

## **The Bush Doctrine of Pre-emption and the US response after 9/11 attacks: Invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq**

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### **Abstract**

The 'War on Terror' is the policy response of the US to the 9/11 attacks on US. President Bush strategy was devised to react and invade Afghanistan where Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda were under the so called protection of the Taliban government. The US pressurized Pakistan to abandon their support for Taliban and become the front line ally in the 'War on Terror'. Most importantly the US National Security Strategy 2002 provided the justification for any preemptive action by the US, if the national Security of the US is threatened by any state or non state actor anywhere in the world. This strategic move and policy decision of the US foreign policy became known as the Bush Doctrine. The US being the only super power takes the responsibility and the courage to ensure the US National Security.

Invasion of Iraq was purely pre-emptive and without any legal or moral justification and was the test case for Neo-conservative supported Bush Doctrine of pre-emption. This article is an attempt to explain the Bush Doctrine and to analyze and find the rationale for the US policy of pre-emption in shape of an attack on Afghanistan in the name 'War on Terror'.

**Key Words:** Pre-emption, National Security, Terrorist, Al-Qaeda, Decision

### **Introduction**

The Clinton administration opponents always criticized the administration policy to support Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, Kyoto Protocol and the International Court of Justice. His opponents

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thought that Clinton failed to understand that after the demise of Soviet Union the United States now had a freedom to assert itself, a columnist Charles Krauthammer wrote in the Washington Post that United States is in unique position to adjust its foreign policy best suited for its national interests (The Washington Post, 2001: 29). It was Charles Krauthammer who explained and highlighted in 2001, that 'Bush Doctrine' is the word that identifies different foreign policy options, which were adopted by the former President of the United States George W. Bush. (The Washington Post: 2002). Charles Krauthammer wanted to describe the US withdrawals from the ABM treaty and the Kyoto Protocol under President Bush. It explained and clarified about the policy that the United States had the inherent right and responsibility towards its citizen to defend itself against countries that protect and support the terrorist groups, The same phenomenon was used to justify the Afghan invasion in 2001 (The New York Times: 2002).

The Vice President of the United States Dick Cheney, in a June 2003 speech said,

"If there is anyone in the world today who doubts the seriousness of the Bush Doctrine, I would urge that person to consider the fate of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq". (AFPS: 2003).

The main elements of the Bush Doctrine were contained in the *National Security Strategy of the United States*, published on September 17, 2001.

'The security challenges faced by the United States today are very different from the challenges being faced by the USA before that. Still the priority of the United States is to protect the American people and safeguarding the US security interests. It is an ongoing American principle that the US government anticipates and responds to the emanating threat to the national security of the United States, utilizing all available resources of national power, before the threats can really materialized. The level of threat is directly proportional to risk of inaction by the United States, which means the greater the inaction the greater the

threat and this justifies the case more strongly for the US government to take preemptive action to defend and safe guard the national security of the United states ,even if the nature, intensity and the timings of the enemy attack remains undefined and unclear. There are many threats but the greatest of all is the terrorist attack on US with WMD. To prevent or avoid such aggressive acts by the enemies of the United States, the United States as a right of self defense will, if required, act preemptively before the enemy threat can materialize. The United States will not necessarily use force in each and every emerging threat to its national security. The US priority will be to use nonmilitary options first to discourage any enemy intentions of hostile act against the US. The purpose of not relying only on military option is to discourage other countries for justifying their aggression as a preemptive measure to protect their national security. . (US NSS: 2002)

### **The rationale of Bush Doctrine**

The strategy of the Bush Doctrine was not an innovation after 9/11. This kind of world view existed even before the Bush becoming the President. George W. Bush had been identifying it in his election campaign. This strategy was basing on two important assumptions. Number one was, the USA because of its unique position in the world should do away with any constraint on its actions imposed by the allies of the United States, as America cannot rely on others for its defense. Because even allies inevitably ignore threats to US which does not involve the allies themselves.( Lindsay & Daalder :2003).Bush says in the US National Security Document (2002) that

The United States cannot always entirely depend on a reactive defense policy as we have been practicing in the past....We shall not permit our enemies to endanger our national security and national interests. (US NSS:2002)

The second rationale was that US should confront and go after any threats posed to the US National Security out of its borders and neutralize them rather than waiting for the threats to materialized.

These fundamental beliefs had important consequences for the US foreign policy in the post 9/11.

The 9/11 attacks presented a foreign policy challenge. In an address to the nation on the evening of September 11, Bush stated his resolution of the issue by declaring that

"we will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them."(Bush address: 2001)

In a speech to the graduating officers at the US Military Academy at west point, President Bush explained the realities of the new post cold war era and talked about major policy changes in the US National Security Strategy from that of containment during the cold war to Preemption. He said:

"Our security will require all Americans to be forward looking and a resolute, to be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives" the President also called for an American hegemony: "America has ,and intends to keep military strength beyond challenge." (Chronology: 2004)

There is another very important aspect of the Bush Doctrine, as the US government has always been under pressures from US defense industrial complex for a prolong intervention in Afghanistan. Because they consider Afghanistan as the gate way to Central Asia and Caspian region which are rich in oil and gas recourses. A report published by Brookings institution in September 2001 said that the exploitation of the Caspian and Asian energy markets was an urgent priority for the Bush Administration.(Ahmad, 2005: 332).To pursue such interest of the super power. The USA also required to have a combination of political, economic and military strategy to endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating the region. The most important aspect on which the Bush doctrine converge is to maintain the sense that the world order is ultimately backed by the US and US would act independently when collective action cannot be taken (Ahmad, 333).

## **The beginning of the 'War on Terror'**

The commonly known '9/11 attacks' were a series of terrorist attacks upon the United States of America on September 11, 2001. When four commercial passenger jet airliners were hijacked on that morning and two of the planes were crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, one plane into each tower, Resulting in the collapse of both towers within two hours. The third aircraft was crashed into the Pentagon (Head Quarter of the Department of Defense of the USA). The fourth hijacked aircraft crashed into a field in rural Somerset County in Pennsylvania killing all on board. Approximately 3,000 people died in these attacks including a number of fire fighters and rescue workers.

America was taken by surprise and was shocked when everyone was glued to the TV screens and watching the twin towers of the world trade center in Manhattan, New York. President George W. Bush had to cut short his tour as he was visiting the students of second graders in children school in Florida when he received the news of the attacks.

## **Immediate Reaction by the President of USA**

The 9/11 attacks by a terrorist group in Washington, Pennsylvania, and New York significantly changed the threat perceptions of Americans which directly had its repercussions for the US national security strategy. Those impacts and consequently the changes in US national security strategy can be seen in the Bush doctrine of preemptive strike (or, preventive war), which was the beginning of the campaign against Al Qaeda and the Taliban. (US-China relations: 2003) .

Soon after 9/11 Bush Doctrine took on a new dimension. Bush told Americans that, in fighting terrorism, the U.S. would not distinguish between terrorists and nations that harbor terrorists.

Bush addressed a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001. He said:

"We will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with

the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime."(Bush Address: 2001)

The United States was very quick to identify and make Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda network as the perpetrator of the 9/11 attacks. (*The News* , 2001).

The first reaction of President Bush had, was to come on television with a very short address to the nation, he said it is "an apparent terrorist act, and those who committed it will be taken to task". He further said that terrorism against our nation will not stand. (Woodward, 2002: 15-16),

In his first contact with the Vice President of the United States Dick Cheney, Bush said "We are at war," (Woodward, 2002:17) and instructed him to ground all the air traffic within the air space of the United States of America. President Bush plane had to be diverted to an air force base in Nebraska for security reason while the President was constantly in touch with his senior members of administration like the Vice President Dick Cheney and the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. At 3:30 p.m President Bush immediately convened the meeting of the National Security Council at the Air force base in Nebraska. In that meeting George Tenet the director Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) informed the President that only Al Qaeda is having the capacity to make such coordinated attacks. He further said that many conversations of the Al Qaeda operatives have been overheard in which they were congratulating each other after the attacks. (Woodward, 2002: 27)By 6:30 the President was back in the White House and from his Oval Office he spoke to the nation. He said:

"Today our fellow citizens, our freedom and our very way of life has been attacked by deliberate and deadly attacks, freedom will be defended. Thousands of lives have just been ended by the evil despicable act of terrorism. Our country is strong, great people have been moved to defend the great nation. Our military is powerful and prepared. The search is under way for those who are behind this, make no mistakes the US will hunt down and punish those responsible for these

acts. No distinction will be made between the terrorists and those who harbor them. Today we and our allies stand together to win this war against terrorism.”(Bush address: 2001)

The President had made up his mind to punish, who so ever harbors terrorists, not just the perpetrators. The Secretary of State’s Collin Powell who had just made back from Peru said, ‘We have to make it clear to Pakistan and Afghanistan, “this is a Showtime”. Taliban were the ruling party in Afghanistan at that time, they were extreme fundamentalists which came to power in 1996, and were harboring Al-Qaeda terrorists in return of financial support by Bin Laden. Pakistan’s powerful intelligence service the ISI had a major role in creating and keeping the Taliban in power.(Wood ward ,32)

This was the right time for President George W. Bush to act decisively according to the principles and dictates of his doctrine (the Bush Doctrine). President Bush was thinking globally and was concentrating to extract maximum benefits of this tragedy which his country had faced on 9/11. Soon after his televised address, in the meeting with his war cabinet to get the feedback and suggestions that how the US should actually react. The war council meeting was attended by the President, the Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State’s Collin Powell, Secretary Defense Donald Rumsfeld, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Bush’s Chief of Staff Andrew Card, Director CIA George Tenet, and General George Hugh Shelton, the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of staff.(Shelton would be replaced by ,General Richard Myers, on his retirement at the end of September ,2001). Bush made a crucial set of decisions, setting the stage for new, global ‘War on Terror’. America would strike against terrorist groups with global reach, starting with Al Qaeda. Collin Powell insisted on the need to get Pakistan involved since Pakistan had the closest ties with the Taliban regime’.(Lindsey & Daalder, 2003: 97-98).

Pakistan was given a choice whether it want to be a part of the US ‘War on Terror’ or against the US. On 13 September Richard Armitage handed over the list of seven demands to General Mehmood then DG ISI, which the US asked Pakistan to agree to. Armitage said that the situation is black and white, either you are with the US or you are not. The seven demands by the US from Pakistan were:

- To stop Al Qaeda operatives at its borders and end all logistics support to Bin Laden;
- To give the United States blanket over flight and landing rights for necessary military and intelligence operations;
- To provide territorial access to U.S and allied military intelligence and other personal to conduct operation against Al Qaeda;
- To provide the United States with intelligence information;
- To continue to publicly condemn the terrorist acts;
- To cut off all shipment of fuel to Taliban and stop recruits from going to Afghanistan; and,

If the evidence implicated Bin Laden and Al Qaeda and the Taliban continued to harbor them, (Pakistan)to break relations with the Taliban government.(9/11 Commission Report, 2004:331).

General Musharraf agreed to all demands of the US. Bob Woodward writes in his book 'Bush at War' that General Musharraf surprised Secretary Powell by agreeing to all the seven demands the US made. (Woodward Bob, 2002:59).However in return Musharraf demanded the US to lift all sanctions against Pakistan dating back to 1990's, to forgive \$3billion debt of the US, to resume military supplies and the provision of loans from the US and the World Bank.(Rashid Ahmad, 2008: 31)

On 17 September 2001 the US President had authorized the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to pay \$ one billion to the war lords and leaders of the northern alliance , and conduct a clandestine war against the Taliban with the support of special operation forces from the pentagon.(Tenet, 2007:187) President Bush signed a 2 1/2-page "top secret" document that outlined the administration's plan to invade Afghanistan and topple its government.( The Washington Post:2003) This option how ever could not bring the desired results which the US had strategically planned to achieve by hitting the Taliban and Al Qaeda. When all the option failed, the US President George Bush ordered to start the bombing (Invasion of Afghanistan) on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2001.



“And now the Taliban will have to pay the price. By destroying their camps and disrupting all communications, we will make it more difficult for terrorists to train and coordinate their evil planes.”(Bush address: 2001)

Ultimately the Taliban government collapsed and Kabul fell to the Northern Alliance forces on November 13, 2001, Al Qaeda was still on the run. Its capacity to act had reduced but certainly not finished.

### **The US Security Policy according to the Bush Doctrine**

After September 11 the ‘War on Terrorism’ became the first priority for President Bush. On January 31, 2003 President Bush while meeting the British Prime Minister in Washington DC said, “We now recognize that oceans no longer protect us, that we are vulnerable to attack, and the worst attack can come from someone with weapon of mass destruction and using them on the American people.”(Bush & Blair press conference: 2003) In the light of the National Security Strategy NSS 2002, Preemption and Unilateralism and military hegemony became the key features of Bush doctrine.(Maszka: 2009) .

Vice President Dick Cheney while speaking to the gathering at the Council on Foreign Relations also out lined the Bush doctrine by explaining the US position it took in the ‘War on Terror’. He said,

“Only we (USA) can lead, we can rally the world in a task of this complexity, against an enemy so elusive and so resourceful. This responsibility does not come to us by chance .We are in a unique position because of our unique assets, because of the character of our people, the strength of our ideals, the might of our military, and the enormous economy that supports it.”(Cheney speech: 2005)

The elaboration of Bush doctrine came in the National Security Strategy of the United States, a document released on September 20, 2002 by the White House. In this document the American Power is the center of the strategy. Bush wrote in the document, “The great struggle of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with the decisive victory for forces of freedom. We will defend peace by fighting the terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by

building good relations among the great powers. We will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.”(Lindsey & Daalder: 2003).Bush strategy was basing on the use of US unmatched power to remake the world with US perspective. The strategy elaborated that to forestall or prevent an enemy attack the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively. This new ‘Bush Doctrine of Preemption’ represented a major departure of the American foreign policy of fairly noninterventionist, isolationist tradition (Bush Remarks: 2002).

The US response to 9/11 did not stop with the Afghan invasion. It became clear that George W. Bush , was also bent on toppling Saddam Hussein in Iraq. The origins of the Iraq war, and its link to 9/11,lay in the Bush administration perception that the dramatic nature of the attack on the US would be met with an even more dramatic response.

A simple police action to go after the 9/11 attackers in Afghanistan did not seem to match the enormity of the accident. While trying to defining the new US approach to the world, Mr Bush fell back on the ideas promoted by the "neoconservatives", who were the only faction within his administration that could convince him with a satisfying and bold explanation and response to the events of 9/11.Two big neoconservative ideas defined the Bush Doctrine and the president's war on terror and led to the Iraq war. The first was the doctrine of pre-emption. The neo-cons argued that because the consequences of a large- scale terror attack particularly with nuclear or biological weapons would be catastrophic the US would be justified in taking pre-emptive military action to head off such a threat. The second big idea was that the terrorism of 9/11 was the product of a sick and despotic political culture in the Muslim world - and was an attack on "freedom". In response, the US would go on the counter-attack and adopt a "freedom agenda" in the Muslim world.(G.Rachman: 2009)

On the night of March 19, 2003, United States military forces launched "Operation Iraqi Freedom" to oust the regime of Saddam Hussein. American troops occupied Baghdad. Bush Administration presented their arguments for going to war were Iraq's links to terrorists and its weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. Internationally there was large opposition to the US invasion of Iraq and was considered very unjustified, there have been a lot of opposition by France and Germany. The invasion was the product of

Bush Doctrine of preemptive or preventive war which in case of Iraq was that the United States believed that Iraq had the capability to do harm or endanger the US National Security. Preventive War was justified without the Iraq clear intents, simply the alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction was enough for justifying the Invasion. Thus, according to the Bush Doctrine, war is permissible if:

1. the opponent possesses weapons of mass destruction;
2. the threat against our national interest is imminent. (Averyt Alan, 2003:16)

The most disturbing point of President Bush's National Security Strategy, 2002, was its policy preemptive action against "emerging threats before they are fully formed." This has been described by foreign policy expert as a diplomatic earthquake that has changed the centuries old principle of the doctrines of containment and deterrence. Iraq was widely seen as the test case of the 'Bush Doctrine' (Max & Boot)

## **Conclusion**

As the Bush Doctrine is naturally associated with the war on terror, the a new US global strategy based on the protection of U.S. grand design and US strategic dominance, the right intentions of the Bush administration were indicative of creating lots of problems. The new US global outlook was driven by strategic consideration in which the US military power was having central position. Some analysts even it an imperialist policy. The important thing is that if the 'War on Terrorism' is the strategy to expand the US Military power, then the doctrine of preemption is simply uncalled for and not justified. The driving force and intension behind the preemption doctrine are wrong. Ironically the same wrong intensions to wage a war are described as the intensions to fight a just War or a war for a just cause. Interestingly the same wrong intention makes it difficult to justify the cause of war as just. The invasion was justified, on the bases of the concept of Bush Doctrine of "preemption," as a means that the terrorist attacks would be protected upon the United States in future. The Bush administration was bent upon insisting that the Iraqi government possessed WMD weapon of mass destruction and there were indication that they would likely use them, they had already used chemical weapons in the past, and Bush administration insisted that the Iraqi's also intend to sell them to terrorists, including Al Qaeda. Apparently the Bush doctrine was having moral justification as it was a clear security response to the

hostile enemy of the United States i.e terrorism. As far as the concept of just war is concerned the doctrine of preemption seems to be an aggressive global strategy based on the use of US military might, this all undermines the reliability of the Bush Doctrine, which in turn undermines the credibility of the USA.

Noam Chomsky has very rightly said in his article that

“Perhaps the most threatening document of our time is the U.S. National Security Strategy of September 2002. Its implementation in Iraq has already taken countless lives and shaken the international system to the core”. (Chomsky:2004).

Noam Chomsky in one of his interview further says that : The National Security Strategy of the United States of America was issued in 2002, presented a somewhat novel and unusually extreme doctrine on the use of force in the world. The new doctrine was not one of preemptive war, rather a preventive war. The new doctrine was the manifestation of the US grand strategy which revolves around the using of US military might against any challenge, real or imagined threat to the US national security as well as its strategic and global interests. The United States would act unilaterally and in advance to destroy or neutralize that threat. The power full state is usually having potential and capability to establish new international practices and traditions .For example if India attacks Pakistan to pressurize Pakistan to stop supporting the cross border freedom struggle in Indian held Kashmir, it will not become a precedent. If the United States invades any small country like Serbia for example on unconvincing grounds. Then its not a norm but rather that may be defined as power. (Barsamian, David, (2003, May 01).

Pakistan too have become the worst victim of US preemptive strikes through drone attacks in the Tribal area (FATA) of Pakistan .American security establishment is following the Bush doctrine to protect the US National Security interests by killing the Al Qaeda elements and other terrorists before they execute any attack on the United States and endangers the US National Security interests globally. After 9/11, then U.S. President George W. Bush ordered U.S. drones, at that point equipped with missiles, to kill leaders of al Qaeda, first in Afghanistan and later in Yemen and Pakistan. But at the same time the US is violating its front line ally (Pakistan's) National Sovereignty also, by

killing many innocent people and terms it as collateral damage. The US policy of pre-emption or the 'Bush Doctrine' has created more anti-Americanism and endangered the US National Security rather than strengthening it. A more transparent drone-strike program, with greater overt cooperation from Pakistan, would increase accountability, in particular regarding civilian casualties. It would also help lessen the fervent anti-Americanism in Pakistan by demonstrating that the war against militants in the tribal regions is in the interests of both Pakistan and the United States.

On the one side the US military intervention in Afghanistan facilitated the US to counter its rival the Russians and establish its influence and dominance over the Central Asian republics on the periphery of Russia. The US also had an opportunity to find military bases in some of the Central Asian States. These bases could be used to further enhance the US political and military profile in the region and would make the US capable to strike targets anywhere in much of the Muslim world.

It was quite a possibility that had the terrorist not attacked the US on September 11, 2001, Iraq would most likely have remained a secondary issue to the US foreign policy. Bush administration might have tried to deal with Iraq through smart sanctions, which would have restricted Iraq from purchasing more weapons and flexing its military muscles.

The US interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, the declaration of a 'war on terrorism' and the use of unrivalled military power of USA, the 'regime change' for 'rogue states', and preventive and pre-emptive war together generated unprecedented divisions in the international community. (Buckley & Singh: 2006). The US must realize that the Bush policy of preemptive strikes have made things more difficult and dangerous for the whole international community and not just the USA. In the future any other powerful state can make preemptive strike against its adversary due to fear of perceived threat. India for that matter can blame Pakistan for cross border terrorism or at least supporting it in India from Pakistan's side and make preemptive surgical strikes to hit the militants or their training camps inside Pakistani territory. Now if this happens then one can always be scared for the crises evolving into a major war between two Nuclear armed adversaries and which could result in the use of nuclear weapon.

That is why the US as the only super power has more of moral and political responsibility to show restraint on its unbridled power and does not become an example for other states to follow the US in using preemptive strike in the name of securing their national interests.

The only possible alternative to avoid this is through empowering the international moral and legal instruments of international institutions that constitute the best and most sustainable strategy against terrorism. In a number of ways the Bush Doctrine as a response to international terrorism is, tragically, undermining the international moral and legal order, thereby undermining the very order necessary for sustainable security against terrorism. The United Nation Organization and its anti terrorism instruments are the only appropriate tools and mechanism to face the challenges of the terrorism which would result not only in strengthening the US National Security but it would be protecting the global security environment. IT would ensure that National Security interests of the states big or small are protected .The UNO to become more assertive and responsive to the challenges of the post 9/11 international security environment needs to bring necessary reforms.

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