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## The US War in Afghanistan and the War Powers Act: A Natural Experiment

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# ***The US War in Afghanistan and the War Powers Act: A Natural Experiment***

**By:**

***Burrell 'Buzz' A Fletcher V***

***Advisor: Shaughan Sparks Cummings***

**An Honours Thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
Bachelor of Science in International Business in Economics.**

**Sam M. Walton College of Business University of Arkansas Fayetteville,  
Arkansas**

**May 5, 2023**

## Abstract:

### **How Can the War Powers Act of 1972 be Reformed to Increase the Chances of Winning Wars?**

This paper examines the effects of the War Powers Act of 1973's Authorisation for Use of Military Force (AUMF) system on the conduct of war, especially regarding the ongoing War on Terror. The War on Terror, began in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks when President Bush invaded Afghanistan. Congress, using the War Powers Act, passed the 2001 AUMF in the weeks after the attacks. The 2001 AUMF has been used in twenty-two countries to justify anti-terror operations thus far (Savell, 2021), with most of these conflicts ongoing. Yet the initial war this AUMF approved (in Afghanistan) ended in 2021 with the Taliban regaining government control and, according to the United Nations, Al-Qaeda cells are still active in the country (Tirumurti, 2021). This is a direct failure to meet the goals of the war, despite what the Pentagon may say (Wittes & Huggard, 2019).

The War Powers Act of 1973 was passed by Congress (after overriding Nixon's veto) in response to the perceived (and actual) failures of the Vietnam War, which occurred without congressional approval. It set out the three methods for which the US Military may be used in conflict. The first, allows the president to commit military forces abroad without congressional approval for no more than sixty days. The second requires to Congress issue an Authorisation for the Use of Military (AUMF) which allows the president to continue the use of military force without a formal declaration of war. The president must follow any stipulations set out by the AUMF. The third is where Congress may pass a formal declaration of war (its Article I power in the Constitution). A formal war declaration has not occurred since World War 2.

Whilst the War Powers Act has allowed Congress to regain control over foreign conflicts by requiring its authorisation or a war declaration, it has clearly not been effective. The massive failures in Afghanistan (2001 – 2021), and lacklustre congressional oversight and reporting illustrate this failure. Due to the rise in conflicts with groups and organisations within countries, rather than nation-states themselves, reforms to the AUMF process might be specifically helpful to constrain the President's power and give Congress more control and information. AUMFs are not required to specify the enemies being fought or the political/governing groups we will be working with in-country. Such omissions can cause confusion both on and off the battlefield. There are also no requirements for periodic congressional testimony or the contents of any potential testimony. Furthermore, there are no requirements for Congress to specify an end to any conflict sanctioned by an AUMF, leading to perpetual (or 'forever') wars. And finally, there are not required to be any mentions of spending or budgets that the war will necessitate. Essentially the Department of Defence chooses its own war budget (from its Congressionally approved DoD budget) and how to spend it in each conflict. I want to explore the notion that constraining AUMF's use and requiring testimony may lead to a more responsibly managed conflict and thus a more successful, shorter, and cheaper conflict overall.

## Introduction:

### ***Purpose of the Research:***

I want to examine specific failures of the US in conducting the war in Afghanistan, and how reforms to the AUMF system in the War Powers Act can potentially help the US government meet its goals on other fronts in the War on Terror – namely, Somalia, Yemen, and Libya. I have utilised declassified government documents, other War on Terror-related journals, ‘The Afghanistan Papers’ (a trove of investigative journalism by the *Washington Post* regarding the war), and congressional testimony to aid my research and draft proposed AUMF requirements. In order to do this, I want to create a base AUMF guideline which must be followed for future AUMFs and propose a natural experiment within the three aforementioned fronts.

Using evidence from the Afghanistan Operation’s failures, I believe it best to continue the War as-is in Libya, as a control, and to use my proposed changes in both Yemen and Somalia. After these changes are enacted, periodic surveys of soldiers, required Department of Defence Reporting, records of terrorist attacks stemming from each respective country, and records of enemy combatants in each respective country, will be used to measure success. This approach analyses the Afghanistan Operation, quantitatively and qualitatively, and I will base my AUMF reform proposal on it. The natural experiment will measure the reform’s effectiveness by providing more detailed qualitative and quantitative data from the wars, during the conflicts’ duration. I have chosen a natural experiment because each battlefield is different, and it is practically impossible to analyse how proposed reforms would change a real-world ongoing conflict. After all, a war’s success cannot be created on paper, only on the battlefield.

## Key Terms:

Counterinsurgency – Any military and/or political action taken against the activities of guerrillas or revolutionaries; a war/conflict against non-state actors (Encyclopedia.com, n.d.).

Insurgents – Rebels or revolutionaries (Encyclopedia.com, n.d.).

The Coalition – The US-led coalition of forces, including Germany, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, France, Italy, Poland, Canada, and other countries. Mostly NATO countries, but other countries like Japan, New Zealand, and Australia played a major role (U.S. Army, 2003).

Operation Enduring Freedom – The “code-name” of the War in Afghanistan (officially, the operation lasted from 2001 to 2014, but it is often used colloquially to refer to the conflict’s entirety) (US Navy, 2020).

War on Terror – The general name of the many counterterrorism operations conducted by the United States and its Allies, in over 80 countries. Can include training, conflict, security, and/or other means (Jackson, 2023).

Non-State Actors – Organisations and/or individuals not affiliated with or controlled by a government; in this paper, these will usually mean terrorist organisations or rebel factions (Longley, 2022).

## Key Abbreviations:

DoD – US Department of Defence

USAID – US Agency for International Development

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

AUMF – Authorisation for the Use of Military Force

US SOFs – United States Special Operations Forces

ISAF – International Security Assistance Force (2001-2014)

CFC-A – Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan (*commanded all CJTFs*)

CJTF-82 – Combined Joint Task Force-82

CJTF-180 – Combined Joint Task Force-180

CJTF-76 – Combined Joint Task Force-76

CJTF-101 – Combined Joint Task Force-101

NA – Northern Alliance

HiG – Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin

ANA – Afghan National Army (*now defunct*)

ANSF – Afghan National Security Forces

FGS – Federal Government of Somalia

ICU – Islamic Courts Union (in Somalia) (*now defunct*)

AMISOM – African Union Mission in Somalia

AQAP – Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

STC – Southern Transitional Council (in Yemen)

GNC – General National Congress (in Libya) (*now defunct*)

LNA – Libyan National Army

GNA – Government of National Accord (in Libya)

GNU – Government of National Unity (in Libya)

ISIS/ISIL – Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (*aka, the Islamic State*)

## **The War Powers Act:**

- War Powers Act of 1973 – An act passed by Congress which requires the President to seek either a congressional *declaration of war* under Article I of the Constitution (not used since WWII) or a “*statutory authorisation*” if he/she wishes to use military force abroad. These statutory authorisations are referred to as Authorisations for Use of Military Force. It also allows a president to use military force abroad in ‘national emergencies’ for a limited time before an AUMF is needed (93rd Congress, 1973).
- Authorisation of Use of Military Force – An authorisation granted to the president from Congress *under the purview of the War Powers Act of 1973*. It is not a declaration of war but simply a “*statutory authorisation*” Congress gives to the president to use military force (93rd Congress, 1973) (107th Congress, 2001).

## **The 2001 AUMF:**

- An AUMF that was passed by Congress on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2001, in response to the 9/11 attacks.
- The AUMF States “That the President is authorised to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organisations, or persons he determines planned, authorised, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harboured such organisations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organisations, or persons.” (107th Congress, 2001)
- Has been used in over 22 countries to justify counterterrorism operations by the US government (with many of these operations still ongoing) (Savell, 2021).

## Literature Review:

### **The Afghanistan Operation:**

#### ***The US War on Terror in Afghanistan (The Cause):***

In 1999, UN Security Council Resolution 1267 linked the Taliban and al-Qaeda and designated them as terrorist entities and sanctioned their respective funding, travel, and arms shipments (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). Throughout the 1990s, there were bombing attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York City, a US military housing complex in Saudi Arabia, and the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya & Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (Reuters, 2011). Also, on October 12th, 2000, there was a bombing of the US warship Cole in Aden harbour, Yemen, killing twelve (Reuters, 2011). On September 11, 2001, mass casualty terrorist attacks in New York City, the DC metro area, and a plane crash in Pennsylvania occurred, setting off mass panic in Washington's political and national security landscape. In the first hours, the government was in crisis as nobody knew what had happened, the Federal Aviation Administration was grounding flights, and the Pentagon (the US Department of Defence headquarters) was severely damaged. It was soon learnt by the CIA and the FBI that al-Qaeda was responsible for the attacks (The FBI, n.d.). Almost 3,000 people (mostly Americans) died at the hands of a known terrorist organisation and policymakers felt that the US had to respond to what President Bush called "despicable acts of terror" (Bush, 2001).

Congress held an emergency session on September 14<sup>th</sup> and almost unanimously passed a joint resolution authorising military force in response to the attacks (Whitlock, 2021, p. 6). And on September 18, 2001, a week after the attack, that joint authorisation was signed into law by President Bush thus authorising him to use military force against

those responsible for the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). After the national security and intelligence community determined that al-Qaeda was responsible, the US' foreign policy shifted to centre on anti-terrorism efforts in the Middle East and Africa. The centrepiece of this policy was US involvement in Afghanistan, which began with a US and British-led bombing campaign on October 7th, 2001, (Whitlock, 2021, p. 6). The Afghanistan operation's initial goal was "to degrade the threat of terrorism against the United States and its allies" (Felbab-Brown, 2021). Bush said the war's two objectives were "to disrupt al-Qaeda's use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime," President Bush boasted to service members that the operation's goals were "defined" and that its "objectives are clear" (Whitlock, 2021, p. 6). Essentially, the national security realm wanted to defeat al-Qaeda and prevent it from re-emerging.

### ***The US War on Terror in Afghanistan (Initial Success): (2001 – 2003)***

Operation Enduring Freedom, as it was called, began on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001, with US and British forces beginning a bombing campaign against al-Qaeda and the Taliban (U.S. Army, 2003). Along with the US and British forces, Australia, Canada, France, and Germany pledged future support (US Department of State, 2001 - 2009). Uzbekistan, north of Afghanistan, provided the US with an operational base for the invasion to allow a quick beginning once forces arrived (Folse, 2022). The coalition's ground forces initially entered via northern Afghanistan, where Northern Alliance (NA) rebels against the Taliban government were located (U.S. Army, 2003). The US-led coalition sought to connect with NA commanders to "gain their assistance in overthrowing the Taliban regime" (U.S. Army, 2003). The initial plan saw special forces and intelligence officers landing in Mazar-e Sharif, Kabul, and Konduz-Taloqan (U.S. Army, 2003). Using ground troops and massive air

support, success in defeating the Taliban in the three initial northern cities was fast (U.S. Army, 2003). In Kabul (the capital), NA and US forces planned five days to take the capital, but US air support proved so effective, that the Taliban were expelled from the capital in one day (U.S. Army, 2003). As the operations in the north were underway, US-coalition air forces struck in the south of the country, targeting the Taliban’s centre in Kandahar (U.S. Army, 2003). Success here was more mixed than in the north, with operational successes and failures, but US forces still significantly weakened the Taliban and al-Qaeda (U.S. Army, 2003).

Through these initial operations, special forces had “effectively liberated six provinces of Afghanistan” all within a month and had few NATO coalition casualties (U.S. Army, 2003). US Central Command was initially concerned with repeating the mistakes of

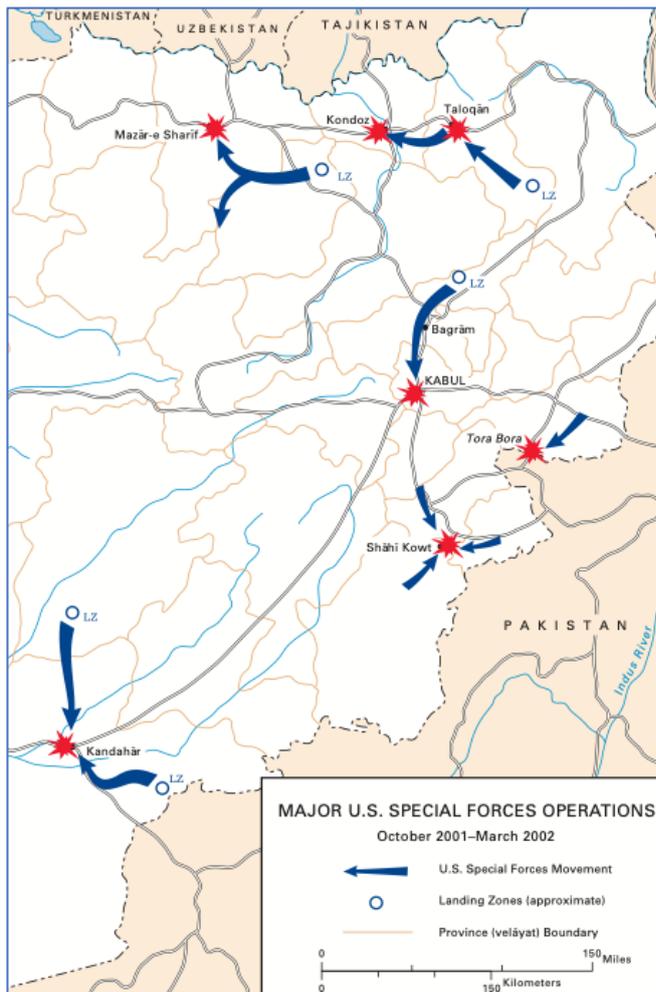


Figure 1 (Folse, 2022)

the Soviets decades earlier and thus tried to limit the visibility of US coalition forces on the ground to minimise the appearance of an occupying force (Folse, 2022). This, combined with the rather focused and efficient nature of special forces, proved very effective in the early months of the invasion as the Taliban and al-Qaeda strongholds continued to fall. Kandahar was initially targeted in late October with air assaults, but ground units were not deployed in the area until November 14<sup>th</sup> (Folse, 2022).

Strategists had long thought that it would be the hardest city to take due to its location and ethnic make-up, but as the centre of Taliban command, it needed to be liberated from the Taliban (Folse, 2022). After intense fighting, the Taliban surrendered the city in early December (Folse, 2022). The US did suffer a few casualties in this assault, however (Folse, 2022).

After the victories in the north and south, special forces moved to the Tora Bora mountains, where many Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters had retreated (Folse, 2022). Tora Bora proved to be a major centre of al-Qaeda cells which had sheltered in fortified caves (U.S. Army, 2003). Intelligence from militias had also managed to track the al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden to the Tora Bora cave complex (Folse, 2022) (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). Special forces were made to work with various unorganised anti-Taliban forces in the area (Folse, 2022). The decision to not exercise greater control over the Tora Bora operation and instead allow Afghan rebels to lead the ground operation is often questioned because it potentially allowed al-Qaeda time to regroup (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). Using the mountains and night as cover and calling air strikes during the day, US and Coalition forces eventually eliminated Taliban and al-Qaeda forces in the area (U.S. Army, 2003). With this and the capture of the major cities above, “Afghanistan was now in effect liberated” (U.S. Army, 2003). The failure to capture and/or kill Osama Bin Laden and directly attack al-Qaeda forces in the Tora Bora area would later be seen as a major policy blunder (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.).

Operation Anaconda was initiated after the initial liberation, as coalition forces began to shift attention to concealed cells of Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters and sympathisers (Folse, 2022). The Shahi Kowt valley was reported to host heavy concentrations of Taliban and al-Qaeda forces and the locals were sympathisers who tolerated the forces’ presence in the area (U.S. Army, 2003). The operation began to grow including more Afghan rebels and all

coalition countries (U.S. Army, 2003). Also, special forces began to request conventional troop units as intelligence that came from the valley reported back with increasing estimates of enemy forces in the area (U.S. Army, 2003). Eventually, the coalition was successful, and hundreds of al-Qaeda forces were killed or captured, with more assumed to have fled to Pakistan (U.S. Army, 2003).

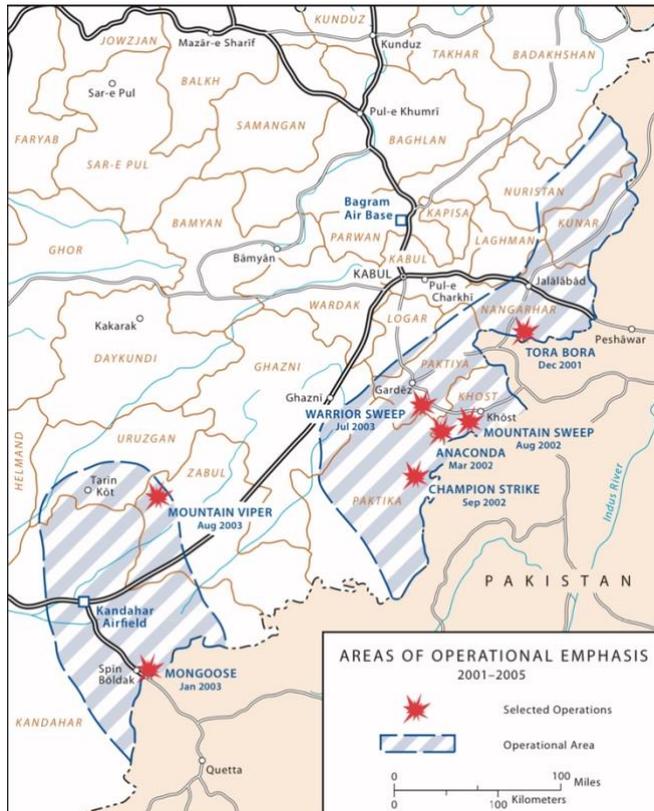


Figure 2 (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, p. 14)

In late March 2002 (after the conclusion of Operation Anaconda), Operation Mountain Lion began (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021). It was “envisioned as a three-month operation composed of week-long missions by helicopter from Bagram and Kandahar...[and] sought to identify, isolate, and destroy al-Qaeda and Taliban forces” (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, pp. 11-12). The operation relied less on Afghan forces

and airpower, and more on infantry coalition forces, in stark contrast to the now infamous mistakes made in Tora Bora (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021). In an attempt to undermine the influence of al-Qaeda and the Taliban on the Afghan people, part of the operation included humanitarian efforts by the coalition forces, the Red Cross, Care International, the Afghan government, and other third parties (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, pp. 11-12). The operation mainly centred around south-eastern Afghanistan, with British, Canadian, US, and Australian forces focusing on intelligence gathering from the abandoned caves in Tora Bora, and eliminating al-Qaeda members

seeking shelters in areas such as Kunar and Nangarhar provinces (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, p. 12). Operation Mountain Lion “prevented insurgents [and terrorists] from disrupting a meeting of Afghan tribal leaders to form a new government to replace the interim authority” (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, p. 15). Despite a widely publicised incident where a Special Forces team apparently mistook celebratory gunfire from a wedding as anti-aircraft fire, leading to the death of forty civilians and injuring others, the operation was a general success (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021).

In the summer of 2002, the CJTF-82 took over responsibility for “tactical operations” from Task Force Mountain Lion forces and saw US forces in Afghanistan increase from 7,000 in May, to over 9,000 in August (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, p. 16). The basic mission of the coalition forces remained the same from mid-2002 to autumn 2003, which was to “deny sanctuary to the enemy, disrupt the ability of al-Qaeda and the Taliban to plan and execute operations, and destroy enemy forces when in contact” (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, pp. 16-18). The CJTF-82 conducted many successful missions like Mountain Sweep and Champion Strike, resulting in capturing of al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters and a financier, weapons caches, and intelligence (documents, etc.), and discovering that the Taliban was using women and their burkas (full-body garments) to conceal and transport weapons.

In the winter, Operation Mongoose ensued, which saw coalition forces engage Hizb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (a political party and militia loosely aligned with al-Qaeda) fighters, and after heavy fighting with Norwegian air support, coalition forces found an “extensive underground complex filled with arms caches and documents, as well as food, water, and livestock” (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, p. 21). As the War in Iraq began to become US policymakers’ main concern, requests for more personnel and supplies were repeatedly denied by US Central Command. The CJTF-180 was reorganised in an attempt

to eliminate redundancies and improve efficiencies (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, pp. 38-39). However, Afghanistan already consisted of less than 10% of the forces between Afghanistan and Iraq (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, pp. 38-39).

Despite the initial success at this turning point in the war, the US found itself with virtual control over a country with no centralised or regional government, no army, and thus nobody to leave the country in the hands of (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021). The US Army itself said that “too much, however, should not be drawn from the easy collapse of the Taliban,” because much of the early success can also be attributed to the help received from the NA forces and other local groups (U.S. Army, 2003). Nonetheless, the US managed to topple the Taliban and severely weaken al-Qaeda within one year and continued to drive al-Qaeda out of the country until Mid-2003 (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021). On May 1, 2003, the US declared an end to “major combat” operations in Afghanistan (Katzman & Thomas, 2017).

### ***The US War on Terror in Afghanistan (Taliban Resurgence): (2003 – 2008)***

After President Bush declared “major combat” operations to be over, he turned his attention to reconstruction and the War in Iraq (History.com Editors, 2021). The Taliban was able to use the apparent lack of focus on Afghanistan to regroup and escalate attacks (History.com Editors, 2021). President Bush shifted the military’s focus from combat, towards training the Afghan national army/police (Kirkpatrick, Whitlock, & Vitovskaya, 2021). One notable success was Operation Warrior Sweep which saw US and Italian forces work with the ANA to target al-Qaeda members infiltrating Afghanistan via the Pakistan border (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, p. 41). Later in 2003, during Operations Mountain Viper and Viper II, US SOFs were able to kill hundreds of Taliban militants in the mountains of northern Kandahar (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, pp. 42-44). In

early and mid-2004, there were only 14,000 coalition forces present in Afghanistan, and the US Military had “spread forces thin to maintain a visible presence” throughout Afghanistan (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, p. 49). At the same time, the war was reorganised to include “five pillars” to focus on: (1) counterinsurgency operations; (2) building the Afghan National Army and Police; (3) establishing an “area of ownership” for Coalition forces; (4) building good governance/expanding the central Afghan government’s reach; and, (5) engaging with neighbouring countries (Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), over the next five years (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, p. 49).

In April 2004, new CJTF struggled with the goals saying, “we didn’t understand the insurgency...we thought we were going to kill/capture and defeat the Taliban and al-Qaeda...really, what we were confronted with was voter registration and [the 2004 Afghan election]” (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, pp. 53-55). Throughout the 2004 election, there were numerous difficulties with voter registration and democratic infrastructure, including a bombing which killed two UN employees (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, p. 56). Operations Trenton, Ticonderoga, focused on deterring Taliban and al-Qaeda election influence (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, pp. 55-57). After the election, Coalition forces assisted with protecting Afghani President-elect Hamid Karzai (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, pp. 55-57). Throughout this time and continuing into late 2005, the training programmes for the Afghan National Army were gradually expanded, and by 2005, “18,300 Afghan soldiers had graduated” (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, p. 57). The Taliban went underground from late-2004 to January 2005, as common for Afghan militias, but re-emerged in February 2005, fighting Coalition forces on multiple fronts (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, p. 60). Despite the ANA playing a more forward role in combat operations, according to the US Military, attacks by Taliban forces gradually increased throughout 2005, with the US Military stating “the war in

Afghanistan was about to enter a new, more violent phase” (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, pp. 61-64).

During the Taliban resurgence, two other local anti-Coalition militias emerged with much greater power: HiG (Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin) and the Haqqani Network (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021). These forces, with the Taliban, posed a large problem for the Coalition forces in the continuation of the counterinsurgency. At the time, the US military understood that the end goal was to “turn over stability operations to NATO” (Neumann & Williams, 2020, p. 18). To achieve this, the military continued to focus on growing the ANSF in size, strength, and public support with Operation Secure Prosperity (Neumann & Williams, 2020, pp. 18-26). US SOFs withdrew from the border with Pakistan (where they had been engaged in various counterterrorism operations) and redeployed into towns and

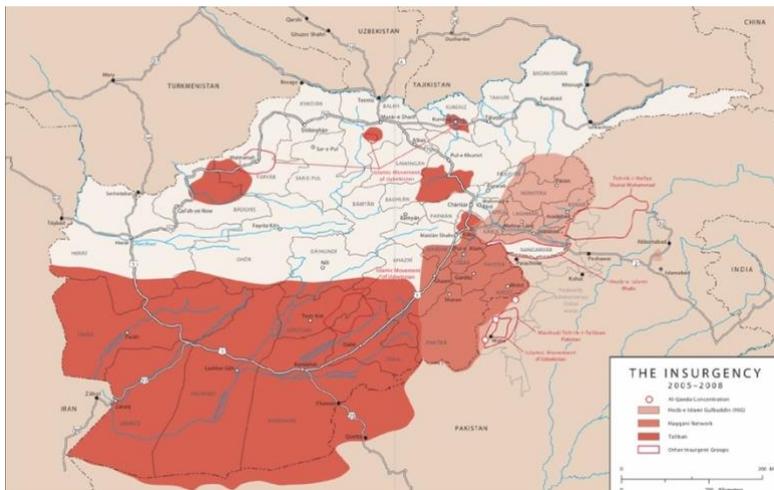


Figure 3 (Neumann & Williams, 2020)

villages with the ANSF for counterinsurgency operations and training (Neumann & Williams, 2020, pp. 24-26). In 2006, NATO and the US Military announced a plan to formalise NATO’s control (via ISAF) over nation-building and

counterinsurgency operations, with the US Military to continue leading counterterrorism operations (Neumann & Williams, 2020, p. 26). However, political issues in various European NATO countries arose regarding troop deployments, and the formalised process stalled, leaving US forces unable to focus on counterterrorism operations (Neumann & Williams, 2020). There were numerous operations throughout 2006, with the goal of working with the ANA and Coalition forces to defeat insurgents (Taliban, HiG, and

Haqqani) in key areas, so the Afghan Government could begin reconstruction and security operations there (Neumann & Williams, 2020, pp. 28-30). The Taliban grew increasingly hostile and “abandoned low-level guerrilla tactics and utilized battalion-sized elements against Coalition forces” managing to kill four Canadian servicemembers and injuring many others (Neumann & Williams, 2020, p. 38).

By the end of 2007, there were upwards of 25,000 troops in Afghanistan, however, security in-country was worsening, and the Taliban was able to rebuild itself; thus “parts of the country [grew] increasingly unstable” (Kirkpatrick, Whitlock, & Vitovskaya, 2021). Throughout 2007 and 2008, Operation Pamir Hamkari and others saw varying levels of success as the Coalition forces experienced ever-increasing levels of resistance from the Taliban and other local anti-Coalition forces, greatly contributing to the deteriorating security situation in-country (Neumann & Williams, 2020, pp. 57-69).

### ***The War in Afghanistan (Stagnation and ANSF Control): (2009 – 2020)***

In 2009, in response to the increasingly unstable situation in Afghanistan and a faltering counterinsurgency, President Obama ordered a surge of troops into Afghanistan, deploying 30,000 from the US, with an additional 20,000 from other Coalition countries (Kirkpatrick, Whitlock, & Vitovskaya, 2021). These troops were intended to end the increasingly unstable and violent nature of the war, with Obama planning to “start bringing American forces home in the middle of 2011” (Stolberg & Cooper, 2009). President Obama called the surge a “short-term, high-intensity effort to regain the initiative against the Taliban” (Stolberg & Cooper, 2009). The surge began with a raid on the insurgent-held village of Marja, in the southern province of Helmand, which was a major success and plans began for a more ambitious offensive in Kandahar (Witte, 2023). The surge was perceived as

an initial success, but US troop presence reached 100,000, and 2010 was the deadliest year of the war for US soldiers (Kirkpatrick, Whitlock, & Vitovskaya, 2021).

In May 2011, US SOFs raided a compound in Pakistan, which resulted in the killing of Osama bin Laden, the mastermind of the September 11 attacks (Kirkpatrick, Whitlock, & Vitovskaya, 2021). From 2012 to 2014, whilst continuing to train ANSF forces and conduct counterterrorism operations, the US and coalition forces began to gradually hand over control of combat operations to the ANSF and the Afghan government. Despite signs that local forces lacked the strength to keep the Taliban at bay (Kirkpatrick, Whitlock, & Vitovskaya, 2021). In October 2014, the US and UK “handed over control of two major bases – Camp Leatherneck and Camp Bastion – to the Afghan military” and on December 28, 2014, Operation Enduring Freedom officially ended with security control being handed to the ANSF (Kirkpatrick, Whitlock, & Vitovskaya, 2021).

The NATO mission that replaced Operation Enduring Freedom was two-fold: (1) Resolute Support, with NATO forces continuing to provide the ANSF with training and support and (2) Freedom’s Sentinel, with US SOFs continuing to carry out specific counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda and other terrorist organisations (with ANSF assistance) in Afghanistan (Kirkpatrick, Whitlock, & Vitovskaya, 2021). Troop numbers after

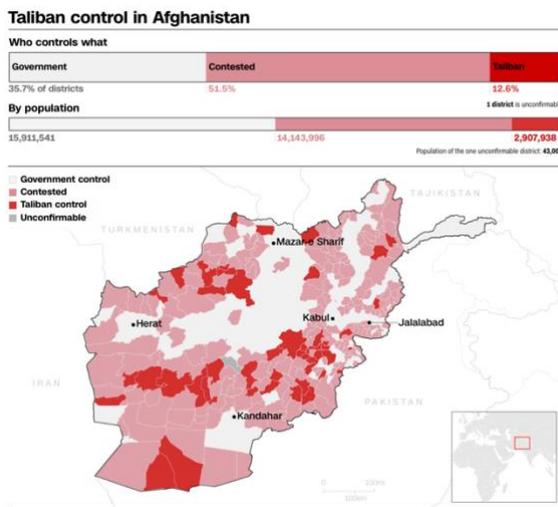


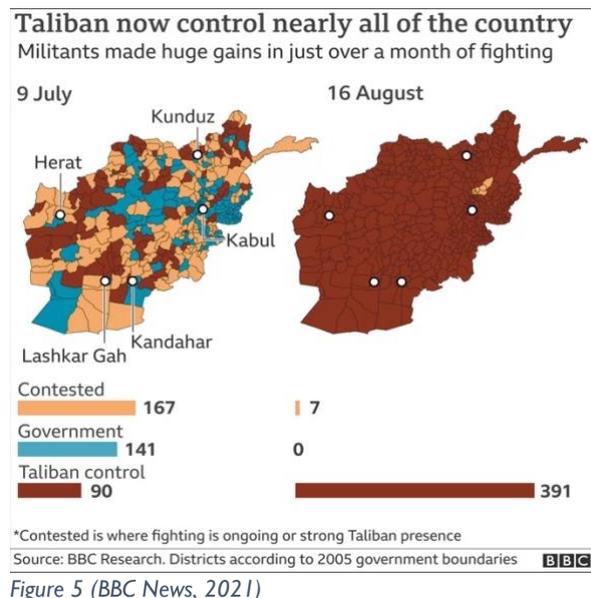
Figure 4 (Ward, Quraishi, & Abdelaziz, 2019)

2014 were reduced to under 15,000 until the war’s conclusion (Kirkpatrick, Whitlock, & Vitovskaya, 2021) (History.com Editors, 2021). In 2015, the Taliban increased its attacks, with bombings at the Afghani Parliament Building, Kabul International Airport, and other suicide bombings (History.com Editors, 2021). Low-level counterterrorism operations and ANSF

training missions continued, and President Trump authorised the Pentagon to approve combat decisions in Afghanistan (History.com Editors, 2021). In August 2017, the US “dropped its most powerful non-nuclear bomb, called the ‘mother of all bombs,’ on a remote ISIS cave complex” in Afghanistan (History.com Editors, 2021). Throughout these latter years of the war, much of the combat was centred on drone and airstrikes against al-Qaeda, ISIS, and the Taliban (Kirkpatrick, Whitlock, & Vitovskaya, 2021).

**The War in Afghanistan (The Exit): (2020 – 2021)**

Peace talks with the Taliban began in 2019 and culminated in a February 2020 treaty for US withdrawal (History.com Editors, 2021). The Afghan Government was not party to the treaty (History.com Editors, 2021). Troops in-country were to be gradually withdrawn, with the plan being to reduce forces from 5,000 to 2,500 from November 20, 2020, to January 15, 2021 (Kirkpatrick, Whitlock, & Vitovskaya, 2021). Troop withdrawals began immediately after, with a plan to exit the country entirely by May 1, 2021 (Biden, 2021). When President Biden came into office, he adhered to the treaty with the Taliban but pushed back the official exit date to the end of August 2021 (Biden, 2021). During the



withdrawal thirteen US soldiers died, and 122,000 people fled out from Kabul International Airport (which was under US control) (Stewart & Ali, 2021). After the chaotic US exit from Afghanistan, and with no treaty in place between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban, the Taliban began a major offensive, overthrowing government control in multiple regions. The Taliban

gained full control of Afghanistan by August 16, 2021 – almost two weeks before the last US troops exited the country (BBC News, 2021).

### ***A Summary of Nation-Building in Afghanistan:***

Even while fighting was winding down in the northern part of the country as early as October 2001, basic humanitarian aid (mainly food) was being distributed via cargo aircraft (U.S. Army, 2003). After Kabul fell in November 2001, the United Nations invited major Afghan groups and the former king (but not the Taliban) to a convention, where Iran, the US, and others facilitated the Bonn Agreement which established an interim government and a peacekeeping force in Kabul (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). On April 17th, 2002, Bush gave a speech signalling a pivotal shift in the war's breadth and goals. The President called for "the reconstruction of Afghanistan" (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.), "by helping to build an Afghanistan that is free from this evil and is a better place to live," (Bush, 2002). This represented a major shift in the war's dynamics, from focusing on counterterrorism and a regime toppling to reconstruction efforts and to creating a strong, centralised democracy.

Congress approved over 38 billion dollars in humanitarian and infrastructure assistance to Afghanistan from 2001-2009. The United Nations supported creating a strong centralised democracy for Afghans, as proposed by the Bush administration. The Bush administration feared that without a strong replacement government, the Taliban could regain control or the potential for a power void could otherwise allow a resurgence in terrorist activities (Katzman & Thomas, 2017). In 2005, after the first elections in the country since 1969, US President Bush and newly elected Afghan President Karzai announced that the US and Afghanistan were "strategic partners," which enhanced military

and intelligence cooperation between the two nations, and signalled an attempt to allow more autonomy to Afghanistan (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.).

A constitution was approved in January 2004 by the interim government set up by the UN. It laid out a strong presidency, a parliament with checks and balances on the executive, and a judiciary based on Sunni Muslim law (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004). Initial presidential and vice-presidential elections were held on October 9th, 2004, and initial parliamentary and provincial elections were held on September 18th, 2005 (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). Opponents of newly elected President Karzai complain of fraud in the election and 3 UN election workers were kidnapped by militants, but the election was hailed as a success (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). The powers of the provinces were rather vague, but provincial governments usually took charge of reconstruction activities. The second presidential and provincial elections were held on August 20th, 2009, and the second parliamentary elections took place on September 18th, 2010 (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). The second parliamentary elections were subject to disputes, but Afghan negotiations overturned results in some provinces to alleviate the dispute (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.).

In 2009, President Obama was inaugurated as president and reviewed the operation's policies. Obama initially narrowed the goals to near the original goals of counterterrorism and prevent Afghanistan's government from acting as a haven for terrorism but continued to extend some of the nation-building policies (Katzman & Thomas, 2017). At a conference in Bonn, Germany, in 2011, President Karzai asked Obama and the coalition for 10 billion dollars over the next ten years to assist with security and reconstruction. The conference failed to achieve its goals of laying out a "blueprint for Afghanistan's transition to a self-sustaining and secure government" (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). In 2013, after failed peace talks with the Taliban in 2012, the Afghan

government was given full security control of the country, with the NATO coalition providing support (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.).

In 2014, after a bitterly disputed election, the newly elected Afghan President Ghani and his opponent Abdullah agreed on a “national unity government,” brokered by then-US Secretary of State John Kerry, which gave Abdullah the role of chief executive (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). Parliamentary elections planned for 2014, were not held. Whilst the agreement prevented social unrest, it led to political infighting as Abdullah and Ghani struggled over their respective powers and national security appointments (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). The plan under the unity government agreement stated that after parliamentary elections, the assembly would then convene and decide if Abdullah's CEO role would transition to a prime ministership; this was intended to occur within two years (by 2016). The elections did not occur by 2016 (Katzman & Thomas, 2017). Parliamentary elections were finally held on October 4th, 2018, but the post of CEO was never converted to become a prime ministership. Presidential elections were again held in 2019, with incumbent Ghani and CEO Abdullah once again both claiming victory and both being separately inaugurated in March 2020 (BBC News, 2020). The Trump administration threatened to cut 1 billion dollars of aid unless both men could come up with a solution to the dispute in 2020 (Mashal, 2020). On May 17th, 2020, President Ghani and Abdullah signed an agreement giving Abdullah control over Taliban peace talks and appointing half the cabinet (Mashal, 2020). However, the Trump administration signed a peace deal with the Taliban itself in February 2020, which did not include the Afghan government as a party, creating confusion and essentially allowing the Taliban to wait for a US evacuation (Schanzer, 2021).

Another aspect of nation building which presented a major challenge for the US government was the lack of “professional military tradition or capabilities to establish and

sustain such a [military] force” (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, p. 26). In the fall of 2002, the US established the Office of Military Cooperation–Afghanistan which was tasked with managing the effort to create an Afghan National Army. The US, however, did not utilise any of the localise militias or warlords because of a perceived “politicised leadership” present within the militias and the US believed they would be “poor representatives of national authority” according to the US Military (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, pp. 26-27). The War in Iraq which began in 2003, also caused major leadership reshuffles within the newly created office. The initial focus was on rebuilding the Ministry of Defence and increasing the size of the army. The Afghani Army was being trained by US Special Forces, but the Iraq war did not allow any Special Forces to be spared and training responsibility was moved to rotating National Guard task forces under the CJTF-82 Phoenix Task Force (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, pp. 27-28). Other factors which continuously hampered the ANA’s effectiveness included neglecting Afghan military infrastructure, the lack of a well-planned banking system to ensure salary payments to Afghan soldiers, and poor logistics systems (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, pp. 57-58).

The initial failure of the US to create a strong, well-trained, and stable centralised military was a major blunder which gave the perception of a lack of care on the part of the US. After the initial architecture of the Afghan National Army, was created, the coalition pursued what was called a “Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration” plan, wherein warlords “relinquished most of their heavy weapons, with serviceable items helping to equip the Afghan National Army” (Neumann, Munday, & Mikolashek, 2021, p. 31). The coalition was essentially trying to integrate Afghanistan’s localised militia system into the centralised system that was being built. In theory, this would have helped to increase the knowledge

and understanding of the new Afghan National Army and provide it with new skills, manpower, supplies, and nationwide support.

## **The US War on Terror in Yemen:**

### ***Summary of the Conflict in Yemen:***

The state of Yemen that we know today was created in 1990 with the unification of the US-and-Saudi-backed Yemeni Arab Republic and the Soviet-backed People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (Robinson, 2022). Ever since then, there has been near-continuous internal conflict which has given rise to multiple terrorist organisations, including al-Qaeda, with the ability to operate in-country. One notable early development was the attack on the USS Cole which was carried out by the al-Qaeda faction operating in Yemen (which would later become the AQAP) (Robinson, 2022). In 2002, a drone strike killed Qaed Salim Sinan al-Harithi, the suspected leader behind the USS Cole attack (Bergen, Sternman, & Salyk-Virk, *The War in Yemen*, 2021). This was the only strike under the Bush administration. However, despite US counterterrorism operations in Yemen taking place since that attack in 2000, Yemen did not become a "first tier front" in the War on Terror until 2009 after a failed terror plot to down an aeroplane flying to Detroit (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Yemen*, 2022).

Initially, in 2009, there was a struggle to establish an effective counterterrorism operation, and the AQAP plotted two more aviation attacks – although both were thwarted – and continued to gain strength on the ground in Yemen (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Yemen*, 2022). Additionally, there were complicated US relations with then-Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was partly responsible for the comparatively weak US counterterrorism operation there (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Yemen*, 2022). However, after the Arab Spring movement arrived in Yemen in 2012, "a far more pliant counterterrorism partner" in President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi was put in power (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Yemen*, 2022). The

US sent Yemen's government weapons and trained its forces, conducting "one of its [the United States'] most intense counterterrorism campaigns in Yemen." (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Yemen*, 2022). US SOFs were embedded within the Yemeni forces and helped them conduct operations (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Yemen*, 2022). Frequent US airstrikes killed a series of AQAP's top operatives during this operation (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Yemen*, 2022).

Due to the poor governance of President Hadi, an Iran-backed group known as the Houthis overtook the capital of Yemen, Sana'a, and toppled the Yemeni government, kicking off an ongoing civil war. In 2015, in response to the Houthi-led overthrow, Saudi Arabia launched its own operations against the Houthis in Yemen, which had turned Yemen into the site of a proxy war between the Saudis and the US, and Iran. In the chaos, the AQAP took more territory, and this prompted the UAE and Saudi Arabia to attack AQAP operations in the south (this was backed by the US). However, it later emerged that both the Saudis and Emiratis were "also paying off AQAP, [and] enlisting it in the fight against the Houthis." (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Yemen*, 2022). This directly worked against US interests. The Houthis have maintained power in the north and the

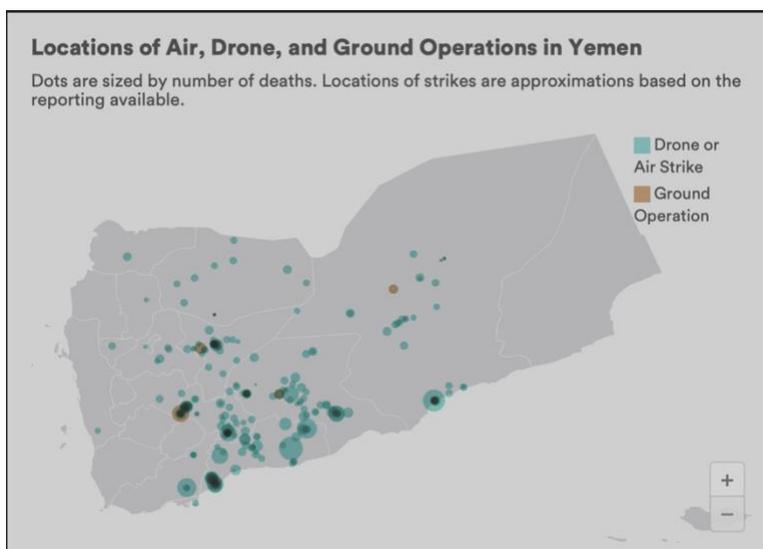


Figure 6 (Bergen, Sternman, & Salyk-Virk, *The War in Yemen*, 2021)

capital of Sana'a, but the Hadi government (and US diplomatic operations) have continued to operate in the southern city of Aden.

After a surge in US airstrikes from 2015-2018 against ISIS and AQAP, the US

had “degraded AQAP’s leadership” and “[removed] many of its top leaders and external operational experts...and supported the UAE in dislodging AQAP from its strongholds.” (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Yemen*, 2022). In 2017, President Trump designated three Yemeni provinces as “areas of active hostilities” which loosened “the battlefield restrictions of the Obama-era drone wars,” and drastically increased counterterrorism operations in Yemen (Bergen, Sternman, & Salyk-Virk, *The War in Yemen*, 2021). Since 2019, however, the US has only conducted an average of six airstrikes annually, according to the same Just Security report. In January 2021, just one day before President Trump departed office, then-US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, announced the US would unilaterally designate the Houthi movement as a terrorist organisation (Doucet, 2021). Just one month later, President Joe Biden ended that designation (Stepansky, 2021). Currently, AQAP and ISIS are much diminished in the area. President Biden has said he will end combat support for fighting the Houthis in Yemen, though his administration has continued defensive support for the Saudi-led operation, instead of focusing specifically on counterterrorism operations (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Yemen*, 2022).

### ***The US Government’s Relationship with the Yemeni Government:***

Since its inception, the US has supported the Hadi government in Yemen, but the rise of the Yemen STC (Southern Transitional Council) – another anti-Houthi group – has drastically challenged the legitimacy of President Hadi’s leadership on the anti-Houthi side of the civil war and amongst international observers (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Yemen*, 2022). Nevertheless, the US Department of State has continued to recognise the legitimacy of the Hadi government. It is also important to note that, in April

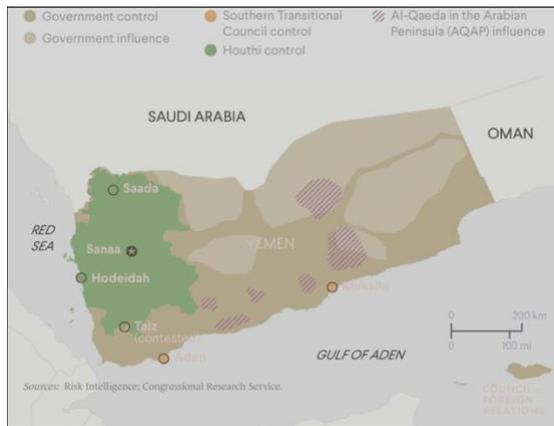


Figure 7 (Robinson, 2022)

2022, President Hadi stepped down from power and transferred control to an eight-person Presidential Leadership Council under new President Rashad al-Alimi whom the US has recognised as the legitimate leader of Yemen (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs: US

Department of State, 2022). At the same time, a nationwide ceasefire was announced (agreed upon by all sides). The ceasefire it had been extended several times, however, it ended in October 2022 after negotiations failed to extend it again (Robinson, 2022). After the Leadership Council was established, the US then named a Special Envoy for Yemen “to intensify efforts in coordination with the US to bring a negotiated end to the conflict” (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs: US Department of State, 2022).

According to the US Department of State, since the civil war began eight years ago, the US has given roughly \$4.5 billion in humanitarian aid to Yemen. It focused USAID development in areas under the control of the US-recognised government, which put the civilians in Houthi-controlled areas at considerable risk (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs: US Department of State, 2022). According to the United Nations, Yemen is currently at a “critical juncture” because although the ceasefire formally ended six months ago, Yemen has maintained “the longest period of relative calm yet in this ruinous war” (United Nations, 2023). US airstrikes in Yemen against AQAP and ISIS have greatly decreased since 2020 and negotiations for long-term peace have begun. Unfortunately, the negotiations have excluded leaders from the internationally-recognised Presidential Leadership Council and the STC (Gramer, 2023). These negotiations are simply between the Houthi rebels and the Saudi-led coalition, as Saudi Arabia seeks an exit (Gramer, 2023). Despite this absence, the White

House National Security Advisor spoke with Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Salman, on the “remarkable progress” of the negotiations (Gramer, 2023).

## **The US War on Terror in Somalia:**

### ***Summary of the Conflict in Somalia:***

A humanitarian mission in Somalia went horribly wrong when, in 1993, a battle erupted between US forces and al-Qaeda-linked organisations which – resulting in 19 US Soldiers killed, 73 injured, and hundreds of Somali civilian casualties (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Somalia*, 2022). President Bill Clinton ordered a massive pull-out from Somalia and initially utilised only the CIA for tracking al-Qaeda activities (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Somalia*, 2022). Following the US exit, Somalia destabilised more until an Islamist fundamentalist organisation called the ICU took power. By 2006 it had claimed the capital Mogadishu and many southern regions (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Somalia*, 2022). Neighbouring Ethiopia feared an Islamic government at its border and, with US backing, it joined with Somalia's Transitional Government (Bergen, Sternman, & Salyk-Virk, *The War in Somalia*, 2021). This splintered the ICU and led to the emergence of al-Shabaab, a jihadist group that was designated a terrorist group in 2008 by the US. Al-Shabaab publicly aligned with al-Qaeda and was not responsible for the 9/11 attacks (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Somalia*, 2022). However, all military action in the area was directed at al-Shabaab. Since 2007, the US airstrikes and other military operations have been justified by the US under the 2001 AUMF (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Somalia*, 2022).

From 2008 until 2014, US involvement was minimal; aiding the African Union's peacekeeping force (AMISOM). But al-Shabaab became increasingly hostile and began committing terrorist attacks outside its borders (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Somalia*, 2022). US air strikes went from fourteen deaths in 2014 to eighty-

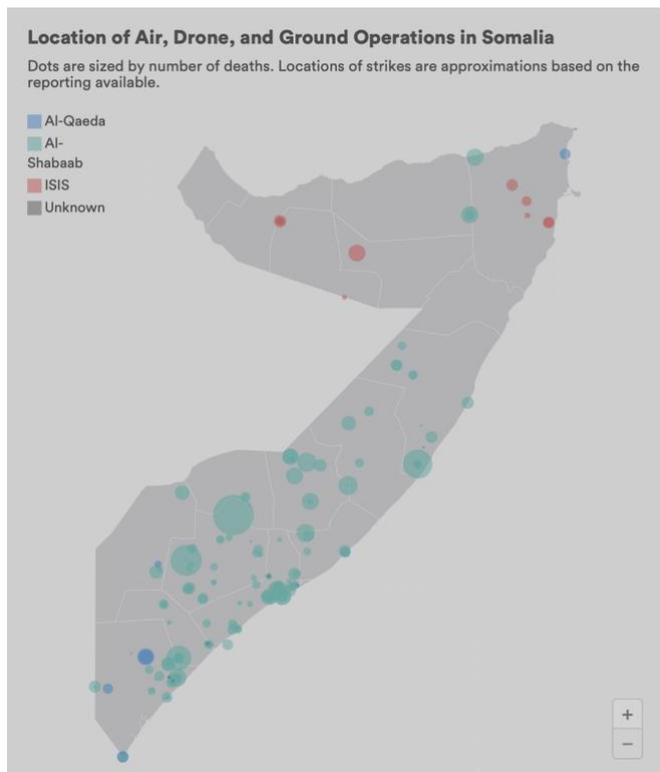


Figure 8 (Bergen, Sternman, & Salyk-Virk, *The War in Somalia*, 2021)

six in 2015, then ballooned to over 200 deaths each year from 2016 to 2018 (Bergen, Sternman, & Salyk-Virk, *The War in Somalia*, 2021). Obama also switched from striking just al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Shabaab members to targeting all al-Shabaab members, a large policy change which increased casualties (Bergen, Sternman, & Salyk-Virk, *The War in Somalia*, 2021). President Trump loosened the

regulations that Obama had put in place regarding airstrikes and significantly increased their use (Bergen, Sternman, & Salyk-Virk, *The War in Somalia*, 2021). The US notably stuck to mainly air strikes in this conflict, as opposed to a ground war as in Afghanistan. Other terrorist groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda have also been targets of US strikes, but al-Shabaab was the main target. The US' advisory support of the African Union peacekeeping was growing, and progress was being made against al-Shabaab. But terrorist attacks were still occurring, including a hotel attack in Kenya in 2019 and an attack on a US airfield in Kenya which killed three Americans (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Somalia*, 2022). In 2020, Trump ordered the withdrawal of all US troops from Somalia in an attempt to fulfil his promise to end "forever wars" (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Somalia*, 2022). President Biden then ordered more airstrikes against al-Shabaab targets in July and August 2021, paused, and then restarted strikes yet again in February 2022 (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Somalia*, 2022).

President Biden has since ordered approximately 500 troops to be deployed in Somalia (Lederman & Kube, 2022).

### ***The US Government's Relationship with the Somali Government:***

The United States' current foreign policy objectives in Somalia are “to promote political and economic stability, prevent the use of Somalia as a safe haven for international terrorism, and alleviate the humanitarian crisis caused by years of conflict, drought, flooding, and poor governance.” (Bureau of African Affairs: US Department of State, 2022). After the government's collapse in the early 1990s, the failed US intervention by President Clinton, and a subsequent power vacuum which prompted the Ethiopian intervention, the federal government of Somalia (FGS) was established which received international (and key US) backing (BBC News, 2023). The US government formally recognised the FGS in 2013 first elections since the initial 2012 process were then held in 2017 (Bureau of African Affairs: US Department of State, 2022). The US has continuously supported the state-building agenda of the FGS and supports the establishment of new democratic institutions and an eventual constitutional referendum. The relationship the US has with the FGS is vital to the continuing War on Terror in Somalia. In regard to US assistance to Somalia, the US has provided more than \$3 billion in humanitarian assistance since 2006 to help “address the problems of drought, famine, and refugees” and “to support the economic, political, and social sectors,” (Bureau of African Affairs: US Department of State, 2022). This is in combination with continued US support of the aforementioned AMISOM and support and training of the Somali national military in defeating al-Shabaab, ISIS, and al-Qaeda.

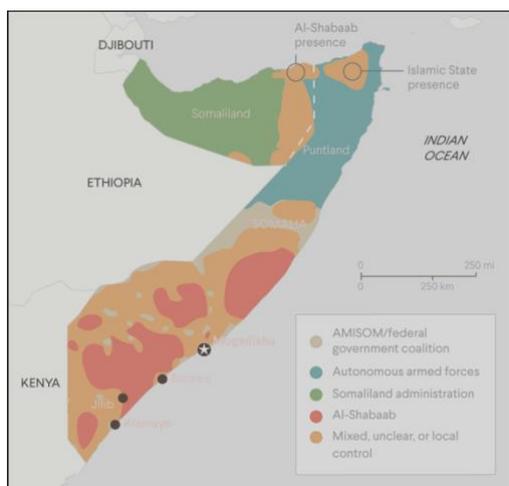


Figure 9 (Klobucista, Masters, & Sergie, *Al-Shabaab*, 2022)

A major issue regarding the US recognition of Somalia's government, remains Somaliland, in Figure 7 above, the white dashed line represents Somaliland, and the green areas are the land which Somaliland's government controls. In 1991, Somaliland declared independence and sought recognition as an independent state (Klobucista, 2018). According to the Council on Foreign

Relations, no government recognises Somaliland's independence, but in 2017, the UK, the US, France, and the EU sent representatives to Somaliland to observe their presidential election. Somaliland operates as a democratic government and has even seen peaceful transfers of power after elections (Klobucista, 2018). The recognised government of Somalia in Mogadishu has rejected Somaliland's calls for independence, instead wishing to pursue unity talks, but Somaliland's foreign minister continues to state that the two must recognise each other as independent states. One key point of the Somaliland government is that the area was once a British colony, which was reunited with the rest of Somalia (which was an Italian colony), and that the Isaaq clan in Somaliland is ethnically distinctive from other Somalis. This is a completely valid argument and the notion of an essentially functioning democracy in both a strategically important area (the Horn of Africa) and an area prone to terrorism could prove invaluable to US anti-terrorism operations. But, in order to ensure continued support for its operations, the US has neglected to recognise Somaliland and Somaliland is thus ineligible for international aid from international government organisations.

Puntland also presents a problem for the US relationship with the government of Somalia. Puntland, seen in Figure 7 in blue, is an autonomous state of Somalia, which does

not wish to be an independent state like Somaliland, but rather wishes “to be part of a federal Somalia” (BBC News, 2023). Puntland has an elected president and an independent army that is helping push back al-Shabaab in the area. Puntland has been negotiating with Somalia’s government since 2014 to try and come to a constitutional consensus and establish a federal country of Somalia that is acceptable to both sides (Garowe Online, 2023). However, the US is not playing a direct role in these negotiations. A potential constitutional consensus would strengthen the Somali government and give the US more areas to operate and access to Puntland’s currently independent military force to help in the fight against al-Shabaab. And, compounding issues, Puntland has major disputes with Somaliland over its border with no talks scheduled to resolve this (Klobucista, 2018).

## **The US War on Terror in Libya:**

### ***Summary of the Conflict in Libya:***

In 2011, in the midst of a national uprising in Libya, NATO intervened “to protect civilians from the forces of Libyan leader Muammar al-Gaddafi,” leading to the fall of the regime (Bergen, Sterman, & Salyk-Virk, *The War in Libya*, 2021). Despite the UN-sanctioned campaign’s cessation on October 31, 2011, “several countries and local militias have continued to conduct airstrikes and drone strikes intermittently” in Libya (Bergen, Sterman, & Salyk-Virk, *The War in Libya*, 2021). After the fall of Muammar al-Gaddafi in October, the GNC was elected the next year and almost immediately faced problems stemming from terrorism. The most prominent example was the now-infamous 2012 attack on the US consulate in Benghazi by the Islamist militant group Ansar al-Sharia (CFR Center for Preventive Action, 2023). The lack of a powerful Libyan government aided the spread of ISIS in the country.

In the summer of 2014, Libya was a fractured country and its transitional government, the GNC, had “failed to establish effective democratic institutions” (Saudi, Ebbs, & Alakar, 2018). Additionally, “many of the militias that had formed during the 2011 uprising [the Arab Spring] refused to disarm” (Saudi, Ebbs, & Alakar, 2018). The GNC then launched Operation Dignity, “a campaign conducted by the LNA to attack Islamist militant groups across eastern Libya, including in Benghazi” (CFR Center for Preventive Action, 2023). However, later in 2014, a fight broke out between the Dignity Coalition (an anti-Islamist group created by LNA General Haftar) and the Libyan Dawn Coalition, made up of Islamist militants – including Ansar al Sharia – leading to a full-scale civil war (Saudi, Ebbs, & Alakar, 2018). As the conflict raged on and peace talks failed, Libya’s oil export-based economy became a major target of the groups vying for power (CFR Center for Preventive

Action, 2023). The groups fought over oil fields across the country, restricting production (CFR Center for Preventive Action, 2023). On June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014, a secret raid by US Special Operations forces “captured Ahmed Abu Khatallah, a suspected leader of the attacks on a US diplomatic facility in Benghazi” (Kaplan, 2014).

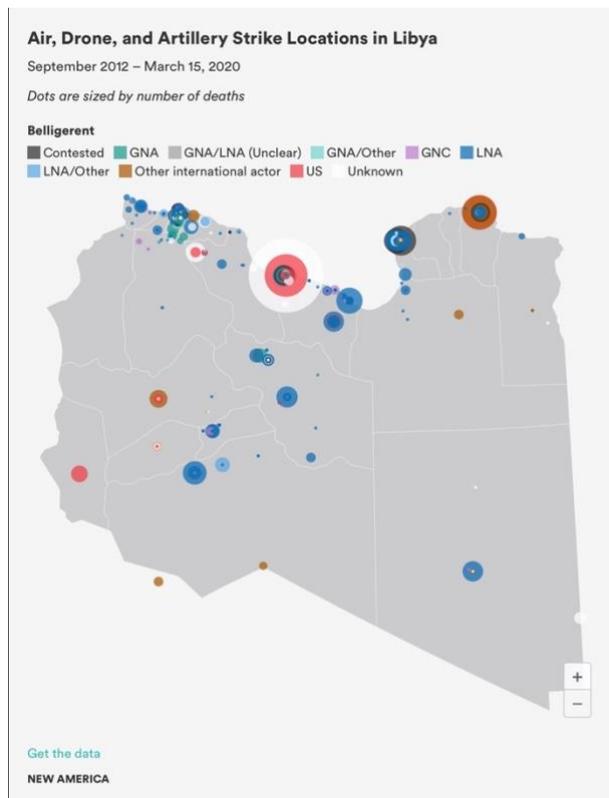


Figure 10 (Bergen, Sterman, & Salyk-Virk, *The War in Libya*,

The US has conducted periodic airstrikes against mainly ISIS targets in-country since 2014, (mainly focused on the ISIS stronghold in Sirte), but realised it needed a legitimate party to give consent for combat actions (Saudi, Ebbs, & Alakar, 2018). Thus, in 2016 when the GNA was created, it began to ensure it had consent from the GNA for further airstrike operations which it has since continued (Saudi, Ebbs, & Alakar, 2018). From August to December 2016, there were more than

495 airstrikes, carried out by US forces as part of Operation Odyssey Lightning, killing 800 to 900 ISIS fighters (Saudi, Ebbs, & Alakar, 2018). Since the initial 2016 operation, the US has continued to focus on counterterrorism with its military operations, but its complicated relationship with the GNA and other groups in Libya, has complicated the situation in-country and failed to address Libya’s other major issues (Saudi, Ebbs, & Alakar, 2018). It is also notable that, in 2018, the LNA recaptured the city of Derna, the “last outpost of Islamic State militants in eastern Libya,” but it also conducted an airstrike on Libya’s foreign ministry later that year (CFR Center for Preventive Action, 2023).

## **The US Government's Relationship with the Libyan Government:**

After Muammar al-Qaddafi's fall in October 2011, a transitional government was in place until it ceded authority to the newly formed GNC in July 2012 (CFR Center for Preventive Action, 2023). The GNC lasted only two years when a civil war in 2014 resulted in failed peace talks – led by then-UN Special Envoy to Libya, Bernardino Leon, followed by Martin Kobler (CFR Center for Preventive Action, 2023). Eventually, the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) was established in 2016 and in 2018 it declared a state of emergency, after four years of a stagnating conflict and a humanitarian crisis (CFR Center for Preventive Action, 2023). However, General Haftar and his coalition contested the legitimacy of the GNA and its governance (Bergen, Sterman, & Salyk-Virk, The War in Libya, 2021). The US government, and most of the international community, (including the UN) recognise the GNA as the legitimate government in Libya, but, to varying degrees, continue to work with Haftar's LNA and other organisations in direct conflict with UN

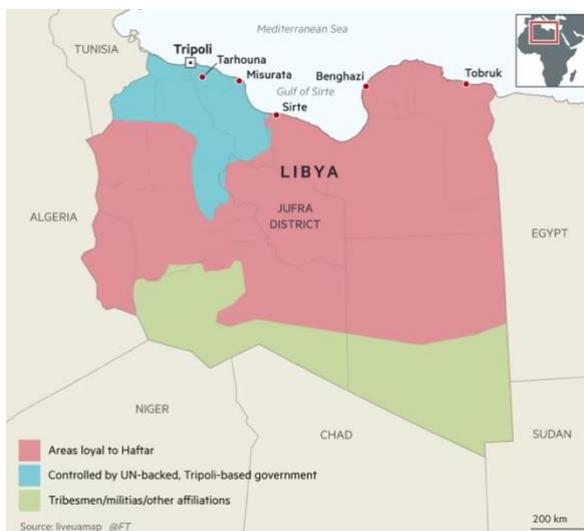


Figure 11 (Saleh & England, 2020)

Security Council Resolution 2259 (Saudi, Ebbs, & Alakar, 2018).

According to the US State Department, the US is “committed to providing assistance to build Libyan institutions, promote political reconciliation, respond to humanitarian needs, and increase Libya’s capacity to govern effectively by

holding free and fair elections, securing Libya’s territory, and managing public finances transparently and responsibly” (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs: US Department of State, 2021). Since 2011, when Gaddafi fell, the US has provided Libya with over \$900 million in assistance, with \$275 million of that being humanitarian assistance (Bureau of Near Eastern

Affairs: US Department of State, 2021). International trade is also marked as a key focus of relations by the US government, with over \$1.1 billion of two-way trade in 2019 (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs: US Department of State, 2021). In October 2020, a ceasefire, which is still holding, was signed between the two parties (BBC News, 2020). And, on March 24, 2023, a unity government (the GNU) but the US continues to not engage with the GNU and instead continues to recognise the GNA (United Nations, 2021).

## **Analysing the Failures of the Afghanistan Operation:**

### ***Lack of Information/Not Applying Knowledge of the Conflict:***

*A Failure to Distinguish between the Taliban and al-Qaeda.*

Despite the initial successes of unseating the Taliban government – who allowed al-Qaeda to operate unpunished – and eliminating swathes of al-Qaeda cells/militants, (in 2003, major combat was declared over by the Bush administration) a counterinsurgency rumbled on and bin Laden, the alleged mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, was still on the run (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). At the start of the operation, the forces treated both the Taliban and al-Qaeda as enemies. Whilst the Taliban and al-Qaeda “shared an extremist religious ideology and a mutual support pact,” they had different goals and objectives (Whitlock, 2021, p. 19). The Taliban is a group of Afghans who have run Afghanistan as a strict, conservative Islamic state before 2001, and again since 2021. They also tolerated the operations of anti-western terrorist cells (namely al-Qaeda) within their borders. Al-Qaeda, by contrast, was a group of mostly Arabs with a global presence and after the initial invasion in 2001, “few al-Qaeda followers remained in Afghanistan” with “hundreds killed or captured, whilst the rest fled to Pakistan, Iran, and other countries” (Whitlock, 2021, p. 20). The US Military wrote in its own reports that US policymakers “continued to view Afghanistan and Pakistan through the lens of the Global War on Terrorism, rather than with a regional focus...[they looked at] groups such as the Taliban...as supporters of international terrorism, not as local actors focused on specific objectives in Afghanistan and Pakistan” (Neumann & Williams, 2020). The US government and its allies failed to make the key distinction between al-Qaeda’s global focus and the Taliban’s local political reach.

The Taliban, despite its alliance with al-Qaeda, was not responsible for the 9/11 attacks. After al-Qaeda was initially defeated, US-coalition forces fought with the Taliban and

other militants, who were not directly linked to al-Qaeda. If the US had gathered and applied better intelligence, could it have meaningfully distinguished between al-Qaeda and the Taliban? That key distinction could have potentially saved money, time, US-led coalition soldiers' lives, Afghan civilians' lives, and the very Afghan institutions the US-coalition had worked to create. The US may have still pursued a nation-building programme, as discussed below, but it was potentially unnecessary to continue with the counter-insurgency strategies pursued by Bush after 2003 and Obama until 2014. Instead, whilst initial conflicts between the Taliban and the coalition forces were probably inevitable, had the US diplomatically engaged with the Taliban been pursued soon after discussing the creation of a democratic Afghan government, the Taliban may have cooperated and become a part of the government. Instead, coalition forces continued fighting the Taliban militants as insurgents.

### ***Uncertainty and Lack of Goals (Constantly Changing Policies):***

#### *A Failure to Keep the War's Policy Stable from President to President*

As seen in the progression of the nation-building programme pursued by the US, drastic changes in policies occurred from President-to-President and throughout the presidents' term(s). President Bush began conducting the operation as strictly focused on counterterrorism and regime change and later expanded to advocating for completely reconstructing the country into a centralised state. President Obama narrowed the war's focus to counterterrorism and preventing Afghanistan's reversion back to a terrorist haven, whilst continuing nation-building policies. Then, after political turmoil in Afghanistan (most likely because of over-centralisation), President Trump abandoned the government and threatened to cut aid unless a solution was found. By the time the Afghan government found a solution, he had already signed a peace deal with the Taliban, completely dooming the government's authority. However, he proved the Taliban did not have to be enemies of the

US. Finally, President Biden, who was Obama’s Vice President, continued with Trump’s exit plan, although he had pursued a completely different policy only four years previously – as part of the administration he served for eight years.

**Lack of Information (Diplomacy and Governance):**

*A Failure of the Nation-Building Policies in Afghanistan*

The Post-Taliban Afghan Government was fairly centralised and was created without attention to history or regional/local governance (Pillalamarri, 2021). Federalism and regional governance were opposed by ethnic Pashtuns and supported by Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks (Pillalamarri, 2021). This resulted in a constitution which was vague in regard to regional/local governance yet with a strong central government – an ill-advised contrast with Afghanistan’s historically localised tribal governance (Pillalamarri, 2021). Also, the Presidency of Afghanistan, like in the US or France, was made relatively strong in relation to the

Parliament (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004). The strong Presidential system was supported by Pashtuns, whilst a Westminster-style Parliamentary system, with a strong prime ministership, was preferred by the non-Pashtun ethnicities (Pillalamarri, 2021). The constitution was ultimately written in favour of Pashtun wishes – an oft-cited reason for Afghans’ lack of cohesion and of support for their new government (Pillalamarri, 2021). This was a major blow to both Operation Enduring

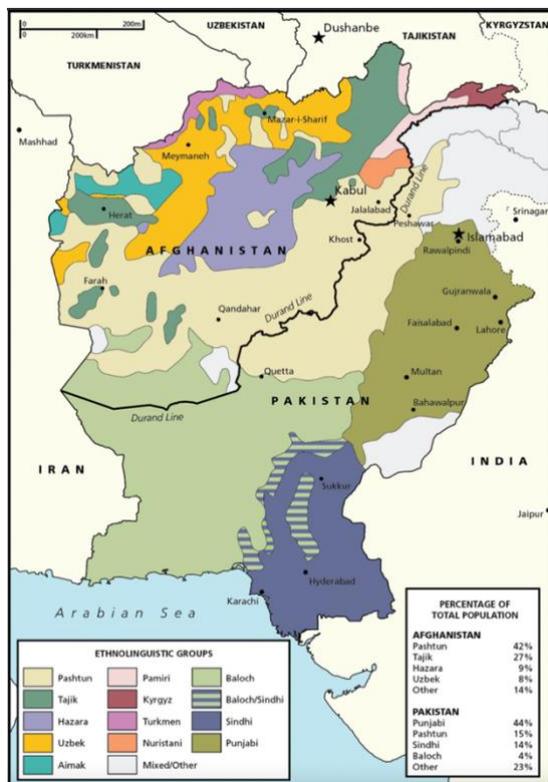


Figure 12 (National Geographic, n.d.)

Freedom and the new Afghan government and promoted local corruption and hostility between the various ethnic groups.

If the Bush Administration, NATO coalition administrations, the United Nations, and the NA had focused more on local and regional control, and minority representation, and then adhered to their nation-building plan, they may have achieved a different outcome. Also, the US assumed that the humanitarian and reconstruction aid it paid to the Afghan government would “result in speedier security gains in Afghanistan,” but because the newly-created Afghan institutions were unable to absorb the money, corruption and fraud were rife (Cheema & Fatima, 2021). Many of the NA initially trusted by the US coalition were corrupt warlords, but US saw no other option than to appoint them to positions in the new Afghan government.

## **Analysis of Similar Problems in Yemen:**

### ***Lack of Information (Diplomacy and Governance):***

#### *Failure of Diplomacy to Resolve the Yemeni Civil War and Focus on Counterterrorism*

As the civil war in Yemen continued to rage, the US initially fought both the Iran-backed Houthi rebels to aid Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as well as ISIS and AQAP. This diverted the military's focus from strict counterterrorism operations and brought the US into another counterinsurgency battle with rebels who had no direct relation to the terrorist organisations we were fighting against (This was a very similar story to US actions in Afghanistan). Later, the US withdrew its support for the Saudi and UAD-led fight against the Houthis and has continued its counterterrorism operations, but it has continuously failed to resolve the civil war, prolonging ISIS and the AQAP's ability to continue operating.

### ***Lack of Information (Conflict):***

#### *Failure to Focus on Counterterrorism and Fight Saudi Arabia's Proxy War for It*

The goal of the War on Terror was to eliminate terrorist organisations and prevent countries from becoming safe havens for said organisations. Despite this, the US decided to help Saudi Arabia in its proxy war with Iran instead of focusing on ISIS and the AQAP in Yemen (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Yemen*, 2022). The US decided to fight against the Houthi rebels under the guise of the 2001 AUMF despite the Houthi rebel's lack of connection with Al-Qaeda or ISIS (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Yemen*, 2022). This was a major strategic blunder and contributed to the wholesale destruction of Yemen, fuelling instability, allowing terrorist cells to continue to exist, and continuing Yemen's lack of a strong nationwide military (Robinson, 2022).

## **Analysis of Similar Problems in Somalia:**

### ***Lack of Information (Diplomacy and Governance):***

*Puntland and Somaliland: How Can America Fight in Somalia and Pretend Half of it Doesn't Exist?*

Somalia is not unique from the other centres of conflict in that there are rival political authorities in the country, but it is unique in the sense that these political authorities are rather stable and organised (in Somaliland especially). But rather than work on diplomacy with all three political bodies – in terms of internal issues, humanitarian needs, and counterterrorism efforts, – the US has opted to pursue diplomatic and military channels with just the Somali government and ignore the relevant Puntland and Somaliland authorities (Bureau of African Affairs: US Department of State, 2022) (BBC News, 2023) (BBC News, 2023). This puts both the country of Somalia's stability and the counterterrorism efforts on rocky ground.

### ***Lack of Information (Conflict):***

*Al-Shabaab was a US Creation: Why Are We Fighting Members Not Aligned with Al-Qaeda*

After the initial US-involved conflict in the early 2000s, al-Shabaab emerged and was labelled a terrorist organisation by the US (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Somalia*, 2022). Despite al-Shabaab having no official alliance with al-Qaeda (similar to the Taliban in Afghanistan), we continued to fight them (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Somalia*, 2022). Concurrent administrations flip-flopped on whether to target the organisation as a whole or just those with al-Qaeda ties (Hartig & Hathaway, *Still at War: The United States in Somalia*, 2022). Limiting US counterterrorism operations to just al-Qaeda, ISIS, and al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Shabaab members may still be a viable option to

refocus US counterterrorism efforts and allow the Somali government to fight al-Shabaab if it so chooses. If care was taken earlier on in the conflict, this could have been avoided.

### **Analysis of Similar Problems in Libya:**

#### ***Lack of Information (Diplomacy and Governance):***

##### *A Failure of Diplomacy and Nation Building in Libya*

Whilst the US has contained its military operations to focus on counterterrorism operations against ISIS and Ansar al-Sharia (dissolved in 2017) post-2011, it has not shown full support to the government it helped create with international partners. The US continues to work with other organisations and groups in-country (Saudi, Ebbs, & Alakar, 2018). This undermines the legitimacy of the GNA and breeds resentment of the US (and its allies) by Libyans and the GNA. It is notable that the LNA does share anti-Islamist sentiments, but also attacks the GNA (CFR Center for Preventive Action, 2023). The US' lack of diplomacy and failure to work with the GNU facilitates this cycle of civil war between two groups who share a common enemy.

#### **Uncertainty and Lack of Goals in All Three Conflicts (Constantly Changing Policies):**

##### *A Failure to Keep the Wars' Policies Stable from President to President:*

In all three of these conflicts, decisions seem to be made without ties to concrete goals, and Presidents, change goals and alter conflicts in without clear aims. Most of this uncertainty centres on enemy identification, identification of diplomatic partners, and exit strategies.

## **Natural Experiment Methodology and Policy Recommendations:**

### **Hypotheses:**

If Presidential administrations had to (1) specify enemies, political partners in-country, and goals before asking for an AUMF and (2) Congress was required to re-authorise the use of the military every two years before presidential or midterm elections, voters and service members know official war updates and be able to evaluate each presidential administration's progress (or lack thereof) in military conflicts. This would facilitate well-informed voting and military service. It would also impose reasonable limits on the use of AUMFs, in contrast to the Bush administration's, and subsequent administrations', use of the 2001 AUMF. Presidents would need to advocate for policy changes they perceive are needed during military conflicts, which would provide greater transparency regarding US military actions. Specifically identifying enemy forces and goals of military engagement from the outset of a conflict would limit unilateral Presidential actions and provide clear direction to servicemembers. I believe these policy changes would raise the likelihood of military success, resulting in greater public support for US military engagement – both during and post-conflict. Hopefully, this would lead to greater satisfaction among servicemembers and veterans. These policy changes could hopefully lower servicemember and veteran suicide rates as well.

Essentially, making AUMFs conditional upon presidential explication of specific policies would require the executive to (1) ensure sound policies/goals, and (2) specifically identify both enemies and political/governmental groups in-country – to be ratified by Congress. As explained above, this would likely increase voter and servicemember support at the outset of military conflict and servicemember understanding and buy-in regarding whom they are fighting and why. This would greatly increase the likelihood of achieving

military objectives, sustained public support, and a healthier and appreciated veteran population post-war. This would increase continuity across presidential administrations and mitigate reactionary policies in favour of long-term planning. Such continuity and long-term planning would be necessary to secure potential re-authorisation.

### **Why a Natural Experiment is Necessary:**

Because every conflict is unique and subject to varying political dynamics, a natural experiment would allow each AUMF to be tailored to Somalia and Yemen individually, with Libya serving as a control. This would allow the US to recognise the combatants and political authorities that are present in Somalia and Yemen, whilst allowing real-world progress to occur. In my analysis of these conflicts, I used two economic concepts to find very similar faults in the operations which the AUMF allowed. **Lack of information:** where a decision is made without sufficient information or without applying known information. And **uncertainty or lack of goals:** where decisions are made without any goals or with uncertainty about the desired effects of such decisions. Given that each conflict commits these economic errors in unique ways, a standardised experiment is rendered impossible, necessitating a natural experiment.

## Comparing Afghanistan to the 2003 Iraq, Gulf, and Vietnam Wars:

I chose two metrics to track the success of wars and military conflicts: voter perceptions and servicemember/veteran perceptions. It is admittedly difficult to judge the success of wars and military conflicts, however, these two metrics are useful in the context of a democracy with a volunteer military. In the political context of the US, I believe voter and servicemember/veteran approval are key to a war's success. Because wars are subject to varying conditions and circumstances, many causes of failure are unique to conflicts. However, the metrics I propose can provide numerical data, which can be compared across geographic and other demographic differences.

Using simple polls of Americans' support for a specific war or combat operation was the most uniform metric for voters' perception of a war's success. Because voters want to see good policies from their government, if a war/conflict is not supported by a majority, I would consider that a war failure in the voter's eyes. Measurements for service members and veterans were more difficult to choose. Polls of specifically deployed servicemembers were non-existent. However, I was able to find a Pew poll of pre- and post-9/11 veterans.

<b>War/Conflict</b>	<b>More than 2 Major Goal or Policy Changes?</b>	<b>Public Support for the War at its Beginning</b>	<b>Did Public Support Decline by more than 20% Mid-War?</b>	<b>Public Support Post-War</b>
<b>Afghanistan War</b>	Yes	89% in favour (Oct. 2001) <sup>5</sup>	Yes <sup>5</sup>	47% in favour and 46% opposed* (Jul. 2021)
<b>Iraq War (2003)</b>	Yes	~72% in favour (Apr. 2003) <sup>2</sup>	Yes <sup>2</sup>	43% in favour and 48% opposed* (Mar. 2018)
<b>Gulf War</b>	No	80% in favour (Jan. 1990) <sup>1</sup>	No <sup>1</sup>	63% in favour and 31% opposed (Feb. 2001) <sup>1</sup>
<b>Vietnam War</b>	Yes	60% in favour (Aug. 1965) <sup>2</sup>	Yes <sup>2</sup>	22% in favour and 74% opposed (Mar. 1990) <sup>3</sup>

<b>Table of Veteran Support &amp; Stats</b>				
<b>War/Conflict</b>	<b>More than 2 Major Goal or Policy Changes?</b>	<b>Veteran Suicide Rates Post-War (per 100k veterans)</b>	<b>Veteran's Support for the War (was it worth fighting?)</b>	<b>Do Veterans Feel Proud of their Service since leaving?</b>
<b>Afghanistan War</b>	Yes	45.3 <sup>7</sup> **	64% said no and 33% said yes (May-Jun. 2019) <sup>6</sup>	58% say yes <sup>9</sup> ***
<b>Iraq War (2003)</b>	Yes	45.3 <sup>7</sup> **	58% said no and 38% said yes (May-Jun. 2019) <sup>6</sup>	58% say yes <sup>9</sup> ***
<b>Gulf War</b>	No	18 <sup>8</sup> (1991-2004)	no available polls of veterans' support	70% say yes <sup>9</sup> ***
<b>Vietnam War</b>	Yes	22.7 <sup>10</sup> (1965-1983)	no available polls of veterans' support	70% say yes <sup>9</sup> ***

#### **Links to polls:**

<sup>1</sup><https://news.gallup.com/poll/1963/americans-believe-us-participation-gulf-war-decade-ago-worthwhile.aspx>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.pewresearch.org/2009/11/23/polling-wars-hawks-vs-doves/>

<sup>3</sup><https://news.gallup.com/poll/18097/iraq-versus-vietnam-comparison-public-opinion.aspx>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/19/iraq-war-continues-to-divide-u-s-public-15-years-after-it-began/>

<sup>5</sup><https://news.gallup.com/poll/352793/americans-split-whether-afghanistan-war-mistake.aspx>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/10/majorities-of-u-s-veterans-public-say-the-wars-in-iraq-and-afghanistan-were-not-worth-fighting/>

<sup>7</sup>[https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Suitt\\_Suicides\\_Costs%20of%20War\\_June%2021%202021.pdf](https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Suitt_Suicides_Costs%20of%20War_June%2021%202021.pdf)

<sup>8</sup><https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5230824/>

<sup>9</sup><https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/11/07/key-findings-about-americas-military-veterans/>

<sup>10</sup>[https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/veterans/pdfs/postservicemortalityamongvietnamveterans/PostserviceMortalityAmongVietnamVeterans1\\_2.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/veterans/pdfs/postservicemortalityamongvietnamveterans/PostserviceMortalityAmongVietnamVeterans1_2.pdf)

#### **What Did I Consider a Major Policy Change?**

I defined major policy changes as any major change in the war's overall goals.

Establishing goals and then meeting those goals is key to soldiers and military leaders

knowing both why and what they are doing and providing them with motivation. These

changes are often announced by the President. Changes in troop deployment, in general, do

not constitute major policy changes, in my mind, but are rather a symptom of a change in

goals.

#### **\* Notes about the Above Data: \***

- For public support at the **beginning of the war**, I chose to use the poll closest to the first day of conflict. All polls asked if respondents approved of involvement.
- For noting if public support **switched mid-war**, I looked at polling conducted throughout the war, mainly from Gallup and Pew, and if a **sustained shift** in public sentiment was seen from when the war started and when it ended, I consider that a 'Yes'. If public polling was supportive (or negative) from the wars' start to finish, I considered this a 'No'.

- For public support **after the war**, I chose to use a poll conducted at least one year after the war's conclusion. All questions asked if respondents thought the war was a mistake or if it was a mistake to get involved, or similar wording. It should be noted that, with respect to the Afghanistan conflict, since it ended two years ago in 2021, I chose to use the most recent polling data.
  - \* Note: Americans went from largely supportive to divided down the middle as the wars progressed, however, it was a significant decrease.
- Measuring veterans' feelings was difficult. I was unable to find either veteran or servicemember-specific polling about the Vietnam War. I could not find official reports on Vietnam veterans' suicide rates either, I instead relied on other medical data from the CDC to create my own non-official suicide rate. There were allegations of high suicide rates, among Vietnam veterans, but this was dismissed due to controversy (Heeney, 1991). And the government said the suicide rates were much lower, but that was also in dispute (Heeney, 1991).
  - \*\* Note: Due to the concurrence of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars, much of their veteran data is from the same pool.
  - \*\*\* Note: Pew polling of veterans' feelings of pride about their service only distinguished between pre-9/11 and post-9/11 veterans, so Gulf War and Vietnam War veterans were surveyed for a single poll.

### ***Importance of the Empirical Data:***

The data above show the stark contrast between the War in Afghanistan, Vietnam and the 2003 Iraq Wars, all of which are widely considered to be military failures, and the Gulf War, which is widely considered to be a military success. I believe adopting my proposed changes to the AUMF system will result in massive differences between public support for the War on Terror in Somalia and Yemen, versus the War on Terror in Libya. I predict that the War on Terror in Libya will result in the same type of disappointment reflected in surveys about the War in Afghanistan. In the same view, I predict that servicemember/veteran support of the three respective conflicts will yield the same divergent results – support for the War on Terror in Somalia and Yemen, and a lack of support for the War on Terror in Libya. Further, I predict that the suicide rates of servicemembers/veterans of the operations in Yemen and Somalia will decrease, whereas, in Libya, the levels will likely remain elevated.

## **Policy Recommendations to Pursue a Natural Experiment:**

### ***Biannual AUMF Reauthorisation and an Annual Policy Review/Operational Update:***

I recommend reforming the ***War Powers Act of 1973*** so that future AUMFs require Congressional reauthorisation every two years on November first, during ***election years***. If a conflict begins in the year of a midterm election, the initial explanation and details that would be given for the AUMF would suffice and the reauthorisation would not be required until the presidential election. If the AUMF is issued during a presidential election year, the same procedure would occur, and reauthorisation would not be required until the next midterm election. This would also force a newly elected president to follow the past president's policies and goals before they could propose changes to a conflict's goals/policies. In addition to the biannual re-authorisation, an annual policy review or operational update should be required for any conflict by November first as well. This would serve solely to inform Congress, voters, and the public, of the status of the war and how the administration is progressing during non-election years. During election years, and thus reauthorisation years, the policy review or operational update would serve as the basis of reauthorisation as well as to inform the public and servicemembers of changes and conflict progression.

### ***Specific Requirements that AUMFs Must Contain:***

AUMFs should target specific enemies, whether they be state actors or non-state actors, and specify other non-combatant parties. Offensive combat would thus be limited to the specified combatants. Another specification that should be required before an AUMF is granted (and reauthorised) is a set of metrics regarding progress towards goal fulfilment, or other details of an exit strategy. The nature of the exit strategy could be based on anything,

as long as it is concrete, plausible, and not dependent on a specific end date. One major difficulty in the current AUMF system is that there is no congressional recognition of any governing authority or authorities that the US would have to work with in cases of non-state actors (terrorist organisations). Thus, there are no guidelines regarding any nation-building or diplomacy that might occur. The current AUMF system also omits requirements for which organisations/groups/authorities must be included in any US-led negotiations.

### Specifications My Reform Will Require

- *Recognising Governing Authorities to Work With*
- *Specifying the Parties Which Must Be Present in Any US-Led Diplomatic Negotiations*
- *Specifying the Enemy Combatant(s) Involved in the Conflict*
- *Determining the Exit Strategy, Including Metrics for Progress Towards Goal Fulfilment (without time-bound deadlines)*

### **Congressional Testimony from Servicemembers at Every Level of Service:**

Pursuant to the above congressional policy and operational updates, congressional hearings must include testimony from servicemembers who were recently in conflict. In addition to commanders, a random selection of lower-level soldiers will be chosen to testify. Enshrined in this policy will be protections for these servicemembers' job security to ensure testimony is accurate. The penalty of perjury should also incentivise truthful, accurate testimony. Servicemembers should be asked about their knowledge of the foreign policy reasonings behind the war they are fighting in; their opinions on how military leadership is functioning in the conflict; and other key aspects. Congress should also question servicemembers directly about operational successes rather than relying solely on information from DoD officials in DC. These service members are not only serving their

country, but they are still constituents to their congresspeople Congress deserves to hear from them, and they deserve to speak to Congress.

***Better Polling of Veterans and Service Members (In Conjunction with Testimony):***

In concurrence with the testimony of veterans and servicemembers, better polling of these groups would allow Congress and the public to better understand how US troops feel during and after conflicts. I used veteran and servicemember polling data as metrics for a war's success, but it was very limited as to the data available. If the War Powers Act specified methods for the government to poll servicemembers and veterans, everyone would be better informed. And hopefully, in conjunction with Congressional reauthorisation, servicemembers and veterans would be better informed about the conflicts they are participating (or have participated) in, thus leading to more informed polling results.

## **Potential AUMF Language**

### ***Potential AUMF for the Operation in Somalia:***

**§1** The President is authorised to use all necessary and appropriate force, against al-Qaeda, ISIS and ISIS affiliates, and al-Qaeda-associated elements of al-Shabaab in Somalia provided the continued consent of the Somali Federal Government. This authorisation prevents the use of the 2001 Authorisation for Use of Military Force (Public Law 107-40) to justify any military force within the borders of Somalia.

**§2** The strategic goal of this conflict is both to significantly hinder the ability of the terrorist organisations in Section I to function and commit terrorist acts and to ensure Somalia is free from internal conflicts that may lead to the country remaining a base for terrorist organisations mentioned in Section I.

**§3** The US Department of State is tasked with working with the US Department of Defence to either secure the unification of Puntland and/or Somaliland with Somalia via a treaty agreed to by both (or all three) parties or the independence of Puntland and/or Somaliland. In the event of the independence of one or both disputed areas, the respective new governments will serve as partners in any continuing counterterrorism operations.

**§4** This authorisation is subject to renewal on November 1, 2026, and every November 1 on a biannual basis.

**§5** An annual policy review including, but not limited to, updates on combatants, updates on terrorist attacks linked to the groups listed in Section I, updates on diplomatic efforts regarding disputed areas, and testimony from at least ten drone pilots who have conducted at least one positive strike and ten US military trainers, will be conducted on Nov 1 every year until the conflict's cessation.

**§6** In the event of a rapid change in battlefield circumstances, the Secretary of Defence and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff may call an emergency congressional session if changes to this Authorisation are needed.

**§7** In the event of a two-year period without terrorist attacks tied to the groups listed in Section I, and a two-year period with no positive strikes in-country against the groups listed in Section I, Congress will call the Secretary of Defence, Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and forty randomly-selected servicemembers who have or are serving in Somalia to testify regarding a potential end to this authorisation.

**§8** All funds approved for this conflict must be spent on combat operations or training Somali security forces. Humanitarian aid must be approved separately but will be given priority so long as the US Departments of Defence and State can attest to its importance.

### **Potential AUMF for the Operation in Yemen:**

**§1** The President is authorised to use all necessary and appropriate force, against the AQAP, ISIS, and ISIS/AQAP affiliates, in Yemen provided the continued consent of the Yemeni Government(s). This authorisation prevents the use of the 2001 Authorisation for Use of Military Force (Public Law 107-40) to justify any military force within the borders of Yemen.

**§2** The strategic goal of this conflict is both to significantly hinder the ability of the terrorist organisations in Section I to function and commit terrorist acts and to ensure Yemen is free from internal conflicts that may lead to the country remaining a base for said terrorist organisations mentioned in Section I.

**§3** The US Department of State is tasked with working with the US Department of Defence to either secure the unification of Yemen via a treaty agreed to by the Houthis, the Presidential Leadership Council, and the Southern Transitional Council or the mutual partition of Yemen by the Houthis, the Presidential Leadership Council, and/or the Southern Transitional Council. In the event of the partition of the disputed areas, the respective new governments will serve as partners in any continuing counterterrorism operations.

**§4** This authorisation is subject to renewal on Nov. 1, 2026, and every Nov. 1 on a biannual basis.

**§5** An annual policy review including, but not limited to, updates on combatants, updates on terrorist attacks linked to the groups listed in Section I, updates on diplomatic efforts regarding disputed areas, and testimony from at least ten drone pilots who have conducted at least one positive strike and ten US military trainers, will be conducted on Nov 1 every year until the conflict's cessation.

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**§8** All funds approved for this conflict must be spent on combat operations or training Yemeni security forces. Humanitarian aid must be approved separately but will be given priority so long as the US Departments of Defence and State can attest to its importance.

## **Conclusion:**

By carefully analysing the War on Terror in Afghanistan, I found two major faults: (1) a lack of information and (2) uncertainty regarding the goals of the conflict. The US' failures in the Global War on Terror have happened, in part, because Presidential administrations have inconsistently identified enemy combatants and political/governing organisations in Somalia, Yemen, Libya, and Afghanistan. Strategic reform of the War Power Act's AUMF system is the best way to resolve these problems and to achieve military success in the Global War on Terror. A natural experiment to test such reforms, as well as increased polling of servicemembers/veterans, and continued polling of the general public, would prove the value of such AUMF reforms. If my predictions regarding military success and polling measures prove correct, permanent reform to the AUMF system would be the next logical step to enhance the US Military and National Security apparatus, and better prepare the US for both future and ongoing conflicts.

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