

IDENTITY AND THE US FOREIGN POLICY: POLITICAL RHETORIC IN THE IRAQ WAR 2003

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Abstract

This article focuses on the largely ignored ideational factors and identity politics in foreign policy analysis while accepting the ideational-material complicity in political analysis. It explains the roots of American political culture and its discursive making over time and factors involved in the process. More precisely, it illustrates the ways political values or political culture serve as a power-base to explain the American foreign policy employing skillful use of political and media discourses.

Introduction

America has never been united by blood or birth or soil. We are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests and teach us what it means to be citizens.

President George W. Bush, Jan 20, 2001

Material factors have been focal point in the dominant state-oriented realists' literature of international studies and specifically in foreign policy analysis. Due to this predominance, material interpretations have got enormous space over ideational and consequently, well explained by the intellectuals of the discipline. This article tends to focus on the largely ignored ideational factors and identity politics in foreign policy analysis while accepting the ideational-material complicity in political analysis. It explains the roots of American political culture and its discursive making over time and factors involved in the process. More precisely, it illustrates the ways political values or political culture serve as a power-base to explain the American foreign policy employing skillful use of political and media discourses.

This article tends to answer three inter-related questions; first, to what extent American values and beliefs influence its political culture and complex social cognition and how this societal analogy of political values and beliefs has helped the government to build on and to materialize its foreign policy goals? Second, to what extent values and political culture work as power-base to promote the US interests abroad by providing moral legitimacy for foreign policy actions? Third, how the US media plays its role to transmit and reiterate hegemonic political discourse under the umbrella of liberal political values, beliefs and preferences to construct favorable public opinion in the matters pertaining to foreign policy?

This article follows post-structuralists' approach in international relations to make sense of the role of ideational factors in foreign policy politics of the United States. As for as case study is concerned, it contextualizes the post 9/11 US invasion of Iraq by President Bush Jr. under the American political ideals, national identity and moral analogy to explain how the War on Iraq was justified on moral and ideational basis at domestic and international level by employing various discursive encounters. Focus of the study remains on language of the US Constitution, hegemonic political and moral discourses, and media strategies employed by the US government to reiterate and disseminate the hegemonic reality with identity as nub of political rhetoric at public-sphere. This study tends to restrict itself at theoretical level and answers 'how' question only.

Identity Discourse: Moral Rhetoric and Historical Analogy

American society is weaved by liberal-democratic political ideals that also shape its political culture. The American nation is unique in a sense that it has inculcated an amalgam of high-sounding political ideals as its formation principles. Liberal political tradition is evolved through the set of ideational factors and skillful use of language over time. Likewise, the US foreign policy engagements are explained

through these political values or liberal tradition by speech acts that prevail at mass level in the United States of America. The political culture of the United States defines the basic political values, cognition, ideas and ideals of American nation about their society and politics. As Huntington maintains the Myrdal's analogy of American Creed by referring to 'certain basic political values and ideas that are supported by most elements in American society with no or little change since late eighteenth century which continues to play a central role in shaping American political identity'.¹ These core political values are taken from Roman ideas of natural law, medieval ideas of fundamental law, seventeenth century Protestantism, eighteenth century Lockean thoughts and finally enlightenment ideas of natural right. These values are also enshrined in the Declaration of Independence in these words:

We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.²

In nutshell, the core political values in the American society are; liberty, equality individualism, capitalist democracy and rule of law under constitution. These values are widely shared and deep seated which, overtime; have constructed the American political culture. Since most Americans are socialized by the same cultural influences, these values have become essential domestic source or power-base of American foreign policy. Social construction of these values has clearly drawn an imagined line of opposition between "us and otherness" which consequently provided the idea of opposition, forming unique, superior, manifested and exceptional national self-image. The political leadership in the US no matter whether republican or democrat, interprets American interests abroad by employing liberal cultural analogy. President George W. Bush Jr. in his State of the

Union address maintains the US political values in his campaign against Saddam regime in Iraq:

Our enemies send other people's children on missions of suicide and murder. They embrace tyranny and death as a cause and a creed. We stand for a different choice, made long ago, on the day of our founding. We affirm it again today. We choose freedom and the dignity of every life.³

Post-positivist tradition in international studies helps to understand the role of ideas and their social construction of political realities through intelligent use of language. Post-structuralism posits the humans need to perceive the social world through language, which is not a neutral medium. Post-structuralism focuses mainly on the role of identity and securitization discourse as well as knowledge and power relationship in the study of politics and foreign relations.

Post-structuralists approach in International Relations assumes that states do not have an objective, independent existence but their "existence is performative which simply means that discourses constitute the objects of which they speak".⁴ Campbell articulates post-structural assertions about political identity and foreign policy in a very persuasive fashion:

Conceptualized in this way, foreign policy comes to be seen as a political practice that makes 'foreign' certain events and actors on the basis of discursive "other". Put differently, foreign policy, according to Post-structuralism; is a specific sort of boundary producing political performance.⁵

Beach refers to Anderson's 1990 book *Imagined Communities* to argue that; "from space we can see no borders... Instead borders should be understood as social constructions (performances) that play a role in defining the

‘Self’ from the ‘Other’. This assertion follows that there is no such ‘objective’ thing like ‘national identity’ but ‘imagined communities or “fictional national myths” that were created in the 19th century.⁶ Hence, “the national identity of the US, is a social construction created through the US foreign policy by defining the ‘self’ in terms of demarcation from what is ‘foreign’. For example US national identity is seen as constructed to the relations to “Other” or the rest of the world, resulting in a national identity that emphasizes American Exceptionalism.⁷

Post-positivist scholars have explored the politics of identity in their search for the origin of interests. According to post-positivist approach, when we aim at explaining a certain policy, the question is not whether an interest-based or an identity-based explanation is the better position. "The question is how a certain identity causes a set of interests and subsequently, how these interests are translated into policy".⁸ For example, according to Campbell, of particular importance for the creation and continuation of national identity is the national discourse of danger: “during the Cold War, the Soviet threat played a crucial role in producing and reproducing US national identity”. Campbell suggests that "the US would search for a new external danger that could be used to reproduce the US national identity".⁹

Lockean liberalism has become the social power-base of American foreign policy working to mobilize public support for the US engagements abroad under the cloak of liberal and moral values, and exceptional American experience as oppose to 'otherness'. President Bush reiterated these liberal values to explain and contextualize the terrorist act on September 11, 2001 in these words:

Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts...America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity

in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.¹⁰

Americans are asking, why do they hate us? They hate what we see right here in this Chamber, a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms - our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.¹¹

American leaders have often employed Lockean liberal ideals and ideas of free enterprise, self-determination, freedom, liberty, constitutional democracy and democratic capitalism to promote and justify their foreign policy actions. As President Ronald Reagan (1983) has rightly put that; “our democracy encompasses many freedoms...these are rights that should be shared by all mankind. President Bush endorses Reagan’s point in his speech to the joint session of congress:

This is not, however, just America's fight, and what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom.¹²

The American way of war is also rooted in the liberal tradition, for example; freedom, liberty, self-determination, national self-image of Exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny are taken from the American political culture or liberal tradition prevailing in the American Society. In addition to liberal tradition, American society is overwhelmingly churchgoing Christian society and profess that religion is an important part of their life. Therefore, in every war America’s side is God’s side.¹³

Religion has contributed in American social and political life as an important consolidating agent within political ideational milieu. Americans have often thought of themselves

collectively as a people whose endeavors are favored by God. In 1630, Puritan leader John Winthrop said, "We shall be as a city on a hill; the eyes of all people are upon us".¹⁴ Puritanism holds that the United States was a chosen mechanism, divinely appointed by to introduce a government and society on the American continent.

Early Puritan settlers like Winthrop and others widely believed that they are especially chosen for the Divine work on the earth. It is said that; "by the eighteenth century the role of New England had become the role of America: God had led this people to establish a new social order, a light to the nations...under the auspices of Divine Providence".¹⁵ In his First Inaugural Address, George Washington saw an 'invisible hand' directing the people of the United States. "Every step they have taken seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency"¹⁶. The presence of God in the American foreign policy was self-evidence when at the time of annexation of the Philippines, President McKinley was reported very confused about annexation or not, it was divine revelation to McKinley when God ordered him to educate and civilize Filipinos.¹⁷

The presence of ethical and religious ideals was also there to justify the American foreign policy behavior in throughout the 20th century as well. Abraham Lincoln in his various speeches called Americans as "God's almost chosen people." In 1936, Franklin Roosevelt told American generation of his time that they had "rendezvous with destiny." John F. Kennedy proclaimed that "God's work must truly be our own".¹⁸ Martin Luther King's dream was identified with the God-given promises of America. Ronald Reagan rephrased Winthrop's city on a hill into "shining city on a hill". All of the Cold War presidents in America gave socially acceptable biblical colors to the American-Soviet rivalry; a tussle between "forces of virtue and forces of evil".

In 1979, during his speech, US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance reasserted two of the themes America holds for foreign affairs: "the American society believe in progress and

beneficial change,' and its related conviction that the American democracy has "a mission" to transform the nature of the international political system. Puritan influence can be regarded as one of the important sources in US self – perception of mission. Puritanism contributed the US nationalism with the belief that the United States was chosen instrument of God, divinely appointed to introduce a government and society on the American continent, and to spread it everywhere. Puritans believed that Americans are an elect people, more immediate to God than others.¹⁹

The Puritan tradition regarded the United States as involved in a test case which would determine whether men could live on Earth according to the will of God. Hence, US perceived its moral obligation to spread all those goodness God has gifted to her. Geographical isolation or physical fact of separation from the Old World (European World) was the second important factor that played a vital role in US self-perception of mission.²⁰ After 9/11 events and subsequent declaration of the global war on terror, the US President George W. Bush Jr. successfully employed the foregoing political and religious ideals and ideas to interpret the September 11 catastrophe and to justify his foreign policy actions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Operationalization of Identity and Moral Discourse before Invasion in Iraq

Before launching preventive war in Iraq President Bush employed not only national security frame and pre-existing liberal ideals but also the missionary role of America in his State of the Union address to justify his decision to invade Iraq to bring liberty to Iraqi people, to prevent Saddam from human rights violation, and spreading WMDs:

Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world; it is God's gift to humanity... We Americans have faith in

ourselves, but not in ourselves alone. We do not claim to know all the ways of Providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the loving god behind all of life and all of history. May he guides us now, and may God continues to bless the United States of America.²¹

Moralism is considered as indispensable part of political culture in the American society. George Lakoff (2002) impressively constructs the concept of moral authority and American public support for war by metaphorically linking conceptual frames of President Bush's political rhetoric of war on terror in terms of threat to the US national security and values, Manichaeism, US benevolent hegemony, and, consequent social legitimating to US response after 9/11—the global war on terror²². Theory of conceptual metaphor by Lakoff (2002) holds metaphor as an analogy or figure of speech in which an implied comparison is made between two unlike terms that leads to common conclusion. Fairclough (2010) and Dijk (2008) called it cognitive 'contextualization' of social events.²³

According to Lakoff (1981, 2002), the idea we learn over and over again, finally, becomes part of our conceptual system, prevails in our brain and hence; in our thoughts and actions. This logic holds that metaphor works to produce abstract thinking, increases the effects of our words and carries out actions. Metaphor also helps to formulate completely different actions alike by using identical jargon that rests in our cognitive annals. For example, once a 'value system of good versus bad' is successfully injected in human brain (by reiteration) then different actions may be defined/explained under the moral genre using intelligent correspondence. Therefore, metaphor is a kind of analogy which achieves its effect through mere symbolic association.²⁴ Lakoff (2002) relates moral family values and role of father in implementation of moral values at the level of state. For example, after 9/11, President Bush established the metaphoric link of evil and perpetrators of 9/11 i.e. Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussain. Bush repeatedly

stressed in his speeches on ‘bad guys’ inculcating message of moral responsibility on the US—moral authority to punish evil doers. President Bush declared shortly after the 9/11 attacks “we will rid the world of evil doers” in “this crusade, this war on terrorism”.²⁵

Norris, Kern and Just summarize the Bush administration’s terrorism frame:

The use of terrorism frame serves the several functions both cognitive, by linking together disparate facts, events and leaders, and also evaluative, by naming perpetrators, identifying victims, and attributing blames. It allows political leaders to communicate a coherent, simple message to the public, while also reshaping perceptions of ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’.²⁶

The ‘moving’ part in post 9/11 Bush political rhetoric held that traditional war was not the permanent solution to eradicate the menace of global terror but to promote the values the US is divinely blessed with. After deep analysis, intellectuals in Bush administration and think-tanks in the US found out the real cause and its solution--the cause happened to be religious nationalism, closed societies and tyrannical regimes and solution was "regime change and the promotion of US values abroad"²⁷. Immediately after ousting the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in October 2001, Bush administration was committed to promote the US values and regime change for ‘safe, better and prosperous world under the benevolent US leadership’.

Recontextualization of New Foreign Policy Rhetoric beneath Historical

Soon after September 11, President Bush Jr. started to recontextualize ‘evil metaphor’ of “9/11 terrorism” and socially prevailing cognitive frames in the American society for example; ‘Manifest Destiny’²⁸ , ‘Manichaeism’ (see for

example, American foreign policy doctrines of Cold War; Truman 1947; Eisenhower 1957; Kennedy 1961; Johnson 1965; Carter 1980; and Reagan 1980s), 'Benevolent Hegemony', and the 'American national political ideals' (Alexis de Tocqueville 1835) to metaphorically connect public mind in favor of the US-led 'ethical war' on Iraq.

The demonization campaign of the tyrannical regime in Iraq sold well by the Bush Administration when American public metaphorically inculcated the philosophy of regime-change in order to solve emerging global 'evil' and America's (morally) global responsibility in that regard. The following excerpts may illustrate the discursive making of the war on terror political rhetoric of Bush administration before invading into Iraq in March 2003:

The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise...we will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.²⁹

The current Iraqi regime has shown the power of tyranny to spread discord and violence in the Middle East. A liberated Iraq can show the power of freedom to transform that vital region by bringing hope and progress into the lives of millions.³⁰

In the war against global terrorism, we will never forget that we are ultimately fighting for [our] democratic values and way of life. Freedom and fear are at war; and there will be no quick or easy end to this conflict.³¹

One of the greatest dangers we face is that weapons of mass destruction might be passed

to terrorists, who would not hesitate to use those weapons. Saddam Hussain has longstanding, direct, and continuing ties to terrorist networks...Iraq has sent bomb-making and document forgery experts to work with Al Qaeda. Iraq has also provided Al Qaeda with chemical and biological weapons training.³²

Above excerpts illustrates the way political rhetoric in the speeches of President Bush metaphorically links and helps to re-contextualize the Al Qaeda metaphor that he previously linked to explain the September 11 terrorists' attacks on the United States. Moral and political rhetoric used in 'war on terror' metaphorically follows as: terrorism is an act of evil, 9/11 was an act of terror, Al Qaeda, bin Laden, Taliban and—Saddam Hussain staged this act of terror; therefore, "he is evil too", all these bad guys must be punished.

Above contextualization follows that; to fight against the evil is moral responsibility of the US being 'moral and benevolent hegemonic state' of the world and after 9/11 events, its responsibility increases manifold because Al Qaeda wants to spread evil of terrorism all over the globe, therefore, the US public must support Bush administration to exercise 'moral authority' to 'punish evil doers' in its fight of global war on terror to save the American citizens, American values and the whole world in general.

Dissemination and Reiteration of Presidential Political Rhetoric

American democracy is also about pluralism which intrinsically means that opinions are not monolithic but varied which implies that; dissent gets representation in public sphere. It implies that public can be divided into distinct categories with different perspectives on given political issue or foreign policy matter. For Example, historically, the US public has been divided on the question whether American should behave as an 'internationalist' or

'isolationist' state which entails the active US role in world politics or vice versa.

Historically, one of the sharpest distinctions between American public opinion occurs between isolationists and liberal internationalists. Rooted Kantian ideas, the intellectual and political tradition of democratic peace promotes the liberal internationalists thesis. It asserts that the promotion of liberal capitalist democratic system will help to transform the world from conflict to cooperation. The proponents of liberal world order are mostly elites not the masses who tend to employ all possible means including the military one to advance the world welfare agenda.

In the postwar period and particularly in the post Cold War era, "the United States of America has been keen to pursue a strategy of liberal internationalism". Liberal internationalists favor the promotion of "Americanized" world order, characterized by "the spread of democratic governments and open markets as well as American backed multilateral global institutions to create friendly and democratic world order".

Liberal internationalists favor the promotion of democracy and human right, worldwide. They do not see violation of human rights as internal matter of states rather they "suggest the United States to put pressure on allies, adversaries, great powers and small ones alike to stop violation of human rights and spread liberal democratic values".

The divergent foreign policy opinion(s) are not marked by the American political culture but dissidence prevails in terms of nature of practice. Divided into isolationism and internationalism as well as multilateralism and unilateralism in foreign policy behavior; the nation enjoys freedom of expression for foreign policy preferences but stands firm on basic creed or ethos as a nation. The political language of President Bush explains this assertion very well:

The qualities of courage and compassion that we strive for in America also determine our conduct abroad. The American flag stands for

more than our power and our interests. Our founders dedicated this country to the cause of human dignity, the rights of every person and the possibilities of every life.

This conviction leads us into the world to help the afflicted, and defend the peace, and confound the designs of evil men... In Afghanistan, we helped to liberate an oppressed people, and we will continue helping them secure their country, rebuild their society and educate all their children, boys and girls.³³

Although practice-side denotes the shift in public thinking or belief system about foreign policy practices i.e. Munich generation versus Vietnam generation, however, political values remain constant determinant. It implies that whatever variations in external environment take place may change public attitude towards foreign policy practice i.e. internationalists, isolationists, hardliners and accommodationists, but the underlying socio-political ideological set of belief remains intact and constant i.e. firm belief on liberal principles. Hence, at the stage of its politico-cultural values America stands unique as well as exceptional. According to Jonathan Monten:

The US national political identity is expressed in foreign policy primarily through the idea of “Exceptionalism”. Historically, this doctrine has referred to the perception that the United States differs qualitatively from other developed nations, because of its unique origin, national credo, historical evolution, and distinctive political and religious institutions.³⁴

These divisions among public on the basis of ‘pluralism’ and nature of ‘practice’ also provide loophole this contributes in the gap between ideals and practices in the US. Moreover, the US foreign policy has historically witnessed that decision making elites been dominant in the sphere of foreign policy

matters due to wide divide among public on the basis of socio-political debate of isolationism and internationalism which led then intellectual of 1950s on the consensus which suggested the need to shun out any possible role of emotional and ill-informed public in highly rational foreign policy spectrum. Under this scenario, a question arises; whether public opinion matters in foreign policy? Answer rests on 'slippery slope' that is; 'yes and no both'.

Yes, democratic governments are supposed to practice public opinion in their domestic and international affairs and they do so by involving public and entertaining their consent in these matters. No, democratic governments do entertain public opinion but after 'successful management of the process which shapes public opinion' through official political discourse, PR campaigns, and media discourse favoring the 'official side'. The role political language and media plays in the foreign policy crisis situation becomes very critical and needs to be understood well to make sense of public opinion-foreign policy dyad. Next section of the article unfolds the theoretical 'sides' of media-public opinion-foreign policy Pandora's Box.

The foreign policy crisis situations like September 11 gives great leverage to the decision-making elites to; first take decisions and then keep on providing rationale that justifies their actions in later stages, which again construct public opinion in favor of the decision already taken through political discourses like presidential speeches and intelligent usage of political-communication.

As given in foreign policy literature, prominent scholars of 1950s and 1970s (Almond 1990; Lippmann 1955; Morgenthau 1960) believed that state leaders would follow the national interest by ignoring irrational public opinion³⁵. Role of public opinion and media came on the theoretical surface of foreign policy studies after the public opposition and consequent pressure on the US government in the event of Vietnam War which also purposed the re-assessment of Almond-Lippmann thesis. Surprisingly, most popular president of mid-twentieth

century America, John F. Kennedy placed the public opinion in foreign policy as:

Public opinion is often erratic, inconsistent, arbitrary and unreasonable—with a compulsion to make mistakes...it really considers the needs of the next generation or the history of the last...it is frequently hampered by the myths and manifestation, by stereotypes and shibboleths, and by an innate resistance to innovation.³⁶

However, Rosenau (1961) suggested that “elected leaders would incur substantial political costs if they diverge too far from the boundaries set by public opinion” which was self-evident in the Vietnam War when the US Presidents Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson faced serious political damage in the wake of widespread public protests against the war after watching casualties of US soldiers by media. Vietnam War helped to make sense that media and public opinion can damage the foreign policy goals set by the administration in a “pluralistic society” like United States of America.³⁷

Although, public opinion in foreign policy issues is still an understudied area in International Relations, however, one broad consensus has drawn its impact in the US. Historically, on one hand, public opinion has worked as a constraint on foreign policy innovation i.e. US Vietnam policy in 1965, and on the other hand, public opinion become a stimulus to foreign policy innovation. For example, American policy toward Mainland China’s admission to the United Nations in 1950s was although favored by the American public but opposed by the influential segments of policy making community. By 1969 more than the half of the American population supported China’s admission as well the diplomatic recognition of China in early 1970s which led US policy makers to endorse public opinion in its foreign policy towards China.

Interestingly, public opinion also works as an advantage or powerful resource when the US policy makers and diplomats deal with other states. Especially on the bargaining table, the American side may enhance their ability to get their demands hold tightly by claiming that “the American people will never tolerate this” which consequently serve as gain or bargaining leverage.³⁸

In most of the foreign engagement cases, public tend to support administration when persuade by referring to ‘liberal values’. Public support, once acquired as legitimate source for foreign policy adventure, decision makers in the White House have to present the results of policy to satisfy the public otherwise they have to face the consequence. For that matter, administration has to manage the media through its ‘public relations establishment as well as skillful and timely usage of mass media.

The American public demonstrates its real power at the time of election in which among other factors foreign policy issues contribute in presidential campaigns; leading public to make up their minds for the right man in the Oval Office. In addition, it is also perceived as the right time for public to reward or punish a presidential candidate and especially ‘second-term candidate’ where it appreciates his domestic and foreign visions and plans.

For example, note the campaign US and UK governments launched at the highest political levels, for instance, Bush and Blair on the issue of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and the subsequent military intervention in March 2003. Apparently successful, but highly controversial campaign led the US and UK forces to invade in Iraq with arguably partial public support for war and massive demonstration against the invasion which consequently ended up into potential political loss in terms of popularity of leadership on both sides; UK and the US.

Finally, there is one troublesome question that remains unanswered: do public preferences lead American foreign

policy or is it policy first and opinion second kind of relationship? The democratic system in America provides multiple access points to public for successful maneuvering of their decision making elites and vice versa. These include mass media, interest groups and the electoral process. The next section examines the role of media in transmission of American values and framing public opinion in foreign policy decision making.

Political Discourse, the US Media, and Mediated Public Opinion

In politics, media performs the mediating role between two or more actors. The US media has enormous capacity to transmit American values, beliefs and preferences into the foreign policy process by employing its power of mass communication structures. One can learn the role of media in American society and politics by examining the relationship between the mass media and the public as well as the relationship between the mass media and policy makers. Mass media plays two pivotal roles; first, it constructs public attitude about a foreign policy issue by providing specific information and second, it tends to influence policy makers by its power of news framing but this power of influence does not place media at policy determining position.

The way Media transmits the image of the world out there may consequently broaden or limit the policy scope for policy makers by shaping public attitude or choices about the policy issue. There are two contrasting alternatives to explain the role of media in foreign policy making; first, “the media either takes foreign policy out of hands of the elite or open the process to an ill-informed public or they are indentured servants of the foreign policy elites.³⁹

The US Media claims to reflect public opinion. Media has enormous power to disseminate political information that shapes and reshapes public opinion about domestic as well as international politics through editing, analyzing and farming techniques. The very challenging question in media studies

has been how to comprehend the varied nature and effects of media-public and media-state relations in foreign policy matters.

Media works as primary institution that claims to provide American public with political information from within policy circles about the US and the world around with great sophistication. The United States is a society-dominant system which also influences its foreign policy behavior outside of the US. American society is arguably most informed society in terms of sources of information and their desirability for it. Wittkopf and Kegley help us to figure out the media access and demand in the US:

Over ninety-eight percent of all American households own at least one television and... they view it an average of seven hours a day...there are over 14,00 daily newspapers in the United States, with total daily circulation exceeding 55 million. The three major weekly news magazines also claim nearly 10 million readers. This extra ordinary establishment has the ability to determine “what the news is,” to define behaviors as important actions, and thereby to make them into... noteworthy is that nearly forty percent of Americans report that the media is their source of information about important international problems.⁴⁰

The American public depends largely upon few ‘authentic’ sources for foreign news, sometimes called as ‘prestigious press’ which is also considered as newspapers of record. Among these are the New York Times, the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times, two wire services; the Associated Press and United Press and finally four national television networks; ABC, CBS, CNN, AND NBC.

The American press media generally follows the prestigious press in their news reporting. Although overwhelming majority of national press and media focuses on

domestic affairs due to public inattention to foreign affair in 'normal situation' but they follow the prestige press during any catastrophe like 9/11 event. For example, the *New York Time* covers over forty percent of its national and international coverage to foreign news, provides news to other newspapers which follow its lead as well as framing (deciding what news is and how it should be interpreted) about foreign affairs.

The best news framing is the one wrapped into American values for which public quickly get exposed in terms of their foreign policy attitude by favoring or opposing the (presented) foreign affairs story when touching their very social cognition or political values. Prestige press usually tend to reinforce mainstream social values by giving a story or issue tag or cloak of legitimate or illegitimate under mass political culture. The 'lead' ensures one thing among many others; thematic and stylistic similarity in news accounts in national print as well as in electronic media.

CNN, the twenty-four hours Cable News Network was considered as revolution in political communication also known as *CNN Effect*. With its global news gathering network, coverage, access and *live* phenomenon, *CNN* had occupied the position of new 'reference' in foreign news. The phrase acquired popularity when *CNN* led news coverage of humanitarian crisis forced Bush administration to intervene in Somalia for "humanitarian cause" to save people from media reported large scale starvation and death. Many critics of that time coined the phrase to describe as 'a loss of policy control on the part of policy makers because of the power of media, however, later research discredited the *CNN effect* thesis.⁴¹

The real question here is not about the myth or reality of *CNN effect* but the real pressing points which arguably forced the Bush administration to intervene in Somalia or elsewhere for 'humanitarian cause'. What media did was to connect the very socio-political ideals of American public with that of human rights violation which produced the 'humanitarian'

demands to their government to rescue the Somalian peoples being 'human'.

In addition, research grounded in social psychology posits the term 'selective perception' to explain the human tendency for information that fits with preexisting beliefs which consequently lead them to divorce or screen out information with which they disagree, this phenomenon is also called as selection bias or cognitive bias. Likewise the newspaper readers or television audience arguably tend to follow the media person, program or news outlet that reinforce interpretations consistent with their preconceptions, and very few would intentionally seek out information that challenges them.

As mentioned in foregoing paragraphs, public opinion is slightly untouched area in foreign policy studies, but few scholars have put serious endeavors to develop models and analytical tools to evaluate the role of media in foreign policy. These models and assertions might not be very substantial intellectually, but surely, they can serve for orientation to media-foreign policy debate if we look into the literature which makes some sense about the role and function of media in a democracy.

One of the crucial role media play in policy making is its ability to define and debate what is important called *Agenda-Setting* and *Framing*. Agenda-setting is the most important stage of the policy making process because media decide what will be a policy issue is crucial to the policy making process which was also discussed explicitly during and after the Vietnam War. President Nixon famously wrote:

More than ever before, television showed the terrible human suffering and sacrifice of war...the result was a serious demoralization of the home front, raising the question whether America would ever again be able to fight an enemy abroad with unity and strength of purpose at home.⁴²

Agenda-setting theory asserts that; “what people identify as issues depends in large part on what the media include as news or entertainment”. Therefore, media identifies issues and setting the agenda for policy makers. Moreover, media also influence attitudes and values towards policy issues which finally change the behavior of the decision makers.

Once used as strategic term “propaganda” is largely replaced by the term ‘framing’ in media discourse. As explained by Norris, Kern and Just (2003), *framing* is about the journalistic practice for the selection of information and the procedures involved into it. It also involves editing, analyzing, and tuning the information to make it ‘news-worthy’. Framing is like engineering of words, symbols, and images through multiple techniques and rhetorical strategies. Framing involves usage of rhetoric in very skillful ways.⁴³

Scheufele (1999) proposes insightful theory of media framing titled *framing as theory of media effects*. Scheufele develops a process model of framing by decomposing media-framing into inputs, processes and outcomes which construct an impressive cycle of framing to understand media effects. This theory deals with four important steps in framing processes; frame building, frame setting, and link between individual frames.⁴⁴

In frame building, Cobb and Elder (1972) Gans (1979), Shoemaker and Resse’e (1996) have put plausible set of arguments to make sense of frame building which include; organizational restraints and routines, individual characteristics of journalists such as ideology, norms, attitude and finally external sources like political actors, interest groups, societal norms etc. *Frame setting* is second step of Scheufele’s theory that is concerned with salience of issues attributes.⁴⁵

McCombs, Llamas, Shaw and Weaver, (1997) have endorsed Scheufele’s argument by suggesting two levels of agenda setting; first, transmission of object salience and second, transmission of attribute salience. In nutshell, frames

influence opinions by stressing specific ‘values and facts’ by making them completely relevant to the issue in hand. Salience of frames depends on accessibility as pointed out by Tversky and Kahneman (1973) “how people think about an issue is influenced by the accessibility of frames”. This step further leads to individual level frame; “the frames that are most accessible are the one that are most easily available.”⁴⁶

There is intrinsic link between public opinion and media or we can say that media has impact on public opinion in terms of ‘framing effects’. Citizens are usually unable to gain direct information about foreign policies, making them dependent either on the few dissident voices (dissidence over the US strategy in Afghanistan by general in charge of the US-led war, Stanley McChrystal) or upon the media as a source of information which ultimately shape or frame the public opinion and preference about the US goals abroad.

The best example of framing effect of media can be seen in the form of War on Terror and the US invasion in Iraq which was mainly framed by the media either as independent or intervening variable. According to Merolla and Zechmeister (2009), Gadarian (2010), the threatening information and images do actually increase the public’s support for hawkish foreign policies, implying that framing matters.⁴⁷

Hegemonic Discourse(s) and Foreign Policy

What this implies for our study of media-public opinion and social construction of foreign policy? On the one hand state has got enormous structure to disseminate its version of reality in the form of multiple channels using huge budget for PR campaigns, offering concessions for media giants as well as showing media regulation teeth to them in case of disobedience and finally, by giving lucrative amounts in the form of advertisements and chances of more news networks for media conglomerates if they show cooperation with administration according to the best ‘public interest’. Bernard Cohen (1961) asserts that,

The *New York Times* is read by virtually everyone in the government ... it is often said that Foreign Service Officers get to their desk early in the morning to read the *New York Times*, so they can brief their bosses what is going on...The *Times* is uniformly regarded as the authoritative press in the foreign policy field ...you can't work in the State Department without the *New York Times*

Policy makers also ascribe special importance to television news accounts. To monitor the development in international crisis situation White House Situation Room continuously feed information it gets from news channels into the crisis nerve center.⁴⁸

Conversely, media is also vulnerable to government's manipulation or 'management', which arguably means that media also reflect the vision of policy makers and their definitions of friends and foes which keeps on changing with the official policy lines i.e. from global communism in past to global terrorism in present. In the matters pertaining to foreign policy and decision making, media remains dependent on the viewpoints of president and the executive branch hence it has to keep or reflect the official narrative as baseline of its story. Draper (1968) narrates the government media relationship in these words:

First the officials handout privileged information to favored journalists...then these journalists pass out the same information, with or without attribution, to their readers. Finally, pro-administration congressmen fill pages of congressional record with the same articles to prove that the officials were right.⁴⁹

The foregoing assertions about media and policy-makers collusion sounds plausible due to multiple reasons; media's dependence on governments' news releases as well as it

inability to obtain classified information, the key officials or 'high government source' use of 'privileged' briefing or 'leak' on foreign policy matters to limited media persons under 'confidentiality ethics'. Policy makers sometimes use these tactics before setting new directions in given foreign policy matter as 'trial balloon' to get public response or gauge any possible outcome and then employ it to reshape policy language according to the public pulse and to protect their political backsides.

Media persons usually offer such confidentiality or protection to policy elites in order to be assured of receiving future 'breaking news stories'. Finally, it makes sense to argue that what is reported as breaking news in foreign policy depends on what is 'leaked' which might be well managed act by key officials in White House or executive branch instead of actual occurrence.

The media spokes persons of White House are specialists of political communication and public relations that are well aware of the art of spin. In addition, government censors the news by managing it behind closed doors especially during periods of crisis and peril. For this purpose, key government officials decide how to manage media case by case which gets hype in the events of foreign military engagements—'when the nation's vital interests or security are believed to be at stake'. In this regard, few examples are noted where government reportedly censored or managed the war reporting from media or public access. As noted by Wittkopf and Kegley:

Reagan administration denied reporters permission to observe the Grenada assault force in 1983, journalists covering the 1989 invasion of Panama also complained that the military deliberately kept them away from the action, the pool arrangement used during the Persian Gulf War had a constraining impact where only limited numbers of reports were allowed to accompany military units where their reports

could be passed after having been screened by military authorities.⁵⁰

Finally, the Iraq War 2003 set the unprecedented precedent where embedded journalists reported the war after signing agreement with military authorities about what to report. Such censorship or screening was defended by the government as being necessary to ensure that news reports would not endanger the mission of US forces and matter of national security in the region. Although with marginal dissidence majority of media outlets tend to agree on the administration's vision which they themselves believe as part of their duty being part of American mission abroad to promote American liberal values. Such a practice gets more worthy due to media's dependence on the government to get the news, perpetuates a symbiotic relationship between opinion making elites and policy elites.

The cultural aspect or liberal values are the most interesting part of American society with its impact on Americans' life, whatever and wherever they are; they must hold their political values. The promotion of liberal values being 'city upon a hill' in the words of Winthrop has social imprints on almost every American citizen; be he an ordinary citizen, a soldier, a journalist, or a diplomat.

It would be imprudent to suggest media performance in war as 'subjective'; perhaps more profound course would be to incorporate the segment of political cultural in our analysis to explain how things really work out in the US society. Liberal values as American political culture has become political belief system for American which provides the government a concrete power-base to fire their foreign policy agenda abroad and to justify their actions at domestic front cloaked into the language of 'promoting American values abroad as part of their divine mission'.

What we can draw from above leads to conclude that, the 'war on terror' frame provides the US government and news media with a template to make people understand global

events and the US response accordingly under the umbrella of US ideals and values. In addition, it provides it media and administration a powerful rhetorical tool to justify an interventionist agenda more aggressively. According to Robinson (2008), it has already been seen during the build-up to and war against Iraq as part of the 'war on terror'. Ultimately, there arises a big question; does liberal media means free media or media with liberal bias?

Renowned critic and linguist Noam Chomsky and Herman (1988) proposed 'propaganda model'⁵¹ to understand the nature of media and ruling elite relationship. Herman and Chomsky claim that media manufacture consent and work as a tool for those in power to influence public mind.⁵² Both writers introduce 'five filters', media use to convert information into news namely; corporate ownership, advertising, sources of news, flack (negative feedback) and ideological or ethical filter (good versus evil) where 'good' stands with 'we' and evil with 'they'. Chomsky maintains that the mainstream US media is controlled either by government or by corporate elites to inculcate and defend the economic, social and political agenda of privileged groups.

In the post Cold War era, some scholars have put serious efforts to establish theoretical links between media and foreign policy (media-state relations) in the form of *CNN effect* (Feist 2001; Schorr 1998; Freedman 2002) but it was strongly rejected by the liberal-media response⁵³. The *CNN effect* simply stands for the rise of 24-hour news channels, such as the US-based Cable News Network (CNN), 'which widened the exposure of international events, thereby increasing the pressure on policy makers to respond to issues raised by journalists.'⁵⁴

To make sense of 'elite-media' proponents' (Hallin 1986; Herman and Chomsky 1988; Bennett 1990) viewpoints, two examples are noteworthy; during the post Cold War period the news media in the US especially *CNN* facilitated the humanitarian intervention in war-torn Somalia and Bosnia which led the foreign policy elites in the US to intervene in

these countries. In the second episode, Iyengar and Simon (1994) demonstrated 'how media focus on Gulf crisis led to public defining the crisis as the most important political issue at that time by setting the agenda and directed the public as to what was the most important issue to think about'. Iyengar and Simon (1994) have argued that:

Media focused upon military matters, such as military technology and the progress of the war and downplayed the coverage that dealt with broader diplomatic issues and matters related to the rationale and justification of war.⁵⁵

Finally, few prominent intellectuals have made powerful statements on the role of media because it has long been considered as symbol of social power and continuity of the link between power and discourse. For Noam Chomsky, it is the intelligent way to thought control (Chomsky, 1989); for others it is channel of mind control (Dijk, 1991, 2000); for Gramsci (1971), it is one of the ways the powerful group integrates its hegemony; Dijk borrows the CDA argument that; "if we are able to influence people's minds, e.g. their knowledge or opinions, we indirectly may control some of their actions, as we know from persuasion and manipulations"; hence, those who control public discourse also have greater chances to control the minds and actions of others.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, language plays an important role in political and media discourses and there is great role of political power too in reiterating political discourse through media which consequently becomes hegemonic discourse. Many discursive factors are substantiated in the foregoing parts of this article including the emergence, contextualization, operationalization and recontextualization of political discourse, using discursive construction of political discourse through socio-cognitive processes in which metaphorical socialization and values system play a vital role in individual's behavior and so on.

In addition, beyond values and socio-cognitive construction by policy makers and media, there are corporate or economic interests at work too. Media lives on news and policy makers and decision making elites in government and military industrial complex have stakes in foreign economic and military engagements and for that matter they need public support for their adventures abroad.⁵⁶

Nevertheless, the role of media in domestic and international politics sometimes has been remarkable, arguably, during Watergate scandal, Vietnam War, humanitarian conflicts like in Chechnya, Kosovo, Somalia, and Rwanda. Therefore, agenda-setting is not always to serve the powerful elites class but also to force government to deal with issues of less importance. Media does not serve only for intervention and war but also to encourage governments for withdrawal i.e. Vietnam War. Rooted in liberal political thoughts, foreign policy of a liberal democratic state must reflect the public opinion; manifested by opinion polls, direct elections and representation of public concerns via media. These are acclaimed values of liberal democratic political system evolved in liberal tradition.

The study of ideational and discursive factors in American political system and its foreign policy politics demonstrates that the material factors have been the passing phenomenon. The real power of American society rests with political ideals or belief system which has consequently made them successful model of modern democratic nation-state on the one hand, and, very vulnerable for political deception by their decision-making elites and media conglomerates on the other hand as it was widely noticed after the US invasion of Iraq 2003. American political culture and its behavior abroad remain puzzling for many because it has been paradoxical in terms of theory versus practice but its real appreciation comes when looking into its evolution and they way it has successfully survived over time.

The political ideals of American society are enshrined in its liberal political tradition, national political identity and in its

'living document'; its foreign policy behavior abroad is interpreted through these too, which is challenged by its contradictory practice due to imperialist tendencies. The way American government synthesizes ideational and material factors in its domestic politics and international engagements still provides a paradoxical model for many but at the same time, ideal for many subscribers of 'real politick'. The nub of this analogy keeps it promise that; material ends of the US foreign policy are operationalized precisely through ideational/moral routes as well as successful employment of hegemonic political discourse through presidential political rhetoric and its reiteration by media discourse which was self-evident in the case of US War on Iraq.

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Notes

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