

# George w bush and barack obama's foreign policies



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Scholars have stated that the US foreign policy was not going to change despite a change in the country's leadership, thus, successor president have continued with similar policies of their predecessor. However, the foreign policies established by Obama have also differed in many respects. There are many variations between the foreign policies of the Bush and Obama Administration. Both presidents had so many different controversial issues to act on and both were influence by many factors; both had different approach for intervening in a sovereign country. This essay will compare foreign policies of Bush to that of Obama and will weigh up their difference in many respects, compare Bush intervention on Iraq to that of Obama's intervention in Libya and will conclude that Obama engaged well with the outside world including the Muslim world.

Neoconservatives has been one the most controversial and influential figures on the US foreign policy, this is often seen the product of the George Bush Administration. They played vital role in shaping the US foreign policy during Bush administration, however, they have little influence on Obama Administration, but will likely to have a continual influence on the presidential election campaigns. (William et al 2007). Neoconservatives dominated George Bush Administration and their notion of the US foreign policy was implemented, they deemed U. S as the only super power in the world and its struggle for greater dominance. Their notion of hegemony was clearly illustrated in Bush speech:

" America has, and intends to keep, military strengths beyond challenge .....  
Bush declared that the United States must build and maintain our defenses beyond challenge and our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential

adversaries from pursuing a military buildup in hopes of surpassing or equaling the power of the United States. (William et al 2007, 5)

This demonstrates that the neoconservative concept of foreign policy has always been to seek power and maintain the US as the global hegemon. The link is very crucial which primary served as justification for the Iraq War (William et al 2007, 2). The notion was clearly pragmatic in intervention in Iraq, which depicted that US foreign policy still seek dominance and hegemony. On the other hand, The language of Bush speeches on Iraq and 911 mattered. The Bush Administration used the language rhetoric to shape public opinion about controversial policies. It could be argued that the Bush administration had this norm of using language discourse in order to motivate and encourage people to accept their claim. If we look at the Bush Speech, it clearly shows that the administration used false claims and including comparing Iraq to Afghanistan and connecting the War on Terror in Afghanistan to removal of Saddam Hussain Regime.

“ The attacks of September 11, 2001 showed what the enemies of America did with four airplanes. We will not wait to see what terrorist of terror states could do with weapons of mass destruction” (Kushner & Gershkoff 2005, 528)

This speech reveals to ordinary Americans that the enemies of the U. S are indistinguishable and they are allied by the use of terror. Bush is linking terrorist to terror states to make his argument about Iraq more valid and ask people to support him. This combination also provided the logical basis for intervening in Iraq. Saddam Hussain was linked to Al-Qaida and therefore to

911. This kind of language have often used by most senior Bush Administration officials, this kind of language allows the president to shape citizens support for his controversial policies. His successor President Obama did not follow his footprint on language discourse.

Obama Administration foreign policies are based upon the very pragmatic notion that the US should defend its primary and secondary interests, and that there is no hard and fast rule on the intervention. It could be argued that the U. S support of military intervention in Libya stands qualitatively different from the policies of Bush Administration on Iraq. The Obama administrations actively seek to shape US foreign policy on intervention. The administration had supported allies in the Libya campaign, but it largely avoided doing the direct fight. The Obama Administration's intervention in Libya demonstrates an evolution in the US foreign policy (William 2011). The change was massive on the intervention policies. Although the administration avoided direct contact, however, it did support the intervention behind the scene.

The US C4ISTR technology tracked and targeted enemy forces, 75%of in-fight refueling for combat aircraft was provided by the US. Washington supplied satellites communication for all allied forces. American specialists at NATO's regional HQ prepared the targeting package. When Europeans ran out of munitions, it was the US that provided them with more, to keep the operation running (William 2011).

This demonstrates that the mission would have not functioned well if the US not support at first instance, and it could have been huge below for its

Europeans allies. This also shows that the Obama administration took different approach to Libya to state it as example of difference than its previous administration. Obama foreign policy in Libya also illustrated that his foreign policy does not stand in the tradition of Iraq. It stands in the tradition of the successful multi-lateral international community action that ultimately saved thousands of lives and ended an ethnic civil war (Creamer 2011). Obama policies on Libya demonstrated that Benghazi did not become Obama's Rwanda. It was hard to predict the consequences of uprising in Libya. Obama played well in Libya to support the intervention through pushing other European countries in front line and that worked well for the US to achieved its goals through different means compare to previous Administration.

The Obama Administration concentrated on shaping policy from soldiers on the ground to unmanned aerial vehicles. This strategy intensified to eliminate the enemy leadership through the American technological advantage. Obama Administration tripled the use of drones, as a result, the Administration achieved to eliminate top Taliban leaders in Pakistan, Such as Pakistan Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud was killed on drone strike, this brought huge achievement for the War on Terror for the US and its allies. (Walsh 2009 ) However, this kind of policy do raises moral, ethical and legal issues, but it has been far more effective on eliminating the top Al-Qaida and Taliban leadership, in particularly, it was increasingly proven to be effective in Pakistan.

Obama took cooperative attitudes towards Muslims World, Obama made it clear that the US is not an enemy of the Muslim world, in his speech in Cairo <https://assignbuster.com/george-w-bush-and-barack-obamas-foreign-policies/>

he stated that he wants to “ seek a new beginning between the U. S and Muslims around the world; one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect; and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not to be in competition” (New York times 2009). This speech was welcomed by many Muslims Countries Leadership and a sign of hopes and trust started to build in between the U. S and many Muslim Countries, The clear difference of Obama’s approach on the US foreign policy was that Obama gestured of extending a hand to Muslims world. This kind of policy was unheard in Bush’s foreign policy.

However, later it has been proved that this was only a speech by Obama in Cairo and there has not been any tangible change in his foreign policy doctrine. It could also be argued that Obama did not take pragmatic steps for a change through his policies to many Muslim Countries in his first term, the foreign policies he inherited from Bush continued till present.

There are policies which Obama inherited from Bush and Obama continued to walk on his predecessor footsteps, however, on many instances Obama mended those inherited controversial policies.

The situation in both countries Iraq and Libya had both different circumstances and different reasons were given by both administrations for intervening, however, on both situations the US had acted on intervening in sovereign states for promoting democracy and human rights. Both presidents took different approach for intervening in these states. Bush claimed understands to be untrue and baseless for intervening on Iraq, however, Obama avoided direct contact on intervening in Libya and push

allies to front line. Although the Libyan mission was smooth enough for the US and its allies, but recently when violence erupted in Benghazi, which as a result left the US ambassador to Libya was killed. This demonstrates the clearly weak Obama policy in Libya and maybe tough times ahead for Obama in Libya as the newly elected Libyan government is not much cooperative with the US (BBC 2012).

The massive pressure of neoconservatives on Bush administration which led Bush took the US into two costly wars, Bush claimed that Iraq is the central front in the global war on terror because Saddam Hussain regime had weapons of mass destruction, and also claimed that the deposing Saddam Hussain from power will bring stability and security to Middle East, Almost all of his reasons were proven to be patently false. (William & Schmidt 2007). Bush Administration held that democracy promotions could be achieve through direct regime change, as a result this led to costliest US foreign policy disaster of recent times, saddling the US with One Trillion of debt and destabilizing the international market. Bush continued to pump more troops into Iraq, however, Obama (Cordesman et al 2012) stated clearly that his priority for the War in Afghanistan and brought the Iraq War to end. In fact, Obama changed foreign policy on Iraq massively, and US troops tasks were mended from fighting on the ground to training, advising and equipping the Iraqi Security forces to meet the future security challenges.

Bush Administration prioritize Iraq and downplayed the importance of Al-Qaida Leadership, who were gaining power day by day and later proved to be tough for the US military to be defeated ( Creamer 2011). On the other hand, Obama ignored the costliest Iraq War and maintained a foreign policy <https://assignbuster.com/george-w-bush-and-barack-obamas-foreign-policies/>

to disrupt, dismantle and destroy Al-Qaida Leadership, the killing of Osama bin Laden credited Obama's foreign policy on War on Terror. On the other hand, there was also this big foreign policy shift from Bush to Obama that Bush Administration favored those states which cooperated in the Iraq War through providing them with a larger aid allocation than would otherwise be predicted. Later the Obama Administration reversed the unstated policy of aid payments for US allies by penalizing allies' members with far below the aid allocation (Miller et al 2012, 1215).

Both presidents have taken similar stances for the war on terror in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Bush Administration did not have a clear strategy for the war in Afghanistan. Bush intervened in Afghanistan in response to 911 to remove Taliban from power and eliminate Al-Qaida leadership, soon after, the purpose on war in Afghanistan has been changed and later it was also war on drug and women's right and promotion of democracy. The War in Afghanistan varied different purpose for Bush Administration and it was not clear enough. However, Obama made the War in Afghanistan clearer and a new strategy for the war. Obama stated:

“ So I want the American people to understand that we have a clear and focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future. That's the goal that must be achieved. That is a cause that could not be more just.” (Lee 2009).

His speech reveals that Obama Administration has drawn a new comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan; the deployment of more troops to



on the ground to fight Taliban guerilla fighters and to train and advice Afghan military forces. The strategy was credited when Pakistani Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud was killed as result of drone strike and the killing of Osama bin Laden, however, his new strategy faced many challenges in South of Afghanistan, where the level of violence remained at alarmed level.

Nuclear weapons are very controversial issue for every administration. Bush did not succeeded on reducing existing nuclear arsenals, on the other hand, did not have good relations with Russia for nuclear weapons reduction and withdrawn from the anti-Ballistic Missiles ( Rusten 2001). However, Obama proposed negotiations with Russia on further nuclear reductions and the administration also ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (Mackby 2011). Obama stated clearly that there would the priority of reducing and eventually eliminating all existing nuclear weapons. Bush sanctions on Iran did not help achieved tangible results, however, Obama introduced tough sanctions on Iran which led the Iranian economy in massive crisis, and Iran's national oil revenue dropped 45% (BBC 2013), Obama sanctions proved to be tough on Iran's National Economy. This is clear effects of sanctions on the Iranian economy which has led some analyst to state that the Iranian economy is on the verge of collapse and the recent sanctions are having severe impact.

To sum up considering many foreign policies where Bush and Obama had similar goals and Obama continued to walk on the footprints of Bush, continued to seek US position as hegemon similar as Bush and intervned in Libya by pushing Europeans allies in front line, however, Bush discovered that many countries did not cooperated with U. S and rejected his style of

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leadership as well as his aggressive policies on Iraq. On the other hand, Obama discovered that in a globalised world, where power has been more widely dispersed, many newly developed countries are not looking to Washington for direction, and are on the verge to make new allies. Bush downplayed the War on terror and focused on Iraq, thus, the made it difficult for the U. S Army to defeat Taliban, on the other hand, Obama prioritized the War on terror and drew a clear strategy to eliminate Al-Qaida Leadership and train, equip and advice Afghan military forces.