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The Political Leadership of International Security in the Middle East

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The Political Leadership of International Security in the Middle East

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The Political Leadership of International Security in the Middle East

Kelly Worthington

Thesis Statement:

How Post 9-11 American Presidents: George Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump make their decisions in the matter of international security concerning the Middle East and how their actions reflect paradigms in theories of international relations.

Abstract

International relations since the end of the Second World War has been dominated by the United States who promised free trade. This led to liberalism becoming the dominate theory in international relations, being the major guiding principle in decisions of international relations made by American Presidents. To ensure free trade amongst nations however, this required a secure world, leading the United States to act as the world's police to ensure international security for global trade. After the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Centers, dynamics of international relations changed. How Post 9/11 Presidents: Bush, Obama and Trump made their decisions can be explained using the institutionalism, constructivism and realist theories of international relations. Despite the major change 9/11 had on the international order, liberalism remains the dominate theory of international relations.

Introduction

Research Topic and Question

International relations have been practiced since interstate relations began. It has been in the form of alliances and at times, enemies. In recent decades, international relations have begun to take on broader definitions, meanings more relevant to the everyday citizen. Globalization has taken hold, giving birth to this idea of the global citizen, no longer are international relations limited to statesmen. With the end of World War II, ideas of world politics, international politics, international studies, global studies and the like have sprung up in a new global order. This global order is led by the foreign policy of the United States. At the end of the second world war, the United States prioritized global and free trade to maintain peace, to prevent a third world war. The operating factor in maintaining free global trade was securing international seas. This led the United States to develop the most powerful military the world had ever seen; international security became the chief export of the United States. But with the events of 9-11, the nature of international security changed, and sights of American foreign policy in international security were focused on the Middle East.

At the helm of American policy in international security is the Commander in Chief, the President of the United States. The Post 9-11, American President operates in a new political landscape than his predecessors in the Middle East. How do these Presidents make their decisions in matters of international security concerning the Middle East and how do their actions reflect paradigms in theories of international relations?

Importance

The purpose of this thesis is to explain how American Presidents make their decisions in the Post 9-11 world using theories of international relations. Its importance is to provide a guide to understanding the actions of political leaders on the international stage using theories of international relations. While world events are volatile and prone to unpredictable change, theoretical concepts offer a solid basis in explanation of global phenomena.

We live in an increasingly interconnected world. Twenty years ago, a terrorist recruitment video from the Middle East would likely never reach the households of suburban America. Today with the rise of social media, a terrorist group such as the Islamic State can write a tweet and send a message to be read all over the world. Understanding theories of international relations aids in responding to new technology such as social media on the international stage.

Theories of international relations ultimately provide a perspective on international relations, and thus an answer to its phenomena. There is more than one way to view international relations, for instance, the realist will have a different view than the feminist. By viewing the actions of past and the current Presidents in Post 9-11 America, it can become possible to predict the actions and consequences of the next President based on his or her perspective in international relations.

Argument and Conclusion

I present and analyze three case studies: President George Bush, institutionalism and Iraq, President Obama, constructivism and Libya, and President Trump, realism and Iran. I focus on their decisions in the Middle East, as this is where policy in international security is concentrated and can provide a picture for the rest of the world.

I ascribe institutionalism to President Bush and Iraq as Iraq was the first invasion in the declared War on Terror. To garner support in the campaign against terror, President Bush relied on all nations and the international institutions in which they sustained, building a coalition of support. In the case study of President Obama and Libya, constructivism best describes idealism that led President Obama to support the Libyan people in their resistance against the Gaddafi regime. As for President Trump, I selected his relations and stance in Iran with his withdrawal from the 2015 Iranian Nuclear Deal, explaining his decision through the lenses of realism.

I conclude by arguing that despite the differences in philosophies, Presidents Bush, Obama and Trump all make their decisions in international security under the theory of liberalism. The individual theories ascribed to each President can explain the individual, but the theory that connects the three Presidents and any future President is liberalism. Liberalism is centered around economic motivators in international relations and in the end, all three Presidents are motivated by economics factors: the need to maintain free trade amongst nations. This is a product of globalism. The unanswered question remains, will the dynamic and influence of liberalism ever shift, will a different theory of international relations surface as the dominate force in the international order?

Organization

This thesis is broken into six sections, within each section follows subsections providing details.

Methodology and Limitations

The purpose of the Methodology section is to explain how I go about deciding which case studies to use to examine the importance of theories in international relations and which examples pertaining to each President would best describe their behavior in international

security. There are roadblocks to answering the research question to which I have outlined and accounted for in the Limitations section.

Literature Review

While brief, the Literature Review section provides a grading on Presidents Bush, Obama and Trump's counterterrorism by an expert as well as the importance of geopolitics in international security. This is to give the reader additional overarching information in international security when reading the case studies.

Theoretical Framework

The Theoretical Framework section is where the theories of international relations are explained. To take a holistic approach in my analysis, I provide additional theories of international relations beyond those I assign to each President. This is to give the reader a chance to critique themselves, as in international relations, there is no single truth or perspective and to be fair, I am allowing the reader a chance to form their own conclusions in addition to my own.

To understand the nature of cause and effect in international security, I outline extremism, violence and change.

Case Studies

I provide three different case studies, each examining a Post 9-11 President and an area of the Middle East he played a greater role in. I selected Iraq for President Bush as Operation Iraqi Freedom marked the beginning of the War on Terrorism. For President Obama, I selected Libya as President Obama was the Post 9-11 President who had to deal with the beginning of the Arab Spring and Libya marked the greatest of his interventions in the Middle East concerning the

Arab Spring. And finally, I selected Iran for President Trump as he has taken a staunch position against the nation, particularly in contrast to his predecessors.

In the Case Studies section, I refrain from discussing theories of international relations and focus on painting the picture of the political landscape and situation.

Analysis

In the Analysis section, I take the previous case studies and apply theories of international relations to dissect them and explain Presidential behavior in regard to international security.

Conclusion

In my conclusion, I collect the analysis and case studies and join them together under globalism to conclude that the overarching theory of international relations applicable to all three case studies is liberalism. I then pose the question of whether or not this paradigm is permanent or will there be a change in the dynamics of the international order and how Presidents make their decisions in international security.

Methodology and Limitations

Methodology

I decided on limiting my case studies and examinations to the Presidents George Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump because their decision making in international security is not placed in the traditional landscape of former Presidents. Presidents Bush, Obama and Trump have operated in the Post 9-11 world. Their given situations may have been affected by historical context of the decisions made by pre-9-11 Presidents such as Clinton, H.W. Bush or Reagan, the players and rules of this game of international chess have changed. Post 9-11 Presidents have greater powers in a more complicated political landscape than their predecessors.

This does not mean that these Post 9-11 Presidents do not follow molds of international relations theories, as any political leader in international relations would. In my theoretical framework section, I explain extremism, violence and change and provide the thoughts of experts on Presidential foreign policy and the geopolitical situation of the United States. This information is provided as a prerequisite to understand the context of the case studies. I then provide the theories of international relations, including theories not used to analyze Presidential decision making. This is to show that there are multiple ways to view a political leader in international relations, but in specific cases, there is best way to view their decision making. This information together lays the groundwork to fully contextualize the case studies and analysis.

In selecting the case studies, I decided to focus on a single world event where the President had the most influence in his decision making. For President George Bush, this meant Iraq. I decided on Libya for President Obama. And as for President Trump, as he has presently been in office for

only two years, the options were limited as we have less results to choose from concerning his decisions in international security, I decided on his relations with Iran.

I begin my analysis by examining the decisions of each President within their case study within the most relevant theory of international relations. While using only three of the theories of international relations to assign to each President (institutionalism, constructivism, and realism), it is important to know the other theories to provide a full picture of theories in international relations. Finally, I conclude by assigning a fourth theory (liberalism) that intersects all three Post 9-11 Presidents on a macrolevel analysis. In my conclusion, I explain this in the context of globalization.

Limitations

There are certain factors that place limitations on this thesis project, they are as follows:

The Volatility of World Events and Time Frame

Due to the dynamic and often changing nature of world events, many of the political scenarios given throughout this thesis are subject to change in the future. Leaders will at times shift their policy position when presented with new information. This limitation coincides with the time frame of this thesis. I will be limiting this thesis to information available as of November 2018. Future developments and new information may disprove or add circumstances to my case studies and thus conclusion.

It is almost impossible to predict the future consequences. Data such as statistics and history can provide a glimpse or a basis for an educated guess into what may happen in the future, but it is impossible to know what exactly will happen no matter how much information one has. For example, despite the numerous experts on the Middle East the United States had, no one

predicted the Arab Spring, much less knowing that it would be started by a shopkeeper accidentally setting fire to himself.

In regard to President Trump's case study and analysis, President Trump has only been in office for two years. Because of this short space of time, his positions and limited actions are only available rather than the results of those positions and actions. Results on President Trump are considerably limited compared to President's Bush and Obama.

Access to Information

Important details in matters of national security are often classified, requiring certain clearances to access them. Information may not be revealed until years after the fact. Classified information may only be released at the whim of possible whistleblowers or leakers or may be declassified after deliberation by intelligence officials or the President of the United States. In addition to domestic state secrets held by the United States, foreign governments hold their own secrets. Some governments are hostile towards the United States, closing information off from the general public.

I am also limited to information that I can physically acquire. As all three of my case studies examine the Middle East, it is impossible for me to conduct a first-hand survey of the peoples directly affected by American foreign policy in matters of international security. I am limited to the information I was able to acquire through online resources and books that account for these experiences, primarily materials written by those who lived these experiences first hand.

Scope

The scope of this thesis is limited to the three Post 9-11 Presidents: George W. Bush, Barack H. Obama and Donald J. Trump. Discussion of historical precedence not directly related to the

given case studies and other world leaders will be kept to a minimum and at most, will only be discussed when necessary to fully analyze the leadership of the Post 9-11 Presidents. Each case study will examine a President and one country of the Middle East in which they made major decisions in. They will be discussed in the context of the theory of international relations most appropriate to them.

Personal Biases

There are multiple ways to understand what is given, there is almost never a simple, black and white outlook. While I will put in every effort to make this thesis as objective as possible, I do have my personal biases and worldview. Having served in the military for five years, I've seen the direct effect of the War on Terror on my fellow service members.

Being born in 1993, I was a child with very little understanding or knowledge of world events prior to the September 11th, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center. This attack changed the world, the world I grew up in was the post 9-11 one, the world I grew up in was dramatically different from the world my elders grew up in.

My personal political beliefs are liberal and have been shaped by my life up until this point. Despite these personal biases, I am confident that I provide a fair analysis and defend my positions in all three case studies.

Literature Review

Introduction

The conflicts taking place in the Middle East since the early 20th century have largely been political rather than religious. Following the events of 9/11, the United States has launched a long and brutal campaign across the Middle East in what became known as the War on Terror. After 17 years of conflict, there have been calls for new strategy and with it, leadership. Spanning across the Bush, Obama and now, Trump Presidencies. New threats such as cyberterrorism have risen since 9/11, presenting new challenges. Despite these new challenges, old geopolitical obstacles have remained in play. Decisions are the building blocks of a strategy, Former Ambassador to Iraq, Hamid Al-Bayati offers insight into the counterterrorism strategy of President's Bush, Obama and Trump.

Ambassador Al-Bayati on the Counterterrorism Strategy of President George Bush

“The reaction of President George W. Bush to the 9/11 terrorist attacks was to launch an ‘International War on Terror.’ This rallied the public. Yet, it was a vague definition that kept the identity of terrorists concealed and led officials in the Bush administration to claim that the United States could change many regimes in the Middle East and that they could have armed conflict anywhere.”¹

One vocal critique on the President Bush's, War on Terror, was how broadly the phrase could be applied. Ambassador Al-Bayati notes that this campaign title was useful in marketing the war on terror. President Bush enjoyed a high approval rating after the events of 9/11, giving him the

¹Hamid Bayati. *A New Counterterrorism Strategy: Why the World Failed to Stop Al Qaeda and ISIS/ISIL, and How to Defeat Terrorists*. Praeger, 2017. Page 24

chance to essentially make decisions essentially unilaterally, without much pushback from Congress. While the war on terror made for a catchy rallying cry, it poorly defined a goal, or target. The definition of terror could be applied to any person or any state. Calling this strategy shortsighted rather than a long term comprehensive global strategy, Ambassador Al-Bayati points out that this worried countries in the Middle East, that they could be targeted by the United States in its war on terror, even if they had nothing to do with the September 11th attacks. The broad scope of engagement gave a means to justify enhanced interrogation techniques that would be considered torture by the Obama administration.

Ambassador Al-Bayati on the Counterterrorism Strategy of President Barack Obama

“Part of President Obama’s strategy for counterterrorism was a reaction to President Bush’s policies that had caused outrage, concerns, and worries among governments, nongovernmental organizations, and human rights activists.”²

In other words, President Obama’s counterterrorism strategy was to be the antithesis to President Bush’s counterterrorism strategy. Where President Bush took a broad definition on the war on terror, President Obama was more specific, declaring that instead of war with terror or Islam, we were specifically at war with Al Qaeda. President Obama campaigned on bringing an end to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. President Obama would opt for drone strikes and special operations raids over land engagements and less precise air strikes. Ambassador Al-Bayati emphasized the importance of air strikes in preventing ISIS from advancing onto Iraq, noting that there is no need for boots on the ground. Ambassador Al-Bayati credits the cumulation of

² Hamid Bayati. *A New Counterterrorism Strategy: Why the World Failed to Stop Al Qaeda and ISIS/ISIL, and How to Defeat Terrorists*. Praeger, 2017. Page 26

President Obama's strategy of focusing on Al Qaeda rather than the Bush strategy of a general war on terror with the death of Osama bin Laden.

Ambassador Al-Bayati on the Counterterrorism Strategy of President Donald Trump

“A draft of President Donald Trump's new counterterrorism strategy demands that U.S. allies' shoulder more of the burden in combating extremist militants, while acknowledging that the threat of terrorism will never be totally eliminated.”³

Ambassador Al-Bayati is highly critical of President Trump when compared to his critiques on Presidents Bush and Obama, he does however, acknowledge that there are positive and negative points in President Trump's counterterrorism strategy. Ambassador Al-Bayati's large criticism is on President Trump alienating the United States from its allies, including Iraq. Stating that this has given terrorist groups the pretext to portray the United States as a religious crusade, endangering cooperation from U.S. partners. In other words, the self-alienation of the United States pushes its friends away and creates an opening for its rivals and enemies, damaging the counterterrorism defenses put into place since 9/11.

Tim Marshall on the Geopolitical Situation of the United States

“For thirty years it has been fashionable to predict the imminent or ongoing decline of the United States. This is as wrong now as it was in the past. The planet's most successful country is about to become self-sufficient in energy, it remains the preeminent economic power, and it spends

³ Hamid Bayati. *A New Counterterrorism Strategy: Why the World Failed to Stop Al Qaeda and ISIS/ISIL, and How to Defeat Terrorists*. Praeger, 2017. Page 27

more on research and development for its military that the overall military budget of all the other NATO countries combined.”⁴

The United States, in Marshall’s words, is situated on prime geopolitical real estate. Having the advantages of an island nation (such as the United Kingdom did) but additionally being geographically diverse and large. The United States has access to the European, Asian and African theaters through the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. While it has access, it can keep overseas conflict from reaching its shores, since 9/11, no government or group has been able to launch an overseas based attack onto American shores. Control of the seas is power, it is difficult enough to launch an overseas attack without taking into consideration that the United States controls the world’s oceans through its superior navy. The geopolitics of the United States gives its leaders a strategic advantage in forming their foreign policy on international security.

Theoretical Framework

⁴ Marshall, Tim. *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps That Explain Everything about the World*. Scribner Book Company, 2016. Page 89

Within the political leadership and decision making in matters of international security are key concepts and theoretical ideas. These include the theories of international relations (including its objective and subjective theories). Extremism, violence and change in addition to globalism.

Theories of International Relations

Objective Theories

Objective theories of international relations view the world as given, the world can be understood but not changed. One facet of objective international relations theories is that the facts can be seen separately from values. Schools of thought within the objective theories of international relations liberalism, realism and institutionalism.

Liberalism holds the notion that states are the driving factor in international relations. The first theory, liberalism is organized around the principle of interdependence, international law, international cooperation and international institutions. The main goals of liberalism are economic gain and cooperation. Democratic peace, an idea of Immanuel Kant, developed from liberalism. Describing the nature of affairs between liberal states, or mature liberal democracies, where there is no war. Liberalism further divides into two factions: idealism and neo-liberalism. In idealism, cooperation is natural while conflict is not. Ideas and ideals are what drive international behavior rather than the state. Neo-liberalism is more focused on the international institutions and argues that international institutions allow states to cooperate within the international system.

Realism, like liberalism, holds the notion that states are the driving factor in international relations. However, emphasis is placed on anarchy, quest for power, the security dilemma and the principle of self-help. The primary goals of realists are survival and the concentration of

power, protecting the domestic population. The principle of self-help refers to the realist belief that states are unable to rely on one another. The international system is anarchic and unpredictable, meaning there is no central authority, states hold sovereignty and autonomy of each other and will hold military power in an uncertain world. State relations are based on coercion or consent of one another. For this reason, realists say that survival is a state's priority and that the state will act in its own interest. This does not mean the state is anti-diplomatic however, the state will engage in diplomacy if necessary. As states heighten their military strength, these actions lead other states to increase their own military strength, therefore creating a need for a state to once again increase their own military strength, creating the security dilemma.

Institutionalists, much like realists, believe that the international system is anarchic, states are motivated by self-interests and uncertainty is the primary factor in international relations.

However, institutionalists believe that institutions can overcome the unpredictability of the international system and thus, cooperation can exist. Institutions bring order, reputation and credibility to states, providing information on state behavior, thereby reducing any risks or apprehensiveness associated with unpredictability.

Subjective Theories

Subjective theories of international relations view the world as what we, the society, makes it. International relations aren't simply understanding the world, as in the objective theories, it is criticizing and improving on it. Subjective theories take on a specific point of view and set of beliefs, they are normative, post-modernist theories. They include constructivism, feminism and Marxism.

Constructivism is organized around the principles of norms and ideas. The main actors are the states, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations and the people. The main goals of constructivists are solving global problems, maximizing everyone's well-being. Constructivists accept that states act on self-interest and rationality, but varying beliefs and identities, human interaction and international collaboration are the driving factors in international relations. Social norms play an active role in international relations, this phenomenon is known as the logic of appropriateness. Conversely, the logic of consequences refers to state actions motivated by rationality.

Feminism holds that international relationships are based on power, in a gender-based, vertical hierarchy. Decisions made by political leaders and their behavior on the international stage stem from their behaviors in the domestic stage. No decision nor is consequence is confined to national borders, the international is personal and intersectional.

Marxism views international relations as being governed by social classes and to understand the international system requires an understanding of a global capitalist system. Due to its complexity and scale, the social world must be viewed as a whole. Marxists view historical change as a reflection of a society's economic development. Core Marxist beliefs are centered around the means of production and the relationship between workers (proletariats) and the owners (the bourgeois).

Extremism, Violence, and Change

Extremism, violence and change is important in the decision making of political leaders in international affairs and security. Because actions carry consequences, political leaders must account for and prepare for the fallout of their decisions. The importance of understanding extremism, violence and change is vital when weighing options in international security.

Extremism

Extremism can be a pattern of thought, behavior or communication of individuals or groups, typically associated with violence. Extremists can be extremists for nationalistic, cultural, religious, moral or socioeconomic reasons, but extremists carry five characteristics:

1. They are monistic, extremists hold a single method of understanding reality.
2. They are simplistic, extremists will adopt a simple view of a complex situation, us versus them
3. Extremists paint viewpoints with colors of morality, good versus evil
4. Extremists are populists. Populism is a major recruiting component, the extremist says, "I'm one of you".
5. Finally, extremists are fear mongers, they induce a fear of the other to give their cause a base.

It is important to distinguish the extremist from the radical. While the beliefs of an extremist are found at the edge of a spectrum, the radical's beliefs may not be mainstream, but they stem from academic investigation. Radicals are willing to deliberate, extremists are anti-political.

Extremists are uncompromising and intolerant of other beliefs. Radicals may be perceived as a threat to the status quo because they seek change, their analysis is intrinsic.

Extremism originates from a contraction of authority space, the need to maintain influence over constituents, a sense of urgency and the fear of losing dominance. If a political leader's actions possibly lead to these scenarios, then within their plan must be a contingency for the rise of extremism in response to their decision.

Violence

Violence is the violation of one's rights. Violence may be direct or indirect. Direct violence is overt and interactive while indirect violence is structural – cultural and latent. Indirect violence is embedded in society. Violence holds an above and below relationship, violence from above is a force of the status quo or state while violence from below is an act of rebellion. Three theories are offered to explain violence: intrinsic theory, deviance theory and the frustration – aggression theory.

The intrinsic theory states that humans are innately aggressive, that we are driven by instinct and emotion. Opponents argue that this is a gross simplification and exaggeration, we are not constantly at war. Humans have self-control, can learn and correct mistakes.

The deviance theory suggests that we are not aggressive, and that violence is for outcasts and the mentally ill. Opponents argue that this theory undermines society's responsibility for violence.

Limiting fault to the perpetrator limits remedies for violence.

The frustration – aggression theory states that frustration builds up and leads to violence. When goals are jeopardized by external stimuli, violence ensues. The closer or more vital the goal, the greater the chances and acts of violence. Opponents argue that most deprived agents do not become violent.

Change

Conflict is inevitable in a community, conflict provides an opportunity to improve, conflict provides an opportunity to change. The dead have no conflicts. Change must be viewed in terms of systems and complexity. Change is not simplistic nor is it linear. Change goes back and forwards, top to the bottom and vice versa of power structures. Change is a study of cause and effect, change is complex and requires intrinsic analysis to be accounted for. The antithesis of violence and extremism, political leaders seek either change or sustainment with the results of their decisions.

Protest is a method used by the constituents to voice frustrations to a political leader. The essence of protest is disruption, the final goal being social change. Pressuring political leaders and power structures to legislate and enforce change. Protests are difficult to sustain, according to the Stanford Threshold Model, everyone has a threshold of their willingness to join political activism. Protesters are comprised of everyday people who must work jobs to sustain themselves, they do not have the luxury of maintaining a protest indefinitely. The status quo on the other hand, has the power of the state, professional guards who are paid and trained to resist protesters, capable of resisting indefinitely.

There are impediments to change that protesters must contend with. Impediments such as culture and tradition as well as the protest dilemma. The protest needs the support of the people.

Organizers must find balance between disruption and not losing support by alienating themselves. The authorities know this and attempt to paint the protesters as riff raffs and hooligans to alienate them.

A successful protest is nonviolent and democratic. Violence alienates the protest as an extremist movement. It is diverse and large, bringing to light issues that transverse class. It is enduring with clear goals, organized to keep bringing others into the cause.

Norms bring stability to society, setting what is appropriate behavior. Norms unify and regulate the people, constraining options outside of the norms. They can be regulative (to bring order), constructive (meant to create new actors) and evaluative (what ought to be the norm). Political change must challenge the norm, the change cannot be too great and sudden, or it could cause a relapse in society, causing civil unrest.

Using the Four Power Model, political leaders can create support for change. A comprehensive approach to develop, organize and act.

1. Power Within

- a. This is self-confidence of the political leader or of the individual. It is the sense that we can bring change

2. Power With

- a. This is collective power, organizing and solidarity. The confidence of a group to bring change.

3. Power To

- a. This is the ability to decide on what must be done and carry the action out. It connects hopes and dreams with action

4. Power Over

- a. This is the ability to win others over and persuade them to be empathetic to the cause. It is hierarchy and control.

Change is a natural part of the political process, with it comes an opportunity to improve. Those in power may resist domestic change as it poses a potential threat to their own power. In the world of international affairs and security, a political leaders' choices are always meant to bring change.

Globalism

Globalization refers to the procession of globalism, the concept of increasing international connectedness. Globalism became a major facet of world affairs after the second World War with nation-states, trade and international organizations. Technologies such as the internet and social media have connected individuals across the globe, giving rise to the international or global citizen and thus the spread of globalism.

Case Studies

Introduction

The United States has long been involved in Middle Eastern affairs. In the early 20th century, American involvement in the Middle East was limited where British and French foreign policy was the primary Western influence on the Middle East. This changed towards the end of World War II, with Europe in ruins and the Middle East in political turmoil, the United States was poised to become the dominate superpower in Middle Eastern affairs. Prior to the September 11th, 2001 attacks launched by Al-Qaeda, the Middle East was largely a Cold War battleground. Post 9/11, we would see the evolution of the War on Terror, spanning 17 years and 3 Presidencies with seemingly no viable end in sight.

In the War on Terror era, I have selected a case study on each President (Presidents Bush, Obama and Trump) and a key area of their foreign policy in the Middle East. Theories of international relations can explain their decision-making behavior. For President George Bush, I shall be examining his actions in Iraq and institutionalism. For President Barack Obama, I will be examining his policies in Libya and liberalism. And finally, for President Donald Trump, I will be examining his policies concerning Iran and realism. For all three Presidents, I will analyze their relationship in the War on Terror.

Case Study #1: President George Bush and Iraq

On March 19, 2003, President George W. Bush launched Operation Iraqi Freedom as part of the War on Terror in response to the September 11th attacks by Al-Qaeda in 2001, thus beginning the war in Iraq.

“I turned to Don Rumsfeld. ‘Mr. Secretary, for the peace of the world and the benefit and freedom of the Iraqi people, I hereby give the order to execute Operation Iraqi Freedom’... For more than a year, I tried to address the threat from Saddam Hussein without war. We had rallied an international coalition to pressure him to come clean about his weapons of mass destruction programs. We had obtained a unanimous United Nations Security Council resolution making clear there would be serious consequences for continued defiance. We had reached out to Arab nations about taking Saddam into exile. I had given Saddam and his sons a final forty-eight hours to avoid war. The dictator rejected every opportunity. The only logical conclusion was that he had something to hide, something so important that he was willing to go to war for it.”⁵

President Bush’s decision to invade Iraq can be best explained by the international relations theory of institutionalism. Institutionalists rely on institutional structures to overcome challenges and the unpredictability of an anarchic international system and foster cooperation amongst states. The Saddam Hussein regime was representative of the anarchy of the international system of which President Bush responded to. Saddam was accountable to no one, motivated by his own self-interest. The institutionalist response to Saddam would be to organize a coalition of international organizations and governments to put a check on Saddam Hussein. In the case of President Bush and his decision to invade Iraq, key institutions included the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United Nations (UN), and the European Union (EU).

The UN enacted international laws against Iraq via its United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. The UNSC had passed resolutions against Iraq in the past for the Iran-Iraq War and Persian Gulf War before finally passing resolution 1441 which provided Iraq with “a final

⁵ Bush, George W. *Decision Points*, Random House USA, 2010, Pages 223–224.

opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations”⁶. With Iraq’s failure to comply with resolution 1441, President Bush would move forward with institutionalist policy making in his decision to invade Iraq with the backing of the EU and NATO forces.

Self-interest and uncertainty are the prime factors in international relations under institutionalism. Saddam was a poster of these two factors in his thirst for power and the uncertainty felt by the Bush administration along with the rest of the world as to whether Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction and whether those weapons could fall into the hands of terrorist groups.

Case Study #2: President Barack Obama and Libya

The Arab Spring began with protests against poor living conditions, oppressive and authoritarian governments in Tunisia in 2010. These Tunisian protests would spread across the Arab world, notably into Libya. Libya had been under the control of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi for 40 years before the Arab Spring reached Libya in 2011. The protests in Libya would escalate when during a protest in Benghazi which ended with security firing on the civilians, this would mark the Libyan Civil War, a war between Gaddafi’s forces and those who wanted democracy for Libya, who would form a temporary government known as the National Transitional Council (NTC).

In a speech given at the National Defense University, President Obama had declared his support for the Libyan people and opposition to the Gaddafi regime, “We had a unique ability to stop that violence: an international mandate for action, a broad coalition prepared to join us, the support of Arab countries, and a plea for help from the Libyan people themselves.”⁷ A majority of Libyans

⁶ United Nations Security Council, “*Resolution 1441*”, United Nations, 8 November 2002. Page 3

⁷ Obama, Barack. “*Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya.*” *The White House Office of the Press Secretary, National Archives and Records Administration*, 28 Mar. 2011

(54%) approved of President Obama's leadership following the fall of Gaddafi according to a 2012 Gallup poll.⁸

On February 26th and March 17th, 2011, the UNSC adopted Resolutions 1970 and 1973 respectively. Key demands under the resolutions included establishment of a no-fly zone over Libya, a ceasefire of violence against civilians, a weapons embargo, a freeze on assets owned by authorities of the Libyan government and tightened sanctions on the Gaddafi regime.^{9,10} The resolutions would be carried out and enforced by a NATO lead coalition. The American role, under President Obama, would be code named Operation Odyssey Dawn for the implementation of a no-fly zone and afterwards would be code named Operation Unified Protector, carrying out the arms embargo via air strikes and naval blockades.

Leading up to the end of the civil war, Gaddafi was being pushed into a corner and announced willingness to negotiate with the NTC, to which the NTC declined. On October 20th, Gaddafi would be captured by rebels after fleeing from a NATO attack where he would be beaten and ultimately killed.

On September 11th, 2012, year after the fall of Gaddafi, militants raided a United States embassy in Benghazi, killing 4 Americans which included Ambassador Stevens. In 2014, the United States State Department would advise American citizens in Libya to leave the country and would place Libya on a level 4 travel advisory (do not travel), due to high levels of crime, terrorism, civil unrest and armed conflict, a warning still in place as of August 2018.¹¹ The region continues

⁸ Loschky, Jay. "Opinion Briefing: Libyans Eye New Relations With the West, U.S. approval highest ever recorded by Gallup in MENA region", Gallup, 13 August 2012.

⁹ United Nations Security Council, "Resolution 1970", United Nations, 26 February 2011.

¹⁰ United Nations Security Council, "Resolution 1973", United Nations, 17 March 2011.

¹¹ Bureau of Consular Affairs, "Travel Advisory: Libya." U.S. Department of State, 8 Aug. 2018, travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Libya.html.

to contend with instability after the death of Gaddafi as the threat of a new civil war grows with pockets of fighting as the newly established government “struggles to rein in the country’s militias.”¹² and the presence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Libya (ISIL).

Case Study #3: President Donald Trump and Iran

In 2015, Iran along with the Germany and the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council: The United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia and China (known as P5+1), reached a long-term agreement on Iran’s nuclear program. Under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or the Iranian Nuclear Deal, as it came to be known, Iran would limit its nuclear activities and allow inspections of its nuclear facilities by the global nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), monitoring Iran’s declared nuclear sites and verifying that no fissile material had been moved covertly to a secret location in order to build a bomb. In addition, the IAEA would have access to any site in the country they deemed suspicious. In return, economic sanctions imposed by the United States, European Union and United Nations would be lifted. Previous sanctions had cost Iran \$160 billion in oil revenue from 2012 to 2016 and had frozen over \$100 billion in assets. Iran’s Uranium Stockpile would have been reduced by 98% to 300kg for 15 years. Low-enriched uranium, which has a 3%-4% concentration of U-235, can be used to produce fuel for nuclear power plants. Weapons-grade uranium is 90% enriched. In July 2015, Iran had almost 20,000 centrifuges. Under the JCPOA, it was limited to installing no more than 5,060 of the oldest and least efficient centrifuges at Natanz until 2026 - 15 years after the deal's implementation in January 2016.¹³

¹² Al Jazeera, “*Is Libya on the Brink of a New Civil War?*”, Al Jazeera, 21 Oct. 2013, www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2013/10/libya-brink-new-civil-war-2013102183055736865.html.

¹³ “Iran Nuclear Deal: Key Details.” *BBC News*, BBC, 8 May 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33521655.

In 2015, then Presidential Candidate Trump would call upon Congress to stop the Iranian Nuclear Deal, calling it a “direct national security threat”¹⁴, signaling his realist approach to international relations with Iran. Due to the threat that Iran poses to Israel, President Trump believed that the JCPOA would lead to Iran acquiring nuclear weapons due to a poor oversight of its nuclear facilities and pose an even greater threat to Israel.

In May of 2018, President Trump would withdraw the United States from the Iranian Nuclear Deal and restore the sanctions the United States had lifted as part of the deal. Despite the withdrawal of the United States, this would not spell the end of the deal, as it was a deal between the P5+1 countries and Iran, not solely the United States and Iran. If the other member states of the deal adhered to the conditions of the deal, President Rouhani has agreed to continue to abide by the terms of JCPOA.

¹⁴ Trump, Donald (@realDonaldTrump). Tweet “The Iran deal poses a direct national security threat. It must be stopped in Congress. Stand up Republicans!” 16 July 2015, 12:57pm. Twitter

Analysis

Introduction

Institutionalism, constructivism and realism are theories of international relations that can best explain the international security policies of Presidents Bush, Obama and Trump. It is important to know of other theories of international relations (such as feminism and Marxism) in order to contextualize Presidents Bush, Obama and Trump. In my analysis of President Bush, Obama and Trump, I examine the efficiency of their theoretical approaches to international security. While institutionalism, constructivism and realism can best describe the aforementioned Presidents on the micro level, these three theories of international relations do not explain the greatest common factor between them: the economic factor. I therefore conclude that liberalism provides best macro level explanation of their decisions in matters of international security.

Analysis: President Bush, Institutionalism and the War on Terror

It was President Bush who initially declared the War on Terror in 2001 in response to the Al-Qaeda attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center. In a speech before Congress, President Bush called for all nations of the world to join the United States in its campaign on the war on terror, stating that "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."¹⁵, demanding more than neutrality from other nations.

The War on Terror itself was poorly and broadly defined. Former Iraqi Ambassador, Dr. Hamid Al-Bayati explains, "it was a vague definition that kept the identity of terrorists concealed and led officials in the Bush administration to claim that the United States could change many

¹⁵ Bush, George W. "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People.", National Archives and Records Administration, 20 Sept. 2001, georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html. Office of the Press Secretary

regimes in the Middle East and that they could have armed conflict anywhere”¹⁶. The Bush administration argued for the war in Iraq by three main points¹⁷:

1. Saddam Hussein potentially had weapons of mass destruction.
2. Saddam Hussein could put these weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda.
3. To liberate the Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein’s oppressive and dictatorial rule.

An institutional international system does not mean that all states will agree with one another, even when they are members of the same international institution. France and Germany for example, opposed military action in Iraq despite being members of NATO and the EU. French President Jacques Chirac pushed back against President Bush’s decision to invade Iraq by supporting a request made by the UN’s chief nuclear weapons inspector, Mohamed ElBaradei for more time to search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Institutionalism relies on the credibility of the institutions. Congress would conclude that Saddam had no weapons of mass destruction and that his refusal to cooperate with UN inspectors was the result of Saddam wanting to project an illusion of power. In a list of conclusions by the United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, “Most of the major key judgements in the Intelligence Community’s October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), *Iraq’s Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction*, either overstated, or were not supported by, the underlying intelligence reporting. A series of failures, particularly in analytical trade

¹⁶ Al-Bayati, Hamid. *A New Counterterrorism Strategy: Why the World Failed to Stop Al Qaeda and ISIS/ISIL, and How to Defeat Terrorists*. Praeger, 2017. Page 24

¹⁷ “The War on Iraq: Justifications and Motives.” News | Al Jazeera, www.aljazeera.com/archive/2003/08/2008410151856461833.html.

craft, led to the mischaracterization of the intelligence”.¹⁸ The intelligence provided in the 2002 NIE (a report prepared by ten different intelligence agencies) was the basis in President Bush’s decision to use military action in Iraq in 2003.

The weakness of institutionalism is when the institutions themselves are incompetent or unreliable. President Bush’s decision to invade Iraq would lead to a conflict and arguably worsened instability that would last for the next 17 years with a death toll of over half a million.¹⁹ States are motivated by self-interests and are subject to being incompetent and by extension, the institutions of those states can be motivated by self-interest and are subject to incompetencies as well. cannot account for state behavior because the institutions are underneath the states rather than the states being underneath the institutions. The UN, for example, has no independent power and derives its authority from its member states. If the UN passes a resolution and no states enforce it or abide by it, there is very little the institution of the UN can do in terms of issuing consequences. After an examination of President Bush’s decision to launch Operation Iraqi Freedom and the subsequent failure of meeting its goals, I believe that institutionalism is an incorrect manner of conducting international relations.

Analysis: President Obama, Constructivism and Post Civil War Libya

Institutionalism could be used to explain President Obama’s decision to intervene in the Libyan civil war for his use of the UN and a NATO coalition, however institutionalism would fail to adequately explain the philosophy and the weak points of President Obama’s policy in Libya

¹⁸ Select Committee on Intelligence, “*Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community’s Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq*”, United States Senate, 9 July 2004

¹⁹ Bump, Phillip. “Analysis | 15 Years after the Iraq War Began, the Death Toll Is Still Murky.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 20 Mar. 2018, www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2018/03/20/15-years-after-it-began-the-death-toll-from-the-iraq-war-is-still-murky/?utm_term=.161e65db865e.

even after the fall of Gaddafi. Constructivism best serves to analyze Obama policy towards Libya.

Constructivism expands on the philosophies of realism and liberalism. Like liberalism and realism, the states are still main actors but non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and the people are the central actors. Like realism, it is accepted by constructivists that states act on self-interests. What sets constructivists apart from the liberals who are concerned economics and the realists who are concerned with survival is that constructivists are concerned with global issues, rationality and the well-being of the people.

In 2009, President Obama would win the Nobel Peace Prize “his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples”.²⁰ During his 2008 Presidential campaign, Candidate Obama made promises of hope and change and his interventions in Libya were popular amongst the Libyan people who wanted change from the Gaddafi dictatorship towards a democratic government. The Libyan revolution was a people’s revolution, human interaction (the protests on the ground against Gaddafi by the Libyan people) and international collaboration (the extensive role NATO played) are driving factors in international relations according to constructivist doctrine.

However, Libya would descend into chaos after Western intervention despite President Obama’s principles of constructivism. In a 2016 Fox News interview with Chris Wallace, President Obama would express regret over Libya for “failing to plan for the day after what I think was the right thing to do in intervening in Libya,”²¹. While not believing that intervention

²⁰ The Nobel Peace Prize for 2009. NobelPrize.org. Nobel Media AB 2018. Wed. 9 October 2009. <<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2009/press-release/>>

²¹ Chris Wallace, “Fox News Sunday”. Fox News. 10 April 2016, <https://video.foxnews.com/v/4839779084001/?#sp=show-clips>

itself was wrong, President Obama believes that he and European leaders failed to account for the aftermath of Gaddafi's fall from power. Therein lay the flaw in constructivism and President Obama's plans for Libya. The constructivist approach does not adequately account for rogue, outside interventions, politics or groups in international relations. Similar to how withdrawing from Iraq created a vacuum for the Islamic State to grow in Iraq, the toppling of Gaddafi created a vacuum for political instability in Libya, allowing groups who do not share the constructivists beliefs of international collaboration and human interaction to disrupt the state of Libya.

Analysis: President Trump, Realism and Iran

In a phrase, I would describe President Trump as the anti-institutional realist. President Trump vehemently rejects the role of institutions. This is in a noticeably stark contrast to his Republican predecessor, President Bush, who embraced institutions to garner support for Operation Iraqi Freedom and the War on Terror. Compared to Presidents Bush and Obama, who could be described more flexibly with other theories of international relations aside from the theories I prescribed to them, President Trump is strictly a realist. I don't believe this to be coincidence and was one of the main reasons he acquired such strong support from his base, President Trump was a departure from the institutionalist George Bush or the constructivist Barack Obama. Realism was anti-establishment and populist theory of international relations as presented by Donald Trump during his 2016 Presidential campaign.

A realist does not believe in institutions as a guarantee against an opposing state interests and unpredictability in the international system. The Iranian Nuclear Deal was an institutionalist agreement, an inherently went against the philosophy of a realist in international relations. By providing Iran with the ability to develop its nuclear capability (even if in only for research purposes), President Trump as a realist would have been subjected to the security dilemma.

States are motivated by their own self-interests and since Iran is opposed to Israel, an ally of the United States, Iran cannot be trusted to not develop its nuclear capability to pose a threat to Israel. Due to the security dilemma, President Trump would be forced to further develop the nuclear capability of the United States to counter a possible nuclear Iran.

Alex Ward of Vox News provides three reasons as to why President Trump left the nuclear deal²² these reasons highlight the realist theory of international relations used by President Trump:

1. Iran works as an enemy of the United States, which President Obama failed to address in the deal.
2. Restrictions such as Iran having the ability to enrich uranium and its centrifuges are lifted in the deal.
3. President Trump believes he can come up with a better deal.

Realists say that survival is a state's top priority, this doesn't exclude diplomacy in state relations. While President Trump prioritizes military strength, he is not anti-diplomatic and believes he makes the best deals.²³ While open to diplomacy on his terms, state relations are ultimately based on coercion and consent in realism, which is why President Trump reinstated and placed harsh sanctions against Iran. Influenced by realists such as National Security Advisor, John Bolton, President Trump has made use of the stick rather than the carrot in international relations. Realism has been the guiding principle in President Trump's foreign policy, including matters not related to Iran, such as relations with European and North American allies compared

²² Ward, Alex. "6 Questions about the Iran Deal You Were Too Embarrassed to Ask." *Vox*, Vox, 8 May 2018, www.vox.com/2018/5/8/17319608/trump-iran-nuclear-deal-announcement-explained.

²³ Trump, Donald (@realDonaldTrump). Tweet "I make good deals. That's what I do. I would make great deals for our country" 21 May 2015, 4:56pm. Twitter

to adversaries such as Russia and North Korea. The enemy of my enemy is my friend, that is diplomacy in the realist framework.

Conclusion

The decisions made by Presidents Bush, Obama and Trump are reflections of paradigms of theories in international relations. Despite the near dramatic differences between the three Presidents and their strategies of foreign policy, American foreign policy has largely looked the same since President Bush assumed office in January 2001. We're still involved in conflicts in the Middle East, particularly Iraq and Afghanistan. Conflicts across the Middle East have only worsened since 9/11, to include multiple civil wars and the rise of the Islamic State. Even though President Obama attempted to reduce the presence of the United States in the Middle East, he was ultimately forced to stay. The same could be said for trade, the international trade policies of Presidents Bush and Obama being essentially one in the same in terms of working for the average American. President Trump has attempted to change how the United States conducted international trade, notably through his trade war with China. But with the upsets and blocks he's faced, it seems that President Trump is only par for course in typical American foreign policy, even his newly revised North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is essentially the old deal with provisions from the Tran-Pacific Partnership (TPP) included. It isn't coincidence that despite their different theoretical approaches to international relations, American foreign policy looks the same between the three Presidents.

American foreign policy since the end of World War II and the start of the Cold War, has followed a certain formula: Free trade maintained through international security in effort to maintain peace. This was the philosophy behind President Truman's 1949 Presidential Inaugural Address, securing the world by the expansion of trade, "we must carry out our plans for reducing the barriers to world trade and increasing its volume. Economic recovery and peace itself depend

on increased world trade".²⁴ In this sense, liberalism has been the overall driving theory of American international relations and it has, for most of the part, been efficient in preserving international security. For instance, once common hostilities in Europe have waned since the implementation of the Marshall Plan nor has there been a World War III. This expansion of trade and global security can be attributed to globalism.

Globalism refers to the political and social interconnectedness of the international community (the term globalization refers to the process of globalism). Liberalism leads to globalism. Since the end of the second world war, American Presidents have shaped their foreign policy around globalization. These policies have stretched President Truman's efforts to lower trade barriers, establishment of the International Trade Organization (ITO) and the signing of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), to President Clinton's NAFTA and President Obama's proposed TPP, which never passed although provisions of the TPP were included in President Trump's revised NAFTA deal.

Liberalism and neoliberalism offer a macro explanation of how Presidents George Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump have made their decisions in matters of international security concerning the Middle East. Institutionalism, constructivism and realism can explain the foreign policy of Presidents Bush, Obama and Trump respectively, however these theories of international relations do not capture the economic factors of their foreign policy that intertwine with one another. Economics matter in topics of international security, for example the migrant refugees are fleeing from Central America in part due to poverty caused by the effects of climate change on farmland or the stability of oil and oil prices from the Middle East. These issues are

¹⁰Truman, Harry. "*Truman Inaugural Address*". Harry S. Truman Presidential Library & Museum. January 20, 1949

intersectional and will continue to affect the international security decisions of future Presidents of the United States.

The trend of liberalism in American foreign policy and the marriage of international security and trade began at the end of World War II when Europe and Japan lay in ruins and the once former allies, the United States and Soviet Union, saw an opening to establish a new world order as that new world's dominate superpower. The resulting cold war would put liberal capitalism against communism. Without the events of World War II, many of the international institutions of the liberal order would not exist (such as the United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organizations, The World Bank, The International Monetary Fund). With the end of World War II, globalization, a phenomenon of liberalism, began. While individual Presidents have their own approaches to international security and foreign policy, their approach is often within the framework of liberalism. This is our destiny, ascribed by history.

Final Thoughts

What remains to be answered is whether or not American foreign policy in international security will always be bound to globalism and liberalism. Is it possible for the liberalism to be replaced as the dominate theory of international relations used to describe the behavior of American Presidents in the Middle East and going further, the world? What would need to change for the liberal order to be replaced. With populism and far right movements rising in pockets around the world, is this a threat to liberalism in international security?

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