforts to introduce ‘democracy’ to Iraq and the wider region (Markakis, 2016). Below is Washington’s foreign policy towards Yemen

2.3.4 THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA'S RELATIONS WITH YEMEN

The USA's foreign policy towards Yemen is fundamentally on countering terrorism. It is in this context that the United States seeks to maintain stable, unified Yemen that is no longer home to transnational militant groups targeting Western or Saudi interests. Sharp (2014) indicates that in the immediate aftermath of the USS Cole bombing in 2000, U.S. officials complained that Yemeni authorities were not cooperative in the investigation. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Yemeni government became more forthcoming in its cooperation with the U.S. campaign to suppress Al Qaeda. President Saleh has reportedly allowed small groups of U.S. Special Forces and CIA agents to assist in identifying and rooting out Al Qaeda cadres hiding in Yemen. According to press articles quoting U.S. and Yemeni officials, the Yemeni government allowed U.S. personnel to launch a missile strike from an unmanned aircraft against an automobile in eastern Yemen in November 2002, killing six alleged militants. The among the deceased also included Qaid Salim Sinan al Harithi, the leader of Al Qaeda in Yemen (Sharp, 2014).

Notably, for almost 15 years, the US's relationship with Yemen has been defined by an intelligence bond that eclipsed all other nation-building measures and anchored on America's global counter-terrorism strategy. Under this pretext, the United States attempted to maintain Yemen's stability, security and economic recovery, including supporting its ability to counter the influence of Iran and defeat militant groups such as The Islamic state of Iraq and Syria (ISIS and Al-Qaeda). As discussed further below Washington has been involved in different operations in Yemen. The most prominent of these operations has included USA's support for Saudi-led efforts counter Iranian intelligence of Zaidi Shiite militant group in Yemen. The USA forces have always provided logistical support to a Saudi-led Arab military campaign of airstrikes and ground combat against the Zaid group. Similarly, the U.S. naval forces have helped block seaborne Iranian weapons shipments to the group (Katzman, 2016). Therefore, Yemen has geopolitically remained divided between those who support the USA and Saudi Arabia and those who support Iran.

2.3.5 MAJOR REASONS THAT LED THE USA'S MILITARY INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN

As pointed out earlier in section 2.3 above, in order for the USA to achieve its interests in the middle east we may argue that the American Administration has adopted a double standard foreign policy towards some countries within the region. Notably, from 1979-1989 the American Administration supported all the Islamic (militant groups) in Afghanistan against the Soviet Red Army. Indubitably, some of these militant groups were led by familiar personalities such as Usama Bin Laden who was fighting against the Soviet invaders. Arguably, these militant groups were receiving some of their support and training from the CIA (Yazdani, 2008:38). Building on the above insights, it is for this reason that the United States had to support pro-Western Arab and non-Arab nations during the cold war to help retain their independence during the 1950s and 1960s in order to strengthen their ability to resist the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic's geopolitical influence (Bagby ,1999). To substantiate this assertion Bagby (1999) is also of the view that the USA's general interests in the Middle East was to contain Soviet power, influence, as well as to preserve strategic trade routes that secure access to the region's oil and gas (Bagby 1999). From the *Realpolitik* point of view, it infers that USA's foreign policy towards Afghanistan has been geared to fit into Washington's hegemonic influence.

Afghanistan is a landlocked state and lies on the edge of Central Asia, yet it has its own geostrategic importance in the region. Great Powers have always had their interests focused on Afghanistan's geostrategic position. Observations are that, in the late 19th and with the beginning of the 20th century several geopolitical theories have been offered and they seem to explain the central factors on how America wants to have geopolitical influence over weaker states such as Afghanistan. The Heartland theory by Halford Mackinder left a long-term impact on world politics in that it clearly explains what motivates great powers to use military force on other states (Muzaffar, Yaseen, Afzal, 2021:56). This section will therefore discuss some of the Geo-political imperatives that led to the USA's Invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. In other words, the purpose of this section is to highlight some of the major reasons that led the American administration to invade Afghanistan.

According to Mearsheimer the Washington Administration is trying to become a global hegemony. This is impossible because the international system also has other great powers (Beijing and Moscow) which can equally compete with Washington. Similarly, Brandon cited in Parveen, Ali Shah, Tariq is also of the view that global hegemony is impossible since great powers are in constant competition (Brandon cited in Parveen, Ali Shah, Tariq 2021:23. Interestingly, hegemonic states can be vulnerable as weak states can also attack them.

On the morning of 11 September 2001, a coordinated series of terrorist attacks were launched against the USA using four hijacked passenger jet airliners (the events subsequently became known as September 11, or 9/11 bombings). Two airliners crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York, leading to the collapse first of the North Tower and then the South Tower. The third airliner crashed into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the Department of Defence in Arlington, Virginia, just outside Washington DC. The fourth airliner, believed to be heading towards either the White House or the US Capitol, both in Washington DC, crashed in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after passengers on board tried to seize control of the plane. There were no survivors from any of the flights. A total of 2,995 people were killed in these attacks, mainly in New York City (Heyhood,2011:20). A week after 9/11 bombings the USA under the former president George W. Bush revealed a plan for America's new "war on terrorism." This new strategy was known as the Bush Doctrine. Part of the reason for this proactive and pre-emptive strategy was to aggressively pursue terrorists wherever they were in the world. Similarly, the doctrine was also giving a stern warning to America's enemies to desist from harbouring and supporting terrorist. Washington strongly believes that the only way of deterring terrorists is to America's military whenever necessary. (Goldstein&Pevehouse2009:80).

Following the September 11 attacks, the former USA President George Bush demanded that the Taliban immediately extradite al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Ladin to the United States of America. The Taliban's refusal to comply with these demands led to the USA declaration of operation Enduring freedom as part of

the earlier declared war on terror. The USA, its NATO allies and over 40 countries invaded Afghanistan in pursuit of the bin Laden and his al Qaeda group. The involvement of the allies in a conflict has always been a successful strategy which Washington uses when invading the logic as one can argue the USA will be seeking to legitimise its military intervention in the eyes of the whole international community. Notably, for almost two decades the USA has always tried to legitimise its military interventions. In the case of Afghanistan, it came up with “Operation Enduring Freedom” (2001-14) as well as ‘Operation Freedom Sentinel’ from 2015 to the present (Connah, 2020). The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 made eminent strategic sense at least as an aspiration to the western and non-western world on how democracy could be maintained in an illiberal state.. The forces of armed illiberalism, in the form of al-Qaeda, had attacked not just the United States but also two of the principal icons of the Liberal International Order, the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. In a way one can argue that what bin Laden and his al Qaeda group had done was indeed a justification for military intervention.

2.5 USA WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH A WITHDRAWAL

In order to have a clear understanding of Washington’s final withdrawal from Afghanistan 1 May 2021 it is imperative to look at the views of American presidents: Bush, Obama Trump and Biden. What the four presidents say helps us to trace the real reason given by the American Administration on when and how they would withdraw from Afghanistan. Below are the various views given by the four American presidents dating from 2001-2021. During President Bush’s tenure in Office On 7th Of October he said “we will win this conflict by the patient accumulation of successes by meeting a series of challenges with determination and will and purpose. Today we focus on Afghanistan but the battle is broader (Bush 2001). On 17 July the president further said” We will stay until the mission is done; we know that true peace will be achieved when we give the Afghani people the means to achieve their own aspirations.

Peace will be achieved by helping Afghanistan develop its own stable government. An observation from president bush's statement is that any withdrawal would be possible only if there was peace stability and rule of law in Afghanistan.

Coming to president Obama he said "We must give Afghanistan the opportunity to stabilize otherwise our gains could be lost and al Qaida could establish itself once more. As a commander in chief, I will refuse to let that happen." President Barack Obama 2009-2017 said 'And even there will be dark days ahead in Afghanistan the light of the secure peace is seen in the distance these long wars will come to a responsible end (Barack, 2011) 27of May 2014the president went on to say"20 14 is a pivotal year together with our allies and Afghan government we have agreed this year will conclude our combat mission in Afghanistan. I Think Americans have learned it harder to end wars than to begin, if this is how war ends in the 21st century not through signing ceremonies but through decisive blows against our adversaries, transitions to elect governments security forces who are trained to take the lead and ultimately fall responsibility (Barack, 2011). An observation from president Obama's statement is that withdrawal from Afghanistan will only take place when democratic institutions are established as well as when the security sector is able to safeguard the lives of the people.

Looking at president Trump on the 21 August 2017 Donald Trump: Our troops will fight to win. If I wanted to win that war Afghanistan will be wiped of the face the earth. Literally in 10 days.20 March 2020 we want to get out we had good meetings with the Taliban and we are going to be leaving. And we are going to bring our soldiers back home. We have been there almost twenty years its long time we have done a great job in terms of getting terrorist. It's up to other countries to get of those terrorists.

An observation from president Obama's statement is that Washington is now going to withdraw from Afghanistan because of fruitful negotiations with Taliban as well as to serve the lives of American soldiers.

“After 20 years I have learnt the hard way that there is never a good time to withdraw US forces. That's why we are still there. We were clear about the risks. We planned for every contingency. But I always promise the American people that I will be straight with you the truth is. This did unfold more quickly than we had anticipated so what's happening. Afghanistan political leaders gave up they fled the country the Afghan military collapsed sometime without trying to fight. If anything, the developments for the past week reinforced that any US military involved in Afghanistan now was the right decision. Americans cannot and should not be fighting in a war and dying in war that Afghan Forces are not willing to fight for themselves. We spend over trillion dollars we trained and equipped an Afghan military force some 300000 strong. Incredible well-equipped force larger in size than militaries many of our NATO allies. We gave them every tow they could need. We paid their salaries provided for the maintenance for their air force. Something the Taliban doesn't have. Taliban does not have an air force. We provided closest support we gave them every chance to determine their own future. We could not provide them, was the world to fight for their future. There are some brave capable Afghan special forces unit and soldiers. If Afghanistan is unable to mount any real resistance of the Taliban now. There is no chance that one year one more year five more years or years twenty more years, The US military put on the ground would not make any difference. That's what I believe to my call” (Biden, 2021).

An observation from President Biden's statement is that Washington is now going to withdraw from Afghanistan because of the weaknesses of the American trained Afghani arm, corruption of the Leaders and cost of maintaining the war as well as the safety of American soldiers.

In main stream literature scholars have come up with various reasons on why the USA had to withdraw from Afghanistan. Some of the narratives are similar to those pointed out by the above American

Presidents. While others are divergence from what the four leaders had to say. The reasons are therefore highlighted below.

The evidence can be traced to the fact that, the long-standing war in Afghanistan started in 2001 came to an end as a result of Washington administration under Donald Trump and the Taliban meetings held in Doha (Qatar) on February 29,2020. The world witnessed the USA marines finalised their withdrawal from Afghanistan on the 30 August 2021. Nevertheless, in February 2020 the Washington Administration and the Taliban signed the Doha agreement which stipulated fighting restrictions for both the USA and the Taliban. The deal was signed by US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban political chief Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo as a witness. It would appear as if, the Doha agreement facilitated a way for the withdrawal of all NATO military forces from Afghanistan in return for the Taliban's counter-terrorism commitments. That being said, the Tump Administration's Doha agreement and on the other hand, the Biden Administration's decision in April 2021 to pull out all USA troops by September 2021 without leaving any military force, were the two critical events that triggered the downfall of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Following the deal, the USA dramatically reduced the number of air attacks and deprived the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) of a critical edge in fighting the Taliban insurgency, and this eased the Taliban to takeover Kabul on 15 August 2021(Borger,2022).It is in this context that the following section endeavours to assess the major reasons that led to the USA's withdrawal from Afghanistan. In addition, the implications of such an unexpected withdrawal of the USA troops will be discussed further below.

Building on the above insights, Peters (2021) emphasised that the global perception of US foreign policy indicated not only a global loss of face but also the recognition of problems with foreign policy transitions from Trump to Biden and a degree of confusion in the White House. On the other hand, the truth of a poorly equipped indigenous enemy fighting for their own homeland against a technologically sophisticated world superpower has struck a chord. This has been an enduring lesson of US foreign policy since

Vietnam. Biden tried a succession of excuses, most recently explaining that no longer is the US committed to the view that 'freedom' and 'democracy' can be installed through a military campaign, or against the collective will. It is clear that the Taliban are now in a position to establish a government that is both representative and recognized by the rest of the world and powerful states in the international system such as China, Pakistan and Russia have already indicated a sympathetic reception of the Taliban government. Moreover, evidence indicates that the Taliban honoured their pledge not to attack and allowed US forces safe passage until the 31st August, 2021(Peters,2021).

On the other hand, Peters (2021) contends that, the end of the war in Afghanistan has significantly added to the discourse that predicts the decline of the American Empire. One form of these '*discourses of declinism*' is historical, after Edward Gibbon's (1776-8) *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* which holds a central place in western historiography. It provides an account based on the loss of virtue by citizens and the hiring of mercenaries with some similarities to the tens of thousands of American and European defence contractors that vie for funds. But the decline Gibbon focuses on is not military overreach but moral decline. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* is certainly pertinent as one of the very first historical accounts of the fall of a great power but '*discourses of declinism*' are characteristic of Abrahamic eschatological narratives and apocalyptic cultures and since taken many other forms (Peters,2021).Generally, domestic paranoia reflected the USA war on terror which was a foreign policy campaign that emerged following 9/11 and implemented aggressive military intervention in the middle east and Afghanistan (Islamic world). Unfortunately, is viewed as a failure. Similarly, the USA in invading Iraq 2003 as part of the campaign, the USA entrenched itself in the Islamic world's conflicts for the next decade. On the other hand, while the Washington Administration's policies claim to promote democracy and human rights, these policies have often resulted in trying to preserve stability and the status quo in the middle east or Afghanistan (Achtoun, Bawab, Brouard etl: 2021)

However, Gordon (2021) is of the view that the ‘The US Empire Is Crumbling Before Our Eyes’ with signs of the same factors that caused the Roman Empire to collapse: ‘gross economic inequality; over-spending on military expansion; political corruption; deep cultural and political fissures’. She first discusses the doctrines –Munroe, Truman, Bush—that have been used to legitimate imperial reach through which America has extended its territorial acquisition and control, including the ‘neo-colonial model’ to gain control of poorer countries under the Washington Consensus and structural adjustment policies. The true extent of imperial power after the collapse of the Soviet Union was revealed in Bush’s ‘unipolar world’ as part of the neoconservative Project for the American Century that set the stage for invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and the Iraq War (Gordon,2021).

Robert Kagan (2004, 2021) argued that the decline of America is a myth and that it will remain a superpower. That being said who knows what new political, military or trading relationships the ‘Five Eyes’ Anglophone countries of US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand will enter into, or with whom. As pointed out above, concur and observes that, the current President of the USA Joe Biden and his predecessor, Donald Trump, were both eager to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan and end what Biden referred to in his Aug. 16 speech as “America’s longest war.” The Trump administration in February 2020 negotiated a withdrawal agreement with the Taliban that excluded the Afghan government, freed 5,000 imprisoned Taliban soldiers and set a date certain of May 1, 2021, for the final withdrawal. however, this has led scholars to contemplate the possibility of other outcomes, such as the subsequent withdrawal of the USA and NATO troops from Afghanistan(Kiely and Farley, 2021). The same concerns are echoed by Schaefer arguing that:

- The withdrawal was a debacle. U.S. citizens and Afghan allies were stranded. The Taliban took over almost immediately
- The Taliban promised to change its ways and respect human rights and equal treatment of women. This promise was quickly broken.
- While they may think they are helping the Afghan people...the Biden administration is rewarding the Taliban for its grievous abuses of human rights.

On the other hand, Lathan is of the view that the fall of Afghanistan is likely to work to Beijing's geopolitical disadvantage in two ways:

- It has at least the potential of exacerbating the security situation in China's restive province of Xinjiang. The Taliban has supported the East Turkestan Independence Movement (ETIM) a group that seeks the independence of East Turkestan as a homeland for the Uyghur people and is alleged to have provided training to Chinese Uyghurs [jihadists]. China was cooperating with the Afghan national government to suppress these groups. With the demise of that government, China may well be forced to take more direct steps to deal with Uyghur nationalist and jihadist groups in Afghanistan.
- The fall of Afghanistan is likely to undermine Beijing's bid to "move to Center stage" of the international order. As the regional security situation worsens, China will be forced to devote more energy and resources to stabilizing a part of the world that is at the very heart of its global Belt and Road Initiative. This will necessarily distract China from other regions (most notably the Western Pacific). In the worst-case scenario, from Beijing's perspective at least, all this will induce China to intervene militarily to impose some sort of order favourable to its interests. Should this happen, one more headstone would likely be added to the graveyard of empires

In conclusion aftermath of 9/11 and the crucial decision by the American Administration to define the response as a "war on terror", much of the discussion of American foreign policy, and in particular the invasions of Afghanistan and subsequently Iraq was suddenly discussed in imperial tropes. Scholars such as Niall Ferguson's *Empire*, Andrew Bacevich's *American Empire*, Chalmers Johnston's *Sorrows of Empire* all use the term in their titles so do numerous other authors (Dalby,2008:423). On the other hand, Achcar(2021) argues that, "the United States suffered grave losses in Afghanistan, just as it did in Vietnam. Nonetheless, a document availed to the researcher indicates that:

In spite of their incomparable high tech military and economic superiority, and after gathering the military forces of 50 client countries in Afghanistan, committing diabolical atrocities, and spending close to a trillion dollars, they have essentially lost the war against the poorly equipped Taliban and their allies that have been waging an effective and experienced guerrilla warfare against the invaders and becoming stronger in the process, again demonstrating the accuracy of dialectical theories of guerrilla warfare by Mao Zedong , Vo Nguyen Giap , and Ernesto Che Guevara. One of the most important differences between the Vietnam and Indo-China war of the 20th Century and Afghan War of the 21st Century is that the resistance forces in Vietnam were getting powerful military, political, and economic support from the USSR, China, and other socialist countries, while the resistance forces in Afghanistan are not getting any such support from any country (Rahman, 2017).

Achcar(2021) is of the view that "we shouldn't mistake revisions of US military strategy after calamitous failures for a turn away from US imperialist ambitions the debacle of the US-sponsored

puppet government has inspired countless features of American imperial power. However, these features are premature. The anti-war movement should be under no illusion that the era of US imperialist warfare has come to an end with the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. What took place in Afghanistan is no more than a reload and update of the lessons that were drawn from Vietnam, with a view to achieve smarter management and higher cost-effectiveness of US military engagements not back away from the global dominance of US imperial power. The United States' defeat in Vietnam, concluded by the withdrawal of US troops in 1973, led to a major revision in military strategy that prepared the United States for the wars of the digital age. The domestic impact of Vietnam was enormous, especially the massive aversion to war that developed among the US population, particularly the youth. Imperialist belligerents called it "Vietnam syndrome," seeing a disease in what was actually a very healthy public wariness toward the power elite's inclination to launch imperial expeditions. After Vietnam, it became imperative to avoid another protracted war ending in failure against a backdrop of anti-war mobilization at home. The United States' post-Vietnam strategy was honed during the Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush years, but it was largely disregarded in the era after 9/11, with the result that the United States repeated many of the same mistakes in George W. Bush's "war on terror." Now Joe Biden is signalling a return to the post-Vietnam strategy" (Achcar 2021).

On other hand, Fazal Rahman(2017)is of the view that In spite of the United States of America having high tech military, economic superiority, the military forces of NATO consisting 50 client countries (NATO)in Afghanistan, committing diabolical atrocities, and spending close to a trillion dollars, they have essentially lost the war against the poorly equipped Taliban and their allies that have been waging an effective and experienced guerrilla warfare against the invaders and becoming stronger in the process, again demonstrating the accuracy of dialectical theories of guerrilla warfare by Mao Zedong , Vo Nguyen Giap , and Ernesto Che Guevara. There has been no anti-war movement against this longest and devastating imperialist war, in the US or the West, even though there are, in spite of great ideological differences, certain important parallels and common patterns between this war and the US

and NATO war in Vietnam and Indo-China of the last century, the most important being that both wars were against the US and Western imperialist invaders, and for self-determination and national liberation, as well as the inability of US and Western imperialism to defeat the anti-imperialist national liberation forces, in spite of the incomparable military and economic superiority of the former. Unlike, one of the most important differences between the Vietnam and Indo-China war of the 20th Century and Afghan War of the 21st Century is that the resistance forces in Vietnam were getting powerful military, political, and economic support from the USSR, China, and other socialist countries, while the resistance forces in Afghanistan are not getting any such support from any country. To the contrary, under the current international political environment, much of the world has been collaborating with and supporting the imperialist invaders. The Left in the US and the West has been extremely biased against the resistance forces of Afghanistan, because of various cultural, political, and ideological perspectives, which it rigidly imposes on the situation in Afghanistan, without understanding the complexities of cultural and politico-economic differences between the Western and Afghan societies, or the great importance of Islam, around which, the forces of resistance have organized their successful struggle in Afghanistan (Fazal Rahman, 2017)

2.5 Summary

This chapter has covered introduction of the topic, theoretical framework literature review, pertinent to The United States of America's Withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. The next chapter covers research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter outlined the research methodology that was utilized during the study; it covered the research design, study population and sample size, sampling techniques and data collection instruments. It also scrutinized research instruments' reliability and validity. According to Creswell (2014) a research methodology can be defined as a global plan of a research that outlines the methods in which the study was executed and also determines the approaches used by it. The current study used of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

3.2.1 Research philosophy

In order to make sense of the world, society, and human behavior (the social world) there are different approaches used by social researchers to perceive and interpret social reality. This concerns ontological and epistemological principles regarding social inquiry (Barron, 2006). Ontology is viewed to be 'about the theory of social entities and is concerned with what there exists to be investigated' (Walliman, 2006:15). In other words, it focuses on 'the way the social world is seen to be and what can be assumed about the nature and reality of the social phenomena that make up the social world' (Matthews and Ross, 2010:142).

The ontological debate centers on two contrasting perspectives namely objectivism and constructivism (Matthews and Ross, 2010; Walliman, 2006; Barron, 2006) and these ideas are also referred to as the nominalist and realist ontological divide (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Ontological questions on social reality are therefore conceptualized quite differently by those who subscribe to the objectivist/ realist (objective) and constructivist/nominalist (subjective) schools of thought.

For the objectivist/ realist social researcher, the world is very real and is knowable as it truly is (Cohen et al., 2007). This implies that ‘the social phenomena that make up our social world have an existence of their own, apart from and independent of the social actors (humans) who are involved’ (Matthews and Ross, 2010:25-26). In other words, ‘social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is not dependent on social actors’ (Walliman, 2006:15). Thus, social phenomena have a reality of their own which is not determined or created by social actors. Burrell and Morgan (1979) further stress that objectivists/ realists consider reality to be of an objective nature and that it is out there in the universe we live in. As such, the objectivist/ realist perceives the social world as having an existence which is equally as hard and concrete as the natural world. This implies that the researcher’s relationship to the social world as well as the social phenomenon being studied is supposed to be based on objective observations which can be scientifically measured or statistically analyzed (Matthews and Ross, 2010). In paragraphs below, the objectivist/ realist approach to ontology is supported by a positivist epistemology.

For those social researchers who subscribe to the constructivist/nominalist (subjective) ontology, they believe that the social world or social phenomenon can best be understood through meanings ascribed to them by individuals (Matthews and Ross, 2010). This implies that the reality to be investigated is created through individual awareness which is subjective and this makes social phenomenon a creation of an individual’s cognizance (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). In other words, social phenomena making up the social world are perceived quite differently by individual actors (Cohen et al., 2007). In this regard, though the world is very real ‘we can only experience it personally through our perceptions which are influenced by our preconceptions and beliefs; we are not neutral, disembodied observers’ (Walliman, 2006:37). As such, the constructivist/nominalist researcher is ‘guided by the desire to investigate the differing ways in which social actors are constantly interpreting the social world from their own particular perspective’ (Barron, 2006:2002). This implies that social reality can mainly be

perceived in a more personal and subjective way. In paragraphs below, the constructivist/nominalist (subjective) approach to ontology is supported by an interpretivist/anti-positivist epistemology.

Closely linked to ontological issues are also epistemological concerns. Epistemology refers to ‘the theory of knowledge and how we know things (Matthews and Ross, 2010:18). It focuses on how one can have knowledge of truth or reality (Sumner, 2006). The main argument is on whether knowledge can be acquired (objective school) or whether it can be personally experienced (subjective school) (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). As such, the epistemological debate is based on two opposing views namely positivism and anti-positivism/interpretivism (Matthews and Ross, 2010; Walliman, 2006; Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

Positivism is premised on the idea ‘that ‘knowledge of a social phenomenon is based on what can be observed and recorded rather than subjective understandings’ (Matthews and Ross, 2010: 27). This implies that a positivist researcher believes that the social world and social phenomenon can be objectively and scientifically measured in much the same way as the subject matter of the natural sciences. The researcher has to understand the social world and social phenomenon from the outside. Such a position resembles natural science where the behaviour of animals, plants and chemical components are studied in their natural setting/form.

In this regard, Matthews and Ross, (2010) summarize the positivist approach as follows: the collection of quantitative data; measurements of some parts of the social world or social phenomenon; a need to find out the underlying relationships between some aspects of the social world; and the widespread use of large data arrangements and statistical analysis. In other words, positivists rely on quantitative techniques of ‘collecting data that is numerically based and amenable to such analytical methods as statistical correlations, often in relation to hypothesis testing’ (Walliman, 2006:37). The positivists’ views concerning knowledge can also be perceived as follows: Knowledge of social phenomenon focuses on what can be observed and recorded systematically (McNeill and Chapman, 2005). The researcher relied on the use of quantitative techniques for the analysis of data (Burrell and Morgan,

1979). Data was collected to test a hypothesis emanating from existing theory (Matthews and Ross, 2010). The researcher is expected to be objective and to have no influence or control on the data (Cohen et al., 2007).

Concerning interpretivism/anti-positivism, it is based on the idea that 'prioritizes people's subjective interpretations and understandings of social phenomena and their own actions' (Matthews and Ross, 2010:28). This implies that for one to have a deeper understanding of the social world one has to obtain first-hand information directly from the individual(s) being investigated. Thus, Matthews and Ross (2010:28) characterize the interpretivist/anti-positivist approach as follows: It encompasses the collection of qualitative data which is 'rich in detail and description'. It comprises the interpretation of subjective meanings within a given context. Lastly, it makes the researcher stand in another's shoes. In other words, interpretivism/anti-positivism mainly relies on qualitative techniques which focus 'more on language and the interpretation of its meaning, so data collection methods tend to involve close human involvement and a creative process of theory development rather than testing' (Walliman, 2006:37).

The interpretivists/anti-positivists' perceptions of knowledge can be seen as follows: Data collected by the researcher focus on individuals' own knowledge, interpretations and understandings of the social world (Matthews and Ross, 2010). Individuals are considered to be very conscious of what goes on around them and they are quite capable of making their own choices (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). The researcher can have deeper knowledge of social phenomena by occupying the frame of reference of the individuals in action (Cohen et al., 2007). Thus, data is mainly collected in order to come up with a theory (Sumner, 2006).

The above ontological and epistemological philosophical views helped to inform a researcher's style of research and methodology. This implied that the selection of the research problem, the designing of the research questions to be answered, the methodology or methodologies which guided the research study as well as the type of data sought, all were influenced by the ontological and epistemological viewpoint held. As such, depending on the ontological and epistemological views of the researcher, the

methodology used can either focus on quantitative or qualitative techniques or a mixture of both techniques. For instance, in my study, the researcher used a mixed method approach which applied both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This means the study based its findings on quantitative data (statistics, figures and percentages of women who participate in various political spheres) and also qualitative data in order to capture the views and opinions of women on issues concerning their political participation and representation. A mixed method approach was relevant for this study as the researcher was able to use a variety of techniques in collecting data thus offering an improved comprehension or deeper understanding of the area under study.

3.2 Research Approach

A research approach can be viewed as approach or procedure that involves the actions of wide-ranging hypotheses to comprehensive process of gathering data, its analysis and elucidation. Accordingly, it is focused on the form of the research problem to be addressed. Essentially research approach can be viewed from the basis of data collection or data analysis (Silverman, 2016b). The current research adopted a qualitative approach. However, according to Holloway and Galvin (2016), there are three kinds of approaches, namely: mixed methods (pragmatic), qualitative and quantitative approaches

3.3 Research Design

Research design is a comprehensive blue print applied to influence a research study towards its anticipated goals (Orodho, 2009). The research design develops a chief plan that offers specific approaches and ways used in collecting and examination of the gathered data.

3.4 Study Population

According to Saunders et al. (2012), a population is an all-inclusive group of individuals or entities with shared observable features. While on the other hand, Polit and Beck (2014) define population as a group of elements with collective set of traits in relation to a particular research problem. The study targeted Academics, journalists and diplomats

3.5 Sampling Procedure

The study used purposive sampling method to select the research participants. Purposive sampling is a method in which the investigator depends on his/ her own judgment when selecting elements of the population to partake in research (Rossman and Rallis, 2012). Holloway and Galvin (2016) indicate that purposive sampling also known as judgmental or expert sampling is a form of non-probability method of sampling. The key goal of a purposive sampling method is to yield a sample that can be reasonably presumed to be demonstrative of the population under the study.

With purposive sampling, there is a desire for in-depth understanding of a case and this leads to the selection of individuals who can provide rich-information about ‘issues of central importance to the purpose of the research’ (Patton, 2002:46;) or ‘individuals who will best help in understanding the research problem and the research questions (Creswell, 2014:294). This view is supported by Cohen et al (2007:116) as they stress that in this type of sample, ‘researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought’. Accordingly, the study used purposive sampling in identifying people who, because of their experience or contacts, have special insights into this study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), purposive sampling can be advantageous when a researcher is dealing with a narrow number of participants that can aid as primary sources of data. The method is also time and cost effective. This study also relied heavily on snowball sampling where the researcher after identifying some respondents is also assisted by these respondents to get ‘in touch with, others who qualify for inclusion and these, in turn, identify yet others’ (Cohen et al, 2007:114).

3.6 Sample size

Yin (2016) views a sampling frame as a physical representation of the study population which encompasses of all elements that are probable members of a sample. However, Garg and Kothari (2014) define a sample as a small group of elements that a researcher chooses from a huge pool and make a

validation to the population. A sample permits the researcher to draw an estimate of the representativeness concerning the elements under the study and also allowing a certain point of confidence on inferences about the study population (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). A sample size of 17 respondents will be used by the researcher.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The study collected primary data using structured questionnaires, key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

3.7.1 Making Appointments

The researcher used electronic mails and phone calls to book schedules for interviews. These two approaches are inexpensive, faster and allowed a most sure response from the study participants.

3.7.2 Retrieval of Instruments

Retrieval of research tools particular the questionnaires were done in person. A drop and pick technique was used by the researcher in the gathering of responses from the questionnaires distributed.

3.8 Research instruments

The researcher used questionnaires, interview and focus discussion guides to gather primary data. The survey technique was suitable for this type of the study as it offers a narrative of attitudes, understanding and views of the sample population.

3.8.2 Questionnaires

The research administered a total of 40 structured questionnaires to Academics journalists and diplomats. A questionnaire is a methodical list of questions that are focused to a sample of population from which significant data is expected (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The researcher will utilize the questionnaire centered on the subsequent advantages as noted by Saunders et al (2009). The participants

can put thorough reasoning when responding to the set of questions in a questionnaire as they will not be under pressure to reply immediately. When responses have been compiled, organized and designed properly, the questionnaire can offer correct and candid answers. Thus, appropriate information for the research can be gathered. It is the most inexpensive way of collecting data in comparison to other data gathering techniques such as interviews. A questionnaire permitted for enhanced comparability of answers as a result of the homogeneousness in the questions that all participants are asked.

3.9 Pilot testing

The researcher pilot-tested the questionnaire and the interview guide. Five respondents were selected to fill the questionnaires and offered feedback concentrating on the length and design of the questionnaire, as well as whether they viewed the questions as comprehensible, appropriate and leading. Three respondents were also selected to pilot the interview guide. Bryman (2016) revealed that pilot testing offers researchers with the chance to assess their data gathering procedures. It provides the researcher an opportunity to examine the set questions to ensure that they are comprehensible, appropriate and unbiased or misleading to the respondents. Holloway and Wheeler (2013) argue that it is often difficult to have an exact number for persons to be piloted, nevertheless as a rule, it is recommended that scholars pilot between 5 to 10% of the ultimate sample. This will aid in determining whether the chosen population in the sample are able to complete the survey and that they comprehend the questions (Cresswell, 2013). The pilot test ensured that the data that was gathered was useful and vital to the study. The information that was gathered from pilot testing was not used in the final results of the research, but the feedback offered was considered and appropriate variations were made to the questionnaire and interview structure to ensure valuable information pertinent to the research question is gathered.

3.10 Reliability and Validity

According to Creswell (2014), validity is the relevance and correctness of the steps taken in validating what has been set out. Validity can be demonstrated when the information offered mirrors an accurate image of what was being researched (Bethlehem and Silva, 2012). To determine the validity of the study tools, views of specialists in the area of study, particularly the research supervisor, was obtained and also pilot testing of the tools was done to confirm validity and reliability of focus group and interview guides. This resulted in the review and adjustment of the research tools so as to improve the whole validity of this study.

Flick (2014) describes reliability as the degree of dependability with the tools which measure a characteristic. The less the deviation the tool creates in repetitive measurements of a characteristic the higher the reliability (Polit and Beck, 2014). Thus, the larger the reliability of a tool the less likely inaccuracies of measurement take place (Bethlehem and Silvia, 2012). In this research, reliability of the questionnaire was also scrutinized through Crocbachs' Alpha value produced by SPSS.

3.11 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data was examined by utilizing thematic and descriptive analysis and presented in thematic and descriptive statistics. Thematic analysis is a technique for classifying, analyzing and recording trends within data (Creswell, 2014). Holloway and Wheeler (2013) posits that thematic analysis is an initial technique of analysis that requires be defining and explaining to solidify its place in qualitative study. For descriptive analysis, the mean and standard deviation were applied to establish the participants' agreement or otherwise with statements under each variable.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

According to Bryman and Bell (2015), ethics are schemes of moral tenets that are concerned with the degree to which enquiry techniques abide by professional, legal and social obligations. The ethical principle of informed consent was employed whereby the participants were permitted to decide to partake, or not to partake in the research upon receiving all pertinent information about the risk of

harm that might arise if they partake in the study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). In this study, authorization was sought from the local authorities, political parties and respondents requesting them to participate in the research. Debriefing or disclosure ethic was applied subsequent to data gathering and prospective participants were oriented on who was conducting the research, aims/goals, and possible benefits and anticipated results. The respondents' voluntary liberty to contribute or pull out from the exercise was explained. All study respondents were treated with respect, fairness and dignity.

3.13 Chapter summary

This chapter underscores the qualitative research methodology that will be applied in this study. In summary this section deliberates on the research design, target population, sampling techniques and sample size, research instruments, data collection procedure and data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the findings of the research. The outcome from interviews, questionnaires, and secondary documents will be analysed following the research objectives and research questions. Secondary sources are compared with the research conclusions from interviews and questionnaires. A discussion that seeks to harmonize the findings and the literature review will also be carried out. The discussion will further attempt to fill the knowledge gap identified in relation to the United States of America's Withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. This will be answered with the help of three research questions which are as follows: What are the United States of America's foreign policy goals towards Iran, Iraq and Yemen? What are the major reasons leading to the United States of America's military intervention in Afghanistan? What are the factors influencing the United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as the implications of such a withdrawal?

4.2 Demographic information of participants

Before discussing and analysing the research findings it is helpful to provide a brief description of the individuals interviewed for the findings discussed in this chapter. Information for my fieldwork was collected through interviews with journalists, political analysts, academics, politicians and foreign diplomats from various embassies. Questionnaires were also administered to different participants from those who were interviewed and these also comprised of journalists, politicians. The tables below are an illustration of participants interviewed and also those who filled in the questionnaires. For the in-depth interviews, the questions were diverse, with some questions being asked more frequently than others depending on their level of significance to the major goal of this research. These questions are included

in the Appendix section. Regarding the questionnaires, the participants gave their opinions to the questions given. An example of the questionnaire is included in the Appendix section.

Table 1: Interviews Response Rate

Target group	Target respondents	Actual respondents	% of actual respondents
Politicians	4	2	50%
Academics	4	2	50%
Journalists	2	1	50%
Foreign diplomats	3	2	67%

Table 2: Questionnaire Response Rate

Target group	Target respondents	Actual respondents	% of actual respondents
Journalists	4	2	50%
Politicians	4	2	50%
Foreign diplomats	4	2	50%

Below the researcher presents the research findings:

4.3 What are the United States of America’s foreign policy goals towards Iran, Iraq and Yemen?

4.4 What are the major reasons leading to the United States of America’s military intervention in Afghanistan?

4.5 What are the factors influencing the United States of America’s withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as the implications of such a withdrawal?

The main suggestions emanating from the interviews questionnaires and documents are veiled to the researcher indicates that some interesting issues which goes beyond what is found in main stream

literature. The invaluable suggestion which helps to answer the above questions as given through interviews, questionnaires and documents availed to the researcher are as follows. Regarding geopolitics there are quite a number of issues which were highlighted by the respondents (interviews and questionnaires) and the researcher discusses this in detail below:

A respondent [academic] from Somali National University is of the view that:

The major goal of the USA foreign policy towards Iran is none other than to seek regime change and overthrow the current theocratic government of the jurist (Velat Faqih). With Regards to the containment and counter of Iran's nuclear ambitions, I think they have failed because Iran has marched on and continues to enrich Uranium at its reactors. Some countries like Israel actually believe that Iran is closer to producing an atomic bomb. Iran seems to have managed to out stage the USA as seen in their expansion of their sphere of influence to include Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. Internally they have also entrenched their system of government as seen by numbers of millions of Iranians marching for them whenever they for a rally.

A respondent from [an academic] University Johannesburg is of the view:

America seeks a regime change agenda in Iran. Since the ouster of the Shah of Iran, who was an American ally, America has sought to destabilize Iran through the imposition of sanctions and supporting dissident groups.

Iran maintained its right to develop its nuclear capabilities for peaceful purposes and was not going to be dictated to by an adversary. Iran remained undeterred as seen with its influence in Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and even Palestine. The Iranian government has resisted this and ruthlessly crushed any attempts at protests against its policies.

A responded from [an academic] Bindura University of Science Education is of the view that

1. Washington withdrew from Afghanistan because its military commanders and intelligence had advised them to do so. It seems Washington has not learnt much from Vietnam war. They had been in Afghanistan for good 20 years and yet were reluctant to concede that the war was unwinnable. The Taliban were waging a guerilla warfare and given the terrain in Afghanistan, the Americans and its allies would not win such a war despite their economic and military preponderance. Any commander or pundit in security studies will tell you cannot win guerrilla warfare.
2. The USA invaded Afghanistan as a rection to the bombing of the twin towers in September 2001. They were fighting against al-Qaeda that was being led by Osama bin Laden, so they rallied their allies to support their onslaught against terrorist. They attacked Afghanistan because they were aware that Afghanistan was a haven from which terrorist activities were being launched from.
3. The Americans failed in their mission apart from the infrastructural destruction that they caused in the 20 years they have been in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is now in the hands of the Taliban who are unpredictable, the US has also failed to separate Taliban- so Qaeda links or to spread democracy in the middles east as they had intended, they also failed to protect human rights especially for women. The US withdrawal was haphazard because of failed policies. China and Russia may come in and fill the void and build friendly relations with the Taliban government. USA policy in Afghanistan was never going to succeed. Ashraf Ghani, the former Afghan president felt betrayed by Washington's

unceremonious departure. American hegemony in the international system has been greatly affected especially as the world has drifted into multi-polar. Americans cannot be trusted because they negotiated with the Taliban and did not involve the Ghani government.

4. Leaders have been involved the war vs terror in Afghanistan Bush jnr, Obama, Trump and Biden. Withdrawal was the logical thing to do. We actual see a shift in American foreign policy, at first, they maintained that they would never negotiate with terrorist and yet here was Trump negotiating with the Taliban, probably it was some kind of face-saving, they knew they could not win the war, American intentions in Afghanistan apart from the murder of Bin Laden was a complete fiasco and so they needed some kind of concession from the Taliban.

First the researcher brings out some of the responses which are related to geopolitics. Looking at the above responses and corroborating them with what was discussed in chapter 2. It can be observed that the first respondent brings out geopolitics in the form of national interest. This concurs with what was raised in chapter two when scholars such as Nuechtelein (1976), Ari, (2013) Cohen (2015), and Agnew (2004) Granieri (2015) Dalby (2011) and many others have indicated that geopolitics is intertwined with the realist views of national interests and power.

The researcher was interested in probing the respondents (diplomats academics and journalists as key informants) for more information in that regard. Divergent views came out with the dominant perspective the US has also failed to separate Taliban- so Qaeda links or to spread democracy in the middles east as they had intended,

Conclusively it can be argued that the American Administration's foreign policy towards (Iran Iraq and Yemen) mainly focuses on issues to do with/regarding influence

In chapter 2 various issues were raised concerning America's foreign policy towards (Iran Iraq and Yemen). The major points were as follows: Pertinent to Iran, Karim Sadjadpour (2022) a political commentator indicated that the United States has three major foreign goals towards Iran and these are as follows: To contain and counter Iran's nuclear ambitions; To Contain and counter Iran's regional ambitions; To champion democratic aspirations of Iranian people.

Evidence from the questionnaires shows that a respondent [diplomat] from the Iranian embassy [in Zimbabwe] is of the view that:

“Iran is not seeking ambition in the nuclear issue. Iran wants nuclear energy for its peaceful use. The United States knows very well that Iran is not seeking to build nuclear weapons. But they have made this issue an excuse to confront the people of Iran. Therefore, it seems that Iran will continue on this path to achieve its rights. Iran has no ambitions in the region. It is the United States that has come to the East from the other side of the world and interferes in the affairs of other countries. The United States does not have any support for the democratic ideals of the Iranian people. They only seek to create tension and provoke the Iranian people. After the Islamic revolution, dozens of elections have been held in Iran and people have given their opinion. America has been cut off from Iran's resources and oil for years. Therefore, he is looking for an excuse”.

This implies that the USA intends to contain Iranian's nuclear ambitions. Subsequently, to deter the Iranian regime from becoming a hegemonic power in the middle east.

More evidence indicates that the U.S. Therefore, has perceived the rise of any great power (China, Russia) or regional power (Iran, Iraq) as a threat to its world dominance/regional. Washington's strategy has been to counterbalance any rising power especially when the rising power is seen to undermine American economic and political interests. Under such conditions, one can argue that t the U.S. largely 'seeks either to keep power' (by maintaining its global status quo), 'to increase power' (by expanding its power beyond its borders), 'or to demonstrate power ... for the purpose of maintaining or increasing it' (for instance U.S. power projection in the Middle East region) (Morgenthau, 1948:21-22)

Evidence from the interviews and questions also provides some similarities with what was discussed above below are some responses from some respondents concerning Washington's foreign policy towards (Iran Iraq and Yemen).In chapter 2 various issues were raised concerning United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as the implications of such a withdrawal. The major points were as follows:

Fazal Rahman(2017)is of the view that In spite of the United States of America having high tech military, economic superiority, the military forces of NATO consisting 50 client countries (NATO)in Afghanistan, committing diabolical atrocities, and spending close to a trillion dollars, they have essentially lost the war against the poorly equipped Taliban and their allies that have been waging an

effective and experienced guerrilla warfare against the invaders and becoming stronger in the process, again demonstrating the accuracy of dialectical theories of guerrilla warfare by Mao Zedong , Vo Nguyen Giap , and Ernesto Che Guevara. This concurs with a responded from [an academic] Bindura University of Science Education is of the view that Washington withdrew from Afghanistan because its military commanders and intelligence had advised them to do so. It seems Washington has not learnt much from Vietnam War. They had been in Afghanistan for good 20 years and yet were reluctant to concede that the war was unwinnable. The Taliban were waging a guerilla warfare and given the terrain in Afghanistan, the Americans and its allies would not win such a war despite their economic and military preponderance. Any commander or pundit in security studies will tell you cannot win guerrilla warfare.

A respondent from University Johannesburg [Zimbabwean academic] is of the view:

I believe America was losing the war, and the decision to leave was the most realistic they could take. In the face of a lightning advance from the Taliban this was a face move. America literally ran away from a humiliating defeat and left behind military equipment worth billions. The advance by the Taliban caught them unawares and the only thing they could do was withdraw. I think this was about geopolitical control. If Afghanistan had a government controlled by America this would open a front for America on the edges of Russia. America appears to cherish an objective of undermining Russia militarily by building bases near Russia and Afghanistan could have been a strategic country for that purpose. Afghanistan would struggle economically because America withheld billions of its funds. Afghanistan would be forced to succumb to American demands to save itself from economic collapse. Afghanistan could forge new alliances with countries like China and thus break any reliance on the West and the effects on its economy. I feel it was a face-saving move.

The above responses show a lot of similarities with what was discussed under the third objective on the United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as the implications of such a withdrawal.

From the Above response it can be noted that the main arguments being raised are as follows:

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study has been to analyse the United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. To achieve this goal; this study had three subsidiary objectives. Firstly, the researcher analyzed the United States of America's foreign policy towards a few selected countries in the Middle- East (Iran, Iraq, and Yemen). Secondly, the researcher assessed the major reasons leading to the United States of America's military intervention in Afghanistan. Thirdly, the researcher established factors influencing the United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as the implications of such a withdrawal. In this concluding chapter, the researcher gives a detailed discussion of the study's research objectives by answering these objectives directly and by answering questions related to them. In so doing, this chapter provides a summary of the factors that influenced the United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan as well as the implications of such a withdrawal. It analyses the United States of America's foreign policy towards a few selected countries in the Middle- East (Iran, Iraq, and Yemen) visa vie Afghanistan. And the major reasons leading to the United States of America's military intervention in Afghanistan are also discussed. The chapter further proffers some recommendations for the study.

5.2 Conclusions

As highlighted earlier in Chapter 4 the study found out that the major goal of the USA foreign policy towards Iran is none other than to seek regime change and overthrow the current theocratic government of the jurist (Velat Faqih). With Regards to the containment and counter of Iran's nuclear ambitions, the USA seems to have failed because Iran has marched on and continues to enrich Uranium at its reactors. Iran seems to have managed to out stage the USA as seen in their expansion of their sphere of influence to include Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. Internally they have also entrenched their system of government as seen by numbers of millions of Iranians marching for them whenever they for a rally. However, Washington withdrew from Afghanistan because its military commanders and intelligence had advised

them to do so. It seems Washington has not learnt much from Vietnam war. They had been in Afghanistan for good 20 years and yet were reluctant to concede that the war was unwinnable. The Taliban were waging a guerilla warfare and given the terrain in Afghanistan, the Americans and its allies would not win such a war despite their economic and military preponderance.

5.3 Recommendations

The study recommends that:

- Diplomacy should always be given before a military interventions take place because it always the ordinary people populous that sufferers through the total destruction of their habitants. The USA should understand that when retaliations with another state are strained it does not mean that state is harboring intentions to attack it. Withdrawal of troops from foreign lands should always be done when maximum peace and stability has been maintained in the conflict zones democracy should not be used to undermine people's cultures beliefs and religion
- The international community should assist the Taliban with enough resources to rebuild Afghanistan rather playing a wait and see game.

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BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

Date 16/09/22

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE : REQUEST TO UNDER TAKE RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR
AREA

This serves to introduce the bearer, MATOLA TIME.....who is a MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS student at Bindura University of Science Education and is carrying out a research project in your area.

Your usual co-operation and assistance is therefore being sought.

Thank you for the continued support.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Makwerere'.

pp. Dr D. Makwerere
Chairperson Department of Peace and Governance



APPENDIX A INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DIPLOMATS AS KEY INFORMANTS

My name is Time Matola, I am a student at Bindura University of Science. I am studying a Masters in International Relations. I am conducting academic research for academic purposes on the topic The United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021: A critical Analysis.

Your usual cooperation and assistance is therefore being sought.

1. *What do you think is the major foreign policy goal of the USA towards Iran*
2. *International political commentators such as Karim Sadjadpour indicated that the united States has three major foreign goals towards Iran and these are as follows:*
 1. *To contain and counter Iran's nuclear ambitions*
 2. *To Contain and counter Iran's regional ambitions*
 3. *To champion democratic aspirations of Iranian people*

In what way do you think Iran reacted to each of the above three foreign goals

3. *During his tenure in office the Former President of the USA Donald Trump indicated that all American troops were supposed to withdraw from Afghanistan on or before May 21 2021. Citing that the war with the Taliban was unsustainable. Similarly, the current American president Joe Biden's reason for the withdrawal has been on the total failure of the American democratic initiative in Kabul as well as the high costs of the war. In your view can you give any other reason or reasons why Washington had to withdraw from Afghanistan.*
4. *Scholars are not agreed on the main reason why Washington intervened militarily in Afghanistan in your view what do you think is the major reason or are the main reasons for such military intervention*
5. *In your view can you suggest any three implications towards America's withdrawal from Afghanistan*
6. *Before the Withdrawal of the American troops from Afghanistan we saw President Donald negotiating a peace deal with the Taliban. Washington has always insisted that it does not negotiate with terrorist or insurgent groups. Is this an indication of the weakening of American foreign policy or as well as its global power*

APPENDIX B INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ACADEMICS AS KEY INFORMANTS

My name is Time Matola, I am a student at Bindura University of Science. I am studying a Masters in International Relations. I am conducting academic research for academic purposes on the topic The United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021: A critical Analysis.

Your usual cooperation and assistance is therefore being sought.

- 1. What do you think is the major foreign policy goal of the USA towards Iran*
- 2. International political commentators such as Karim Sadjadpour indicated that the united States has three major foreign goals towards Iran and these are as follows:*
 - 1. To contain and counter Iran's nuclear ambitions*
 - 2. To Contain and counter Iran's regional ambitions*
 - 3. To champion democratic aspirations of Iranian people*

In what way do you think Iran reacted to each of the above three foreign goals?

- 3. During his tenure in office the Former President of the USA Donald Trump indicated that all American troops were supposed to withdraw from Afghanistan on or before May 21 2021. Citing that the war with the Taliban was unsustainable. Similarly, the current American president Joe Biden's reason for the withdrawal has been on the total failure of the American democratic initiative in Kabul as well as the high costs of the war.*

In your view can you give any other reason or reasons why Washington had to withdraw from Afghanistan?

- 4. Scholars are not agreed on the main reason why Washington intervened militarily in Afghanistan in your view what do you think is the major reason or are the main reasons for such military intervention*
- 5. In your view can you suggest any three implications towards America's withdrawal from Afghanistan*
- 6. Before the Withdrawal of the American troops from Afghanistan we saw President Donald negotiating a peace deal with the Taliban. Washington has always insisted that it does not negotiate with terrorist or insurgent groups. Is this an indication of the weakening of American foreign policy or as well as its global power*

APPENDIX C INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR JOURNALIST AS KEY INFORMANTS

My name is Time Matola, I am a student at Bindura University of Science. I am studying a Masters in International Relations. I am conducting academic research for academic purposes on the topic The United States of America's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021: A critical Analysis.

Your usual cooperation and assistance is therefore being sought.

- 1. What do you think is the major foreign policy goal of the USA towards Iran*
- 2. International political commentators such as Karim Sadjadpour indicated that the united States has three major foreign goals towards Iran and these are as follows:*
 - 1. To contain and counter Iran's nuclear ambitions*
 - 2. To Contain and counter Iran's regional ambitions*
 - 3. To champion democratic aspirations of Iranian people*

In what way do you think Iran reacted to each of the above three foreign goals

- 3. During his tenure in office the Former President of the USA Donald Trump indicated that all American troops were supposed to withdraw from Afghanistan on or before May 21 2021. Citing that the war with the Taliban was unsustainable. Similarly, the current American president Joe Biden's reason for the withdrawal has been on the total failure of the American democratic initiative in Kabul as well as the high costs of the war.*

In your view can you give any other reason or reasons why Washington had to withdraw from Afghanistan?

- 4. Scholars are not agreed on the main reason why Washington intervened militarily in Afghanistan in your view what do you think is the major reason or are the main reasons for such military intervention*
- 5. In your view can you suggest any three implications towards America's withdrawal from Afghanistan*
- 6. Before the Withdrawal of the American troops from Afghanistan we saw President Donald negotiating a peace deal with the Taliban. Washington has always insisted that it does not negotiate with terrorist or insurgent groups. Is this an indication of the weakening of American foreign policy or as well as its global power*

APPENDIX D INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR POLITICIANS AS KEY INFORMANTS

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1. *What do you think is the major foreign policy goal of the USA towards Iran*
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