

From Cold War Containment to a Liberal Order: Analysing US Foreign Policy Shifts through Domino Theory and Liberal Hegemony

Asma Rashid & Sadija Sušić

Abstract

This study delves into the complexities of US post-war policies in the context of world politics. We examine the impact of two major theories, the Domino Theory and Liberal Hegemony, on US post-World War II policies. While the Domino Theory has its origins in Cold War politics, post-Cold War politics revolve around ideas of Liberal Hegemony. A critical study is conducted to determine the extent to which these theories have been successful in promoting world peace and security. This investigation is complemented by a series of case studies, each highlighting instances of US intervention and regime change conducted allegedly to limit Communism. Although the US has repeatedly justified its interventionist tactics as a deterrent to Communist expansion, many of these activities went beyond conventional containment. Indeed, they were premeditated endeavours to achieve US worldwide hegemony. Regrettably, this desire for global domination has had far-reaching ramifications for international peace and security, essentially weakening the order of stability.

Keywords: Cold War, Containment, Domino Theory, Liberal Hegemony, Security, US

Dr. Asma Rashid is Lecturer at Department of Political Science & International Relations, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Sadija Sušić is an MS scholar at Department of Political Science & International Relations, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Introduction

It has been argued that the post-World war policy of the United States was grounded exclusively in the logic of containment¹. Proponents of this view argue that after the Second World War, the United States felt threatened by the rise of totalitarian communism as espoused by the Soviet Union, and to counter the hegemonic influence of the Soviet Union, the United States adopted the policy of containment. This so-called containment policy was fully endorsed by the Truman Doctrine, which was adopted by the then US President Harry Truman. The Truman Doctrine laid down the various policies the US intended to adopt to contain the Soviet Union, which also involved providing military and financial aid to countries facing 'internal' or 'external' threats from communism. However, as we shall see, the post-World war policy of the US was not plainly driven by the need to contain the Soviet Union; rather the aim was also to maintain US hegemony over important regions of the World. George Kennan, who is regarded as the main architect of the US policy of containment, appeared to have become disillusioned with the application of his policy, especially after it was used to justify the invasion of Vietnam, which Kennan strongly condemned as an unnecessary war. Likewise, the US misadventures particularly in Indochina were rather motivated by excessive reliance on the supposed wisdom of 'Domino Theory' and less so on containment.

It has been the policy of the United States to pursue regime change in several countries around the world, and the various accounts detailing US interference in other countries is not a mere conspiracy theory promoted by those who hold anti-American prejudice; contrary to that, these are facts that remain undisputed by the CIA and the American government. Most of the information detailing US interference comes from documents that were declassified by the CIA itself. During the Cold War, the policy of interference was justified on the pretext of safeguarding the world

from a 'communist takeover' and in the post-Cold War era, the United States actions were intended to be interpreted as good gesture policies aimed at 'exporting' freedom and liberal democracy in places that lacked it.

The United States, for instance, had always defended its policies of regime change in Indochina, Latin America and the Middle East as 'necessary steps' to prevent the influence of the 'totalitarian Soviet Union' and 'Communism' around the world. Moreover, the US went further by crediting itself for the downfall of the Soviet Union, along with ensuring that American-led free market liberal democracy triumphs around the world, which is the only viable way of maintaining perpetual peace. However, not everyone agrees with this narrative. Many critics of the US foreign policy such as Noam Chomsky and other scholars argue that the various policies adopted by the United States not only helped destabilize other countries but also threatened regional as well as International Security.

The Domino Theory, which was rooted in the Cold War fears of communist expansion, influenced US policies in Southeast Asia and Latin America, emphasizing military interventionism in countries like Vietnam, while adopting the policy of overthrowing left-wing governments and installing brutal dictatorships across Latin America. In contrast to Domino Theory, the concept of Liberal Hegemony arose in the post-Cold War era, calling for the global propagation of liberal democracies, and advocating military intervention to achieve this aim.

This research uses qualitative methodology. It relies primarily on scholarly books specifically those addressing the history of United States military interventions in order to conduct content analysis. The research also refers to the Truman Doctrine (1947) document along with the Pentagon Papers both of which are available at the US National Archive. Finally, the research has drawn on data taken from several newspapers and refers to commentary and opinion

piece as well. The research referred to several case studies while providing an analysis of United States Foreign Policy.

Historical Background

The United States Policy of regime changes and global interference has a long history, which can be traced back to the second half of the nineteenth century during the Spanish-American war.ⁱⁱ However, it was not until the Truman Doctrine that the United States made its official policy to get involved in conflicts and regime changes around the world. Before the Second World War and the Truman Doctrine that followed, the United States was reluctant to become involved in conflicts and thus adopted a policy to stay neutral. However, after the end of the Second World War and the triumph of allied forces, the United States saw itself as an emerging world superpower that was expected to play an active role in world politics. Furthermore, the US saw the emerging power and influence of the Soviet Union as a threat to its hegemony, and it is for this reason that various policies were adopted exclusively to counter and undermine the Soviet Union.

The Truman Doctrine was one of the policies adopted in 1947 by the then-president of the United States, Harry Truman. This doctrine completely abandoned the neutral stance of the United States when it came to world politics, and instead encouraged a policy that would aim at providing military, political, and economic assistance to any country that was facing threats ‘internally or from an external hostile force.’ⁱⁱⁱ At a first glance, the doctrine seems like a gesture of goodwill on the part of the United States, which is determined to protect liberty and human rights across the world. However, a careful analysis of the doctrine along with the US policies that followed, makes it quite clear that what the US meant by ‘internal, or external threat’ was precisely targeted at the Soviet Union and Communism. Moreover, the decades-long support for pro-US dictatorships and brutal regimes around the World indicates that the United States was not as much

concerned about democracy and human rights as these doctrines presented. This is evident from the consequences of US foreign policies around the world, which continue to have a serious impact on countries ranging from Latin America to the Middle East. It would not be an overestimation to blame the misadventures of the US Foreign Policy on the economic and immigration crisis surrounding Latin America as well as the state of perpetual instability that has engulfed the Middle East.

Domino Theory

As already mentioned, the US post-World War policy was mainly driven by what is referred to as ‘The Domino Theory’^{iv}. The Domino Theory is a geopolitical concept that is based on the following proposition; if one country experiences a political change, other countries will also be under the influence of that political change. In the context of the Cold War, this meant that if one country became communist, other countries would follow and thus the entire region would eventually fall under the domination of Communism. US policymakers were heavily influenced by the Domino Theory and used it to justify the US intervention and regime change policies in several regions around the world, most notably Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. The US relied on the domino theory and used it as a pretext to invade Vietnam, however, as we shall see later, the US faith in the domino theory backfired. Instead of containing Soviet influence in Southeast Asia, the United States’ aggressive policies towards Vietnam not only failed to prevent the communist takeover, but it also encouraged other countries such as Cambodia and Laos to become communist mainly to seek refuge from what they saw as ‘American Imperialism’.^v

Liberal Hegemony and Neoconservatives

After the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the US was expected to halt its interventionist policies, for it had emerged victorious and there remained no power left to

challenge the US hegemony. However, despite the end of the Cold War, the United States continued with its long-held policies of military intervention and regime change under the pretext of what is known as the ‘new world order’. The term became a popular way of describing a new period of history that has undergone a significant change in the balance of power in international relations. In the post-Cold War era, the term was used to describe the unipolar world dominated by the United States and US-backed Liberal Democracy.^{vi}

The triumph of US-backed liberal democracy was also celebrated in a well-known book *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) written by Francis Fukuyama, in which Fukuyama argues that after the disintegration of Soviet communism and the triumph of Western Liberal Democracy, the world had reached ‘the end of History’. In other words, Western-style democracy would eventually spread across the world even in places that never had liberal democracies.^{vii} The optimism expressed by Fukuyama and other neoconservatives like him influenced the US policymakers to adopt what is known as ‘Liberal Hegemony’. The term liberal hegemony refers to the idea that liberal democracy is universal and the best form of government that exists. Therefore, the United States has a ‘moral responsibility’ to export liberal democracy around the world, even if doing so requires overthrowing foreign governments that are hostile towards the US and its liberal ideology. Neoconservatives in the Bush administration, who later became the chief architects of the Iraq War, vigorously adopted the latter view.^{viii} Liberal Hegemony continued to influence US foreign policy and served as the dominant ideology guiding US foreign policy in places like Afghanistan, Syria, and Libya. Moreover, the US-backed colour revolutions in Eastern Europe aimed at bringing ‘liberal democracy’ to former republics of the Soviet Union were also driven by liberal hegemony. Similarly, the eastward expansion of NATO along with openly endorsing

Georgia and Ukraine's membership to the EU and NATO are deeply embedded in the idea of Liberal Hegemony.

Evaluating the Success of Domino Theory and Liberal Hegemony

The Domino theory was initially employed to prevent the spread of communism. Despite its failure to halt communist expansion in Vietnam, it deterred such an outcome in South Korea during the Korean War. Concerning Liberal Hegemony, its effectiveness can be judged through various metrics, notably the expansion of security alliances like NATO, which have facilitated liberal interventionism, exemplified by interventions in former Yugoslavia, Libya, and Afghanistan, among other instances.

The Korean War (1950-1953) and the roots of tensions in the Korean peninsula

After the Second World War, Korea was liberated from Japan and subsequently divided into two countries between the US and Soviet Union, South Korea and North Korea respectively. As a result, Joseph Stalin installed a Communist Government in North Korea under the leadership of Kim II Sung, and South Korea followed the path of US-backed Liberal free market capitalism. There is a commonly held view that the Korean War was provoked by Soviet Union-backed North Korea that aimed to invade South Korea, and that the US was "forced to intervene". However, I.F. Stone in his book *The Hidden History of the Korean War* (1952) dismisses such widely held assumptions and offers an entirely different account of the Korean War. Stone argues that, based on official accounts and declassified documents, the US was not 'taken by surprise' when the North attacked the South as it claims, instead the US was aware that 'conditions' existed in the Korean peninsula which would make war a 'likely' possibility. In other words, the US provoked North Korea to launch an invasion of South Korea. The US aimed to stop the spread of Communism in the peninsula, which is why it also sought UN sanctions against

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North Korea to destabilize the Soviet-backed Communist Government in North Korea.^{ix} Furthermore, Stone also argued that the United States did everything in its power to prevent a treaty between North and South Korea even when both parties were prepared to initiate peace.

There were many instances when North and South Korea as well as China were in favour of a peace treaty that would ensure peace by making sure that all foreign forces, including the US, withdrew from the peninsula. However, since 1953, 11 U.S. presidents have been unwilling for any such treaty to be signed.^x Moreover, the United States first deployed its nuclear weapons in South Korea in 1958, which prompted North Korea to get its nuclear weapons because it felt intimidated by the US. As a result, the Korean peninsula has ever since been in constant turmoil, and the possibility of a nuclear war continues to threaten the world order.

Vietnam War (1954-1975)

The Vietnam War was a major conflict between the communist North Vietnam and the US-backed South Vietnam. Although the war was mainly fought in Vietnam, the conflict also spread to other parts of Indochina including Cambodia and Laos.

After gaining Independence from France in 1945, the Vietcong under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh in North Vietnam sought to unite the Country, however, because the US feared that the Country would fall to communism, it was vehemently opposed to any attempts made to unify Vietnam. In its efforts to undermine communism, the US supported President Ngo Dinh Diem who favoured an American-style capitalism.

However, President Ngo, a Catholic, was very unpopular with the Buddhist Peasants in South Vietnam, who demanded land reform, which had already taken place in North Vietnam. President Ngo ignored the demand for land reform, which prompted a civil war

between the US-backed South Vietnam and North Vietnam. Initially, the US was not involved directly, however, it supported South Vietnam against the Vietcong, and in 1965 the US chose to become directly involved by invading South Vietnam.^{xi} The logic behind invading South Vietnam lies in the Domino theory. The US was concerned that if Vietnam became communist other countries would follow suit, which would then lead to a Soviet hegemony over Southeast Asia. The US believed that its military intervention in Vietnam would discourage other regional countries from adopting Communism. However, the US misadventure turned out to be a nightmare not just for the Vietnamese who suffered terrible losses but also for the US which met a humiliating defeat. The Vietnam War resulted in massive civilian as well as economic loss, and the scars of the war remain. Similarly, the US invasion of Vietnam and its subsequent bombing of Cambodia led to the rise of Communist Khmer Rouge who are responsible for committing one of the worst human atrocities ever recorded in human history.^{xii}

The Case of the Communist Cambodia

The emergence of Cambodia as a communist state led some scholars to consider the domino theory as a legitimate explanation based on accurate predictions. However, it is crucial to recall that Cambodia did not fall to communism immediately following the events in North Vietnam. Instead, it was after the devastating 'secret' bombings of Cambodia that the United States came to be widely regarded as an aggressive 'imperial power.'^{xiii} The militaristic policies adopted by the United States with respect to Indochina along with the devastating impacts of the bombings led to the eventual rise of Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.^{xiv}

The Iranian Coup D'état and the Decades-Long Iran-US Tensions

The United States and Iran's relations have been hostile since 1979. Since the 1980s, there has been no significant improvement

in ties between these two countries, the effects of which can be felt across the entire Middle East. The Iranian Revolution of 1979, which ended the Western-backed regime of Reza Shah Pahlavi and gave rise to the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, was the beginning of unfriendly relations between Iran and the US. Furthermore, the Hostage Crisis, Iran's refusal to bow down to the US hegemony, along with its growing influence in the Middle East have all contributed to the US dislike of Iran and its policy to overcome Iranian influence in the region. The animosity between Iran and the US has even led to proxy wars, for example, in the Syrian Civil War, the US and its Western allies backed anti-government forces to overthrow Bashar Al Assad who was backed by Iran.

However, the current bitter relationship between the US and Iran is not a mere coincidence, for its roots can be traced back to 1953, which was when the US decided to overthrow the democratically elected Iranian Prime Minister, Mohammed Mosaddegh. Mosaddegh attempted to nationalize Iranian oil, and this move was also fully backed by the Iranian Parliament which voted unanimously in 1951 to approve the nationalization of Iranian oil. The British, who profited through its oil companies in Iran, were viciously opposed to the idea of nationalization of Iranian oil, which it knew would hurt the profit of British-owned companies. In the wake of this, the British approached the US administration intending to convince them to overthrow Mosaddegh and install the Pro-West Shah of Iran, Reza Pahlavi as the country's leader. The coup d'état, initiated by the CIA and MI6, was successful in overthrowing Mosaddegh and installing Shah Reza Pahlavi as Iran's leader.^{xv}

The CIA also managed to garner the support of some of the local leaders for the coup, including the clergy. Mosaddegh was secular in some respects, especially when it came to the separation of religion and state, a policy which was bitterly opposed by the

religious clergy of Iran who wanted him to be overthrown. What followed the successful coup d'état was the totalitarian rule of Shah Reza Pahlavi, who oversaw the brutal crackdown on his opponents and criminalized any form of dissent, all of which qualified as gross human rights abuses. Many analysts argue that the Iranian revolution of 1979 was a huge blowback to the United States' policy of overthrowing Mosaddegh and installing the dictatorship of Shah. It is quite ironic that such a miscalculation on the part of the US helped create today's Iran, which it views as a serious threat to the stability of the Middle East along with the US dominance in the region.^{xvi}

The US Intervention in Iran in overthrowing the democratically elected prime minister also helps to explain the reason behind the bitterness that so many Iranians feel towards the US. The Iranians feel that they have learned the lesson not to trust the US ever again, which is why many of them are ready to rally behind the hardline positions that the leaders of Iran take when it comes to the US, Israel, and the Middle East as a whole. The United States has been threatening Iran with warmongering rhetoric ever since the 1980s, thinking it could force Iran into submission. Contrary to this, Iran has emerged stronger than before, with its influence spanning across the entire Middle East. The pursuit of nuclear weapons along with the uranium enrichment on the part of Iran despite the crippling US sanctions goes on to expose the miscalculation on the part of the US regarding its ability to maintain hegemony anywhere without any form of resistance. Moreover, it also shows how the various attempts of the US to exert its influence over the Middle East, rather forcefully, have resulted in instability, and soon enough the region could become a hot spot for a nuclear arms race.^{xvii}

The United States and the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt

The United States, along with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, consider the Muslim Brotherhood as 'terrorists,' and attempts are made on

the part of the US to designate them as such. The US regards the Muslim Brotherhood and their ideology as ‘radical,’ which they think threatens regional and Global peace.^{xviii} However, it was not long ago that the US regarded the Muslim Brotherhood as an important ‘ally’ against socialism and Nationalism. Robert Dreyfus, who is an American Investigative Journalist, in his famous book *The Devil's Game* (2005) offers a comprehensive account of how the US used radical extremist groups against nationalist and pro-Soviet Union leaders in the Arab World, and how this gave rise to the various terrorist groups across the Middle East.

Gamal Abdel Nasser served as Egypt’s President from 1954 till 1970, and unlike his predecessors, he was a nationalist who aimed to weaken the US influence in Egypt and the Arab World. Nasser was also popular among the Egyptian population, and one of the reasons for this was some of his socialist policies that were aimed at providing welfare for all Egyptians. The US viewed Nasser as a major threat for two reasons; first of all, he was a staunch Nationalist who was openly opposed to US hegemony in the region, and second, his socialist policies drew him closer to the Soviet Union, and the US could not tolerate Soviet Union’s influence in the Middle East at any cost. The US was not the only one to dislike Nasser, the Muslim Brotherhood hated him equally. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928 in opposition to Nasser because they were bitterly opposed to Communism, Soviet Union, and Nationalism, mostly because their ideology was based on the concept of ‘pan Islamism’. The US saw an opportunity and thus decided to use the Muslim Brotherhood against Nasser, and it was mostly done with the help of Saudi Arabia, which funded the Muslim Brotherhood for decades.^{xix}

The Muslim Brotherhood was little known in Egypt at the time, however, with the US backing and Saudi Funding, they expanded their influence over Egypt and across the Muslim World. The

Muslim Brotherhood actively engaged in activities that aimed to overthrow Nasser and unleash failed assassination attempts. Nasser banned the Muslim Brotherhood; however, it was too late because the organization was already too powerful, with its influence spanning across the Arab World. The far-reaching influence of the Muslim Brotherhood also led to the rise of extremist terrorist groups in Egypt, and one of the affiliated groups eventually assassinated the President of Egypt, Anwar el Sadat in 1981. ^{xx}

US Hegemony in Latin America and the Roots of Instability

It would not be an exaggeration to claim that the United States' interventionist foreign policy in Latin America is responsible for the Economic crisis, mass immigration, and overall instability in the region. A careful analysis of the decades-long US-backed regime change policies in Latin American countries will testify to the above claim. In 1954, the United States orchestrated a coup and overthrew the democratically elected Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz, and installed a brutal military dictatorship that would serve the national interests of the US. Jacobo Arbenz introduced land reforms that prevented powerful companies from engaging in exploitive labour practices. The United Fruit Company, which was a powerful US company in Guatemala, was opposed to land reforms because most of its profits depended on exploitive labour practices.

It is for this reason that this company convinced the US administration to overthrow Arbenz on the pretext that he was a 'Communist' just because he introduced certain reforms that intended to help the poor.^{xxi} Similarly, in yet another attempt to exert its influence over Latin America, the United States initiated a coup in 1973 that succeeded in overthrowing the democratically elected president of Chile, Salvador Allende, which then gave rise to US-backed brutal military dictator, Augusto Pinochet. Allende had initiated socialist reforms which were then used as a pretext to overthrow his 'Communist Government'.^{xxii} The military rule of

Augusto Pinochet was defined by the brutal crackdown, gross Human Rights Abuses, and mass Economic privatization that created massive inequalities and destroyed the working class of Chile.^{xxiii}

Furthermore, in 1964 a US-backed coup overthrew the democratically elected President of Brazil, Joao Goulart. This was followed by a US-backed brutal military dictatorship coming into power, that was aligned with the interests of the United States at the expense of the Brazilian population, which had to endure years of brutal torture and Human rights abuses. Joao Goulart was labelled and smeared as a 'Communist' just because he had proposed reforms that would benefit the majority of the Brazilian population. One such reform was the proposal to socialize the profits of major companies in Brazil. Both the local elite and the US did not like this idea. The reforms initiated by Goulart not only undermined the exploitive practices of private companies but also threatened the hegemony of the US in Brazil which it maintained mostly through the multinational US-backed companies. The United States was prepared to go to any lengths to ensure that its hegemonic interests were protected, even if it meant installing a brutal military dictatorship in Brazil against the wishes of the Brazilian people.^{xxiv}

John Perkins in his well-known book *Confessions of an Economic Hitman* (2004) offers a detailed account of how the American-backed contracting firms target poor third-world countries and give them huge loans in exchange for US control over the natural resources of these countries. Perkins further argues that the so-called Economic hitmen go to third-world countries and offer them huge loans, however, the loans given to these countries go to US companies, which build highways and power projects, most of which rarely benefit the majority of the poor population of these countries.^{xxv} However, when these third-world countries are unable to pay back the loans, they are then forced to sell their natural

resources like oil to the US companies at a much cheaper price. General Omar Torrijos, who was the leader of Panama, attempted to nationalize and expand the Panama Canal, thus excluding the US Companies. Similarly, Jaime Roldos, who was the President of Ecuador, was a strong proponent of nationalist policies that threatened to undermine the influence and monopoly of foreign, especially US oil companies. Jaime Roldos died on May 24, 1981, and Omar Torrijos died on July 31, the same year as Roldos, both of them killed in a plane crash. Perkins believes that this was not an accident or mere coincidence; instead, he argues that both leaders were assassinated by the United States for having the courage to resist US hegemony in Latin America. The fact that Ecuador has one of the highest numbers of immigrants going to the US is not a mere coincidence. It is quite clear that mass immigration is a result of decades-long US policies that created desperate conditions for people to flee their own countries in search of better livelihoods.

The US Intervention in Venezuela

Furthermore, the US interference in Venezuela is well documented. The rise of socialist leader, Hugo Chavez, as Venezuelan President in 1999 intensified US attempts to overthrow his government. In fact, one such attempt was made in 2002 in the form of a military coup, though it ultimately failed.

Hugo Chavez was a popular leader in Venezuela, which was partly due to his revolutionary policies that were oriented towards helping the poor people of his country. Moreover, Chavez was openly against US imperialism in Latin America and implemented policies that aimed to limit US influence in Venezuela. Venezuela has one of the world's largest oil reserves, and following Chavez's policy of nationalization, the oil industries came under the direct control of the State.^{xxvi} In order to weaken Chavez, the US imposed harsh sanctions that hurt the Venezuelan people the most and weakened the economy of the country. The harsh tactics continued

even after the death of Hugo Chavez. In fact, the United States intensified its efforts by attempting to overthrow his successor, the current Venezuelan President, Nicolás Maduro, and replace him with the openly pro-US opposition figure, Juan Guaidó. However, these attempts to overthrow Maduro failed. In response, the US escalated its actions by imposing sanctions, which continue to have crippling impact on the Venezuelan economy and have contributed to the current immigration crisis.

Some realists rejected the notion of hegemony as a compelling explanation for US policies in Latin America. Instead, they maintained that the strategic significance of Latin America, mainly due to its geographical location in the Western Hemisphere, justified the United States' interventionist policies in the region. They argued that these policies were aimed at containing Soviet expansion and protecting national security. However, this argument falls short of explaining the continued US interference in the internal affairs of Latin American countries even after the collapse of the Soviet Union.^{xxvii}

The core lesson that can be drawn from US intervention in Latin America is that not only has it destabilized the countries in the region, but it has also threatened to undermine the security of other countries that are close to the region, including that of the US. The US is facing a major influx of migrants from Central and South America, which many US officials fear will endanger the security of the United States and countries around it because there are many gang members and criminals who hide in the migrant caravans to enter the US. This also raises the concern of Drug and Child trafficking, which threatens to undermine the security of the entire region and not just of the United States.^{xxviii} Serious analysts and scholars of Latin American studies argue that the current migrant crisis, which has also increased drug and human trafficking, is the result of decades-long US foreign policy in countries like Honduras, El Salvador, Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Haiti. The

instability in Central and South American countries has not only caused the refugee crisis but has also created an environment that makes it easy for various criminal gangs, including drug and human traffickers to thrive.^{xxix}

The Invasion of Iraq

After the 9/11 attacks, the United States invaded Iraq and overthrew Saddam Hussein on the pretext that he had close ties to the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks namely Al Qaeda. The invasion of Iraq and the events before it were riddled with propaganda to the extent that lies became indistinguishable from truth. Indeed, the Media played an equally destructive role in enabling the war in Iraq; in fact, had it not been for the Media's propaganda, the US government would have hardly received any support from the American public to invade Iraq. It all began with the preverification about the 'weapons of mass destruction' and the notion that Saddam Hussein had nuclear weapons, and since he was alleged to have close ties with Al Qaeda, the latter could use the weapons of mass destruction against the US. The US media, including the reputable *New York Times*, unquestionably endorsed the unverified claims that Saddam Hussein had Weapons of Mass Destruction. The media went further to advocate the invasion of Iraq and spread propaganda as to why the war was necessary in order to protect National Security, which played a major role in shaping the public perception of the war.^{xxx} However, it became evident later that not only was Saddam Hussein not in possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction but he also had no ties to Al Qaeda; in fact, Saddam Hussein was against the terrorist groups and was actively engaged to stop them from gaining power in Iraq. The late Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was right in warning former US president George W. Bush that the invasion of Iraq was counterproductive and would instead lead to the emergence of '100 bin Laden's afterward'. The prediction made by the late Egyptian President came true, the war in Iraq not only destroyed the Country but also made Al Qaeda stronger and sowed the seeds of terrorism,

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sectarianism, and eventually led to the rise of ISIS.^{xxx1} Joby Warrick, who is an Investigative Journalist for the Washington Post and the author of the book *Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS* (2015), argued in an interview given to *France 24* that the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 remains the main culprit for the emergence of groups like ISIS that not only undermined the security of Iraq but also threatens to weaken the overall global security.^{xxxii}

The Syrian Civil War

It would be a gross understatement to claim that the Syrian war was merely an internal conflict between the government and opposition forces. Contrary to this, the Syrian conflict is not just about civil war, but it is also about regional powers battling to gain influence. When the protests began in Syria demanding reform, Assad's government overreacted by cracking down on the protesters. The US saw the civil unrest in Syria as a golden opportunity to overthrow Assad. The US along with its allies UK, France, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar demanded that Assad step down as a way of ensuring that 'Democracy prevails in Syria'.^{xxxiii}

However, the US attempt to overthrow and undermine Bashar Al Assad did not begin with the Syrian revolution; the US had been attempting to overthrow Assad since 2006. A December 13, 2006, cable, 'Influencing the SARG [Syrian government] in the End of 2006,' was revealed by WikiLeaks, which indicated all sorts of efforts on the part of the US to undermine the Syrian government. The cables unearthed by WikiLeaks went further to expose the attempts made by the US with assistance from Saudi Arabia and Egypt to fuel sectarianism and hatred towards Shias in Syria to weaken the Syrian Government. Iran maintains a strong strategic relationship with Syria especially with Bashar Al Assad given that he is also a member of the Shi'ite Muslim community. This of course gave Iran immense influence over Syria, and the US along with Saudi Arabia could not tolerate the increasing Iranian

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influence in the region. Hence, the US launched massive propaganda in Syria to turn the Sunnis against the Shias and thus create a sectarian divide.^{xxxiv}

After Assad refused to step down, the US along with Saudi Arabia and its NATO allies started supporting the Syrian opposition, which also involved providing military aid to the armed opposition, which marked the beginning of a brutal proxy war. Reports suggest that some of the weapons given to US-backed Syrian rebels ended up in the hands of terrorist groups like Al Qaeda, ISIS, and Al Nusra.^{xxxv}

Moreover, a French cement company by the name of Lafarge pleaded guilty and was ordered to pay over \$700 million in fines for paying terrorist organizations such as ISIS money to operate safely in Syria.^{xxxvi} The company is facing additional lawsuits brought by the families of victims killed by ISIS who accuse the company of effectively enabling ISIS to carry out terrorist activities.^{xxxvii}

On the other hand, Iran along with the Iranian-backed Shia forces, Hezbollah, reiterated and reaffirmed their unflinching support for the Syrian government and President Bashar Al Assad, and soon enough the Iranians along with Hezbollah started funding and supporting forces that were pro-Assad who were fighting the Syrian opposition. Moreover, Russia also affirmed its support for Bashar Al Assad with whom it has maintained strong Strategic relations since 1966. The Russian support for the Syrian government against the US-backed opposition paved the way for Russia to exert its influence over the region. The US, on the other hand, saw the increasing Russian and Iranian influence as a threat to its hegemony in the Middle East and was determined to remove Bashar al Assad from office.

The Syrian war intensified sectarianism and strengthened the hold of the ISIS and other terrorist groups in Syria. Furthermore, the Syrian war resulted in a mass refugee crisis in the Middle East and

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Europe, which has also contributed to undermining global security since it raised the possibility of terrorist groups infiltrating refugee camps to carry out Terrorist attacks in various parts of the world.
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NATO Expansion and the Russia-Ukraine war

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed in 1949 to protect countries of Western Europe from Soviet aggression. In response, the Warsaw Pact was formed in 1955, which included a military alliance between the Soviet Union and states of the Eastern Bloc. However, unlike the Warsaw Pact, which dissolved immediately after the end of the Cold War, NATO remains to exist and keeps on expanding its military influence. There are many critics, who continue to believe that there remains no need for NATO to function as a military alliance because the threat, which existed in the form of the Soviet Union no longer poses any security concerns. Similarly, notable scholars like George Kennan also warned against expanding NATO Eastward, as it is likely to provoke Russian military aggression against Europe. Kennan went as far as to assert that NATO expansion would be the ‘most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold-war era’.^{xxxix}

To understand the reason underlining NATO’s continued existence, it is important to remember that NATO serves as a tool used by the US to advance its goals of Liberal Hegemony. One of the ways the US can spread its version of the so-called liberal democracy is through NATO interventions as witnessed during wars in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya among other places.

However, the continued Eastward expansion of NATO received resistance from Russia, especially after the US announced in 2008 that it is willing to welcome Ukraine and Georgia as new members of NATO. Ukraine has always remained a red line for Russia

because allowing Ukraine to join NATO would mean inviting a hostile US-backed military alliance to the doorsteps of Russia. The United States failed to realize that the principles of balance of power politics that the US adopted during the Cuban Missile Crisis, when it nearly went to war over Soviet missiles in Cuba, remain relevant today as Russia views NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe as a provocation, which is why it is willing to adopt extreme measures to prevent NATO from expanding towards its borders.

While there is no denying that Russia's invasion of Ukraine constitutes a clear violation of the UN Charter and international law, the conflict could have been avoided by guaranteeing that Ukraine would not join NATO. Such a guarantee would have ensured Ukraine's status as a neutral country, serving as a buffer zone between Russia and NATO. The idea of Ukraine as a "red line" for Russia was also acknowledged by former German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who blocked Ukraine's NATO membership during the 2008 NATO summit.^{x1}

The Efficacy of the Domino Theory

As already mentioned, Vietnam was a humiliating defeat for the US, and it also served to expose the failure of Domino Theory. The US intervention in Vietnam did not stop the spread of Communism, as claimed by policymakers who relied on the "wisdom" of Domino Theory. On the contrary, both Laos and Cambodia became communist countries. Domino Theory is no longer regarded as a credible explanation of international politics and has been discredited by realist scholars such as Kenneth Waltz, Hans Morgenthau, and John Mearsheimer.

Realism and the Domino Theory

The realist theory of International Relations revolves around the role of the State and the influence of power dynamics in World politics. The emphasis on the prominence of power politics has led

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realists to draw the conclusion that war between states is often inevitable. The pessimism inherent in realist theory about the nature of war has given the impression that realists are warmongers. However, a careful study of realism reveals a contrasting perspective, namely that realists are not war enthusiasts. Quite the contrary, realists aim to pursue ways to avoid war, especially given the challenges presented by an anarchic system. According to realism, there are two main ways to avert conflict: the acquisition of nuclear weapons or engagement in balance of power politics. As far as the war in Vietnam is concerned, it is noteworthy to mention that a majority of realist scholars, with the notable exception of Henry Kissinger, opposed the war. Their protest stemmed from the conviction that Vietnam was not in the core interest of the United States. George Kennan, Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz, regarded as prominent realists of their era, opposed the war on the grounds that it contradicted the main realist assumptions about balance of power and nationalism.^{xli}

Realist Critique of Invasion of Iraq

Realist scholars expressed scepticism about the liberal idea of nation building through the overthrow of totalitarian governments. Realists reject the notion of using military force to spread democracy to other regions. Moreover, they were concerned that the invasion of Iraq would lead to regional instability and disrupt the existing balance of power. The concerns highlighted by the realists proved valid, as not only did the region become destabilized, but Iran, an adversary of the United States, also managed to extend its influence over Iraq.

Nationalism and the Domino Theory

Realist theorists like Kenneth Waltz and Hans Morgenthau rejected the domino theory as an adequate explanation for events unfolding in Southeast Asia. One of the main reasons for their skepticism

was the realist assumption on nationalism, which they considered as a relatively more powerful force than communism. This assumption implied that even if countries were to adopt communism, it did not necessarily entail yielding to Soviet influence. States maintain a strong sense of sovereignty, which leads them to prioritize their own national interests over those of other nations, even when they share a similar ideology. Several examples can be cited to strengthen this argument. For instance, the Sino-Soviet split in 1960, the Cambodian-Vietnamese War in 1978, and the Sino-Vietnamese War in 1979 serve as compelling examples supporting the aforementioned argument.^{xlii}

Broader implications of US Interventionism

The US intervention in Iraq not only destabilized the region but also fueled the rise of terrorist groups like ISIS which continues to pose serious threats to global security. Similarly, the war in Iraq has also influenced subsequent military actions in Libya and Syria. If the interventionist logic continues to guide US foreign policy, there is a risk that the US may contemplate military action against Iran, aimed at achieving regime change with the objective of installing a more Western-friendly government.

Conclusion

During the Cold war, the United States policy of intervention was not exclusively driven by the need to contain the Soviet threat; rather, the US involvement in Latin America also aimed at protecting the interests of large American multinational companies that benefited from cheap and exploitative labour practices. In other words, the Cold war was not merely about containment, but it also intended to maintain economic and political hegemony of the United States.

The United States foreign policy is said to have undergone a significant change after the end of the Cold war, from mere containment to exporting liberal democracy across the globe.

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However, the underlying faith in the power of military to achieve these goals has anything but changed. The United States continued with its militaristic approach to foreign policy while assuming that it could employ the power of the military to spread liberal democracy across various regions of the world. The endeavour to force political change in countries with military intervention has failed to produce the desired outcomes. Military interventionism has failed to bring liberal democracy to countries in the Middle East and has instead contributed to severe economic and political instability.

The United States has for decades adopted various policies aimed at undermining and overthrowing foreign governments around the world. It is an indisputable fact that the interventionist US foreign policy turned out to be counterproductive leading to catastrophic long-term implications for peace and stability in the region and around the world, as shown in this research. Moreover, it has also been demonstrated, with the help of many case studies discussed at length in this research, that the US intervention in other countries not only helped to destabilize the given region but also created a chain of events, which gave rise to circumstances that threaten peace, stability, and security of the entire world.

End Notes

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