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**Countdown to Catastrophe: President Clinton,
the CIA, and the Spectre of Terrorism, 1993-
2001.**

by

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degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Politics and International Studies.

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In memory of

Louis Amadeus (2012-2018)

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Declaration.

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by me and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree. The work presented was carried out by the author.

Abstract.

This thesis investigates how President Clinton and his intelligence agencies dealt with the challenges posed by domestic terrorism and al Qaeda. During the Clinton presidency, episodic attacks were inflicted on the American people and US assets, both domestically and overseas. Many of these attacks were inspired or perpetrated by the al Qaeda network. After he left office and, in the wake of '9/11,' Clinton's record in facing down the developing terrorist threat came under intense scrutiny. Accused of being negligent in a series of polarising and invective-filled accounts, over the threat of terrorism and held indirectly responsible for '9/11', Clinton was famously challenged by Fox news anchor Chris Wallace: "Why didn't you do more to put bin Laden and al Qaeda out of business when you were President?" My thesis focuses on answering this question using newly declassified source material, interviews with some key participants, and a reassessment of contemporary arguments about terrorism and US counterterrorism during the 1990s.

This thesis has found that President Clinton evolved US counterterrorism policy by implementing defensive counterterrorism actions to pivot to coercive actions in the pursuit of bin Laden. From 1995 onwards, Clinton's foreign and domestic counterterrorism management became attuned to the threat posed by terrorism, and by the time he left office in 2001 had identified bin Laden as "Public enemy Number 1" and the primary threat to US Security. Clinton acted to bring in anti terrorism legislation in the face of Republican opposition and increased FBI funding to put in place defensive counter measures to protect American lives and infrastructure. Clinton then pivoted to pursuing a range of coercive counterterrorism measures, short of full-scale military expedition to deal with al Qaeda, including diplomatic efforts to co-opt allies and persuade other states to hand over bin Laden, attack suspected al Qaeda facilities and order covert operations to eliminate bin Laden. Much of Clinton's counterterrorism initiatives was compromised by the poor intelligence capability of a CIA, struggling to come to terms with its post Cold War role and poor leadership at the Agency. Domestically, Republican opposition and FBI Director's personal animosity towards the president, proved to be dragging anchors on US counterterrorism before '9/11'.

Introduction.

The acrid cloud of smoke hung in the air. At least three thousand people were believed to be dead. The country was in shock. The victims were being identified. The exact perpetrators remained unknown, although speculation was rife. Before the mourning could begin for the dead, the blame had started. In a hastily organised press conference, Californian Republican Representative Dana Rohrabacher had fired the first shot in a torrent of invective against a past President, hours after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington D.C. on September 11, 2001. As the *Washington Post* reported Rohrabacher saying: “We had Bill Clinton backing off, letting the Taliban go, over and over again.”¹ Hours after the single biggest foreign attack on US soil, some Americans were turning on their previous president, William Jefferson (Bill) Clinton, who had left office only eight months earlier with the highest job approval rating of any post-World War II president at 65%.² The ‘9/11’ attacks would have far reaching consequences and the critical voices would be amplified over the following years as they demanded answers to the questions of why and how the United States could have been attacked in this way? How could the US have been left so vulnerable? How could the most powerful country in the world have missed the countdown to catastrophe?

Before the official inquiries had begun, a cottage industry of commentators, speculators and armchair generals were on television and radio stations offering reasons why the attack had happened and how America should respond. Addressing the nation at 8.30 pm EST from the Oval Office, the now incumbent, President George W. Bush, described the attacks as “evil” and attempted to reassure Americans with the promise:

The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts. I've directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. We

¹ John F. Harris, “Conservatives sound refrain: It’s Clinton’s fault”, *The Washington Post*, October 7, 2001, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2001/10/07/conservatives-sound-refrain-its-clintons-fault/2aa26a75-0742-4d9f-9139-a3ea02b42ad4/?utm_term=.e2915ca496e5 .

² Gerhard Peters. "Final Presidential Job Approval Ratings." *The American Presidency Project*, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/final_approval.php .

will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.³

Whilst President Bush looked to comfort the nation, another effort to ascribe blame was underway as the media began its own investigation before the facts were even established. On September 12, the libertarian conservative columnist William Safire was one of the earliest media commentators to direct the nation's attention back to the Clinton administration, of which he had been a strong critic during much of its two terms in office. In an opinion piece in *The New York Times*, Safire questioned the effectiveness of Clinton's counterterrorism policies. In the op-ed, in which he described the events of '9/11' as a "new day of infamy" (in a reference to the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor), Safire fired the starting gun on the accusation that Clinton's counterterrorism record was at fault. He lambasted the earlier Democratic administration for its failure to respond to terrorism strongly enough:

When we get solid information about the centers and resources of the terror network, how do we retaliate? Five years of investigation and trials and appeals, as after the first World Trade Center attack, deter nobody. Lobbing a few missiles at possible training sites, as President Clinton hastily and ineffectually did, is a demeaning pretense. Lashing out on the basis of inadequate information is wrong, but in terror-wartime, waiting for absolute proof is dangerous. When we reasonably determine our attackers' bases and camps, we must pulverize them - minimizing but accepting the risk of collateral damage- and act overtly or covertly to destabilize terror's national hosts. The Pentagon's rebuilt fifth side should include a new Department of Pre-emption.⁴

In January 2002, another conservative commentator, Andrew Sullivan, accused President Clinton of "criminal negligence" and betrayal of trust.⁵ Unsurprisingly, Clinton's political opponents also weighed in to the debate. Newt Gingrich, former Republican Speaker of the House, and arch-rival of the Clinton White House after 1994, suggested that Clinton had not done enough to confront terrorism on his watch. Gingrich said that Clinton had been

3 George W. Bush: "Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks", *The American Presidency Project*, September 11, 2001, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=580>.

4 William Safire, Opinion, "Essay; a new day of infamy," *The New York Times*, September 12, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/12/opinion/essay-new-day-of-infamy.html>.

5 Andrew Sullivan, "While Clinton diddled," *Salon.com*, January 9, 2002, https://www.salon.com/2002/01/09/clinton_85.

“pathetically weak, [with an] ineffective ability to focus and stay focused.”⁶ The public pinnacle of this critique of Clinton came on Fox News in 2006. The pre-arranged focus of the interview with the former president was to discuss his post-presidential work, specifically his efforts to raise public awareness about the issue of climate change. After some preliminary discussions, four and half minutes into the interview, host Chris Wallace surprised the former president by moving the conversation away from the environment to the issue of terrorism. “Why didn’t you do more to put [Osama] bin Laden and al Qaeda out of business when you were President?” asked Wallace. Visibly upset at what appeared to be an ambush on this issue - a case of “gotcha journalism” – Clinton responded: “At least I tried. That’s the difference [between] me and some, including all of the right-wingers who are attacking me now. They ridiculed me for trying. They had eight months to try. They did not try. I tried...”⁷

This thesis provides a theoretically grounded and empirically rich response to the question of how the Clinton administration responded to the threat of terrorism from al Qaeda and within the US, what choices it had, and whether the post- ‘9/11’ criticisms are justified.

The thesis will therefore address these questions:

- First, how did the Clinton administration’s perception and understanding of terrorism develop over time?
- Second, what were the essential characteristics of the Clinton administration’s counterterrorism policy?
- Third, how effective was the Clinton administration’s counterterrorism policy judged against its own stated objectives?
- Fourth, how effectively did the Clinton White House lead, support and interact with other elements of the administration, particularly the FBI, CIA and other intelligence and security agencies, that were charged with implementing its stated goals on counterterrorism?

⁶ Steven M. Gillon, *The Pact: Bill Clinton, Newt Gingrich, and the rivalry that defined a generation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 271.

⁷ Fox news.com, “Transcript: William Jefferson Clinton on ‘Fox news Sunday’”, *Fox news*, September 26, 2006, <https://www.foxnews.com/story/transcript-william-jefferson-clinton-on-fox-news-sunday>.

This research has chosen its focus on exploring threats to the US from domestic and foreign acts of terrorism. Though acts of terrorism fluctuated in their intensity during the Clinton presidency, the threat from al Qaeda was perceived as the greatest threat foreign threat to Americans. By 2000 the US State Department, described al Qaeda as having “several hundred to several thousand members” and as a “focal point or umbrella organisation for a worldwide network”.⁸ This research will argue that domestic counterterrorism policy development in protecting US infrastructure and civilians drove Clinton’s counterterrorism thinking during his first term, before pivoting to pursue hostile and coercive actions against al Qaeda, including missile strikes in his second term. This research is focused on threat to the US by domestic terrorism and al Qaeda. It has not explored Clinton’s diplomatic efforts to secure peace in Northern Ireland from the threat of terrorism. Clinton was seen as highly influential in securing the peace agreement was lauded for his efforts on pushing for an agreement between the British and Irish governments that would bring an end to ‘the troubles’ in North Ireland.⁹ Clinton’s interests in Northern Ireland can be traced back to his time in the late 1960’s when he was at Oxford University. Clinton believed that with a big Irish American population, the United States could play a pivotal role in engineering a breakthrough.¹⁰ In *The Irish Times* editorial on the Easter Saturday after the signing of ‘The Good Friday Agreement’ (Belfast Agreement) between the Irish and British Governments, it stated that the “role of President Clinton cannot be underestimated”.¹¹ From the British perspective, Peter Hain Northern Ireland Secretary in 2007, Prime Minister Tony Blair in his memoirs and Jonathan Powell more recently have all praised Clinton’s commitment to delivering the peace process.¹² John Dumbrell, The Clinton foreign policy scholar has also

8 US. State Department, “Patterns of Global Terrorism, 1992,” *Federation of American Scientists*, https://fas.org/irp/threat/terror_92/review.html; Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000, *US Department of State*, <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2000/2473.htm>.

9 Warren Hoge, “Clinton in Ulster: The mood; After 3 violent decades, Hope in Northern Ireland”, *The New York Times*, September 4, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/04/world/clinton-in-ulster-the-mood-after-3-violent-decades-hope-in-northern-ireland.html>; Jack Power, Bill Clinton to receive freedom of Belfast on Agreement anniversary, *The Irish Times*, March 31, 2018, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/bill-clinton-to-receive-freedom-of-belfast-on-agreement-anniversary-1.3445835>.

10 Bill Clinton, *My Life*, (London: Arrow Books, 2005), 401.

11 “Easter 1998”, April 11, 1998, *The Irish Times*, , <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/the-agreement/easter-1998-1.140932>.

12 Peter Hain, “Peace making in Northern Ireland”, *Chatham House*, June 12, 2007,

<https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/politics/docs/nio/ph120607.pdf>; Tony Blair, *A Journey: My political life*, London: (Arrow books, 2011), 188, Jonathan Powell, “The lessons of Northern Ireland: security is not enough: ten lessons for

argued, “He [Clinton] had a strong personal commitment to Irish issues.... his new agenda,[was] central to the peace dynamic of the 1990 ’s and in particular to the achievement of the GFA [Good Friday agreement].”¹³ Though there were pockets of support for the cause of Irish rights within the US, there was a distaste for the terrorist tactics of the IRA (Irish Republican army) within the US.¹⁴ In 1996, it was uncharitably argued that Clinton’s investment of political capital on the Irish question had been done to secure votes for his healthcare reforms from the Irish American Senators, Edward Kennedy and Daniel Patrick Moynihan.¹⁵ The president’s role in delivering peace through encouraging a negotiated settlement that brought an end to a very long conflict on both sides of Irish border and on mainland UK, was an European foreign policy accomplishment. The situation in Northern Ireland never posed a threat to US security and for this reason has not been included in this research. Also, the criticism Clinton received in the aftermath of ‘9/11’ were all focused on his handling of al Qaeda and his negligence of terrorism as a phenomenon.

The importance of this research

This research aims to address the gaps and problems that exist in developing a comprehensive study of US foreign policy and counterterrorism during the period of the Clinton presidency. It aims to achieve four key goals. First it addresses the lively, yet unresolved, academic, and popular debate about how Clinton responded to the issue of terrorism. The subject of the Clinton administration’s approach to counterterrorism has been contorted by politics and obscured by secrecy. Journalists and commentators have written books, many of which are highly speculative and partisan, without sufficient rigour in their research. The availability of primary data has further complicated this contortion, much of which has been classified until now. This paucity of sources

conflict resolution from Northern Ireland,” *IDEAS reports - special reports*, Kitchen, Nicholas (ed.) SR008 May 2012. LSE IDEAS, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

¹³ John Dumbrell, “The new American connection: President George W. Bush and Northern Ireland,” in *A Farewell to Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement*, eds. Michael Cox, Adrian Guelke, Fiona Stephen, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 358.

¹⁴ Dan Barry, “For Irish, a mix of pride and discomfort over the I.R.A”, *The New York Times*, March 13, 1996, <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/03/13/nyregion/for-irish-a-mix-of-pride-and-discomfort-over-the-ira.html>

¹⁵ Joseph O’Grady, “An Irish policy born in the USA: Clinton’s Break with the past”, *Foreign Affairs*, (May / June 1996).

has prevented a rigorous academic investigation into Clinton's counterterrorism policies.

Second, it speaks to a critical period of US political history, the consequences of which are continuing to impact US national security policy today. The ripple effect of US national security decision-making that followed '9/11' led to protracted conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, which served to destabilise the Middle East and fuel a wider conflict and proxy wars by Saudi Arabia and Iran. International terrorism nevertheless remained and as Iraq fell, some of the officers from Saddam Hussein's Iraqi army made their way into an organisation called 'Daesh' (also known as Islamic State of Iraq and Levant) that became synonymous with brutality, particularly towards Westerners. Whilst forces of optimism came and went with the putative 'Arab Spring' of 2010, which replaced one set of dictators in some parts of the Middle East with another, countries that had previously been accused of sponsoring terrorism like Libya underwent regime change as a result of American interventions that failed to manage a smooth transition of power. Libya, for example, was left in a lawless state. Since 2009, US foreign policy went from President Bush's unilateralist instincts so beloved of the neoconservatives, to a period of engagement and restoration under Obama. However, before Obama had left office, America had grown tired of playing the 'global constable'. In the 2016 presidential election, the vision of Clinton and Obama, plus the neoconservative project, was consigned to history. Voters went to polls to reject interventionism in preference to being seduced by President Trump's Manichean rhetoric of 'us' against 'them' as he exploited grassroots American fears over terrorism to drive a domestic narrative of immigration control.¹⁶

Third, the Clinton administration faced distinct types of terrorism (domestic, state, and non-state terrorism). Much of the journalistic literature has not focused with sufficient precision on the different threats and responses the administration faced. This study, by dissecting the responses to the distinct types of terrorist threats, will contribute a more nuanced approach to the body of knowledge on US counterterrorism.

¹⁶ Jack Shafer, "Trump and Terror", *Politico*, November 1, 2017, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/11/01/trump-new-york-terror-attack-jack-shafer-215780>.

Fourth, this research is important because at the outset of the Clinton presidency there were calls for the role of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to be scaled down or disbanded altogether.¹⁷ It is important to understand, therefore, how the administration used both the FBI and the CIA to develop their counterterrorism roles in ways that helped redefine their post-Cold War purpose. This study will thus contribute to the research into the post-Cold War role of intelligence agencies in counterterrorism. This research builds on the knowledge of how the United States in the post-Cold War period, when earlier foreign policy challenges appeared to be diminishing and new challenges rising, dealt with the specific threat from terrorism, in all its forms. In summary, this is a study about United States foreign policy threat management in relation to terrorism between the end of the Cold War and the start of the so-called “War on Terror”.

The originality of this research

This thesis aims to tackle hitherto unexplored questions about the conduct of the Clinton administration’s handling of terrorism. The empirical approach adopted in this research aims to provide a focus on counterterrorism policy by examining the strategies, policies and the application of the policies during the Clinton presidency. Though the chronology of this research is largely focused on the period of the Clinton presidency, between 1993-2001, it is bookended first by an examination of counterterrorism strategy by Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush in the decade before Clinton came to power, then secondly at the end of the thesis by analysing the legacy of Clinton’s policies during the eight months of 2001 after George W. Bush took office. This will enable this research to explore some of the often biased or spurious claims that have been made in the years following ‘9/11’ about the Clinton administration’s alleged neglect. The purpose here is to provide an academic analysis on the judgements made by the supporters and detractors of the president. By situating the research in the nexus between foreign policy, domestic counterterrorism, and foreign

¹⁷ Paul McGarr, “Do We Still Need the CIA?” Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the Central Intelligence Agency and US Foreign Policy,” *History*, 100: 340, (April 2015), 275-592.

intelligence, it provides a rounded view of the policies adopted by the Clinton administration as it went about confronting the challenge of terrorism.

Research Methodology

The research methodology in this thesis draws principally from the disciplines of political science and diplomatic history to deliver an empirically-informed understanding of the Clinton administration's handling of terrorism between 1993-2001. This method offers a proven approach based on the exploration of archival data supported by interviews and contemporaneous press reports and memoirs. It is not without its challenges both methodologically and ontologically.

This research draws upon latest information that has become known in the years since '9/11'. Specifically, this research utilises newly declassified archival data on the Clinton administration counterterrorism policies. With each passing year, more and more data has been cleared for release either through Freedom of Information Access (FOIA) requests or has been processed and declassified for other reasons to be made available at the Clinton Presidential Library in Little Rock, Arkansas, at the Library of Congress and at the National Security Archive, both in Washington D.C. This thesis supplements this archival record with a combination of elite face-to-face interviews with counterterrorism national security staff from the Clinton Administration, the CIA, the Justice Department, and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). These have been supplemented with further interviews with staff members who served on the congressional inquiry into '9/11': 'The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States' (commonly referred to, as hereafter, as the '9/11' Commission) which reported in 2004.¹⁸ These staff members provide excellent eye witness accounts for both Clinton and George W. Bush as well as the White House staff who testified at the '9/11' inquiry. This interview material is also complemented by memoirs and unpublished accounts from private papers of some of the people that were instrumental in not just leading and devising the policies of the Clinton administration but also those that were in the front line of applying these policies in practice. This research will draw upon

¹⁸ U.S. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 commission report: Final report of the National Commission on Terrorist attacks upon the United States*, Authorized edition, (New York: WW Norton, 2004).

some of these unpublished accounts found in the archives such as Ambassador Prudence Bushnell who was one of the Ambassadors who directly saw the Embassy bombing in 1998 in Kenya. As this introduction has already suggested, the tensions that existed in US public life following ‘9/11’ requires this research to consider not just the views and arguments made by the people within the Clinton administration, but also to reflect upon the contemporaneous views of the media, critics of the administration and other commentators, to ensure that a rounded perspective on terrorism and counterterrorism during the period is presented. Therefore, this thesis has adopted three distinct yet intertwined methods that offer an opportunity to explore the record of the Clinton administration, mindful that each method adopted has its own associated risks.

The first of these methodological approaches is the adoption described by Brian Roberts as “biographical research”¹⁹. At nearly a thousand pages, Clinton’s autobiographical study provides an excellent starting point in exploring his life and times.²⁰ Though this book was published in 2004, when many of the arguments that are explored in this thesis were raging, Clinton’s engagement with the challenge of terrorism is fitted within the chronological narrative of his presidency. From these pages a good understanding of president’s life and values can be discerned, as well as the challenges he faced both domestically and internationally. Clinton’s engagement with terrorist attacks during his presidency is selective and incomplete. For example, terrorist attacks that captured significant media attention, e.g. World Trade Center bombing (1993), Oklahoma City bombing (1995) and the East Africa Embassy bombings (1998) are discussed in some detail. The shooting of the CIA staff at the gates of the Langley campus in Virginia (1993) gets no mention and the attack on the USS Cole (2000) only merits one paragraph. Therefore, to build up a complete picture of the administration’s counterterrorism strategy the scope of this research has extended to exploring the accounts provided by members of his administration, from accounts provided by Secretaries of State Warren Christopher and Madeleine Albright; Richard A. Clarke who was Chair of the Counterterrorism Security Group on Clinton’s National Security Council and continued to serve under George W. Bush until 2003; George Tenet who

¹⁹ Brian Roberts, *Biographical Research*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002).

²⁰ Bill Clinton, *My Life*, (London: Arrow books, 2005).

was the second longest serving Director of the CIA under both Clinton and Bush; Louis Freeh who was Director of the FBI during most of the Clinton presidency; and Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon who served on Clinton's National Security team with Benjamin going on to serve as Ambassador at Large on Counterterrorism for President Barack Obama.²¹ Books by the Secretaries of State are highly illuminating because they provide a good understanding of how terrorism came to be viewed differently by Christopher and Albright. They also act as a guide, to the administrations priorities on counterterrorism, within the wider scope of US foreign policy. The books from Clarke, Benjamin and Simon offer a detailed view of the challenges faced on shaping and applying Clinton's counterterrorism policies along with the White House's views of the intelligence agencies. The books by the intelligence agency chiefs on the other hand deliver a view from their perspective on the direction and support provided by the administration. It also provides a good understanding of the other intelligence challenges that impacted the attention that they could give to terrorism.

The use of memoirs is not an unfamiliar approach but, in recent years, appears to have gained more traction within Social Science research methodology. Originally, memoirs were viewed and described as 'documents of life', to quote Ken Plummer, when they were first used within Social Sciences research. As Brian Roberts has noted, autobiographies are now "firmly established within social sciences, becoming part of the 'mainstream'" in research practice.²² However, whilst biographical research is valuable, it is not without its issues. As David Thelen observed in his study of American history and memory, whilst memoirs offer the exciting possibility of a glimpse into private thought, the author's remembered version of reality is to a large extent "constructed not reproduced".²³ In particular, Thelen cautions about how memory serves to influence the presentation of evidence, in that events can gain

21 Warren Christopher, *In the stream of history: Shaping foreign policy for a new era* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press 1998); Warren Christopher, *Chances of a lifetime: A memoir*, (New York : Scribner, 2001); Madeleine Albright, *Madam Secretary: A Memoir*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005); Richard A. Clarke, *Against all enemies: Inside America's War on Terror*, (London: Free Press, 2004); George Tenet (with Bill Harlow) *In the Center of the Storm : My Years at the CIA*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2007); Louis J. Freeh, *My FBI: Bringing down the mafia, investigating Bill Clinton, fighting the War on Terror*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005); Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror: Radical Islam's War against America*, (New York: Random House, 2003).

22 Brian Roberts, "Biographical Research: Past, present, future" in *Advances in biographical methods: Creative Applications*, eds. Maggie O' Neil, Brian Roberts and Andrew C. Sparkes, (London: Routledge 2015), 17.

23 David Thelen, "Memory and American History", *The Journal of American History*, 75: 4 (March 1989), 1119.

greater significance in biographies brought about through “need or circumstance.”²⁴ This is evidenced in books by Clinton administration insiders that appeared before and after ‘9/11’ as terrorism became more prominent within American political discourse. A good example of this is the contrasting way in which terrorism was treated in the two books by Warren Christopher. Christopher’s first book, published in 1998, presents the challenge of terrorism in an episodic manner as one of many borderless foreign policy challenges faced by Clinton, which included drugs and narcotics.²⁵ In his second book, published in 2001, terrorism gains one dedicated chapter in three hundred pages of text.²⁶

To overcome these pitfalls in memoirs, this research will also rely on archival and contemporaneous media reports. The use of archival data offers the researcher the opportunity to cast a fresh eye into history. The archival data at the Clinton Library in Arkansas, the CIA “CREST” archive in College Park, Maryland, the Library of Congress and the National Security Archives in Washington, DC, has enabled this research to examine the declassified information that has been made available and check it against the published claims of both officials and commentators. These archival findings have been supported by FOIA (Freedom of Information Access) requests, where possible. Alas a number of my FOIA requests exceeded the time scope allocated for this research due to the vagaries of the Interagency Security Classification Panels (ISCAP). Frustratingly, ISCAP can only handle a limited number of requests.²⁷ With much of the non-sensitive data being made digitally accessible, gaps created through classification of sensitive data become more apparent as often records tend to be appended with digital markers that identify gaps that offer room for further exploration.

In praise of the potential offered by archival data, Louise Corti and Paul Thomson noted that archival sources are “rich and unique [and] yet too often underexploited.”²⁸ A more starry-eyed description was offered by Robert Connors who described the potential of archival information as being where

24 Ibid.,1121.

25 Christopher, *In the stream of history*, 559-560.

26 Christopher, *Chances of a lifetime*, 225-235.

27 At the time of writing five ISCAP appeals have been lodged, with support of the Clinton Library in Arkansas, requesting declassification of papers associated with National Security Presidential Directives PDD 39, 62, 63.

28 Louise Corti and Paul Thompson “Secondary analysis of archived data” in *Qualitative Research Practice*, eds, Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber F. Gubrium and David Silverman, (London: Sage Publications, 2004) 297-313.

“storage meets dreams and the result is history.”²⁹ There are, however, challenges associated with archival information. Richard J. Aldrich’s pithy description of government archives as “history’s supermarket” mitigate against relying solely on archival data to inform research, especially as he also warns that the researcher who lives on a diet of supermarket fare alone risks becoming an official historian by proxy, such is the way the material has been “pre-selected, cleaned and processed by officials”. In short, an over-reliance on state archives could lead to the researcher “display[ing] a flabby posture”.³⁰ Moreover, given the classified nature of the material, Andrew Hammond has urged further caution in that the “secrecy and the very nature of these institutions [NSC, FBI, CIA], militate against a full picture of the documentary record.”³¹

To overcome the methodological issues presented in using archival data and heeding the warnings of researchers and academics on archival data, the third leg of the methodological approach seeks to triangulate the other two areas. There remains a cannon of literature produced by authors who have studied aspects of terrorism often with the cooperation and clearance offered by the security agencies, such as the FBI, CIA and DIA. Whilst arguably some of these accounts could still be accused of having been pre-cleansed and officially approved, nonetheless they offer an insight into an alternative perspective away from accounts created by the Clinton administration to justify their political positions. Alongside this approach, as a check on explanations provided in biographical accounts that may try to offer a different perspective on the events during the Clinton administration, are the accounts provided in media and TV interviews that provide a written record of the comments and speeches, but also the perception of accompanying ‘noise’ that was created by these terrorist events and the responses. As the Clinton administration straddled the onset of the digital age, with the mass adoption of the Internet, there remains a digitised record of the reactions and comments not captured within the traditional media

29 Robert J. Connors, “Dreams and Play: Historical method and methodology” in *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research*, eds. Gesa Kirsch and Patricia Sullivan, (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 17.

30 Richard J. Aldrich, “‘Grow your own’: cold war intelligence and history supermarkets”, *Intelligence and National Security*, 17:1, (March 2002), 135-152.

31 Andrew Hammond, “Through a glass darkly: the CIA and Oral history,” *History*, 100: (April 2015), 311–326.

that provide a valuable source of data for research into this period, specifically with regard to digital articles in the blogs and electronic media.

A number of Clinton administration personnel were also approached for an interview. The respondents covered a wide range of people that served in the Clinton administration. The respondents included people who had direct oversight and responsibility on counterterrorism within the administration. These included interviews with the CIA, DIA, Treasury and Justice Department. Further interviews were also conducted with those that served in the White House in aiding Richard Clarke and the National Security Council (NSC) on terrorism. Alongside these interviews, I also conducted three further interviews with staff members of the '9/11' Commission who sat in on the depositions of many of the key members of the Clinton and Bush administrations. The one observation on the timing of the fieldwork that is worth noting is that most of the interviews were undertaken ahead of the 2016 election, and some of those interviewed expected serving in a future Hillary Clinton administration. Whilst the interviews in the main tended to be supportive of President Clinton's efforts against terrorism, any criticism such as the failed missile strikes in 1998 against bin Laden was muted. Specifically, CIA Deputy Director John McLaughlin continued to argue that the strikes were justified in light of the evidence. Moreover, any deficiencies such as information sharing between the CIA and the FBI were not seen to be a failure in counterterrorism management, but due to actions of specific individuals, such as FBI director Louis Freeh.

Along with practical considerations such as career prospects for political respondents, oral history generated through interviews also brings with it methodological opportunities and challenges. Some of the issues found above in relation to memoirs, are also relevant to how memory shapes oral history interviews. The benefits, therefore, that can be gained require methodological precision in terms of setting up and managing interviews. As Donald Ritchie noted, being aware of the opportunities as well as the challenges of oral history interviews is important as "interviewers must be aware of the peculiarities of the memory, adept in their methods of dealing with it, conscious of its limitations and open to its treasures."³²

32 Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 91.

There are two specific methodological challenges that exist. First, issues relating to national security and terrorism, where the actions and decisions of many of the respondents changed on the life of so many Americans, is likely to have been altered as terrorism has become more prominent within the national dialogue. The magnitude of events that took place on ‘9/11’ means that memories of that day have been seared into the psyches of all those who witnessed it whether in person or via the media. The meanings attributed to the day’s events have also been produced and reproduced extensively in both news and popular media. As Federico Lorenz noted in his exploration of contested accounts of a conflict situation in Argentina, whilst “all memories *are* political... not all memories *affect* politics” [authors italics].³³ Therefore, in an exploration of the Clinton administration’s handling of terrorism the separation of the insights between those that are being suggested by interviewees which are political must be separated from observations that do not impact upon the politics of the event. Second, as Andrew Hammond discovered in his research on national security and the CIA, there is a propensity for some respondents to be “economical with the truth”.³⁴ Hammond’s experience suggests that there is a need to verify information gathered by interview, with triangulating and corroborating the information.³⁵ However, it is nonetheless worth including intelligence agents among interviewees in that not only do they provide a glimpse into the intelligence that was pushed up the chain of command into the White House, but they also provide, as Philip Davies has noted, not only a view of the “same thing from a different angle ... [but to] see different facets of the same thing.”³⁶

Approaches to Counterterrorism

The literature review that follows reflects upon Clinton’s handling of terrorism. Implicit within this is however a bigger debate on the nature of counterterrorism which this thesis has considered in the chapters that follow. Though as Paul Wilkinson has argued with there being “no universally applicable counterterrorism policy for western democracies. Every conflict involving terrorism

33 Federico G. Lorenz, “How does one win a lost war? Oral history and political memories?” in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History* ed. Donald A. Ritchie, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 125.

34 Hammond, “Through a glass darkly” 324.

35 Ibid.

36 Philip H.J. Davies, “Spies as Informants: Triangulation and the Interpretation of Elite Interview Data in the Study of the Intelligence and Security Services” *Politics*, 21:1(February 2001), 73-80.

has its own unique characteristics,” this does leave open the door for debate.³⁷ Clinton’s handling of al Qaeda was mischaracterised as “legalistic” by his political critics predominantly from the conservative right, accusing the president of ducking his responsibilities by not carrying through with the “war model” of counterterrorism against bin Laden.³⁸ The war model of terrorism presents the threat and attack of terrorism that must be repulsed by pre-emptive and sustained military action. Ronald Crelinsten has argued however that it is too simplistic to reduce the counterterrorism debate to what he has described as “September 10 thinking” versus “September 12 thinking”.³⁹ “September 10 thinking” was presented as law enforcement whereas “September 12 thinking” advocating military response, Crelinsten argues, was “discursive device” which “distorts the nature of the phenomenon [terrorism].”⁴⁰ Both these models of counterterrorism are within the coercive model of counterterrorism, as it reflects on the state’s ability to carry through its counterterrorism actions either through police and courts or through the military.⁴¹

Terrorism in the decade before Clinton came to power, as explored in chapter two on the Reagan and George H. W. Bush presidencies, shows that terrorism was a state sponsored threat. The Reagan administration, with the arrival of George Shultz at the State Department, moved its rhetoric and tried to shift its policy emphasis onto the ‘war model’ for counterterrorism, treating counterterrorist activity as a matter of primacy of military response. This focus by Shultz on using the military was part of a wider coercive counterterrorism policy platform that included other coercive actions including extradition, sanctions and attempted criminal prosecution.

Clinton had a wide spectrum of terrorist attacks to deal with during his presidency, from domestic and foreign actors perpetrating acts of terror in the US mainland to state sponsored terrorists attacking US troops in Saudi Arabia, before the first attack by al Qaeda, a non state actor ,attacked the US embassies in 1998, in East Africa. As will be clear from the analysis carried out in this thesis, Clinton would deploy differing counterterrorism responses, that could

37 Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism Versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 203.

38 Gertz, *Breakdown: How America’s intelligence failures led to September 11*, (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2002), 19.

39 Ronald Crelinsten, *Counterterrorism*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2009), 9.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., 48.

not be reduced to the binary military or non military debate. Persuasive counterterrorism is one school of thought in the winning of hearts and minds in achieving the goals to stop terrorist attacks.⁴² Other efforts that this thesis will explore could be categorised as “proactive counterterrorism,” such as in choking of terrorist funding.⁴³ Actions directed to protect infrastructure and citizens, can be considered as “defensive counterterrorism.”⁴⁴ Thus, the consideration of Clinton’s counterterrorism cannot be between the war and non war models only, but must extend the debate to other aspects of counterterrorism beyond what his political critics have determined.

Primary Literature

Most major events in US diplomatic and foreign policy histories have had different analysis and interpretations made of the event itself and circumstances surrounding or giving rise to that event. ‘9/11’ was no different. However, the period of the Bush presidency saw a marked increase in political polarisation that had not been witnessed in American politics for nearly twenty-five years according to a Pew opinion survey carried out in 2012.⁴⁵ Being a seismic political event, ‘9/11’ generated an array of literature exploring all aspects of the attack, including not only the decisions taken by the George W. Bush administration but also the preceding Clinton presidency. A comprehensive, highly readable investigation into the challenge from terrorism is the ‘9/11’ Commission’s report from the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States published in 2004.⁴⁶ There were however issues that surrounded the production of this report. The Commission’s bipartisan co-chairs, Republican Thomas Kean and Democrat Lee Hamilton, would observe in 2006 that the legislative mandate for this inquiry made it appear that they “were set up to fail,” nonetheless it could be argued they grasped the intricacies of the issues by the very broad remit of this report.⁴⁷ Though this report was produced in a relatively short time, it has been claimed the Bush White House influenced

42 Ibid., 122.

43 Ibid., 111.

44 Ibid., 167.

45 US politics and policy, “Partisan polarisation surges in Bush, Obama years: trends in American values 1987-2012,” *Pew Research Centre*, June 4, 2012, <https://www.people-press.org/2012/06/04/partisan-polarization-surges-in-bush-obama-years/>.

46 National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004)

47 Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton with Benjamin Rhodes, *Without precedent: The inside story of the 9/11 commission*, (New York: Vintage books, 2006), 316.

sections of this report.⁴⁸ As Kean and Hamilton reflected in their own book about the Commission's work, because they "did not set out to endorse one particular theory, or to single out one particular individual" and present the facts with "little editorial comment" some who read the report were "disappointed" by its findings.⁴⁹ There was also criticisms of this report including from a coalition calling themselves, National Security Whistle blowers coalition who describe themselves as an "independent and nonpartisan alliance of whistle blowers who have come forward to address our nation's security weaknesses." and described the report as "selective" with the evidence.⁵⁰

Next are the memoirs and accounts from the Clinton Administration. First, the memoirs of Bill Clinton, published in 2004, provide a narrative of the President's background and thoughts both before and during his presidency.⁵¹ The references to terrorism are not frequent or systematic, with Clinton first addressing the issue only half way through his five hundred and seventy-four-page account when he writes about his efforts in 1994 with President Hafez al Assad of Syria⁵². Whilst the leader of al Qaeda does not appear for a further two hundred pages, until his account of the Embassy bombings in East Africa, Clinton reveals that his administration had been following "bin Laden for years," thus raising more questions that this thesis can explore.⁵³

Second, the memoirs of Clinton's foreign policy and national security personnel. The memoirs of Warren Christopher, Secretary of State during Clinton's first term in office, were published in 1998 and give greater prominence to terrorism, albeit as a state sponsored phenomenon, with no reference to the threat from bin Laden.⁵⁴ Madeleine Albright, who followed Christopher and became the United States first female Secretary of State, advocates a much more confrontational strategy on terrorism compared with her predecessor. She advocates "bolder actions" in case of diplomacy and law enforcement having not succeeded.⁵⁵ The accounts by the administration's counterterrorism are revelatory, not just about their personal contributions but

48 Philip Shenon, *The Commission, The Uncensored History of the 9/11 investigation*, (London, Little Brown, 2008).

49 Kean and Hamilton, *Without precedent* 316-317.

50 National Security Whistle blowers Coalition, <http://www.nswbc.org/Press%20Releases/NSWBC-911Comm.htm> .

51 Clinton, *My Life*, (London: Arrow books, 2005).

52 Ibid., 574.

53 Ibid., 797.

54 Christopher, *In the stream of history: Shaping Foreign Policy for a New Era*, (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2008).

55 Albright, *Madam Secretary*, 366.

also the policy and management leadership given by the President. Richard Clarke's *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* and Steven Simon's and Daniel Benjamin's *The Age of Sacred Terror: Radical Islam's War against America* – provides a detailed account from those charged within the Clinton White House to lead the counterterrorism effort.⁵⁶ Benjamin and Simon, who both worked for Richard Clarke, present a readable overview of the administration's efforts to counter the terrorist threat. Their account, which has been supplemented by an interview with Benjamin for this thesis, shed a good deal of light specifically on the interagency challenges viewed from the administration's perspective and act as a good counterpoint to views expressed by Director of FBI Louis Freeh and CIA Director Tenet.

The third category of memoirs are accounts from the intelligence community. George Tenet's, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* and Louis Freeh's *My FBI: Bringing Down the Mafia, Investigating Bill Clinton, and Fighting the War on Terror*, along Michael Scheuer's *Osama bin Laden* are three powerful accounts from those at the head of the domestic and foreign intelligence community and the bin Laden tracking station.⁵⁷ These accounts are revelatory in that not only do they offer the opportunity to learn the administration's stated goals on terrorism but also to investigate in detail how each of the men viewed their contributions to the Clinton presidency's counterterrorism effort. Moreover, these books allow the reader to come to a view as to how the advisors viewed the challenge from terrorism in general and al Qaeda in particular, as they looked to implement policy responses in their respective areas. Scheuer is an important contributor to this debate having been leader of the CIA virtual station that was set up to track bin Laden in 1996. Scheuer's account, published in 2011, offers additional perspectives on the challenges faced by the CIA in their pursuit of bin Laden during the time of Scheuer's leadership of the tracking unit between 1996-1998. The book presents

⁵⁶ Richard A. Clarke, *Against all enemies: inside America's War on terror*, (London: Simon & Schuster, 2004); Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror: Radical Islam's War against America* (New York: Random House, 2003).

⁵⁷ Louis Freeh, *My FBI, Bringing down the mafia, Investigating Bill Clinton, and Fighting the War on Terror*, (New York: St. Martin's Press 2005); George Tenet (with Bill Harlow), *At the Center of the Storm: My years at the CIA*, (New York: Harper Collins 2007); Michael Scheuer, *Osama bin Laden*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

an interesting counterpoint to the view presented by Tenet in offering a holistic understanding of the CIA's view of bin Laden.

Secondary Literature

In general, the academic literature on Clinton had until 2016, given limited coverage to the issue of terrorism.⁵⁸ The literature that has previously appeared is fragmentary in that no book length and study have to date delivered an empirical study of the Clinton administration and the intelligence agencies. The literature is grouped into four broad categories. First, academic books and articles on Clinton's foreign policy that have touched on or addressed the challenge of terrorism.⁵⁹ Second, academic analysis of counterterrorism management specifically focused on the intelligence agencies.⁶⁰ Third, are journalistic investigative accounts that have either reported on the presidency or reported on counterterrorism management.⁶¹ Fourth, the ideological and polemical accounts which attempted to create a myth of failure by the Clinton administration and its culpability for '9/11.'⁶²

Academic literature on US foreign policy and intelligence had previously been challenged by relative paucity of declassified presidential

58 In 2016, during the course of this research project, a monograph appeared from Chin-Kuei Tsui, *Clinton, New Terrorism and the origins of the War on Terror*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017). This is considered later in this section.
59 Michael Mandelbaum, "Foreign Policy as Social Work," *Foreign Affairs*, 75:1,(1996),16-32; Douglas Brinkley, "Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine," *Foreign Policy*, 106 (1997), 110-127; Richard N. Haas "Fatal Distraction: Bill Clinton's Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy*, 108 (1997),112-123; Thomas J. Badey "US anti-terrorism policy: The Clinton administration," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 19:2, (1998), 50-70; William G. Hyland, *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999); Thomas J. Badey, "US counter-terrorism: Change in approach, continuity in policy," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 27:2, (2006), 308-324; Derek Chollet and James Goldgier, *America Between the Wars from 11/9 to 9/11: The misunderstood years between the fall of Berlin Wall and the start of the War on Terror*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2008); John Dumbrell, *Clinton's Foreign policy: Between the Bushes*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); Russell L. Riley, *Inside the Clinton White House: An Oral History*, (New York Oxford University Press, 2016), Chin-Kuei Tsui, *Clinton, New Terrorism and the origins of the War on Terror*.

60 Paul R. Pillar, *Terrorism and US Foreign policy*, (Washington DC: Brookings, 2001); Timothy Naftali, *Blind Spot: The Secret History of American Counterterrorism*, (New York: Basic Books, 2006); Amy Zegart, *Spying Blind: The CIA, the FBI, and the origins of 9/11*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Gregory F. Treverton, *Intelligence for an Age of Terror*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

61 David Halberstam, *War in a time of peace: Bush, Clinton and the Generals*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2003); Peter L. Bergen, *Holy War Inc: Inside the Secret world of Osama bin Laden*, (London: Phoenix, 2002); Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan and bin Laden from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*,(London: Penguin, 2005); Peter L. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An oral history of the al Qaeda leader* (New York, Free Press 2006); Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The history of the CIA* (London: Penguin 2008); Richard Sale, *Clinton's Secret Wars: The Evolution of a Commander in Chief*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2009).

62 Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an idea, Selected Essays, 1949-95*, (New York: The Free Press, 1995); Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs*, 70:1, (1990-91), 23-33; Norman Podhoretz, "Neoconservatism—A Eulogy," *Commentary*, 101:3, (1996); William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, 75:4, (1996), 18-32; Robert Kagan, "The Benevolent Empire," *Foreign Policy*, 111, (1998), 24-35.; Norman Podhoretz, "Strange Bedfellows: A Guide to the New Foreign-Policy Debates," *Commentary*, 108:5 (1999), 19-31; Irving Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion," *Weekly Standard*, August 25, 2003; 62 Bill Gertz, *Breakdown: How America's intelligence failures led to September 11*, (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2002); Richard Minitzer, *Losing bin Laden: How Bill Clinton's failures unleashed global terror*, (Washington D.C.: Regnery publishing, 2003); David N. Bossie, *Intelligence Failure: How Clinton's National security policy set the stage for 9/11*, (Nashville, TN: WorldNet daily books, 2004).

records. From 2008, scholars have had the opportunity in accessing presidential records when the Clinton library in Arkansas opened its doors. Progress on declassification though has been painfully slow, as limited federal resources at the facility has meant that much of the archival records, especially on counterterrorism still is classified. This research has made at least five freedom of information (FOIA) requests, which are caught up in the labyrinthine inter agency appeals process since 2015. Therefore, scholars have had to deal with limited information in their exploration of Clinton's counterterrorism legacy. One of the earliest scholars who attempted this task was Thomas Badey, who published two journal articles in 1998 and 2006.⁶³ Badey described Clinton as adopting a "three-track" policy on terrorism which he categorized as "economic isolation", "multilateral cooperation" and "resource allocation". Badey argued that Clinton remained "internally consistent" following the three-track process throughout his presidency. Badey also stated that Clinton had made terrorism a "national security priority" which he argued demonstrated his leadership abilities.⁶⁴ In 2006, Badey's second article argued that President George W. Bush adopted the same three track policy but drew a distinction between Clinton and George W. Bush's counterterrorism approach by arguing "the Clinton administration focused on terrorism primarily as a law enforcement issue while the Bush administration approached terrorism as a military problem."⁶⁵

Other contemporaneous scholars during the Clinton presidency who have touched on the issue of Clinton's counterterrorism policy was Hyland's book *Clinton's World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*, devoted two pages on Middle Eastern terrorism but nothing on al Qaeda.⁶⁶ Derek Chollet and James Goldgier, excellent foreign policy book *America between the wars From 11/9 to 9/11*, devoted a dozen pages out of a four hundred twelve page book to debate the challenge from al Qaeda.⁶⁷ John Dumbrell's otherwise masterful book of Clinton's foreign policy devoted only four out of two hundred pages to the

63 Thomas J. Badey "US anti-terrorism policy: The Clinton administration," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 19:2, (1998), 50-70; Thomas J. Badey, "US counter-terrorism: Change in approach, continuity in policy," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 27:2, (2006), 308-324.

64 Badey "US anti-terrorism policy," 56, 65, 66.

65 Badey, "US counter-terrorism", 308.

66 Hyland, *Clinton's World*, 158-60.

67 Chollet and Goldgier, *America Between the Wars*, 260-272.

challenge from al Qaeda.⁶⁸ These limited analyses did not allow for any reflection on the impact of al Qaeda on US foreign policy during the Clinton presidency. Nonetheless, Dumbrell did dismiss allegations of negligence on Clinton's part as being "absurd".⁶⁹

In 2016, a monograph was published that finally gave greater focus on Clinton's counterterrorism legacy by Chin- Kuei Tsui.⁷⁰ Chin- Kuei's monograph examined the impact of Clinton's rhetoric on the 'War on Terror' discourse⁷¹. Chin-Kuei argues that the notion of 'War on Terror' did not originate with the George W. Bush administration but can be found within the framing of the threat, policies, and practices of the Clinton administration. The aim of the book is to challenge the notion that George W. Bush ushered in a new era in US foreign policy with his rhetoric on 'War on Terror' by arguing that certain constructs such as the use of force, pre-emptive strikes, the promotion of American values and regime change was 'built upon the existing framework' of the Reagan and Clinton administrations.⁷² Chin-Kuei argues that Clinton "interpret [ed]" acts of terrorism against civilians as a "crime" whereas acts against US government or military was described as a 'war'.⁷³ This thesis in contrast is focused on the Clinton Administration and examines the Reagan and George H.W. Bush to argue that Clinton's counterterrorism policy was an evolution of what had gone on previously. In examining Clinton's counterterrorism policies this thesis argues that Clinton had to deal with differing patterns of terrorism beyond state sponsored actors, and therefore the critics of Clinton in the aftermath of '9/11' provided a false and partial picture of his counterterrorism legacy. Moreover, this thesis has been able to expand the scope of this research to examine the effectiveness of Clinton's counterterrorism policy by juxtaposing the exploration of Clinton's policies against the rise of al Qaeda, domestic terrorism, and the response to these threats through the administration's relationship, handling, and management of the intelligence agencies.

68 Dumbrell, *Clinton's foreign policy*, 135-139

69 Ibid., 135.

70 Chin-Kuei Tsui, *Clinton, New Terrorism, and the origins of the War on Terror*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

71 Ibid.,1.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.,167.

Alongside academic literature from US Foreign policy scholars is the second category of literature that have informed this research. These are from scholars who have specifically focused on the performance and management of the intelligence agencies in dealing with the terror threat. Three schools of thought are clear from the intelligence leaning literature. First, the ‘scholarly spooks’ like Pillar and Treverton have set out the role that good intelligence processes can play in effective counterterrorism.⁷⁴ Second, the ‘intelligence historians’ like Naftali who have explored how presidential administration have used intelligence in their counterterrorism management. Naftali has strongly argued for ‘public engagement’ in fighting terrorism.⁷⁵ This led Naftali to state that Clinton did not attempt “sustained public education” on the issue of al Qaeda leading to an “air of complacency” on the threat from bin Laden.⁷⁶ Third, are the “intelligence pathologists,”⁷⁷ like Amy Zegart, who rummage around the entrails of the intelligence organisations and came up with a diagnosis on what had afflicted the intelligence agencies that led to them not being able to anticipate ‘9/11’.⁷⁸ These scholars all published after 9/11 with Zegart also having the benefit of the 9/11 Commission’s findings to situate their arguments.

One of the earliest accounts on the challenge for counterterrorism from terrorism and al Qaeda appeared very quickly (2001) in the aftermath of ‘9/11’ from Paul Pillar. Pillar had spent twenty- eight years in the CIA and had served from 1993 to 1997 as chief of counterterrorism analysis at the CIA. Though Pillar had the front row seat on the events of ‘9/11’ his book does not address some of the challenges that the intelligence agencies faced in dealing with al Qaeda. His book lays out what could be done to address the challenge of terrorism. For example, Pillar advocates “countering terrorism requires not only fortitude but also skill in getting foreign partners to help in that task.”⁷⁹ Closely following Pillar’s book in 2005 was Timothy Natali’s book *Blind Spot: The Secret History of American counterterrorism*. Naftali had the benefit of

74 Paul R. Pillar, *Terrorism and US Foreign policy*, (Washington DC: Brookings, 2001); Gregory F. Treverton, *Intelligence for an Age of Terror*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

75 Timothy Naftali, *Blind Spot: The Secret History of American Counterterrorism*, (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

76 Ibid., 285.

77 The term “intelligence pathologists” is derived from Richard J. Aldrich and John Kasuku, “Escaping from American intelligence- culture, ethnocentrism and the Anglosphere,” *International Affairs*, 88: 5 (2012), 1009-1028. Zegart along with Gregory Treverton and Robert Jervis were described in this article as “pathologists of the strategic intelligence process.”

78 Amy Zegart, *Spying Blind: The CIA, the FBI, and the origins of 9/11*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

79 Pillar, *Terrorism and US Foreign policy*, 1.

working as a “contractor” on the 9/11 commission. Naftali’s book is important in that it shows that before ‘9/11’ often differing interpretations and assessments of the threat of terrorism made counterterrorism policy making challenging. Naftali makes five important points in Clinton’s management of terrorism. First, Naftali accuses the US intelligence community of having failed to figure out “bin Laden’s operational method” before the attack.⁸⁰ This research will explore this claim in detail, especially in the period before 1996 when al Qaeda was still in a gestational phase. Second, Naftali argues that the intelligence community were complacent in thinking that the attacks were going to be perpetrated abroad, “a faraway threat’ and thus not doing enough to increase Homeland Security.⁸¹ This thesis will present declassified evidence from Clinton’s Presidential Decision Directive, especially PDD 39, that will argue that Naftali has misjudged Clinton’s efforts on securing and organizing resources on Homeland security. Martha Crenshaw has argued in her review of Naftali’s book, of overstating this issue.⁸² Crenshaw points out that Clinton “did recognize al Qaeda was a novel organization and attacking the US homeland was bin Laden’s great ambition.”⁸³ Next, Naftali argues that Clinton’s decision to deal with bin Laden in “secret,” was a “misstep” in comparison to his other foreign policy challenges such as the Balkan campaigns.⁸⁴ Naftali identifies the reason for Clinton’s decision, arising out of the sarcasm that greeted Clinton over the failed missile strikes, in response to bin Laden’s East African embassy attack in 1998.⁸⁵ Naftali criticizes Clinton’s handling of terrorism by arguing that the president should have engaged the public more into the campaign against al Qaeda.⁸⁶ Winkler, has suggested that Clinton believed it would be “a mistake” about “conflating terrorism with Islam.”⁸⁷ As this research will argue based on the evidence presented in Chapter four of this thesis, the media’s alarming misplaced xenophobic attitudes, following on from the 1995

80 Naftali, *Blind Spot*, 284.

81 Ibid., 284-285.

82 Martha Crenshaw, “Review Essay: Counterterrorism in retrospect. Chronicle of a War foretold,” *Foreign Affairs*, 84:4, (2005), 187-193.

83 Ibid. 192.

84 Naftali, *Blind Spot*, 285.

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid., 326.

87 Carol Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism: Presidents on Political Violence in the Post-World War II era*, (Albany, NY:University of New York Press, 2006), 153.

Oklahoma City bombing, had led this research to conclude that Clinton's judgement in not raising the public awareness of Islamic terrorism was prudent.

Amy Zegart's analysis of the failure of intelligence agencies leads her to argue that it was "organizational deficiencies and enduring impediments to fixing them rather than from individual mistakes."⁸⁸ Zegart, previewed much of the evidence in a series of journal articles but her 2007 book, *Spying Blind: The CIA, the FBI, and the origins of 9/11*, would bring the evidence together in a powerful expose on the failings of the intelligence community. Zegart drew attention to three critical failings within the intelligence agencies before '9/11'. She found three critical failures at the CIA. First, there was a culture that was resistant to change both in accepting technology, innovative ideas, and methods. Second, an incentive structure which she describes as "perverse" and "rewarded intelligence officers for all the wrong things". Third, she argues that there was evidence of a "structural weakness" that prevented interagency collaboration especially between the FBI and CIA.⁸⁹ She would however add these failures were not as a result due to a "lack of effort, talent or dedication." of any one individual.⁹⁰ This thesis would find much of Zegart's analysis is plausible. However, though Zegart did not hold any single figure responsible for the intelligence failures that led to '9/11' this thesis would conclude that George Tenet's leadership of the counterterrorism effort was unsatisfactory.

Though, she finds no fault with any one individual, Zegart's analysis stares deep into the soul of US intelligence to identify strategy and culture as two key determinants of a successful intelligence performance.⁹¹ In 2004, the British intelligence academic, Philip Davies had argued "Culture...is the most useful tool for understanding the relative effectiveness of collegial arrangements in the British and American intelligence communities."⁹² Davies drew attention to the findings of the '9/11' Commission on the lack of CIA / FBI coordination which he argued "acted as a force multiplier on structural problems that might otherwise have been overcome by an ethos of 'jointery'

88 Amy B. Zegart, "CIA Chronicles," *Foreign Affairs*, 87:3 (2008), 164-165.

89 Zegart, *Spying Blind*, 4.

90 *Ibid.*, 88.

91 *Ibid.*, 196.

92 Philip H.J. Davies, "Intelligence culture and intelligence failure in Britain and the United States," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 17:3, (2004) 495-520.

and collaborative problem-solving.”⁹³ Aldrich and Kasuku in 2012 acknowledging thought culture may be a “slippery” construct to pin down, it is an important determinant in the performance of intelligence agencies in the “Anglosphere [US/UK]”.⁹⁴ Though Pillar would dismiss Zegart’s book by describing it as a “repackaging of the 9/11 Commission report” with “factual errors” and “looseness of evidence.”⁹⁵ In a riposte to Pillar, Zegart would retort by challenging Pillar’s criticism of her work stating, “How can an individual who served at the heart of the organization being criticized render an unbiased view of that organization's performance?”⁹⁶

This thesis has been able to go further than Zegart in light of additional information and published interviews, that have come to light since 2007 when Zegart’s book was published. This has been made possible by three new developments. First, an account from Michael Scheuer, the chief of the bin Laden tracking station, that raises questions on Director Tenet’s handling of the bin Laden tracking station in the period of 1996-98. Second, other accounts from senior CIA individuals associated with that period have also been published including the recently published account by Michael Morell.⁹⁷ Third, interviews conducted for this research with employees of the CIA, some of whom served in the bin Laden tracking station.

The third category of literature is the journalistic output that has considered the threat from al Qaeda during the Clinton presidency. These will be explored below. David Halberstam’s book, *War in a time of Peace: Bush Clinton and the Generals*, is a useful study of the Clinton foreign policy especially in the Balkans but sidesteps the challenge from terrorism. One of the most outstanding accounts of Clinton’s effectiveness in countering al Qaeda in Afghanistan and beyond is provided by Steve Coll in his book, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and bin Laden from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. Coll would win a Pulitzer Prize for this study and achieved the prestige of it being the book that Barack Obama read in the

93 Ibid., 507.

94 Aldrich and Kasuku, “Escaping from American intelligence- culture, ethnocentrism and the Anglosphere,” 1023.

95 Paul Pillar, “Review essay: Intelligent design? The unending saga of intelligence reform,” *Foreign Affairs*, 87:2 (2008) 138-144.

96 Amy B. Zegart and Paul Pillar, “CIA Chronicles,” *Foreign Affairs*, 87:3 (May – June 2008), 164-165.

97 Michael Morell (with Bill Harlow), *The Great War of our Time: the CIA’s fight against Terrorism - from Al Qaida to ISIS*, (New York: Twelve, Hachette book group, 2016).

final days of his 2008 presidential campaign.⁹⁸ Writing in 2004, Coll took meticulous care in avoiding generalisations and offers evidence-based judgement but also shows an intellectual honesty and maturity in suggesting that his book is published “too early to radically reinterpret such a recent history, or to reallocate proportions of blame and responsibility.”⁹⁹

Another journalistic account of al Qaeda’s growth and the response by the Clinton administration is Lawrence Wright’s *The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda’s road to 9/11*.¹⁰⁰ First published in 2006, Wright focuses on the struggle of John O’Neil, the FBI’s Head of the New York Office, who would lead much of the fight against al Qaeda. Wright supplements his account with the expert testimony of Ali Soufan, who worked for O’Neil and was lead investigator after the *USS Cole* bombing. Wright’s book is a homage to O’Neil’s valiant attempts to pursue and bring to justice bin Laden and al Qaeda, but he also provides a senior FBI perspective on the fight against al Qaeda from 1996 onwards. Wright’s conclusion requires further investigation in this thesis. From his exploration of the efforts of O’Neil and Soufan and his assessment of the interagency cooperation leads to the contention that, prior to ‘9/11’, “almost no one took it [al Qaeda] seriously. It was too bizarre, too primitive, too exotic.”¹⁰¹

Other books that provide some perspective on this period are Tim Weiner’s histories of the FBI and the CIA.¹⁰² Weiner, as a reporter for the *New York Times*, covered many of the terrorist attacks that occurred during the Clinton presidency and his intelligence histories of both agencies provide a contemporaneous overview of the period. Weiner appears to have approached much of his task from a sensationalist journalistic perspective and his critique of the CIA, in his book *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*, has been claimed to contain some inaccuracies in an interview for this thesis, albeit from a CIA loyalist.¹⁰³ Nicholas Dujmovic, in his earlier review of this book, had described Weiner’s effort as an “op-ed piece masquerading as serious history”

98 David Quigg, “Why We All Ought to Read the Book President-Elect Obama Has Been Reading,” HuffPost – The Blog, December 6, 2008, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-quigg/why-we-all-ought-to-read_b_141555.html.

99 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 588.

100 Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda’s road to 9/11*, (London: Penguin 2011).

101 *Ibid.*, 7.

102 Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The history of the CIA* (London: Penguin 2008).

103 Interview with Nicholas Dujmovic, former CIA historian, McLean, VA on March 29, 2016.

and having “factually unreliable” information.¹⁰⁴ Finally in this category of journalistic literature, CNN’s Peter Bergen’s 2006 account of his face-to-face dealings with al Qaeda. *The Osama bin Laden I Know* provides an insightful understanding of the terrorist group, especially in the early years as bin Laden was establishing himself.¹⁰⁵ Bergen’s first account of bin Laden was in his 2001 book called *Holy War Inc: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden*, which appeared soon after the ‘9/11’ bombings but did not contain the insight that was evident in his later book.¹⁰⁶

Finally, there is the fourth and final category of books which were political attacks from the conservative media who produced hasty, highly partisan, and incomplete accounts and put the blame for ‘9/11’ on Clinton.¹⁰⁷ The common underlying counterterrorism idea underpinning these authors was the attempted justification of the ‘war model’ to tackle the issue of terrorism. Moreover, these authors espoused a markedly different vision as to how they viewed America’s role in the post Cold War world. This underpinned much of the criticism of President Clinton. However, before these accounts can be dismissed as less relevant strawmen accounts, it is worth reflecting upon the intellectual tradition that these accounts were looking to popularize through these hastily produced accounts, which appeared in successive years between 2002-2004.

The intellectual antecedents behind these journalistic accounts was a vision that has been described as neoconservative with Irving Kristol, whose selection of essays in *The autobiography of Neoconservatism*, seen as having set the neoconservative agenda.¹⁰⁸ Justin Vaisse has argued in a paper for Brookings, that originally these neoconservatives were “New York based intellectuals , primarily interested in domestic issues” whereas these

latter- day neocons, [the authors of the PNAC report] ... are Washington- based political operatives identified with the right, interested in foreign policy, and who have a solid, if not excessive

104 Central Intelligence Agency, Review of “Legacy of Ashes: The History of CIA,” CIA. gov., <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol51no3/legacy-of-ashes-the-history-of-cia.html> .

105 Peter L Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An oral history of the al Qaeda leader*, (New York, Free Press 2006).

106 Peter L. Bergen, *Holy War Inc: Inside the Secret world of Osama bin Laden*, (London: Phoenix, 2002).

107 Bill Gertz, *Breakdown*; Minitier, *Losing bin Laden*; Bossie, *Intelligence Failure*.

108 Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an idea, Selected Essays, 1949-95*, (New York: The Free Press, 1995).

confidence in the ability of the American government to enact social change.¹⁰⁹

This debate within a very select group of Washington foreign policy specialists was designed to shape and influence a very limited amount of people and thus was restricted in very specific foreign policy and conservatively minded journals.¹¹⁰ While this literature did not address specifically the problem of terrorism they were critical of the Clinton administration defence policy, specifically for defence spending cuts. This literature defines the differing ideological vision that fueled the attacks on Clinton's handling of terrorism, specifically in relation to the use of force. It also served to define the George W. Bush stance on US foreign policy before and after '9/11' and set out the governing principles of what has come to be referred to as neoconservative thinking on US foreign policy. It differed markedly in how these conservative authors viewed America's role going forward in the post-Cold War period from Clinton foreign policy agenda which was determined by "global economics and free trade," "multilateral engagement" and "selective [military] engagement."¹¹¹ In "*Rebuilding Americas defences*" published in 2000 a report from the think tank *Project for the New American Century (PNAC)* which set out their vision for America's security posture for the twenty first century.¹¹² Their unilateral intent was clear from the start as they declared the US as the world's "sole superpower":

The Cold War world was a bipolar world; the 21st century world is – for the moment, at least – decidedly unipolar, with America as the world's "sole superpower." America's strategic goal used to be containment of the Soviet Union; today the task is to preserve an international security environment conducive to American interests and ideals.¹¹³

109 Justin Vaisse, "Why Neoconservatism still matters," Foreign policy at Brookings, Policy paper number 20, May 2010, 1-2, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/05_neoconservatism_vaisse.pdf

110 Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs*, 70:1, (1990-91), 23-33; Norman Podhoretz, "Neoconservatism—A Eulogy," *Commentary*, 101:3, (1996); William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, 75:4, (1996), 18-32; Robert Kagan, "The Benevolent Empire," *Foreign Policy*, 111, (1998), 24-35; Norman Podhoretz, "Strange Bedfellows: A Guide to the New Foreign-Policy Debates," *Commentary*, 108:5 (1999), 19-31; Irving Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion," *Weekly Standard*, August 25, 2003;

111 Dumbrell, *Clinton's foreign policy*, 29.

112 Donald Kagan, Gary Schmitt, Thomas Donnelly, "Rebuilding Americas Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century," *Project for the New American Century*, <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf>

113 Ibid., ii.

The principal argument that the authors of this paper put forward was that the US needed to reinvigorate US defence spending and capability as it argued that “the U.S. military has found itself undermanned, inadequately equipped and trained, straining to handle contingency operations, and ill-prepared to adapt itself to the revolution in military affairs.”¹¹⁴ The authors of this report argued that with a “decade’s worth of experience” in defence matters, they were uniquely qualified to bring forward their recommendations.¹¹⁵ Many of their recommendations were based on supporting specific items of expenditure such as the F-22 aircraft and V-22 Osprey, new missiles and the creation of “a Space force” to control outer space.¹¹⁶ In a diagram in this report they provided a schematic in which they defined their aims as “Preserv[ing] Pax Americana” through military missions; “secur[ing] and expand[ing] zones of democratic peace; deter[ing] the rise of new great power competitors, defend[ing] key regions, exploit[ing] transformation of war.”¹¹⁷ The role of this newly acquired capability the authors argued would allow US armed forces to carry out “Homeland Defense” through an enhanced nuclear capability, be able to win “large wars”, achieve “constabulary duties” [to defend zones of peace] and transform the US armed forces by the “introduction of advanced technologies.”¹¹⁸ Given that this paper was published after al Qaeda had carried out the horrific attack on two US embassies in Africa and would attack the US again a month after this report was published in September 2000, this ninety page report had only three mentions of terrorism.¹¹⁹ Of these, only one chose to address the security challenge posed by terrorism, in noting that Clinton’s missile strike in response to the terrorist attack on East African embassies with Tomahawk missiles from the *USS Lincoln* carrier battle group had “12 percent fewer people in the battle group than on the previous deployment.”¹²⁰ Following George W. Bush’s close election victory in the highly controversial 2000 presidential election, the ideas of *PNAC* came to be incorporated into US foreign policy as many of the supporters of *PNAC* came into government.¹²¹

114 Ibid., iii.

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid., iv.

117 Ibid., 2.

118 Ibid., 5.

119 Ibid., 5, 40, 55.

120 Ibid., 40.

121 James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*, (New York: Viking, 2004); Stefan Halper and Jonathon Clarke, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order*, (Cambridge: Cambridge

'9/11' provided them with the political opportunity to put some of these ideas into practice, chief among them being that lengthy military campaigns to beat terrorism were needed.¹²²

President George W. Bush were reframing foreign policy, simultaneously the dismantling of the Clinton foreign policy legacy also began, not least his legacy on terrorism. John Dumbrell has described the attacks on the President as “part of a rightist assault” as supporters of *PNAC* looked to “align intellectual neo conservatism with more traditional defence hawks”, which he argued would “prove crucial” to the Iraq invasion.¹²³

Iraq had been on the foreign policy radar of US administrations since Reagan but after George H. W. Bush's victory in the Gulf War of 1991, Clinton had ignored an open letter that had been authored by some of those behind *PNAC* that had argued “to remove Saddam Hussein and his regime from power.”¹²⁴ Therefore a process was needed from supporters of Bush that would require a political narrative that would cast doubt on foreign policy aims and approaches of the previous Clinton administration. With '9/11' bringing terrorism to the forefront of public attention, that process would be aided if well-known journalists and media commentators could produce critiques of Clinton's counterterrorism and foreign policy. With the 9/11 Commission not due to present its findings until 2004, there appeared to be an opportunity for those that had argued for a change in US foreign policy to put their case to the American public. Some of those accounts, as reviewed below, appear to have been clearly intended to have clear political intent in their interpretation of the circumstances before and after '9/11' to deflect some, if not all of the responsibility and culpability, on President Clinton, his intelligence agencies and the president's decision not to adopt the 'war model' of counterterrorism to face down al Qaeda.

University Press, 2004); Gary Dorrien, *Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana*, (New York: Routledge, 2004).

122 Chollet and Goldgier, *America between the wars*, 313- 314.

123 John Dumbrell, “The neoconservative roots of the war in Iraq,” in *Intelligence and national security policymaking on Iraq: British and American perspectives*, eds. James P. Pfiffner and Mark Phythian, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008),19-39.

124 “Letter to President Clinton on Iraq from Project for New American Century”, *z.facts.com*, January 26, 1998, <http://zfacts.com/metaPage/lib/98-Rumsfeld-Iraq.pdf>.

The first of these books was Bill Gertz's *Breakdown: How America's Intelligence failures led to September 11*, published in 2002.¹²⁵ Gertz at that time was the defence and national security reporter of the conservative leaning newspaper, the *Washington Times*. Gertz accused President Clinton of being "anaemic" in his handling of terrorism and "legalistic" in his counterterrorism response.¹²⁶ In the book Clinton's counterterrorism leadership is criticised over two major areas – management of the CIA, especially in his appointments of directors who were incapable of doing the job, and failing the FBI by trying to bring about a change in organisational culture instead of focussing on terrorism. Gertz is highly critical of President Clinton's leadership of the US intelligence community, claiming that the intelligence agencies had "lost sight of their purpose and function" under Clinton.¹²⁷ Gertz argued that the CIA under Clinton had seen "five directors in six years" which was perhaps stretching the facts to argue his case, as he appears to count interim directors who had stood in whilst the nominees were going through the Senate approval process but he accused John Deutch as being "without question, the most damaging director."¹²⁸ Gertz also criticises the performance of the CIA Director who, at the time of publication of Gertz's book, was still serving within the Bush administration: George Tenet.¹²⁹ Gertz accused Tenet of having turned a blind eye to the numerous threats and warnings the Agency had received in the days before '9/11.'¹³⁰ He put the failure of the CIA down to no longer focusing "on gathering human intelligence."¹³¹ Gertz also suggested that the CIA were reluctant to engage in covert operations which he argued was down "to cautious bureaucratic, slow and timid nature and unimaginative" nature of national security thinking at the time.¹³² Gertz caustically described CIA as being "next to useless" for not putting intelligence agents out in the field:

Case officers, those who actually conduct espionage operations, are being sent to work in classical embassy reporting jobs. Instead of sending spies to work the streets and befriend terrorists, or at least their

125 Bill Gertz, *Breakdown: How America's intelligence failures led to September 11*, (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2002).

126 Ibid., 17, 19.

127 Ibid., 6.

128 Ibid., 66.

129 Ibid., 5.

130 Ibid.

131 Ibid., 73.

132 Ibid., 76-77.

friends and supporters, the new officers file embassy – based reports to Washington.¹³³

Chollet and Goldgier have noted that the attack on the CIA was symptomatic of neoconservative supporters of the Bush administration who believed that they “understood international politics better and had a cleaner vision of reality” on deciphering events in international politics than the professionals in the intelligence agencies.¹³⁴

Second, Gertz suggests that the reason Clinton did not take the threat of terrorism seriously was because of the President’s unwillingness to grasp major national security challenges which Gertz characterised as a “see no evil problem.”¹³⁵ Gertz offered the FBI as the case in point to argue this view. He suggested that the FBI under Clinton had been shaped to suit the political agenda of the administration and was busy focussing on prosecuting those that bombed anti-abortion clinics instead of chasing terrorists.¹³⁶ Under Clinton, Gertz accused the administration of turning the FBI into a politically correct agency which he argued “push [ed] for diversity over performance [which was manifested by the appointment] of a black, a Hispanic and a woman to the top posts of the FBI.”¹³⁷ At times Gertz is puzzling: in one sentence he will say that the president “wasn’t interested in antiterrorism”, but in the next will suggest that the administration was “perfectly willing to vastly increase the spending at the FBI as an adjunct of Janet Reno’s justice department” without clarifying whether this was on the FBI overall budget or anti-terrorism in particular.¹³⁸

Gertz’s book, which brings together a critique of Clinton’s handling of the intelligence agencies and argues for the need for a radical overhaul of the intelligence structure, is reasonable in light of the intelligence challenges that this thesis has explored. However, he appears to be only giving voice to the prevailing neoconservative opinion that was guiding the foreign policy agenda of the Bush administration. In his call for a new “clandestine service”, he does not appear to be offering anything new beyond reducing congressional oversight on being able to conduct more covert operations, rolling back the

133 Ibid., 61.

134 Chollet and Goldgier, *America between the wars*, 327.

135 Gertz, *Breakdown*, 95.

136 Ibid., 96-97.

137 Ibid., 97.

138 Ibid.

checks and balances introduced by Congress, in the wake of the Church committee report, in the mid-1970s.¹³⁹ Gertz's over-reliance on leading neo conservative opinion only makes his arguments open to challenge. Specific areas such as analysis of intelligence issues, the reliance on commentators from the fringe of the intelligence community supported by unverifiable information also make his conclusions unpersuasive.

The second in the trio of books that gained prominence was written by Richard Minter entitled, *Losing bin Laden: How Bill Clinton's failures unleashed global terror*.¹⁴⁰ Published in 2003 by Regnery, which describes itself as the "country's [US] leading publisher of conservative books,"¹⁴¹ this book would become a non-fiction *New York Times* bestseller.¹⁴² Minter was a journalist at that time working for the investigative team at *The Sunday Times* in London, owned by the conservatively-minded press baron Rupert Murdoch who had supported the Iraq War led by the neoconservatives. Later, Minter would become the "editor of editorial pages and vice president of opinion" of the conservative orientated *Washington Times*¹⁴³. Minter's book is perplexing: although his book starts promisingly by offering to conduct a deep exploration of the Clinton administration's handling of terrorism, he nevertheless does not finish this task.¹⁴⁴ Instead he pivots away to argue for intervention in Iraq, by claiming that "the Clinton administration kept talking about a shadowy network of Islamic extremists – not a campaign of terror by a vengeful Saddam Hussein."¹⁴⁵

Minter's book had the potential to offer more but still is unconvincing at two levels. First, he appears to put forward claims for which he does not supply any corroborating evidence. Second, he goes down the same path as Gertz in giving voice to critics or people who had fallen out of favour with the Clinton administration. In terms of the claims that Minter presents in his book to argue that Clinton had been negligent on terrorism, three examples illustrate the problematic aspects of his book. First, Minter's assertion that by January

139 Ibid., 166.

140 Minter, *Losing bin Laden*.

141 "About Regnery publishing", Online at <https://www.regnery.com/about>.

142 Books, "Best sellers: September 28, 2003," *The New York Times*, September 23, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/28/books/best-sellers-september-28-2003.html>.

143 Jennifer Harper, Minter to lead Times editorial pages" *The Washington Times*, March 9, 2009, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/mar/09/minter-named-to-lead-editorial-pages-at-times/>.

144 Minter, *Losing bin Laden*, xviii- xxi.

145 Ibid., 241.

1993 the CIA “was learning to pay attention to bin Laden,” is not supported by any evidence.¹⁴⁶ Second, Minter makes several unverifiable claims about the World Trade Center attack of 1993. He claims, without evidence, that after the attack, President Clinton kept crossing out the word “bomb” from his address to the nation.¹⁴⁷ Next he claimed that in the pursuit of World Trade Center bomber Ramzi Yousef, Richard Clarke (the Clinton administration’s lead coordinator on counterterrorism) would have benefitted from greater support from the president, especially when it came to his efforts to coordinate various federal agencies.¹⁴⁸ However, Clarke’s own 2004 account suggests the opposite, when he affirms that Clinton directed that “we would use all the resources of any agency that could contribute” to fighting terrorism.¹⁴⁹ Third, Minter speculates that if the missile targeted on Afghanistan in 1998, following the East African embassy attacks, had struck earlier than when it struck the al Qaeda camp in Afghanistan, it would have killed bin Laden.¹⁵⁰ No evidence is offered to substantiate this claim. Suspicions increase as to Minter’s intent as he uses the same inflammatory language as the Bush administration at the time of publication of his book. For example, after the 2000 attack on the US navy ship USS Cole, he claims (in classic neocon-speak) Clinton should have responded with a “full-fledged war on terror.”¹⁵¹

Minter’s book could have achieved greater balance if he had not supported his arguments from well-known critics of Clinton. More alarmingly, his checking of the background of some of his sources appear to question his investigative powers. Much of the supporting information to support his claim that Clinton had ignored the rise of bin Laden emanate from comments in his book attributed to Republican House Representative Dana Rohrabacher, who had been a speechwriter and Special Assistant to President Reagan. As mentioned earlier, Rohrabacher had been one of the first out of the blocks to point fingers at Clinton after ‘9/11’. Supporting Rohrabacher’s comments was fellow House Republican Bill McCollum. McCollum was also no fan of President Clinton having failed in his effort to impeach him in the Senate,

146 Ibid., 15.

147 Ibid., 29.

148 Ibid., 78.

149 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 90.

150 Minter, *Losing bin Laden*, 183.

151 Ibid., 229.

having initially succeeded as one of the Republican House Managers in the House of Representatives.¹⁵² Minter also gives voice to those that had fallen out with Clinton, like 1992 campaign manager Dick Morris. Morris, a onetime friend and self-declared “strategist” of Clinton, had parted with the president just two months before the 1996 election over revelations regarding a relationship that Morris allegedly had with a prostitute that was uncovered by the press.¹⁵³ Moreover, it appeared that, after his departure from Clinton’s campaign, Morris had switched his allegiance back to the Republican Party with whom he had previously been a strategist. In 2010, *The New York Times* went onto describe him as a long-time contributor to the Republican cause.¹⁵⁴ Based on the opinion of Morris, Minter would conclude that “Clinton just didn’t get it,” with regard to terrorism.¹⁵⁵ Finally, Minter’s rushed effort to get his book out to fit a political narrative appears to be clear. Instead of providing a conclusion to his book, Minter pivots away to provide a ten page “Appendix” instead.¹⁵⁶ In this Appendix, he claims again without any evidence that a connection exists between Saddam Hussein and bin Laden.¹⁵⁷ Minter speculates that the ‘9/11’ attack could have been prevented if more focus was dedicated to attacking Saddam Hussein who he argues without evidence was connected to bin Laden:

Cheney [Vice President to George W. Bush], Rice [National Security Advisor to Bush], and other senior administration officials have steadfastly maintained that Iraq and al Qaeda had a long relationship.”¹⁵⁸

The Washington Post would find in 2014 that at that time when these claims between Iraq and bin Laden were being speculated upon Vice President Cheney was planning, against the advice of the CIA, a speech “on the relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda that “goes way beyond what the intelligence shows.”¹⁵⁹ That speech never materialised in the end.

152 Frank Bruni, “The impeachment trial managers: A team facing an uncertain future”, *The New York Times*, December 26, 1998. <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/26/us/the-impeachment-trial-managers-a-team-facing-an-uncertain-future.html>.

153 Richard L. Berke, “Call girl story costs President a key strategist”, *The New York Times*, August 30, 1996. <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/08/30/us/call-girl-story-costs-president-a-key-strategist.html>.

154 Janie Lorber, “The Caucus; \$1.5million for Republicans”, *The New York Times*, October 27, 2010. <https://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C0DE0DC1030F934A15753C1A9669D8B63>.

155 Minter, *Losing bin Laden*, 32.

156 Ibid., 231- 241.

157 Ibid., 240.

158 Ibid., 240.

159 Glenn Kessler, “The Cheney’s’ claim of a ‘deep, longstanding, far-reaching relationship’ between al Qaeda and Saddam,” *The Washington Post*, July 17, 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact->

The third in this trio of books, which appeared in 2004 just ahead of the report from the ‘9/11’ Commission, is the most hostile and partisan in its arguments against Clinton’s handling of terrorism. The book by David Bossie, called *Intelligence Failure: How Clinton’s National Security Policy set the stage for 9/11*, does not leave the reader guessing too long as to its position. In the foreword, Bossie suggests that his judgement on the President’s record is going to be “harsh.”¹⁶⁰ Bossie, unlike Gertz and Minitzer, was not a journalist. He was a conservative activist who had played a leading role as a critic of President Clinton. In 1997, the *Washington Post* described him as a “32-year-old college dropout and volunteer firefighter, the man who has become the leading impresario of Clinton White House scandals.”¹⁶¹ Bossie, who began working for conservative political advocacy group Citizens United in 1992, was hired by the Republican-led House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight in 1997 as their chief investigator into alleged campaign finance abuse by President Clinton. Bossie’s practices were discredited and he was forced to resign in 1998. Following increasing success with Citizens United, where he became President and Chairman, Bossie would go on to become presidential candidate Donald Trump’s Deputy Campaign Manager in the 2016 election.¹⁶² Exonerating George W. Bush, Bossie argues that the responsibility for ‘9/11’ lies with one man and one man alone: President Clinton,¹⁶³ To give his attack an added piquancy, Bossie argues that had Vice President Gore not wasted everyone’s time by challenging the 2000 election results, George W. Bush would have had a further six weeks to deal with terrorism.¹⁶⁴

In exploring Bossie’s book, the same problems that were evident in the previous books by Gertz and Minitzer are evident, including problematic and partisan sources and claims against Clinton’s foreign policy, without evidence. On terrorism specifically, Bossie concludes that Clinton’s approach “has no

[checker/wp/2014/07/17/the-cheneys-claims-of-a-deep-longstanding-far-reaching-relationship-between-al-Qaeda-and-saddam/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2014/07/17/the-cheneys-claims-of-a-deep-longstanding-far-reaching-relationship-between-al-Qaeda-and-saddam/).

160 David N. Bossie, *Intelligence Failure: How Clinton’s National security policy set the stage for 9/11*, (Nashville, TN: WorldNet daily books, 2004).

161 Lloyd Grove, “A firefighter’s blazing trail,” *The Washington Post*, November 13, 1997.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1997/11/13/a-firefighters-blazing-trail/b9beb874-fd7b-4dfe-b285-ffcd385501a2/?utm_term=.9859e7a8a7e2.

162 Maggie Haberman, “A campaign memoir that shows Trump, at least partly, as he is” *The New York Times*, December 11, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/11/us/politics/campaign-memoir-trump-lewandowski-bossie.html>.

163 Bossie, *Intelligence Failure*, 203.

164 *Ibid.*, 203.

credibility as someone serious about fighting terrorism.”¹⁶⁵ Bossie appears to find that Clinton’s aversion to using force to tackle terrorism was because he “loathe[d] the military.”¹⁶⁶ Bossie’s emotional phrasing in accusing the President is evident throughout as he argues that Clinton mismanaged the CIA but “degraded” the FBI and military.¹⁶⁷ The majority of Bossie’s sources come from well-known neoconservatives. For example, in his evaluation of the mismanagement of the CIA, he relies heavily on the opinions of CIA Director Jim Woolsey and neoconservative historian and political analyst Michael Ledeen. Woolsey had a public fall out with Clinton in 1995, which will be explored in chapter three of this thesis and aligned himself with then candidate Trump in 2016. It has also been alleged that he was supportive of the neoconservative platform as a supporter of *PNAC*.¹⁶⁸

Bossie cites Michael Ledeen as a “national security scholar”, who states that “Clinton gave up on intelligence to look good on human rights.”¹⁶⁹ To sustain his argument Bossie cites the example from the time of John Deutch’s tenure as Director of the CIA. Nora Slatkin, who was deputy to Deutch, had put forward guidelines that the CIA would not recruit agents who had committed human rights violations¹⁷⁰. This course of action along with the overall reform of the CIA, as this thesis discusses in chapter three, was brought about following pressure from leading Senator’s, like Daniel Moynihan, questioning the culture and role of the CIA as Clinton was coming into office. Ledeen’s questioning of the CIA leadership’s focus on human rights is puzzling in the modern context given the human rights violations that were alleged to have taken place during the ‘War on Terror’ during the George W. Bush administration.¹⁷¹ Ledeen also has a problematic provenance. Craig Unger, who has researched the neoconservative connections that drove much of President George W. Bush’s foreign policy, describes Ledeen as a “neocon firebrand.”¹⁷² Ledeen was involved in multiple covert and disinformation campaigns against Democratic

165 Ibid., 82.

166 Ibid., 67.

167 Ibid., 58, 66.

168 “Partial list of people associated with the Project for New American Century” *Reasoned. org*, http://www.reasoned.org/e_PNAC2.htm.

169 Bossie, *Intelligence Failure*, 33.

170 Ibid., 32-33.

171 Matt Apuzzo, Sheri Fink and James Risen, “How U.S. torture left a legacy of damaged minds” *The New York Times*, October 8, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/09/world/cia-torture-guantanamo-bay.html>.

172 Craig Unger, *American Armageddon: How the Delusions of the Neoconservatives and the Christian Right Triggered the Descent of America--and Still Imperil Our Future*, (New York: Scribner, 2008), 191.

presidents. As evidence to support his view on Leeden, Unger provides an article in the *Wall Street Journal* by Jonathan Kwitny from 1985, which claimed that Ledeen had been involved in a disinformation campaign against President Jimmy Carter's brother.¹⁷³

Bossie's book makes unsubstantiated accusations and twists the facts to suit his narrative that Clinton neglected terrorism. For example Bossie, without providing evidence, appears to link China to Islamist terrorism, by describing China as "terrorism's friend."¹⁷⁴ Similarly, he throws unsubstantiated allegations against Russia by stating that under Clinton, US intelligence services had "turned a blind eye to intelligence showing that Russia was selling a massive amount of forbidden weapons and weapon technologies to enemies of the US."¹⁷⁵ Bossie also contorts information to present a partial picture to sustain his arguments that the president himself was responsible. Bossie cites from the *Joint inquiry into Intelligence community activities before and after terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001* report in arguing that the CIA had struggled with funding and that the staffing "was slim and skeletal."¹⁷⁶ However, he fails to mention that further down the report it concludes:

Because intelligence budgets were shrinking while counterterrorism resources were steadily growing, senior policy and intelligence officials were reluctant to make the additional cuts in other programs that would have been necessary to augment counterterrorism programs further. This would have jeopardized their ability to satisfy other collection priorities within the Intelligence Community.¹⁷⁷

Bossie appears to repeat this approach of presenting an incomplete picture in discussing the FBI also. Bossie only discusses the budgets for 2000-2002 to argue that the FBI budgets have been reduced all throughout the Clinton presidency. The evidence from the Government Accounting office however shows:

That estimate showed that from fiscal years 1995 to 1998, the FBI more than doubled its allocation of resources for combating terrorism,

173 Craig Unger, "The war they wanted, the lies they needed", Vanity Fair, July 2006 citing Jonathan Kwitny "How an Italian ex spy who also helped the U.S. landed in prison here, Wall Street Journal, August 8, 1985, online at Vanity Fair <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2006/07/yellowcake200607> .

174 Bossie, *Intelligence Failure*, 116.

175 Ibid.,122.

176 Ibid.,55.

177 Congressional Record, Report of the US Senate Committee on Intelligence and US House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, "Joint inquiry into intelligence community activities before and after terrorist attacks of September 11," 107th Congress , 2nd Session, December 2002, *Congress.gov*, <https://www.congress.gov/107/crpt/hrpt792/CRPT-107hrpt792.pdf> .

increasing from about \$256 million in fiscal year 1995 to about \$581 million in fiscal year 1998. In total, from fiscal years 1995 to 1998 (as of July 31, 1998), the FBI had been allocated an estimated \$1.66 billions of its available funds to carry out its counterterrorism mission. The FBI expects to allocate about \$609 million for its counterterrorism mission in fiscal year 1999, which includes no-year funds carried forward from prior fiscal years.¹⁷⁸

One argument that dominates Bossie's book is that Clinton dealt with terrorism by using diplomacy and the FBI, when what was needed was to use the military to attack suspected terrorists. Throughout his book Bossie brings forward arguments to argue this point though some of his evidence to support his arguments are problematic. For example, Bossie cites the response to the Khobar Towers bombing of 1996, which he says was an "act of war."¹⁷⁹ He argues that Clinton should have responded with force against Iran, as Saudi Arabia had given evidence of Iran's complicity in this attack. Bossie notes that Clinton did nothing as the "public's memory faded." Bossie further argues that the only time President Clinton did deploy the military, after the embassy attacks in East Africa in 1998, was when he wanted to "politically deflect" from personal scandals.¹⁸⁰ However, Bossie follows up this accusation without supplying the evidence.¹⁸¹

Bossie argues that much of Clinton's antipathy to the use of force against terrorism appears to be based on his loathing for the military.¹⁸² To support this claim he retells a story that originally appeared in the 1992 elections in the *Los Angeles Times*. According to this article, Colonel Eugene J. Holmes, a recruiting officer in the ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Core), claimed that Clinton deceived him over the draft to avoid joining the Army.¹⁸³ This story, which ran during the 1992 election, stated that Holmes had received a letter from the future President Clinton thanking him for avoiding the draft so that he could pursue his studies at Oxford University, as Clinton had gained the Rhodes scholarship. Bossie cites from this article in the *Los Angeles Times* a letter that

178 Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Administrative Oversight and the Courts, committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, "Combating Terrorism: FBI's Use of Federal Funds for counterterrorism related activities FY's 1995-98," *US General Accounting Office*, <https://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/testimony/212.pdf>.

179 Bossie, *Intelligence Failure*, 177.

180 *Ibid.*, 190.

181 *Ibid.*, 191.

182 *Ibid.*, 66.

183 William C. Rempel, "Ex ROTC leader says Clinton deceived him, cheated military," *Los Angeles Times*, September 17, 1992, http://articles.latimes.com/1992-09-17/news/mn-796_1_clinton-camp.

allegedly Holmes had written about Clinton, “I was not 'saving' him from serving his country. . . . I was making it possible for a Rhodes scholar to serve in the military as an officer.” He charged that Clinton ‘purposely deceived me, using the possibility of joining the ROTC as a ploy to work with the draft board to delay his induction’.”¹⁸⁴ In his memoirs, Clinton had been grateful to Holmes for allowing him this opportunity to study abroad but suspected that Holmes daughter had pushed the Colonel into this course of action.¹⁸⁵ The letter and press conference that briefly sparked controversy in the 1992 elections indicated a conflicted Bill Clinton that “opposed and despised” the Vietnam War¹⁸⁶ like many of his generation but still wanted to serve his country, as he stated in his press conference:

Like so many people in my generation, I felt a profound ambivalence. I loved my country, but I hated war. I believed in our system as deeply as I believe the war was wrong. The American system had been good to me. It had given me opportunities, the chance to fulfill my dreams.¹⁸⁷

In coming to a view on these three key texts, it would be easy to adopt Dumbrell’s view that many of the claims by these authors are “absurd” and highly partisan.¹⁸⁸ Gertz, Minter and Bossie have raised some interesting questions that require greater exploration than Dumbrell was able to provide in his exploration of Clinton’s foreign policy. Bossie’s claim that it was Reagan who displayed a “sound approach” to terrorism through the use of force, which he argued should have been the counterterrorism model for Clinton, needs to be revisited.¹⁸⁹

The structure of the thesis

Chapter One explores the decade before Clinton came to power and begins with an examination of the Reagan presidency and counterterrorism policies. Reagan, having asserted before coming to power that the Soviet Union had a

184 Ibid.

185 Clinton, *My Life*, 164, 388-389.

186 The Associated Press, “The 1992 campaign; A letter by Clinton on his Draft deferment: A War I opposed and despised,” *The New York Times*, February 13, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/02/13/us/1992-campaign-letter-clinton-his-draft-deferment-war-opposed-despised.html>.

187 “Clinton News Conference,” February 12, 1992, *C-Span*, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?24375-1/clinton-news-conference>.

188 Dumbrell, *Between the Bushes*, 135, 137.

189 Bossie, *Intelligence Failure*, 180.

hidden hand in terrorist attacks, found it hard to sustain this account against the scepticism of the CIA, other than when DCI William Casey was in charge of the agency. George Shultz, after the disastrous events of the Beirut attacks, redefined US counterterrorism, as he advocated for a force to be used against terrorism. This advocacy of the use of force on the presumption of guilt of terrorist attacks was not universally accepted, not least by the Pentagon. Responses to the TWA hijack and *Achille Lauro* attacks would show that the use of force in counterterrorism would be difficult to achieve. Reagan counterterrorism policy that had made its zenith with Libya reached its nadir of credibility as the administration fought to deal with the fallout of the 'Iran-Contra' scandal. The George H.W. Bush administration rejected the idea of the use of force against terrorism. His administration, in response to the Lockerbie Pan Am bombing of 1988, sought to bring prosecutions and went ahead with economic sanctions against Libya.

Chapter Two considers Clinton's first two years in power. Clinton did not address the issue of terrorism except in a general sense of borderless threats before coming to power. Neither did any members of his first term administration speak with any authority on the challenge from terrorism. The slight exception was Woolsey, who was Clinton's first and short-lived CIA Director who hinted at developments of new security challenges in the post-Cold War environment. Terrorism was evolving with conflicts in Bosnia and Somalia, and with the emergence of bin Laden who looked to exploit these conflicts to build his al Qaeda network. The terrorist attacks of 1993 did not at first show any connection with al Qaeda, and the FBI led the task of investigating and bringing the perpetrator to justice. Clinton became aware of bin Laden in 1994, but the prevalent view within the administration was that he was a wealthy Saudi financier who financially supported *jihād*. Clinton's midterm election losses in November 1994 would prove significant to his counterterrorism efforts as the Republicans gained control of both Houses and challenged the president on policy positions including terrorism.

Chapter Three considers the impact on Clinton's counterterrorism policy following the multiple terrorist plots and attacks in 1995 and 1996. The chemical attack on the Tokyo subway focused the administration's attention on the challenge of non-state actors with access to biological weapons. The

discovery of a major terrorist plot to bomb US airliners over the Pacific created an urgency within the administration. Clinton, despite proposing anti-terrorism legislation, was frustrated by Republican opposition. The Oklahoma City bombing brought bipartisan attention to the problem of terrorism, but this vanished soon after. The Republicans under pressure from the gun and civil liberties lobbies put up fierce resistance. Clinton finally signed the bill in 1996 into law, despite it not having all the elements of counterterrorism protection such as wiretapping of suspected terrorists and control of gun transfers and tagging of ingredients in bombs to help improve identification following terrorist attack. Clinton continued to push for more funding and support for counterterrorism but clashed with the FBI Director, Louis Freeh, who defined his relationship with the presidents through a filter of morality. The FBI still received a substantial funding boost following the passing of the Anti-terrorism legislation. International terrorism investigations were however turning out to be a challenge for the FBI. Bin Laden tracking station which opened in 1996 was a major initiative launched by the White House and the CIA to get a better understanding of bin Laden's threat as he moved his operational base to Afghanistan. Cooperation between the FBI and the CIA had become a challenge, and despite the best efforts, this challenge would increase. 1996 would prove to be a pivotal year for the president, as he brought through a combination of Executive Orders and legislation bringing national focus on terrorism.

Chapter Four focuses on the East Africa bombings in 1998. Clinton began his second term in office with a new team in place that was more aware of the challenge of terrorism. Foreign policy challenges on terrorism mounted with the administration, having to deal with the Taliban, the host of bin Laden in Afghanistan. Throughout 1997, Clinton strived to coax and cajole the Taliban into handing over bin Laden without success. Despite these setbacks, Clinton continued to focus on developing alternative covert missions to bring bin Laden to justice. 1998 saw the twin bombing of the East African Embassies. Thirteen days after the attack Clinton retaliated with Tomahawk missiles against suspected al Qaeda targets in Sudan and Afghanistan. Coming in the midst of a personal crisis with revelations about his private life being focused by the media, some in the Republican Party and the press accused the president of

using the attacks to deflect from his private life. More problematic for the president was the morphing of the investigations into the Whitewater land deal into perjury and obstruction of justice charges arising out of revelations in his private life leading to an impeachment motion in the House of Representatives passing. Despite these challenges, Clinton continued to be focused on terrorism and directed the CIA to step up their efforts to find and eliminate bin Laden. The CIA, however, failed in this task as the local Afghan informers proved too unreliable. The American public was not interested in impeaching Clinton and punished the Republicans in the 1998 mid-terms elections where the Republicans had sought to exploit Clinton's crisis for political gain.

Chapter Five explores the multiple efforts by the White House to authorise covert action to eliminate bin Laden in 1999-2000. Clinton was acquitted as the impeachment motion did not get the two-thirds majority in the Senate. Clinton was seeking to develop a program of diplomacy, covert action and further missile strikes as he approached his end of his second term. These counterterrorism initiatives did not materialize as intelligence reliability continued to be a challenge. The Pentagon also proved unreliable partners in adopting covert action preferring instead large-scale ground invasion or further missile launches. The White House went ahead with its patient diplomacy with the Taliban expecting that the strategy of supporting a dialogue with the Taliban and bringing in harsh economic sanctions would force the Taliban to surrender bin Laden. In 1999 CIA Director George Tenet would overhaul his counterterrorism operations by bringing in new people and trying to improve intelligence timeliness and reliability. The use of predator drones offered the CIA new possibilities at a time when Clinton was determined to deal with bin Laden before he left office. The CIA in 1999 still did not consider bin Laden the number one threat facing America, despite the president having said in 1998, that bin Laden was "Public Enemy number 1." Al Qaeda carried out another terrorist attack on a US warship in Aden. Clinton could not respond to this attack, as the FBI and CIA struggled to supply a definitive confirmation on the perpetrator.

In the **Conclusions** chapter the answers are brought together, to the questions set out in this introduction. Clinton's counterterrorism policy evolved over his two terms in office. Reagan's use of force in counterterrorism response

had not continued under George H. W. Bush. Clinton came into office with the belief that that domestic law enforcement could be extended to investigate and prosecute terrorist suspects. This was not new; George H. W. Bush had used the FBI to investigate the Lockerbie bombings of 1988. Initially, the president's faith in the FBI looked justified as they successfully apprehended and prosecuted the perpetrators of terrorist incidents between 1999-95. Terrorism, however, was evolving in sophistication and the FBI struggled with international investigations.

Clinton evolved his counterterrorism policy instruments to focus on finding diplomatic solutions to the problem of bin Laden who became America's number one public enemy. He continued to persist in his belief that the rule of law should prevail on counterterrorism and so strived to address the gaps in US counterterrorism through legislation and Executive orders. Clinton was hamstrung as to how quickly he could move to implement counterterrorism legislation. The Republicans delayed much of this legislation, while the White House also came under pressure from the gun lobby and civil libertarians. Clinton persisted, and his legislative efforts paid off despite the president not getting everything he wanted from it. The East African Embassy attacks were the next pivot point as Clinton increasingly looked to use force to deal with the problem of bin Laden. Having failed very publicly with missile strikes as intelligence on bin Laden and al Qaeda facilities turned out to be unreliable. The missile response signalled presidential intent that he was prepared to use force, but Clinton adapted his strategy to a twin-track approach of covert action and diplomacy to find a solution. He remained determined to eliminate bin Laden if he could not be captured. However, he would not authorize force without adequate and prompt intelligence as the risk for collateral damage remained a possibility. Clinton urged the Pentagon to find methods short of putting boots on the ground to deal with bin Laden, including sanctioning covert operations, but each time the Pentagon retreated behind the excuse of unreliable intelligence to only propose long range missile strikes.

Clinton faced multiple challenges in shaping his counterterrorism policies. First and most critical was the effectiveness of his intelligence capability. In his first term, an under-fire CIA was in no fit shape to consider new missions as they fought budget cuts and Congressional scepticism over its

post-Cold War role. With a revolving door in leaders during Clinton's first term, that situation at the CIA was not helped as spy scandals that buffeted the agency just when it needed to define its post-Cold War role became urgent. However, by January 1996, John Deutch, CIA Director, and Anthony Lake, National Security Advisor, had launched the bin Laden tracking station just as the terrorist leader was ratcheting up his rhetoric. Tenet changed and stabilized the CIA. He created an active partnership with the White House, and the majority of his staff appreciated his personable nature. That agreeableness gave way to being too ready to please the White House against the wishes of his frustrated bin Laden tracking team. The lack of a coherent strategy and funding would be changed by how much priority the CIA leader felt his organisation needed to give to al Qaeda versus another significant foreign policy challenge such as the proliferation of weapons. Overall the intelligence reliability has turned out to have prevented the Clinton administration from achieving its stated aim of the second term, to eliminate bin Laden without committing the US to a prolonged and brutal conflict. The FBI, on the other hand, remained well funded on terrorism but its internal doubts over how to share information and scepticism of its Director Louis Freeh over the president's morality meant it became a dragging anchor on US counterterrorism during the Clinton presidency. The success that the FBI had achieved during Clinton's first term soon gave way to doubts as it found it hard to operate in a complex international environment, especially as was the case after the attack on Khobar Towers, in Saudi Arabia.

Clinton's other big challenge was the Republican Party who sought to frustrate the president's counterterrorism ambitions. In his first term, even after the devastating attack on Oklahoma City, the spirit of bipartisan cooperation soon faded to be replaced by the gun and civil lobby as they strove to frustrate the legislative efforts. The most common aspects of the president's personal life came to be exploited for political gain and may well have delayed the deployment of missiles that might have killed bin Laden. Instead, the president was made to endure an impeachment process when the majority of Americans did not want their president to be impeached. It was only after the loss in the 1998 midterms, the Republicans faded an imposition on US counterterrorism.

Finally, Clinton was unfortunate that in his first term key cabinet members in the State and Defense Department leadership did not show an

appreciable awareness of terrorism. In his second term, this improved. Similarly, Berger proved the more effective in driving counterterrorism in Clinton's second term like Lake shaped the president's agenda and helped bring in bin Laden station. The DOD remained averse to consider missions without intelligence, and the DOJ made sure that the legal position of the administration was adapting itself to meet the challenges posed by terrorism. Neither could be argued fast enough in changing their organisations to face up to the challenge posed by terrorism. Thus, the DOD found itself accepting the default choice of cruise missiles and the DOJ struggling to ensure that president's more aggressive instincts did not put him in legal jeopardy. However, the DOJ appears to have been unable to get clarity of understanding within the FBI as to how they could share information without disrupting their prosecutorial efforts.

A Note on the Terminology of Terrorism

Martha Crenshaw has argued that an empirical study must show that if violent acts are to be given the label of "terrorism", they must be deliberate, intentional and pre-determined, be perceived as "socially and politically unacceptable" to the targeted audience, and follow a "consistent pattern" in targeting particular individuals to create a "psychological effect" and ultimately "to change [the] political behaviour and attitudes" of those targeted individuals or their representatives.¹⁹⁰ The problems, however, come in naming and labelling the perpetrators of such acts as "terrorists" rather than, for example, "criminals" because as Richard Jackson has argued there are a "set of assumptions, beliefs, forms of knowledge and political and cultural narratives" that are associated with any such use of language.¹⁹¹ As this thesis considers the words, speeches and notes of US Presidents and members of US administrations from Ronald Reagan through to George W. Bush, there is no single definition that exists that could accurately be argued as defining the adversary without adopting those same political biases.

190 Martha Crenshaw, *Explaining terrorism: Causes, processes and consequences*, (Oxford: Routledge 2011), 23.

191 Jackson, *Writing the war on terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter terrorism*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2005).16.

The pattern of terrorism during the Clinton presidency appears not to emanate from the same adversary of the US and therefore some precision is needed especially those perpetrated by foreign actors to accurately label them. In considering the evidence over the time period, research has explored it could be argued that pre-Clinton, acts of political violence labelled as terrorism were state sponsored or perpetrated by proxies of states such as Hezbollah and therefore labelling them appeared less problematic. However, during the Clinton presidency, as this thesis explores, acts perceived as terrorism ranged from lone shooters outside the gates of the CIA campus in Langley, Virginia to the bombers that targeted the warship *USS Cole*. There were also a number of domestic incidents such as the armed siege of the Branch Davidians religious sect in Waco, Texas in 1993 and the bombing of a Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995. This study has focused primarily on the attacks that affected US National security, foreign intelligence and foreign and domestic counterterrorism units at the FBI and the CIA.

The labelling of all these different adversaries simply as “terrorists” is problematic, as Jackson has argued. Presidents, other policy makers, journalists and many scholars tend to use the catch-all term “terrorists” unless they specifically name one terrorist adversary such as al Qaeda as Clinton did later in his presidency. Therefore, this thesis in exploring the phenomenon of non-state terrorism, especially when focusing on the early part of Clinton’s presidency, requires an awareness of the difficulties associated with labelling perpetrators of violent acts as “terrorists”. Richer analysis might require more precision than was used by Clinton, his advisors, and the observers of his policy making, rather than a catch-all term that describes these perpetrators as ‘terrorists’ or ‘jihadists’ or ‘Islamic terrorists’, or worse still all three of those labels being appended with the word ‘evil’. Simon Cottee in a recent article argued in the *Atlantic Magazine* citing the British historian, Lewis Namier, “public figures who summon high moral principles to explain their own actions and insist that such professed ideals will be ex post facto rationalizations that have little or nothing to do with those individuals’ actual motives for acting.”¹⁹²

192 Simon Cottee, “What’s the right way to think about religion and ISIS,” *The Atlantic*, July 12, 2016. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/07/religion-isis-orlando/490958/> .

Moreover, as Peter Bergen argued in his interview with al Qaeda in *The New York Times*:

I found that the perpetrators were motivated by a mix of factors, including militant Islamist ideology; dislike of American foreign policy in the Moslem world; a need to attach themselves to an ideology or organization that gave them a sense of purpose; and a “cognitive opening” to militant Islam that often was precipitated by personal disappointment, like the death of a parent. For many, joining a jihadist group or carrying out an attack allowed them to become heroes of their own story. But in each case, the proportion of the motivations varied.¹⁹³

In this thesis, some precision of language is required to ensure that it does not also succumb to inaccurate or lazy labelling as it analyses the shape shifting nature of threats and violent attacks during the Clinton presidency that were labelled as terrorism. The thesis will, however, still use “terrorism”, “terrorist” and “terrorists” as terms in line with the conclusion reached by Jackson that:

in spite of its insecure ontological status, its negative cultural-political baggage and its frequent misuse by political and academic actors, there are a number of important political and normative reasons for retaining the term "terrorism" as an organising concept for the field.¹⁹⁴

As Jackson argues further: “we should retain the term ‘terrorism’ and engage in sustained and rigorous discursive struggle over its constitution and knowledge production” because it is the term that has great currency among the public, politicians, journalists, and academics, and any research that abandoned or rejected the label entirely would risk undermining its credibility and to be marginalised. Jackson also contends that there is “a compelling normative imperative to retain a term that de-legitimises particular kinds of violence directed against civilians and which instrumentalises human suffering for the purposes of influencing an audience.”¹⁹⁵ This thesis, therefore, will engage critically with the language of terrorism adopted by the Clinton and other US administrations to describe and give meaning to acts of political violence and their perpetrators. My own use of the language will often be more contingent,

193 Peter Bergen, “Why do terrorists commit terrorism?” *The New York Times*, June 14, 2016.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/15/opinion/why-do-terrorists-commit-terrorism.html>.

194 Richard Jackson, “An Argument for Terrorism,” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 2 No. 2 (2008),

<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/27/html>.

195 Ibid.

using qualifiers such as ‘alleged’, ‘suspected’, ‘perceived as’, and will avoid using labels in a pejorative or moralistic manner except where directly citing and critiquing such uses by policy makers and others.

Chapter One: Antecedents in Counterterrorism.

Introduction

This chapter looks to explore US counterterrorism policy in the decade or so before Clinton came to office. In doing so, it looks to answer three core questions. One, what were the key characteristics of Reagan-era US counterterrorism policy? Two, how important was Reagan’s use of force in preventing terrorism? Three, what legacy did Reagan and President George H.W. Bush leave behind in counterterrorism? A running theme throughout the chapter is the charge made by Clinton’s critics that Reagan successfully managed terrorism through military force, something Clinton was not prepared to contemplate.¹⁹⁶

Reagan, the Red Menace, and Terrorism

Ronald Wilson Reagan was a Hollywood actor and then Governor of California before seeking the presidency of the United States in 1976 and successfully in 1980. Political violence and state sponsored acts of hostage taking had been an agenda item for him even before taking office. It could be argued that for any candidate seeking the high office of the President during the Cold War, the foreign policy aims in mitigating the Soviet threat remained the primary aim. Nevertheless, terrorism was a foreign policy challenge for Presidents.

Despite frequent terrorist attacks in the 1980’s, terrorism still had the power to “shock...perhaps rooted in the excessive expectations, and surprise that such things should happen at all.”¹⁹⁷ For President James Earl “Jimmy”

¹⁹⁶ Bossie, *Intelligence failure*, 180.

¹⁹⁷ Walter Lacquer, *The Age of Terrorism*, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1987) 299.

Carter, the Iranian hostage crisis, going on since 4 November 1979, proved to be one of his greatest challenges. Following the overthrow of the Shah of Iran by a revolutionary theocratic movement led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, fifty-two diplomats and embassy staff were taken hostage by student protestors who overran the US Embassy in Tehran in support of Khomeini. Eight days after the hostages had been seized, the President described it as an act of “terrorism”.¹⁹⁸ As *The New York Times* observed, the challenge by the Iranians in taking Americans hostage had made the US appear “impotent” and viewed by the public as a “blow to their self-assurance.”¹⁹⁹

Carter struggled to find a solution to rescue the hostages and suffered various setbacks, not least an abortive military operation in April 1980. By September, an *NBC News* and *Associated Press* poll showed that 55% of those polled disapproved of his handling of the crisis.²⁰⁰ The poll also demonstrated that Carter’s handling of the crisis, together with his limited response to the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, had created a negative image of his foreign policy, as 76% of those polled believed that the President was doing a poor job on foreign affairs.

Reagan, who would be labelled the “great communicator” by supporters and critics alike²⁰¹, took full advantage. As Trevor McCrisken has argued, Reagan’s foreign policy was designed to “halt the [perceived] gains being made by America’s adversaries, and restore the faith of the public at home and abroad in the will and ability of the United States to lead the defence of American and Western interests.”²⁰² Within this aim was a broader principle that appeared to underpin his counterterrorism approach, which Carol Winkler has argued, developed during his time as a labour leader in Hollywood and then as Governor of California. This relied on the principle of ‘peace through strength’ that had been a core organising principle in Republican Party foreign policy thinking

198 Jimmy Carter: “Oil Imports from Iran Remarks Announcing Discontinuance of United States Imports.,” November 12, 1979, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=31674>.

199 Steven R. Weisman, “For America, a painful awakening,” *The New York Times*, May 17, 1981, <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/05/17/magazine/for-america-a-painful-reawakening.html>.

200 NBC News/Associated Press Poll, “National Poll, September 1980”, *NBC News/Associated Press*, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research).

201 Geoffrey Nunberg, “And yes, he was a great communicator”, *The New York Times*, June 13, 2004 <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/13/weekinreview/and-yes-he-was-a-great-communicator.html>.

202 Trevor McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism and the legacy of Vietnam: US Foreign policy since 1974*, (Basingstoke, Hants: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 92.

since at least the failed presidential campaign of Barry Goldwater in 1964.²⁰³ Reagan and his advisors asserted this principle as the bedrock of his foreign policy and it drove much of his rhetoric, threats and actions, especially in his relations with the Soviet Union. Michael Flamm has thus argued that Reagan conflated the challenge of fighting terrorism into the wider challenge of fighting the Soviet Union in the Cold War.²⁰⁴ This view appears to be borne out in Reagan's pre-election statements on countering the Soviet threat and terrorism:

I will direct the resources of my administration against this scourge of civilization and toward expansion of our cooperation with other nations in combating terrorism in its many forms.... Terrorist organizations have enjoyed the support – covert and open – of the Soviet Union.²⁰⁵

Framing and mastering the challenge of terrorism appears to have focused Reagan's mind early on in his presidency though, as Winkler has argued, Reagan's "terrorism narrative reflected the scene, characters and themes of Cold War discourse".²⁰⁶ In trying to achieve this, Reagan faced a challenge – the CIA was sceptical of the Soviet hand in terrorism.²⁰⁷ Despite the lack of corroborating evidence, members of the administration continued the narrative of Soviet involvement in what they described as terrorist activity, with Reagan's first Secretary of State Alexander Haig suggesting in his first speech that "proxies" of the Soviet Union were perpetrating terrorist attacks against Americans.²⁰⁸ To get over this challenge, Director of the CIA, William "Bill" Casey, led an effort to 'force-fit' the data to support the administration's claims of Soviet involvement. This episode has been referred to by Robert Gates, who became Deputy Director Intelligence in 1986, as "a struggle over the estimate" which he claimed "poison[ed] the relationship between the DCI and some of the Agency's Soviet analysts for the rest of his [Casey's] tenure."²⁰⁹

203 Winker, *In the Name of Terrorism*, 80; Trevor McCrisken, "Past is Present: The Future of Conservative US Foreign Policy" in *Crisis of Conservatism?: The Republican Party, the Conservative Movement and American Politics after Bush*, Joel Aberbach and Gillian Peele, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 358-361.

204 Michael W. Flamm, "The Reagan Presidency and Foreign policy" in *Debating the Reagan Presidency*, John Ehrman and Michael W. Flamm (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 104.

205 Ronald Reagan: "Televised Address by Governor Ronald Reagan "A Strategy for Peace in the '80s'," October 19, 1980, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=85200>.

206 Winkler, *In the name of Terrorism*, 80.

207 Marc A. Celmer, *Terrorism, US Strategy, and Reagan Policies*, (London: Mansell Publishing, 1987) 2.

208 Alexander Haig, "Text of Haig's speech on American Foreign policy," *The New York Times*, April 25, 1981. <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/04/25/world/text-of-haig-s-speech-on-american-foreign-policy.html>.

209 Robert M. Gates, *From the shadows: The ultimate insider's story of five presidents and how they won the Cold War*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 203.

A 1982 interview with Casey hints that there was a major behind-the-scenes effort launched by the DCI and his aides to massage the numbers to fit the narrative of Soviet involvement in terrorism. A transcript of the interview was published on 11 July 1982 in the magazine supplement of *Newsday*, a local daily newspaper serving residents of the New York City Borough of Queens and Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island, where Casey himself lived. The article recounts how the reporter David Wise sneaked a tape recorder into the interview, ignoring Casey's refusal to talk on the record. Indeed, Casey had said to Wise, "I don't want to have to be so careful when we're talking together." The article claims that despite a tough nomination process, Casey was now "quietly in control." However, the article also notes that Casey was bringing undue pressure on both his own agency and the DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) to present the evidence that would sustain the administration's claims on Soviet involvement in sponsoring terrorism. The article claimed, on the basis of an unnamed source described as having "had good access to the secret world," that under Casey "there is so much pressure to show that the Soviets are the bad guys that every other issue gets submerged." The article revealed that Casey ordered "three successive drafts" to prove that Soviets were training and funding terrorists around the world. It claimed that the CIA had upwardly revised the number of acts described as terrorism in a public report to 6,714 over a twelve-year period instead of the figure of 3,336 that had been reported internally a year earlier.²¹⁰

Whilst most CIA Directors might at some point query figures, it was the revelation of the manipulation of numbers that support the view that the Soviet involvement was being exaggerated to meet the needs of a counterterrorism strategy. In the article, Casey reveals that "I looked at the estimate and felt it fully did not reflect Soviet activity in support of terrorist training. In the report there was a dissenting opinion of the D.I.A. I simply said, You fellows take a stab at it. They came back, and I thought too heavy the other way."²¹¹ Casey said he then asked for a senior review panel that arrived at the published estimate.²¹² Further doubt in the article is cast on the veracity of the numbers to further

210 David Wise, "Bill Casey at the CIA helm: Quietly in control," *The Newsday magazine*, July 11, 1982, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/document/cia-rdp90-00965r000807500037-5>.

211 Ibid.

212 Ibid.

support the view that some sort of manipulation had gone on in the background. One of Casey's aides, Lavon B. Strong, with whom Wise also spoke, rationalised the discrepancy as a "computer problem".²¹³ Robert Gates would describe this force fitting of the data to suit the Reagan Administration's narrative as a "donnybrook" (meaning a scene of uproar and disorder) between the CIA and the DIA. Gates suggested that the DIA would in time come to accept the numbers "grudgingly (and mainly because they were fed up and exhausted with the fight)."²¹⁴

In exploring this manipulation by Casey of the figures used to sustain the Reagan Administration's claims of Soviet involvement in training terrorists, an attempt here has been made to verify the claims made by Wise in his article. As is evident from the non-redacted elements of the 1987 National Intelligence Estimate there existed "serious gaps in our knowledge about the region's ties to terrorist groups, in particular those in the Middle East."²¹⁵ The NIE drew on "new information" that "considerably expands our horizons, especially as it relates to Bloc states" as well as opening up "the distinct possibility that, as collection efforts go forward, additional facets of the relationships will come to light." The estimate found that whilst the Soviet Union did support the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organisation) and had a "liaison relationship" with the Abu Nidal Organisation, another Middle Eastern militant network accused of terrorism, the "Soviets tend to avoid direct contact with West European terrorist networks because they believe European groups are uncontrollable and can undermine broader Soviet foreign policy."²¹⁶

The NIE noted that, since Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms had been instituted in the Soviet Union, there was more open condemnation of terrorist organisations and more cooperation through bilateral meetings, but that Moscow continued to support the links between its East European client states and terrorist organisations, such as East Germany and Poland. The CIA report found that Abu Nidal, for example, had received medical care in East

213 Ibid.

214 Gates, *From the shadows*, 205.

215 Central Intelligence Agency, "The Soviet Bloc Role in International Terrorism and Revolutionary Violence, National Intelligence Estimate, Memorandum to Holders, March 1987,"

<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP09T00367R000200310001-2.pdf>.

216 Ibid.

Germany.²¹⁷ The 1987 NIE concluded that Moscow would continue to support “national liberation movements” due to their ideological coherence with Marxist-Leninist groups and their political objectives while “periodically” condemning terrorist groups in the interests of greater openness under Gorbachev. By taking this approach, the NIE argued, the “Soviet Union can maintain its influence with client countries and not constrain the operations of terrorist groups that are useful to the USSR.” While the declassified portions of the document do not include numbers, it is clear that the assessments support the position taken by the Reagan administration as it concludes “we see no reason to believe that the Soviet Union’s policy toward terrorism is likely to change significantly in the foreseeable future.”²¹⁸

From the Rubble of Beirut

In the sixteen months between June 1982 and October 1983, the Reagan administration got caught up in the lava pool of Middle Eastern politics. Lou Cannon would describe the events as a “case study in foreign policy calamity.”²¹⁹ The administration justified its engagement in Lebanon by stating that US interests had to be protected against the Soviets making inroads into that region.²²⁰ Lebanon had been engulfed in a civil war since 1975. The administration argued that acts of terrorism undermined countries where democracy was under threat. Accordingly, the US needed to get involved to protect the “freedom” of these fragile states.²²¹ This was the logic that Reagan had used in Central America, particularly in Nicaragua against the Sandinistas. In time, the involvement in Lebanon would lead to terrorist attacks but would require a political sleight of hand to convince America that Reagan had been tough on terrorism.

In April 1981, the proxy forces of Syria and Israel had clashed over the presence of Maronite Christian in the Beqaa Valley. The Maronites had been supported throughout the bitter civil war by Israel and the US. On the other side,

217 Ibid.

218 Ibid.

219 Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 390.

220 Ibid., 389.

221 Winkler, *In the name of Terrorism*, 80.

the Syrians were supportive of a pan Arab force comprising the PLO in Lebanon and other Islamic forces. The clashes in April had broken out over concerns by the Syrians that gains by the Christian Maronites would give Israel a bridgehead to target the PLO in Lebanon. In response, Israel in July 1981 had bombed the PLO headquarters in Beirut. Though a ceasefire was eventually agreed, it had required the Saudi's working privately to bring the Palestinians around to sign up to the agreement. Saudi involvement had been welcomed by the Reagan administration who had rewarded the Saudi's by supporting their request to buy AWACS aircraft (Airborne warning and control system equipped aircraft). This created a problem for Israel, the traditional ally of the United States in the region. The Israeli PM, Menachem Begin, had received word of the Saudi-US deal at a time when US F-16 fighter aircraft sales to Israel had been halted. This rift in US-Israeli relations had arisen out of US displeasure over Israel's bombing in Beirut. With Begin lobbying Congress, the AWACS sale was temporarily halted as the powerful Israel lobby in the Senate initially blocked the deal.²²² Reagan's blunt response was to tell Begin: "It is not the business of other nations to make American foreign policy."²²³

This tension between Israel and the US would impact US counterterrorism initiatives. It would also mark an extraordinary period where the US president would be at loggerheads with Israel, its long-term ally in the Middle East. As a result of this ongoing tension, the response to the assassination of the Israeli Ambassador to the UK, by the PLO, would set in motion a catalogue of events that would spiral out of control. Israel's response to the assassination was to bomb Beirut on 2 June 1982. This in turn led to the Palestinians to fire on Galilee in Israel. The tit for tat pattern continued until Israeli troops invaded Western Lebanon on June 6, with the aim of moving the Palestinians further to the North to prevent them from attacking Israeli territory. Secretary of State Haig told reporters that Israel's only intention was to create a buffer zone between the Palestinians and Israeli territory.²²⁴ It has been

222 Charles Mohr, "Sale to Saudi's just got by, but it didn't just happen," *The New York Times*, November 1, 1981, <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/11/01/weekinreview/sale-to-saudis-just-got-by-but-it-didn-t-just-happen.html>.

223 Ronald Reagan: "The President's News Conference," October 1, 1981, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=44327>.

224 Cannon, *President Reagan*, 200.

subsequently claimed that Haig was giving diplomatic cover to Israel's act of aggression and had "green lit" the invasion.²²⁵

The situation in Lebanon coincided with tensions boiling over in the State Department over the direction of US foreign policy, not helped by Haig feeling that he was being marginalised in his own department. Disagreements had developed between Haig and his deputy William P. Clark, Jr. on many key areas of foreign policy. Haig, who had considered a Presidential run himself, felt that his authority was being undermined by his deputy. Haig, however, was not blameless in this turn of events. Haig had displayed naked ambition whilst Reagan was under the surgeon's knife having a bullet removed after John Hinckley had tried to assassinate the president in March 1981. He had declared to the world's media "I am in control here."²²⁶ Putting aside the constitutional proprieties of who would be in charge in the event of a President being unable to fulfil his obligations through incapacity, Haig's actions had irritated his cabinet colleagues including Secretary of Defence Caspar Weinberger.²²⁷ Weinberger was a Reagan loyalist who the President trusted since their time together in the California legislature when Reagan had been Governor of California. Haig's boorish attempt to assert himself whilst his president lay under the surgeon's knife had not gone down well. Unfortunately for Haig, his popularity did not increase after the events had passed and Reagan had returned to full health. Haig found himself on the opposite side of the argument with the US Ambassador to the UN, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, and his deputy Clark over the April 1982 Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands, with Kirkpatrick and Clark initially supporting the Argentinian case. But matters really came to a head in a series of events that, in retrospect, were trivial in the context of geopolitical developments.

In June 1982, Reagan along with Haig and others made a series of visits to European countries including Great Britain and the G-7 Summit to Versailles, in France. Haig, it appears, had been discombobulated by his accommodation on Air Force One, followed by not being able to travel on Marine One with the

225 Ibid.

226 Richard V. Allen, "When Reagan was shot, who was in control at the White House?" *The Washington Post*, March 25, 2011, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/when-reagan-was-shot-who-was-in-control-at-the-white-house/2011/03/23/AFJlrFYB_story.html.

227 Ibid.

President. Haig had felt aggrieved when he was told by the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher that he was not meant to be on a reception line, at an event in 10 Downing Street.²²⁸ So, when Clark and Haig disagreed over how the US should respond to Israel's invasion of Lebanon in terms of instructions to Philip Habib, the US negotiator trying to bring about a ceasefire, Haig lost self-control and told Reagan on 14 June "I simply can no longer operate in this atmosphere."²²⁹

On 24 June, Reagan and Haig met to discuss Haig's accusation that Clark and others were interfering in Haig's work. Haig demanded that Reagan reduce Clark's authority. By that meeting, Reagan, who normally avoided having to resolve difficulties between his cabinet officers, appears to have had enough of constant challenges by Haig daring the President to go against him. Reagan asked his aides to track down George P. Shultz the day after the meeting. On 26 June, the front page of *The New York Times* on their late edition carried an exclusive, Haig was gone, and Shultz was going to be nominated by the president.²³⁰

In looking back over the eighteen months that Haig had been in the State Department, it had seen the sharpening of the narrative of the fight against the Soviet Union. On terrorism, he had ratcheted up the accusation of the hidden hand of the Kremlin behind many of the terrorist attacks that were taking place and in Central America especially in his rhetoric against the Nicaraguan Sandinista rebels, which he argued was evidence of his assertion of creeping Soviet influence. However, Haig's downfall was his own doing. Reagan, who had supported Haig, eventually lost patience as the president kept getting dragged into having to deal with Haig's spats within the administration. Having presented himself as the self-styled 'vicar of [US] foreign policy', Haig threatened to create a great schism in the Reagan Administration.²³¹

George Pratt Shultz would cast a giant shadow on Reagan's foreign policy. He would come to revolutionise counterterrorism policy, setting the

228 Cannon, *President Reagan*, 199- 201.

229 Ibid., 202.

230 Bernard Gwetzman and Special to the New York Times, "Haig resigns over Foreign Policy course, but cites no issues; Reagan names Shultz," *The New York Times*, June 26, 1982, <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/06/26/world/haig-resigns-over-foreign-policy-course-but-cites-no-issues-reagan-names-shultz.html>.

231 Don Dberdorfer, "Haig calls terrorism top priority," *The Washington Post*, January 29, 1981, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1981/01/29/haig-calls-terrorism-top-priority/>.

future template for conservative politicians and commentators on terrorism. Shultz's early life and education indicated an analytical mind having been trained to PhD level in Economics. Prior to his public service roles, Shultz had been a Professor at MIT rising to become Dean of the University of Chicago. Having served as Secretary of Labor and then the Treasury under Nixon, Shultz understood the workings of life inside the "Beltway" before Reagan hired him from the Bechtel Group, where he was Executive Vice President. As Iwan Morgan has argued, "this impressive curriculum vitae endowed self confidence in his capacity to run foreign policy", but as events would demonstrate Shultz would not get his own way when it came to formulate a response to terrorism.²³² Shultz would be approved by the Senate on 16 July 1982 and remain in post till Reagan left office in 20 January 1989.

Shultz's first test was the worsening situation in Lebanon. Israel had bombed West Beirut for seven consecutive days beginning on 21 July 1982. This was followed by eleven consecutive hours of bombing on 12 August. The earlier tension with Israel compounded by Israel's relentless bombing of Beirut had created a sense of revulsion, even among those that were traditional supporters of Israel, in the White House.²³³ Cannon recalls that even the normally placid Reagan had phoned the Israeli Prime Minister Begin and described Israel's actions as creating a "holocaust", a remark that was met with the riposte "Mr President, I know what a holocaust is."²³⁴ Though the bombing would cease, the security in the region remained fragile. A peace plan was put in place which involved an international peacekeeping force acting as guarantors of peace, supporting evacuation of the PLO out of West Beirut. The force, which included French, Italians and eight hundred US Marines, landed in Beirut on 25 August 1982.

Prospects for peace were soon shattered. On 1 September, Reagan addressed the nation to inform them that the evacuation was going well and would be completed in time. He also gave an uplifting vision of how he viewed prospects for a long-lasting peace in the Middle East. Reagan's speech began by describing American involvement as a "moral imperative," but with a clear

232 Iwan Morgan, *Reagan: An American Icon*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 157- 158.

233 Cannon, *President Reagan*, 40.

234 *Ibid.*

intent: to “deter the Soviets and their surrogates from further expansion in the region.”²³⁵ However, it was his even-handed treatment of both Israel and Palestine that gladdened the hearts of Arab leaders when he said that steps to peace needed to:

Reconcile Israel's legitimate security concerns with the legitimate rights of the Palestinians. And that answer can only come at the negotiating table. Each party must recognize that the outcome must be acceptable to all and that true peace will require compromises by all.²³⁶

Though the speech would be described by Arab leaders around the world as the “most courageous stand” by the American administration since the Suez Crisis in 1956, the Middle East Peace process would not be built on good wishes and soaring rhetoric.²³⁷ Soon after the speech, Weinberger and the Pentagon decided that the US Marines should be brought home as their job was done, overruling objections by Shultz.²³⁸ Problems started with the election of the new President of Lebanon, the Christian Falangist leader, Bashir Gemayel. Elected on 3 August, Gemayel was acceptable to the West and Israel, but not to the PLO, Syrians or Iranians. He was assassinated on 14 September, before taking office. Despite reservations from the State Department, the small force of eight hundred Marines had all but left Lebanon. The response by the Christian Falangists was to massacre seven hundred Palestinians, including women and children, some of whom were babies at the Palestinian refugee camp in Sabra and Shatila between 16 – 18 September.²³⁹ Reagan expressed “outrage and revulsion” whilst an Islamic Lebanese politician would describe it as “Nazi style killing.”²⁴⁰

Trust in the US as a guarantor of peace was shattered, especially as Philip Habib, the US negotiator, had assured PLO leader Yasser Arafat that the US would protect the Palestinians at these camps. Israel was blamed for not controlling the militia and the US for not putting diplomatic pressure on the Israelis to ensure they carried through on the security guarantees given to the

235 Ronald Reagan: "Address to the Nation on United States Policy for Peace in the Middle East," September 1, 1982, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42911> .

236 Ibid.

237 Ibid., 407.

238 Ibid.

239 Thomas L. Friedman “The Beirut massacre: The four days,” *The New York Times*, September 26, 1982, <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/09/26/world/the-beirut-massacre-the-four-days.html>.

240 UPI archives, “World reaction echoes Reagan: ‘outrage and revulsion,’” *UPI.com*, September 18, 1982, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1982/09/18/World-reaction-echoes-Reagan-outrage-and-revulsion/6798401169600/>.

Palestinians. In a report that appeared in 2012, it was revealed that the “Israelis [had] misled American diplomats about events in Beirut and bullied them into accepting the spurious claim that thousands of “terrorists” were in the camps”.²⁴¹ The same report also suggested the US had failed to prevent the massacre, as “the United States was in a position to exert strong diplomatic pressure on Israel that could have ended the atrocities,[but] it failed to do so.”²⁴² It was claimed by the US Ambassador to Lebanon during these events, Samuel W. Lewis, that the massacre could have been averted had:

Reagan picked up the phone and called Begin and read him the riot act even more clearly than he already did in August — that might have stopped it temporarily.²⁴³

The setback in American security provision would have terrible consequences. Eight months after these events, the response from the aggrieved became known. The first attack, on 18 April 1983, saw the US Embassy in Beirut attacked by a suicide bomber driving a truck filled with two thousand pounds of explosives, killing sixty-three people including seventeen Americans. This was followed by another attack on 23 October 1983 on the US Marine barracks in Beirut, this time killing two hundred and forty-one US servicemen as the building collapsed on them through the force of the blast. Both these attacks raised doubts about Reagan’s foreign policy and the overall effectiveness of his counter terrorism plans. The US public were also beginning to wonder where this involvement in Lebanon would lead. Senator Sam Nunn, the ranking Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, asked the President: “What are the marines doing there and under what terms would they be withdrawn?”²⁴⁴ *The New York Times* carried an interview with a certain Nancy Tiffen of Evanston, Illinois, that appeared to sum up the public mood, linking the debacle with Vietnam: “I worry that we’ll send more and more people...and sooner or later we will have another Vietnam”.²⁴⁵

241 Seth Anziska, “A preventable massacre,” *The New York Times*, September 16, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/17/opinion/a-preventable-massacre.html>.

242 Ibid.

243 Ibid.

244 Steven V. Roberts, “Legislators say Reagan must reassess U.S. role,” *The New York Times*, October 24, 1983, A8 <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/10/24/world/legislators-say-reagan-must-reassess-us-role.html>.

245 Robert McFadden, “Americans react to attack with frustration and doubt,” *The New York Times*, October 24, 1982, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/10/24/world/americans-react-to-attack-with-frustration-and-doubt.html>.

The administration's response would be to create a political sleight of hand which allowed the Reagan administration to convince the American public that America would not be cowed by terrorism. After the attack, David Wills has described the Reagan national security team being split between those who wanted to retaliate militarily and those like General Vessey who argued that a military response against terrorism was "beneath our dignity"²⁴⁶. A more pragmatic argument was made by Vessey who said that the Marines might be attacked again for any US response.²⁴⁷ In the end, the President was swayed by the hawks and supported military retaliation.²⁴⁸ The events allowed Reagan to construct a narrative of appearing strong but without risking a war with a formidable adversary. Wills has suggested that US was getting requests from allies not to retaliate against America, but the evidence appears to show that a much more crafted attempt was underway, which was more than just an act of simple political deflection.²⁴⁹

The US had come to the view that targeting the backers of Hezbollah, Iran, was fraught with dangers. Robert Gates, Deputy Director of the CIA at this time, has acknowledged this in his memoirs.²⁵⁰ To get over the problem of remaining tough on terrorism the Reagan administration needed to convince the American public that they were remaining true to its stated aims on terrorism. This, therefore, required a political sleight of hand and was delivered in four choreographed steps.

First, on 24 October, Reagan reminded the American public that the course of action they were taking in Lebanon was in the national interest. This was the same justification offered in 1982 where Reagan reiterated American "vital interests" requiring American Marines to be in Lebanon to prevent it falling to "hostile forces to the West."²⁵¹ Second, they then presented the terrorist attacks in Beirut as being committed by "criminals." In describing these acts as criminality, Reagan skilfully avoided any talk of responding by force to terrorism. Reagan also omitted any reference to the Soviet Union as the

246 David C. Wills, *The First War on terrorism: Counter-terrorism policy during the Reagan administration* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 63-64.

247 Ibid., 64.

248 Ibid.

249 Ibid., 65 -66.

250 Gates, *From the shadows*, 351.

251 Ronald Reagan: "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Regional Editors and Broadcasters on the Situation in Lebanon," October 24, 1983, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40678> .

hidden hand behind these attacks, enabling him to present the events as an act of lawlessness rather than terrorism:

The tragedy is coming not really from the warring forces, it is coming from little bands of individuals, literally criminal minded, who now see in the disorder that's going on an opportunity to do what they want to do. And we're going to make every effort we can to minimize the risk but also to find those responsible²⁵².

The third step was to direct the public's attention to another beleaguered nation whose democratic system was under threat. Standing alongside the Prime Minister of Dominica Eugenia Charles, as chair of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, Reagan announced that US troops would be deployed to Grenada. He described Grenada as having been taken over by "a brutal group of leftist thugs."²⁵³ The decision to invade Grenada was then presented as an act of US determination to restore the rule of law but with the added benefit that it also saved US lives.²⁵⁴ Having now delivered the aim of directing the public's attention away from Lebanon to Grenada, he then moved to the fourth step. On 27 October, in a major foreign policy speech, Reagan completed the political sleight of hand by presenting Lebanon and Grenada as being part of the same problem. He reminded the American public that the US needed to be in Lebanon and Grenada because as a nation it had "global responsibilities."²⁵⁵ Reagan argued perversely that the attack on the Marines in Beirut was proof that Marines were successful. He also justified involvement in Lebanon as being good for Middle East peace, securing Lebanese democracy and guaranteeing Israel's security. As the Reagan speech developed, the events are presented as a moral cause for America with small anecdotes:

A Lebanese mother told one of our Ambassadors that her little girl had only attended school 2 of the last 8 years. Now, because of our presence there, she said her daughter could live a normal life.²⁵⁶

252 Ibid.

253 Ronald Reagan: "Remarks of the President and Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica announcing the Deployment of United States Forces in Grenada," October 25, 1983, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=4068>.

254 Ibid.

255 Ronald Reagan: "Address to the Nation on Events in Lebanon and Grenada," October 27, 1983, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40696>.

256 Ibid.

The tone of Reagan's speech then changed, as he turned his audience away from Lebanon to Grenada. Here the narrative changed back to terrorism by a reminder that Americans were in peril in Grenada and the "nightmare of our hostages in Iran must never be repeated." In reminding Americans of the trauma of the Iranian hostage crisis the president returned to events that made his vision for American security achieve success in the 1980 elections, over President Carter. Then Reagan returned to his familiar theme of Soviet complicity:

Syria has become a home for 7,000 Soviet advisers and technicians who man a massive amount of Soviet weaponry, including SS-21 ground-to-ground missiles capable of reaching vital areas of Israel.... The events in Lebanon and Grenada, though oceans apart, are closely related. Not only has Moscow assisted and encouraged the violence in both countries, but it provides direct support through a network of surrogates and terrorists. It is no coincidence that when the thugs tried to wrest control over Grenada, there were 30 Soviet advisers and hundreds of Cuban military and paramilitary forces on the island²⁵⁷.

He then announced a successful military victory in a "brilliant campaign" describing Grenada as a "Soviet – Cuban colony." In a piece of political theatre, the president ended his speech with a heroic tale of an injured Marine in Grenada. He recounted the tale of an injured Marine who despite horrific injuries, "with more tubes going in and out of his body" still managed to scribble to his commanding officer on a piece of paper the words "Semper Fi."²⁵⁸ Semper Fidelis is the motto of the US Marine Core, meaning 'always faithful'. Reagan had done the impossible; he had transformed the narrative of disaster in Lebanon to triumph in Grenada. He had responded to terrorism by force, not in Lebanon where he would have met military challenge from backers of Hezbollah but by moving the narrative of force against terrorism to the tiny island of Grenada.

Two later developments provided further proof of a stage-managed political sleight of hand from Lebanon to Grenada. First, despite the administration accusing the Syrians and Iranians of being complicit of the attacks in Lebanon, Weinberger refused to call it an "act of war" with Shultz also joining in by damping down retaliatory rhetoric by suggesting that

²⁵⁷ Ibid.
²⁵⁸ Ibid.

“advocating public talk of retaliation should cease.”²⁵⁹ Second, three years later, Bob Woodward would claim that Eugenia Charles had been paid millions of dollars by the CIA for supporting intervention in Grenada.²⁶⁰ The President had turned the disaster of Lebanon into a triumph. As *The New York Times* noted, the president’s approval rating climbed 3% with the blame for the terrorist attacks in Beirut being put down to lax security measures.²⁶¹

Shultz’s solution – American muscle.

Shultz personified the approach that had been projected by Reagan. McCrisken has argued that “Reagan believed the reinvigorated United States was ready and willing to meet any challenge anywhere in the world, with force if necessary.”²⁶² Schultz viewed terrorism as a form of “unconventional warfare” and therefore believed a military response was needed.²⁶³ Shultz based this assessment on suggesting that terrorism was an “ugly fact of international life,” and bold action was needed if the perpetrators were to be deterred in pursuing their attacks on the US.²⁶⁴ Shultz had come to this view having consulted widely with experts such as the Rand Corporation.²⁶⁵ He argued that the approach in place when he took office was not “sufficient or effective.”²⁶⁶ He also suggested that since he believed terrorism had no legitimacy or justification, any negotiations with terrorists should be ruled out.²⁶⁷ While this approach suggested a muscular stance in response to terrorism through the use of the military, it was Shultz’s idea of “preventative or pre-emptive action” and “active defence” that broke new ground. Though Shultz would self-effacingly understate his approach in describing it as an “evolution”, it should be considered a revolution in US counterterrorism.²⁶⁸ In effect, Shultz was proposing that besides a muscular

259 Richard Halloran, “Weinberger links Syria to bombing,” *The New York Times*, November 23, 1983, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/11/23/world/weinberger-links-syria-to-bombing.html>.

260 Bob Woodward, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA 1981-1987*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 290, 300.

261 David Shribman, “Polls show support for presence of U.S. troops in Lebanon and Grenada” *The New York Times*, October 29, 1983, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/10/29/world/poll-shows-support-for-presence-of-us-troops-in-lebanon-and-grenada.html>.

262 McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism*, 105.

263 George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and triumph: My years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), 643.

264 *Ibid.*, 643.

265 *Ibid.*, 645.

266 *Ibid.*, 644.

267 *Ibid.*, 645-646.

268 *Ibid.*, 643.

stance being adopted in responding to terrorist incidents around the world, the United States should contemplate proactive measures when they suspected a state of contemplating, perpetrating, or supporting a terrorist act.

As McCrisken has argued, one of the challenges for decision makers at that time was the “enduring legacy of the Vietnam War”. Specifically, how to justify the use of force both to the purse string holders in the legislature but also to the wider American public.²⁶⁹ Reagan set the agenda in terms of restoring American pride. Shultz was aiming to convince Congress and the American public that his approach to responding to terrorism through force was right. He also wanted to reassure the public that deploying force against terrorism would not result in another Vietnam. In a series of speeches in the summer and autumn of 1984, Shultz brought this approach to the attention of the world. The most notable, making the front page of *The New York Times*, occurred on the 25 October in front of eight hundred people at the Park Avenue Synagogue in New York.²⁷⁰ In an address that argued the moral case for a robust counterterrorism response, he suggested that there should be “no moral confusion” about putting “an end to violent attacks against innocent people.”²⁷¹

Shultz was specific about how that force ought to be deployed. Acknowledging the need for improved intelligence as a prerequisite for effective counterterrorism, he sought to delineate responsibility for terrorist attacks in America versus terrorist incidents abroad. He reiterated the basic principles of the *Posse Comitatus* Act of 1878 that the military must never be deployed at home and terrorist attacks should be investigated and dealt with by “domestic law enforcement.” In the case of overseas attacks where the US did not have sovereign rights, he acknowledged that the situation needed to be dealt with by the “host government and its forces.” Shultz suggested that he envisaged a scenario where the US reserved the right to respond in cases “where international practices and rules don’t apply” with what he described as “gray areas” where the “full facts cannot be known.” Shultz did not provide examples of any recent terrorist attacks to illustrate his “gray areas” point but appeared to

269 Ibid.,104.

270 *The New York Times*, “Schultz says U.S. should use force against terrorism”, October 26, 1984,

<https://www.nytimes.com/1984/10/26/world/schultz-says-us-should-use-force-against-terrorism.html> .

271 *The New York Times*, “Excerpts from Shultz’s address on International terrorism”. October 26, 1984,

<https://www.nytimes.com/1984/10/26/world/excerpt-s-from-shultz-s-address-on-international-terrorism.html> .

be asking for the American public's support on an open-ended commitment to attack. Shultz warned his sceptics that if America did not have these counterterrorism measures in place, it would "become the hamlet of nations, worrying endlessly over whether and how to respond." In a final piece that resonated with the political theatre of making a major speech at a synagogue, he ended with a reference from the Scriptures that America needed to look after its own interest as it was the very essence of national identity, "The sage Hillel expressed it well, If I am not for myself, who will be? If I am for myself alone, who am I?"²⁷²

The immediate reaction to this major policy shift was that it caught everybody in the administration by surprise, including his own department, who suggested that the Secretary of State had been speaking "in his personal capacity".²⁷³ Reagan, who had been out campaigning for his re-election, distanced himself by stating: "We want to know, when we retaliate, that we're retaliating with those who are responsible for the terrorist acts."²⁷⁴ It was also reported that the Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs and Staff and the CIA were all "wary" of the Shultz approach against terrorists whose culpability had not been established "precisely".²⁷⁵ However, it was not the initial reaction but what Shultz described as the "battle royal" between him and the Secretary of Defense that appeared to put in motion a titanic public debate on counterterrorism response.²⁷⁶ Shultz downplayed the divisions within the Cabinet in his memoirs. He stated that Larry Speakes, the White House Press Secretary, was asked to inform the American public that this was the "administration's policy from top to bottom."²⁷⁷ This, however, did not turn out to be the case.

Weinberger was no political lightweight in having his opinions heard. Having risen through the ranks of the Republican Party, he had served as the Director of Office and Budget in the administrations of Presidents Nixon and Ford. Although not possessing the dazzling intellectual credentials of Shultz, nonetheless Reagan had admired Weinberger's abilities in managing the

272 Ibid.

273 Ibid.

274 Ibid.

275 Ibid.

276 Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 650.

277 Ibid, 649.

finances of the State of California, where Reagan had gained his gubernatorial experience. Whilst Reagan had believed that the two men would make a formidable combination, McCrisken has observed that Shultz was a “pragmatist” and Weinberger an “ideologue”, “who had a long history of disagreeing with each other.”²⁷⁸ Wills has argued that Weinberger believed that terrorism “was criminal activity – reprehensible criminal activity- but not warfare” and therefore military intervention was unnecessary in most circumstances.²⁷⁹

Weinberger’s counterproposals on the use of force were made in a speech to the National Press Club in Washington, DC on 28 November 1984. Weinberger sidestepped the issue of Shultz’s ‘gray areas’ but nonetheless offered six tests that US policy makers should consider before using force. This became known as the Weinberger Doctrine:

1. That the US should only commit to combat operations that were deemed to be “vital to the national interest” of the US or its allies.
2. That the US should only fully commit forces with the “clear intention of winning” and there should, therefore, be adequate provision made in terms of resources to achieve this goal.
3. That there should be “clearly defined” political and military objectives with clarity on plans as to how the mission objectives were to be realised
4. There needed to be flexibility to reassess and adjust the “size composition and disposition” of the forces.
5. That there needed to be public support for this course of action in terms of congressional support for the campaign.
6. This force must be considered as “a last resort.”²⁸⁰

In his memoirs, Shultz described the conditions set by Weinberger as the “Vietnam syndrome in spades”.²⁸¹ While the President had appeared initially reluctant to take sides, he soon came around to Shultz’s view, although he never stated his view either way with any conviction. In a wide-ranging interview to the *Washington Times*, Reagan appeared to equivocate between committing

278 McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism*, 91.

279 Wills, *The First War on terrorism*, 30.

280 Frontline, “The Uses of Military Power” Remarks prepared for delivery by the Hon. Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of Defense, to the National Press Club, Washington D.C. November 28, 1984, *PBS.org*, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/military/force/weinberger.html>.

281 Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 650.

himself wholeheartedly to Shultz's position while acknowledging that his Secretary of State's speech had caused "a little hoopla":²⁸²

Intelligence is the most important thing with regard to terrorism: Can you, in some way, find or get access to information that would let you know where and when operations are planned. The other thing is when it comes to if you can't intercept... you've got to be able to get some evidence.... And at the same time, you have to recognize that you don't want to just carelessly go out and maybe kill innocent people. Then you're as bad as the terrorists.....I think there what George Shultz said in his speech—that caused a little hoopla for a time—what he was saying to our people was that you must recognize that in this whole thing, if you're going to try to defend against terrorism, there are going to come some times when military action will be called for. And you need the public understanding...²⁸³

There is further evidence to suggest that the rift between Shultz and Weinberger was affecting the Reagan administration from coming to a settled position on counterterrorism. This was shown in media reports that continued to refer to "discord" and "feuds" between Shultz and Weinberger. On 11 December 1984, it was reported that Robert "Bud" McFarlane, the President's National Security Advisor, was struggling to bring the two conflicting views together. *The New York Times*, which ran the headline that there was "discord seen in all foreign policy issues" between Shultz and Weinberger, quoted unnamed administration insiders who highlighted that significant foreign policy challenges existed between both men, not least on terrorism: "It's gotten bad", said one Administration policy maker. "McFarlane cannot resolve the disputes between the two of them. No one can except the President" ... "The President's aware of it," said a senior White House official. "He continually tries to get them to work together. Reagan is a very patient guy. He likes both of them. He wants it to work. He's going to do everything he can to make it work."²⁸⁴

In the second article, this was described in *The New York Times* as a "feud" and appeared to be leading to policy application problems.²⁸⁵ The article quoted

282 Ronald Reagan: "Interview with Representatives of the Washington Times," November 27, 1984, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=39441>.

283 Ibid.

284 Hedrick Smith, "Shultz - Weinberger discord seen in nearly all foreign policy issues," *The New York Times*, December 11, 1984, <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/12/11/world/shultz-weinberger-discord-seen-in-nearly-all-foreign-policy-issues.html>

285 Philip Taubman, "The Shultz - Weinberger Feud," *The New York Times*, April 14, 1985, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/04/14/magazine/the-shultz-weinberger-feud.html>.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor, who had faced his own battles with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, suggesting that the Shultz-Weinberger debate was not in the national interest: "The public venting of disagreements through speeches is damaging to the national interest. It's like a plane with co-pilots trying to turn in different directions."²⁸⁶ The article even reported that the disagreement between Shultz and Weinberger had led Weinberger to countermand operational orders in Lebanon in 1983.²⁸⁷

The challenge of delivering a muscular response to terrorism

The debate between Shultz and Weinberger was focused on the question of deployment of force. Presidential National Security Decision Directives (NSDD) were also used to define the administration's counterterrorism approach. The first of these had been in place since 1982 under a presidential National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) about "Managing terrorist incidents".²⁸⁸ In this NSDD, the President had ordered the National Security Advisor to take the lead in bringing together a Special Situation Group, under the leadership of Vice President George H. W. Bush, to advise the President.²⁸⁹ The State Department was authorised "to coordinate the response" of the policy deliberations of this group.²⁹⁰ In a seven-page Presidential order (NSDD 138) titled "Combatting terrorism" a counterterrorism plan was put in place that followed "two phased programs", with phase one running from 3 April 1984 to 31 December 1984 and phase two commencing 1 January 1985.²⁹¹ The NSDD aims were designed to "prevent, counter and combat" terrorism.²⁹² The key measures included to "resist terrorism through legal means"; "persuading those now practicing or supporting terrorism to desist"; viewing terrorist actions as "hostile acts" which required counter measures; increased focus through

286 Ibid.

287 Ibid.

288 National Security Decision Directives Reagan Administration, "Managing Terrorist Incidents," National Security decision directive number 30, April 10, 1982, *Federation of American Scientists*, <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-30.pdf>.

289 Ibid.

290 Ibid.

291 National Security Decision Directives Reagan Administration, "Combatting terrorism," National security decision directive number 138., April 3, 1984, *Federation of American Scientists*, <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-138.pdf>.

292 Ibid.

intelligence against states suspected of perpetrating terrorism; and a public condemnation campaign “in every available forum.”²⁹³

Specific tasks that the President ordered in phase one involved the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense working “in conjunction” with the CIA and Attorney General, to “conduct improvements in US capability to conduct military operations to counter terrorism” along with “develop[ing] a military strategy that is supportive of an active, preventive program to combat state-sponsored terrorism, before terrorists can initiate hostile acts”.²⁹⁴ There were two other elements with this NSDD that focused on the role of the CIA in counterterrorism. First, it authorised the CIA to undertake enhanced intelligence collection on suspected terrorists. Second, it directed the CIA to create a “clandestine service capability using all lawful means” to counter the threat from terrorists.²⁹⁵ Whilst these measures suggested that Reagan had a firm grasp of counterterrorism, the lack of settled policy on force application appears to have created a capability gap between policy making and the implementation of an effective counterterrorism programme, as was evidenced in the response to two particular incidents of terrorism in 1985, both targeted at civilians.

On 14 June 1985, Hezbollah, a Shiite militant group based in Lebanon, hijacked TWA flight 847 traveling from Athens on route to Rome and New York. Of the one hundred and forty-five passengers and eight crew, all bar sixteen were US citizens. Having rerouted the plane to Beirut International Airport, the hijackers demanded the release of seven hundred and sixty-six people being held by the Israelis and a further seventeen being held for terrorism in Kuwait. These Palestinians had been taken prisoner from the Lebanese invasion and they were being held in an Israeli prison. This was in breach of the Fourth Geneva convention which prohibits the transfer of non-combatants to the territory of the occupying power.²⁹⁶ This incident has been argued by Cannon as a “residue of the war” of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and failure by the US marines to protect Palestinians.²⁹⁷ There is also the suggestion that the motive behind the hijack was the attempted assassination on 8 March, 1985 of Sheikh Fadlallah,

293 Ibid.

294 Ibid.

295 Ibid.

296 Cannon, *President Reagan*, 605.

297 Ibid.

the spiritual leader of Hezbollah , allegedly by American and British intelligence.²⁹⁸

The negotiations dragged on for days as the hijackers moved the aircraft around cities in southern Europe and North Africa, posing a challenge for negotiators. The plane traversed a number of sovereign jurisdictions including Greece, Algeria, and Lebanon. Each of these governments had their own hostage resolution strategies. Also, some looked more favourably on the Palestinian cause (Lebanon and Algeria) whereas others were keen not to enrage the Palestinians and to bring terrorism to their shores (Greece). In this confused state of affairs, before the plane had returned to Beirut for the second time some of the hijackers had wanted to get through to the Shiite Amal militia, one of the powerful factions supportive of the Palestinian cause in Lebanon. However, this had been delayed. The hijackers, in their frustration and eagerness to prove that they were serious, targeted US Navy Diver Robert Stethem who was on the plane. Stethem was badly beaten, murdered and his body dumped on the tarmac of Beirut airport on 15 June 1985.²⁹⁹ The hijackers got their wish and with the Amal militia leader Nabih Berri, the Reagan crisis team got their first break in a situation that looked like spiralling out of control. Berri was known to the Americans through Bud McFarlane when Berri had briefly worked as a lawyer in Washington D.C.³⁰⁰

The crisis team developed plans for an armed intervention by storming the plane. They were however stymied by events that made an armed intervention politically risky. First, a letter from the hostages to the president, warning him not to take direct action to secure their release.³⁰¹ Then, despite there now being thirty-two American nationals remaining on board out of the original one hundred and fifty-three crew and passengers, polling indicated that the American public wanted a peaceful resolution to the hijacking.³⁰² The situation was further complicated by seven American passengers who had been taken off the plane earlier and were being held in a location near Beirut. Any attempt to

298 Wills, *The First War on terrorism*, 91.

299 William Robbins, "T.W.A. pilot tells how diver died," *The New York Times*, July 5, 1985, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/07/05/us/twa-pilot-tells-how-diver-died.html>.

300 Cannon, *President Reagan*, 607.

301 Associated Press, "Hijacking of Flight 847: The choice for Israel; Hostages letter to Reagan," *The New York Times*, June 17, 1985, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/06/17/world/hijacking-of-flight-847-the-choice-for-israel-hostages-letter-to-reagan.html>.

302 Wills, *The First War on terrorism*, 111.

release the passengers on the plane by force would risk the lives of these seven passengers, as the president himself later acknowledged.³⁰³ On the 20 June, the day Reagan had scheduled a meeting with his crisis team, the media printed an interview with Captain John Testrake, the pilot of the aircraft, in which he said that any armed rescue attempt would be “futile.”³⁰⁴ Despite these developments, the president continued to strike a belligerent tone ruling out negotiations either by America or its allies:

Let me further make it plain to the assassins in Beirut and their accomplices, wherever they may be, that America will never make concessions to terrorists—to do so would only invite more terrorism—nor will we ask nor pressure any other government to do so.³⁰⁵

Privately, a plan was put in place authorising back channel negotiations.³⁰⁶ Though the public had no knowledge of these negotiations, Cannon has suggested that evidence of attempting to strike a deal “mock[ed] Reagan’s vow of taking swift and effective retribution against terrorism³⁰⁷. It has also been claimed that what was agreed at this meeting was never put into writing at the suggestion of McFarlane, in case the administration was accused of “brokering a deal” with terrorists.³⁰⁸

The negotiations that were implemented resulted in the release of hostages. During these negotiations, McFarlane had requested for Berri's personal assurance that the hostages would be released unharmed.³⁰⁹ Then, in a series of choreographed moves, the Israeli Defence Minister Rabin appeared on a US talk show and offered to release the Lebanese prisoners “if the United States formally requested such an action.”³¹⁰ The meeting also agreed to open lines of communication through Algeria and Syria to the hijackers, though there would be public denial of any such involvement.³¹¹ Despite these background negotiations, the Reagan administration continued officially support the view that acts of terrorism would be dealt with by a military response. Also, to

303 Ronald Reagan, *An American Life*, (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1990) 497-498.

304 Ihsan A. Hijazi “U.S. raid would doom hostages, T.W.A. pilot warns in interview,” *The New York Times*, June 20, 1985, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/06/20/world/us-raid-would-doom-hostages-twa-pilot-warns-in-interview.html>.

305 Ronald Reagan: "The President's News Conference," June 18, 1985, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38789>.

306 Wills, *The First War on terrorism*, 113.

307 Cannon, *President Reagan*, 605.

308 Wills, *The First War on terrorism*, 114.

309 Cannon, *President Reagan*, 607.

310 Wills, *The First War on terrorism*, 113.

311 *Ibid.*, 115-116.

convince the American public that terrorism was receiving the highest White House attention, on the same day as Reagan's meeting, a statement was put out announcing a commission on terrorism under Vice President Bush along with a narrative of responding to acts of terrorism by force.³¹²

The hostages were released on 30 June 1985. Prior to that, Israel released the prisoners they had taken in Lebanon and who were being held in Israeli jails. The seventeen-day ordeal of the hostages had shown the shortcomings of a solution that sounded robust on terrorism but could not be implemented in practice. Diplomacy rather than military force had seen the loss of life limited to one. Cannon would describe this TWA hijack as a "political success" for the hostage takers and conclude that Reagan's counterterrorism policy "was a failure, for which there would many reminders."³¹³ It was also the first of the many terrorism incidents during the Reagan administration where the reality of peaceful resolution would be eclipsed by the bellicose rhetoric of threatening a muscular response to terrorism.

In the aftermath of this hostage crisis, incidents of terrorism continued to increase with attacks on American soldiers in El Salvador, the simultaneous bombing attempts on two Air India Flights on 23 June 1985, one of which succeeded and resulted with a horrific explosion over the Atlantic with the loss of three hundred and twenty lives. The day after the end of the hostage crisis the media carried harrowing accounts of interviews with the hostages.³¹⁴ Throughout the first week of July more accounts continued to appear.³¹⁵ The public were looking for reassurance and answers. By the time the president stood in front of the American Bar Association on 8 July, he had to respond to those concerns.³¹⁶

Terrorism was the predominant theme of Reagan's speech. It was a major development in the administration's counterterrorism narrative as, for the first time since taking office, the president did not ascribe all acts of terrorism to the

312 Ronald Reagan: "Statement Announcing Actions Against Terrorism," June 20, 1985. *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38800>.

313 Cannon, *President Reagan*, 608.

314 *The New York Times*, "Out of captivity; Sketches of American hostages from hijacked T.W.A. plane, The New York Times, July 1, 1985, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/07/01/world/out-of-captivity-sketches-of-american-hostages-from-hijacked-twa-plane.html>.

315 Jane Gross, "The hijacking aftermath; 3 on T.W.A. crew describe their 17-day ordeal in the hijacking by Shiites" *The New York Times*, July 4, 1985, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/07/04/us/hijacking-aftermath-3-twa-crew-describe-their-17-day-ordeal-hijacking-shiites.html>.

316 Ronald Reagan: "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the American Bar Association," July 8, 1985, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38854>.

Soviet Union. Instead, he identified a further five states that he accused of supporting or sponsoring terrorism: Iran, Libya, North Korea, Cuba and Nicaragua.³¹⁷ He continued to assert the Soviet Union's association in terrorist attacks by suggesting that Moscow maintained "a close relationship with all these states." Reagan described these five countries as "outlaw states", in a curious turn of phrase, which aimed to "expel America from the world." In defining US actions against these states, the president described acts by these countries as posing a "criminal menace" but called for a "domestic and legal" framework to tackle terrorism.³¹⁸

This speech was notable for three major evolutions in Reagan's counterterrorism narrative. First, Reagan broadened the focus on terrorism to beyond the Soviet Union. Second, the president equated these states as an "internationally orchestrated syndicate of criminals."³¹⁹ Third, this was the speech that appeared to break with Shultz's idea of retaliating to terrorism through force. This also has implications for this thesis. Critics of Clinton would claim in 2002 that Clinton chose to deal with terrorists through a "legalistic approach".³²⁰ This was presented as a divergence from past policies of earlier American administrations. As Reagan's speech to the American Bar Association shows, the president describes the perpetrators as "criminals". Moreover, he reaffirms fighting these alleged terrorists by trying them through the legal process:

You have a fundamental concern for the law, and it's upon the law that terrorists trample. You need to address this problem in conferences and conventions that will lead us to a better domestic and international legal framework for dealing with terrorism. You must help this government and others to deal legally with lawlessness. Where legislation must be crafted to allow appropriate authorities to act, you should help to craft or change it.³²¹

For Reagan, the idea of combating terrorism through force was not yet a spent idea. The next terrorist incident would nevertheless prove that yet again when it came to deal with the realities of implementing a solution, a call to arms was not the answer. On 7 October 1985, the Italian flagged cruise ship *Achille Lauro*

317 Ibid.

318 Ibid.

319 Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, 86.

320 Gertz, *Breakdown*, 19.

321 Ronald Reagan: "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the American Bar Association," July 8, 1985.

was on day four of its eleven-day cruise around Italy, the Eastern Mediterranean and Red Sea ports. Seven hundred and forty-eight passengers were on board, including US citizens amongst whom was Marilyn and Leon Klinghoffer. Leon Klinghoffer, a small engineering firm owner, partially paralysed after two strokes, had chosen the *Achille Lauro* because of its disabled facilities.³²² The ship was owned by the Italian government and this was to be significant in the days that followed.³²³ During the cruise on one of its port stops around the Mediterranean, on 7 October 1985 heavily armed men captured the ship, taking its passengers hostage, and demanding the release of fifty Palestinians being held in Israel.³²⁴ On 8 October, the hijacker's ultimatum of demanding the release of Palestinians not having been met, Klinghoffer was shot, and his body dumped overboard. The president, on a school visit in Chicago, expressed his "frustration" but no further details emerged. The challenge yet again to find a solution was an inter-jurisdictional maze of many countries including Egypt where the ship had headed and Italy, the owners of the ship³²⁵.

Shultz faced two foreign policy challenges as he took charge of the situation.³²⁶ First, though the identity of the armed group that hijacked the ship was established as Abu Abbas, a suspected Palestinian terrorist, any attack on the PLO would jeopardise the peace process discussions with Yasser Arafat, the leader of the PLO.³²⁷ Second, any attempt at a negotiated settlement would go against the administration's policy of negotiating with terrorists.³²⁸

The events that followed brought home the challenges in adopting a muscular response to terrorism. Shultz's memoirs suggest that despite requesting Weinberger to ask the *Seventh Fleet* to intercept the *Achille Lauro*, he did not receive a positive reply.³²⁹ Two days after the death of Klinghoffer the Egyptian government would end the hostage crisis by striking a deal with

322 Ralph Blumenthal, "Hijacking at sea; The Achille Lauro; Over half a century, a series of crisis and mishaps" *The New York Times*, October 9, 1985, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/10/09/world/hijacking-sea-achille-lauro-over-half-century-series-crises-mishaps.html> .

323 Ibid.

324 John Tagliabue, "Ship carrying 400 seized; Hijackers demand release of 50 Palestinians in Israel" *The New York Times*, October 8, 1985, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/10/08/world/ship-carrying-400-seized-hijackers-demand-release-of-50-palestinians-in-israel.html> .

325 Ronald Reagan: "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Students and Faculty at Gordon Technical High School in Chicago, Illinois," October 10, 1985, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=37893> .

326 Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 669.

327 Wills, *The First War on terrorism*, 146.

328 Ibid.

329 Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 669.

the hostage takers, with no preconditions.³³⁰ Shultz claims in his memoirs that the Egyptians struck a deal to give the hijackers safe conduct by providing a charter jet to Tunis when the ship had docked at Cairo.³³¹ Nevertheless, in an audacious show of force, Reagan, with Shultz in attendance, ordered US fighter jets to force the charter plane to land in Italy. The president marked this action with language reminiscent of his Hollywood days, warning all those considering acts of terrorism against Americans, “you can run, but you can't hide.”³³²

Shultz claimed in his memoirs that it was he who had suggested to the president to follow through on this course of action and that Weinberger had conceded by allowing the US navy ship to deploy aircraft to force this plane to land³³³. However, just when it appeared that the US would finally be able to carry through on its promise of muscular response to terrorism, it met a problem. As the plane carrying the hijackers landed, it was at once surrounded by US Delta force and then in a bizarre turn of events the US forces found themselves surrounded by the Italian armed carabinieri. Though this would be resolved after heated exchanges between Rome and Washington, the hijackers would end up being taken by the Italians.

In the aftermath, the narrative of this audacious act of muscular response to terrorism would be challenged in an article in *The New York Times*.³³⁴ The article would controversially claim that it had all been orchestrated between the US, Italy and Egypt.³³⁵ The Italians stated that Egypt had supplied the coordinates of the flight to the US to allow the interception to take place.³³⁶ In a further twist, two differing narratives would appear in the media. The Italians presented these events as a triumph of Italian diplomacy in persuading the alleged terrorists to stand trial in Italy and securing a peaceful resolution to the crisis.³³⁷ Shultz viewed the situation pragmatically by arguing that the hijackers would at least

330 Christopher Dickey and Jeffrey Barthelet, “Pirates surrender ship,” *The Washington Post*, October 10, 1985, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1985/10/10/pirates-surrender-ship/60277123-de2c-4c9d-923f-bf445997777e/?utm_term=.ee471e10cb5a .

331 Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 673.

332 Times Wire service, “You Can Run but Not Hide, Reagan Warns Terrorists: Calls Case for Action ‘Clear Cut,’” *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 1985, http://articles.latimes.com/1985-10-11/news/mn-17021_1_clear-cut-case .

333 Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 674.

334 John Tagliabue, “Capture of hijackers; Italian officials say movement of the hijackers came after a wide accord,” *The New York Times*, October 11, 1985, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/10/11/world/capture-hijackers-italian-officials-say-movement-hijackers-came-after-wide.html> .

335 Ibid.

336 Ibid.

337 Ibid.

stand trial in Italy.³³⁸ A further complication arrived when President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt accused the US of piracy in forcing down their aircraft.³³⁹ This was met with an equally robust response from the president refusing to apologise to the Egyptian government for forcing the Egyptian jet to the ground.

³⁴⁰ A final footnote in this less than successful demonstration of force against terrorism was a report in the *Los Angeles Times* alleging that a radio ham operator had picked up on a conversation between Weinberger and the President that claimed that Weinberger had been overheard “oppos[ing] Reagan's order to force the plane to land.”³⁴¹

Though many of the counter claims for the end to the hijacking of the *Achille Lauro* could be debated between the differing accounts by Americans and Italians, the inescapable conclusion still is that Shultz had failed to convincingly prove the potency of force in resolving terrorist incidents. The two hijackings had shown the difficulties in deploying force against terrorists outside the US. One important legacy from the crisis was having to approach the Iranians. That set in motion a chain of events involving the CIA, the White House and Tehran that would lead to the greatest crisis of credibility on Reagan’s counterterrorism legacy, the so-called ‘Iran-Contra’ affair.³⁴² As this chapter discovers below, once revelations of this covert deal became known, the administration’s credibility of not negotiating with terrorists would be fatally undermined and would become one of the biggest foreign policy crisis of the Reagan presidency.

Qaddafi – The Piñata villain

Following the president’s American Bar association speech, Libya had been put on notice that it was now in the Reagan administration’s crosshairs for supporting acts of terrorism. Though Iran and Syria were named by the administration as sponsors of earlier attacks in Beirut, from the CIA’s perspective there were risks associated with targeting both those countries militarily. As Robert Gates, who was Reagan’s Deputy Director of the CIA

338 Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 675.

339 Rudy Abramson, “No apology for capture, Reagan says: ““Never,”” He replies on regrets over forcing down jet”, *Los Angeles Times*, October 16, 1985, http://articles.latimes.com/1985-10-16/news/mn-15013_1_air-force .

340 Ibid.

341 Ibid.

342 Cannon, *President Reagan*, 613.

acknowledges, Iran was categorised as “too hard” and attacking Syria would risk confrontation with the Soviet Union.³⁴³ Also, the Syrians were judged to have “the most effective military.”³⁴⁴ Given that Iran and Syria were put in the too difficult to handle box, the choice of Libya to target for counterterrorism attention came about as a process of “elimination” along with the belief that they were in the “poorest position” to retaliate.³⁴⁵ Moreover as Gates recalls the “Reagan administration had wanted Qaddafi’s hide”.³⁴⁶ In short, Qaddafi would become the piñata with which the administration wanted to establish their counterterrorism credentials of being tough against terrorism.

Muammar Qaddafi seized power in a coup in 1969 and proceeded to turn Libya into a Socialist State. With revenues derived from crude oil, Qaddafi had tried to project Libya as a major player in pan Arab politics. His ideological position combined elements of Socialism, Populism and moderate Islam which he combined to describe as a “third way” through his writings in his “Green book.”³⁴⁷ Qaddafi’s ambitions can be summarised in this pithy epithet that appeared as part of his obituary:

He wanted his people to see him as the great champion not only of Libya, but of the whole Arab world, with him at the helm of a great march against western imperialism.³⁴⁸

It was claimed in 1982 that Qaddafi was suspected of being a “supporter” of radical Palestinian causes and a group of terrorists known as ‘Terrorist International’.³⁴⁹ Terrorist International was a loose affiliation of Europe based terrorist organisations including the IRA and the Basque separatist group ETA.³⁵⁰ Libya’s foreign policy was determined by what Qaddafi wanted.³⁵¹ Qaddafi supported external terrorist organisations through arms and money and carried out terrorist acts using his intelligence services.³⁵² Reagan saw him as being close to the Soviet Union:

343 Gates, *From the shadows*, 35.

344 Ibid.

345 Ibid., 351-352.

346 Ibid., 352.

347 Muammar al Qaddafi, *The Green Book: The Solution to the Problem of Democracy, The solution to the Economic problem, The social basis of the third universal theory*, (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2005).

348 Daniel Kawczynski, “Muammar Gaddafi’s cult of personality has finally crumbled,” *The Guardian*, February 23, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/feb/23/muammar-gaddafi-cult-personality> .

349 Ibid., 9.

350 Ibid.

351 Geoff Simmons, *Libya: the struggle for survival*, (Basingstoke, Hants: Macmillan Press, 1993) 263 -264.

352 Ibid., 265.

Drawing upon the \$10 billion worth of Soviet military equipment and munitions now in Libya, Colonel Qadhafi has been using Soviet-built fighter bombers, T55 tanks, and artillery in a blatant attempt to destroy a legitimate government.³⁵³

In Reagan's Bar Association speech where he called out Libya as a state sponsor of terrorism, the President had claimed Libya was "deeply involved in terrorism" and was even "exporting" terrorism.³⁵⁴ At the time of Reagan's speech, plans and covert missions had been underway for some five years, all designed to topple Qaddafi.³⁵⁵

Terrorist acts allegedly by Libya hastened Reagan's efforts to bring down Qaddafi. The first of these attacks was on 27 December 1985. In an attack later discovered to have been carried out by radical Palestinian group Abu Nidal, grenades and submachine gun fire were directed at passengers waiting to board *El Al* flights (national carrier of Israel) at Rome and Vienna airports, killing thirteen people including four Americans and injuring over one hundred and thirteen people.³⁵⁶ Libyan culpability was established when the CIA had discovered a transfer of \$1m to the Abu Nidal organisation "some years earlier".³⁵⁷ However, the decision to immediately strike back against Libya was postponed, fearing that any action could inadvertently injure the fifteen hundred Soviet advisors in the country.³⁵⁸ The President instead responded with economic sanctions. Sanctions however proved to be counterproductive as it impacted upon US and British companies operating in Libya.³⁵⁹ Eight days after the attack, the president blamed Qaddafi directly:

These murderers could not carry out their crimes without the sanctuary and support provided by regimes such as Colonel Qaddafi's in Libya. Qaddafi's longstanding involvement in terrorism is well documented, and there's irrefutable evidence of his role in these attacks. The Rome and Vienna murders

353 Ronald Reagan: "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the American Legion in Seattle, Washington," August 23, 1983, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41747>.

354 Ibid.

355 Simmons, *Libya*, 331.

356 John Tagliabue, "Airport terrorists kill 13 and wound 113 at Israeli counters in Rome and Vienna," *The New York Times*, December 28, 1985, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/12/28/world/airport-terrorists-kill-13-and-wound-113-at-israeli-counters-in-rome-and-vienna.html>.

357 Simmons, *Libya*, 331.

358 Ibid.

359 Wills, *The First War on terrorism*, 186.

are only the latest in a series of brutal terrorist acts committed with Qaddafi's backing.³⁶⁰

The events leading to a military strike against Libya built steadily but inexorably. The evidence shows the decision to respond militarily to terrorism evolved over a brief time period. The build-up to the attack on Libya had seen ominous developments. On 6 March, the Vice President's Task Force on US counterterrorism policy released its report with George H. W. Bush appearing to shift ground by stating that a military response if delivered "surgically" would be acceptable.³⁶¹ Bush added a qualifier to this statement, suggesting that force must be used judiciously to demonstrate the willingness to retaliate, but not to "wantonly destroy human life".³⁶² Then on 24 March, US aircraft flying over the Gulf of Sidra off the coast of Libya were targeted by Libyan anti-aircraft missiles and in response the US aircraft sank two Libyan patrol boats. Next, on 5 April, Libya responded by launching a terrorist attack on the US military. In the early hours of that day, the *La Belle Club* in West Berlin was bombed with a two-kilogram explosive. The attack on the club, which was frequented by off duty US military personnel, killed two people, an off-duty US serviceman and a Turkish woman along with injuring over two hundred and twenty people. A third person, another US serviceman, was to die later in hospital. The day after, reports appeared accusing Libyan terrorists as suspects.³⁶³ Some years later it would emerge in files abandoned by the 'Stasi', the East German Intelligence Service, that the US had intercepted messages from Libya to agents in Europe regarding this attack.³⁶⁴ It was also claimed that intercepted messages between Tripoli and Libyan agents in Europe "made it clear that Colonel Gaddafi was the brains behind the attack."³⁶⁵ In his memoirs, Robert Gates adds an interesting rejoinder that Shultz pressurised the CIA to release to the media intercepts confirming that nine further attacks were also being planned against the US.³⁶⁶

360 Ronald Reagan: "The President's News Conference.," January 7, 1986, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=36812>.

361 *The New York Times*, "Bush issuing terror report, affirms current US policy" March 7th, 1985. <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/03/07/world/bush-issuing-terror-report-affirms-current-us-policies.html>.

362 Ibid.

363 John Tagliabue, "2 killed, 155 hurt in bomb explosion at club in Berlin" *The New York Times*, April 6, 1986, <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/04/06/world/2-killed-155-hurt-in-bomb-explosion-at-club-in-berlin.html>.

364 Nathalie Malinarich, "Flashback: The Berlin Disco bombing", *BBC News*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1653848.stm>.

365 Ibid.

366 Gates, *From the shadows*, 353.

Ten days after the bombing on 14 April, the US struck back. F-11 fighters were deployed in bombing missions from UK bases to targets in Libya including an attempt on Col Qaddafi's home. Though it missed Qaddafi, the attack killed his adopted two-year-old daughter and wounded two of his sons. Several civilians were also killed. The US raids were widely criticised internationally, including by NATO ally France, with the French President Francois Mitterrand, saying: "I don't believe you stop terrorism by killing 150 Libyans who have done nothing."³⁶⁷ The response from Reagan was unapologetic, "I warned that there should be no place on earth where terrorists can rest and train and practice their deadly skills. ...I meant it."³⁶⁸ Shultz in his memoirs suggested, "I felt that our war against terrorism and the policy that it was taking shape in an effective way... Most importantly, we had shown that we possessed the will to take military action against a state directly supporting terrorism."³⁶⁹ Reagan's action proved popular at home.³⁷⁰ The Republican Senate echoed this sentiment, when Senate majority leader Robert Dole stated:

I just believe the President did what the American people would have wanted him to do, a proportionate response when there was no doubt about Libyan fingerprints on the Berlin bombing.³⁷¹

But that is not the end of this story. An investigation by Seymour Hersh in *The New York Times* would raise some disturbing questions in 1987.³⁷² At the time of this report, Hersh was already well established in the US as a major investigative journalist who had unearthed a number of military misadventures including the infamous *Mai Lai* massacre in Vietnam. Hersh raised a number of issues on this military response by Reagan. The most disturbing was that this was not an attack on the state of Libya but an attempt to eliminate Qaddafi which had been in planning for five years.³⁷³ President Gerald Ford's Executive order 11905 of 1976, strengthened significantly by President Carter's Executive order 12036 in 1978, had banned political assassinations by the intelligence services.

367 Cannon, *President Reagan*, 654.

368 Bernard Weinraub, "U.S. jets hit terrorists centers' in Libya; Reagan warns of New attacks if needed" *The New York Times*, April 15, 1986. <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/04/15/politics/15REAG.html?pagewanted=all> .

369 Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 688.

370 Cannon, *President Reagan*, 654.

371 Michael White, US jets bomb Tripoli "from British bases," *The Guardian*, April 15, 1986, <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2011/apr/15/archive-us-jets-bomb-tripoli-1986> .

372 Seymour Hersh, Target Qaddafi, February 22nd, 1987, *The New York Times*, February 22, 1987, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/02/22/magazine/target-qaddafi.html> .

373 Ibid.

Hersh had described this attempt to use the US military as an “assassination attempt” which he discovered had been planned by the CIA and was developed by a secret group which included John Poindexter, Reagan’s National Security Advisor and Colonel Oliver North, the National Security Council’s Deputy Director of political and military affairs.³⁷⁴ Though Hersh’s account appeared nearly a year after the strike, the apparent illegality of an attempted assassination by a political leader was not lost amidst the storm brewing over the revelations of the ‘Iran – Contra’ affair.

The action against Qaddafi was a clear attempt to remove the Libyan leader from power. Terrorism had been used as a pretext to drive foreign policy aims – something that would be tried ten years later by George W. Bush in invading Iraq. Hersh’s article appeared to suggest that having ducked the opportunity to carry through on their promise to respond with force against terrorism, the Reagan administration had engaged in underhand means to portray Qaddafi as a terrorist and then use the US armed forces to attempt an extra judicial killing against another head of state. Qaddafi, having chosen to project himself as a military strongman, was a piñata for the Reagan administration. Reagan’s personal popularity increased as a result of this raid, reaching an all-time high.³⁷⁵ Qaddafi’s own personal position remained strong and regime change never materialised. Despite their suffering, neither the Libyan people, nor the Libyan military, would rise up against Qaddafi.³⁷⁶

The Nadir of Reagan’s Counterterrorism

The two years following the events in Libya proved to be the nadir of Reagan’s counterterrorism legacy. The first of these events, the “Iran-Contra Affair”, would seriously undermine the President’s political authority and would suggest that much of his aggressive rhetoric was more about style than substance. The events leading to this scandal began in the early days of the Reagan presidency. William Buckley, a CIA agent, had been captured in early 1984 by the Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah in Beirut, two groups supported by the newly established

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Cannon, *President Reagan*, 654.

³⁷⁶ Simmons, *Libya*, 337.

Islamic theocratic regime in Iran. Buckley was a senior CIA operative with extensive knowledge of US covert operations in the Middle East and the White House was keen to secure his release. The seemingly unconnected other leg to what would become a complex plan to secure hostage releases in the Middle East was the ideological desire by the Reagan administration to overthrow the elected left-wing Sandinista government in Nicaragua by supporting a number of right wing rebel groups collectively known as the Contras. John Poindexter, who was Deputy and then full National Security Advisor to Reagan, hatched a plan with ambitious Marine Colonel and Deputy Director for Political and Military Affairs, Oliver North at the NSC, to covertly sell missiles to moderate factions in Iran in the hope of securing the release of Buckley and other hostages, as well as undermining the theocratic leadership in Iran. Additionally, the payments from the weapons sale could be diverted to fund the Contras. Buckley's release and the foreign policy imperative of preventing the Iranians from falling into the Soviet sphere of influence drove this decision, despite Tehran's alleged links with terrorism. This had been part of MacFarlane's initiative in 1985 with a hope of bringing Iran inside. But, as with many Reagan foreign policy initiatives, this too had failed to garner support, this time from both Shultz and Weinberger.³⁷⁷ Reagan had wanted to rid himself of the lingering memories of hostages right from the start of his Presidency, as he felt that this could imperil his Presidency just like it had for Carter:

No problem was more frustrating for me when I was President than trying to get American hostages' home. It was a problem I shared with Jimmy Carter, a problem that confronted me when I entered the White House and that was with me when I left.³⁷⁸

When the plan on Iran arms for hostages unravelled, it did so in a swift and spectacular way. Details of the weapons sales were leaked to a Lebanese newspaper and the story broke to great consternation in the United States which increased as details of the link to the Contras also emerged. The events that followed have been described by one author as "a purposeful effort to deceive the American Congress."³⁷⁹ The later investigations by the Tower Commission

³⁷⁷ Caspar W. Weinberger, *Fighting for peace: Seven critical years in the Pentagon*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1990), 255.

³⁷⁸ Reagan, *An American Life*, 490.

³⁷⁹ Robert Busby, *Reagan and the Iran Contra Affair: the politics of presidential recovery*, (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1990), 65.

revealed serious evidence of misleading Congress over counterterrorism activity. The fallout resulted with Poindexter's resignation, North being fired, and both being convicted. Reagan sought damage limitation but, with no opportunity to deflect the issue, there followed greater media and public scrutiny of the President's foreign policy. In late 1987, *The New York Times* reported that the congressional investigation regarded Reagan's foreign policy being run by a "cabal of zealots."³⁸⁰ Wills has concluded that the revelations from the Iran-Contra affair meant that Reagan's counterterrorism credibility was damaged greatly, and the president's "bully pulpit" terrorism rhetoric was left in tatters after he had declared "don't negotiate with terrorists" and then his administration, whether he was aware of it or not, sent arms to Iran and funds to the Contras.³⁸¹

The second of these incidents would turn out to be the horrific coda to Reagan's counterterrorism legacy: an US commercial airliner Pan Am 103 being blown out of the sky just before Christmas. The incident seemed to confirm that muscular responses to terrorism would not deter terrorism since the investigations, which dragged on for months, would eventually find Libyan agents had been responsible for the attack. Moreover, it also appeared, as *The New York Times* would claim, that on this occasion US intelligence had failed to pass on to the outgoing Reagan administration evidence of an imminent threat to Pan Am flights, though it believed it better not to issue the warning for fear that it "could paralyse the air industry".³⁸² Ray Salazar, Director of Aviation Security at the Federal Aviation Administration, even tried to suggest if the terrorist threat became "public knowledge, then people could circumvent the security measures." Moreover, he expected Americans to take him at face value when he tried to reassure them by suggesting that "We have a process that works."³⁸³ Reagan urged his successor, George H. W. Bush, to maintain his strategy of a muscular response to this terrorist attack:

Indeed, President-elect Bush knows as thoroughly as anyone in the world today the nature and problem of terrorism. As chairman of this

380 David E. Rosenbaum, Iran Contra report says President bears 'Ultimate responsibility' for wrongdoing; 'cabal of zealots', *The New York Times*, November 19, 1987. <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/19/world/iran-contra-report-says-president-bears-ultimate-responsibility-for-wrongdoing.html>.

381 Wills, *The First War on terrorism*, 136.

382 John H. Cushman, Jr, "The crash of Flight 103; Pan Am was told of terror threat," *The New York Times*, December 23, 1988. <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/12/23/world/the-crash-of-flight-103-pan-am-was-told-of-terror-threat.html>.

383 Ibid.

administration's task force on terrorism he oversaw a report that is the toughest statement to date on the need for strong action—including, when warranted, military action—against terrorists. That report ought to be giving some people sleepless nights right about now.³⁸⁴

President George H.W. Bush and Terrorism.

George Herbert Walker Bush became the forty-first President of the United States in January 1989. Bush came to the Presidency with more foreign policy experience than Reagan, having been Director of the CIA from 1976 to 1977 in the Ford Administration and then as Reagan's Vice President, a role he had served faithfully for eight years and had been involved in the debates on terrorism during the early days of Shultz. At the time of Shultz's speech Bush is reported to have said, "we are not going to go out and bomb innocent civilians or something of that nature. I don't think we ever get to the point where you kill 100 innocent women and children just to kill one terrorist."³⁸⁵ However, in February 1986, as chairman of the Vice President's task force on combating terrorism, Bush changed direction in an interview with *The New York Times*, following the publication of his task force's report. "The consensus of his task force was that retaliation was at times warranted, but only in specific cases...I think our consensus would be retaliation where it could be surgically done." Bush went onto add that "the panel would not approve of wanton destruction of human life in order to show some muscle and show some retaliation."³⁸⁶

In office the Bush did not continue arguing for 'war model' against terrorism. Two speeches signalled a change away from using military force against terrorism. The first on 22 November 1988 by Paul Bremmer, the State Department's Ambassador on counterterrorism, argued that the counterterrorism effort would be focused on intelligence gathering to be able to mount successful prosecutions against suspected terrorists.³⁸⁷ Bremmer also

384 Ronald Reagan: "Radio Address to the Nation on New Year's Eve," December 31, 1988, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=35305>.

385 Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 648.

386 *The New York Times* "Bush issuing terror report, affirms US policies", Mar 7, 1986, <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/03/07/world/bush-issuing-terror-report-affirms-current-us-policies.html>.

387 Paul Bremmer, "Countering terrorism in the 1980's and 1990's: Address before the George Washington University Conference on Terrorism, November 22nd, 1988," in *Evolution of US counterterrorism policy*, Vol 1, ed. Yonah Alexander and Michael B. Kraft (Westport CT, Praeger Security International, 1988) 182 – 188

outlined that the response to terrorism would be delivered through a combination of political cooperation with allies to bring diplomatic pressure against countries suspected of sponsoring terrorism and through economic sanctions.³⁸⁸ The second, on 24 October 1989 by Morris Busby the State Department's Coordinator for counterterrorism clarified this approach further by arguing that though the Bush counterterrorism policy was maintaining its coercive stance it would not contemplate adopting the 'war model' that had been argued by Shultz. ³⁸⁹ In this speech, Busby described terrorists as "criminals" to be dealt by "imposing the rule of law.... for their criminal actions."³⁹⁰ This was a change from Shultz's argument of terrorists as soldiers involved in illegitimate military actions.³⁹¹ Busby reiterated the same approach as Bremmer by stating that "pressure" would be brought against countries suspected of sponsoring or harbouring terrorists.³⁹² Cooperation between allies to share information would be used to prosecute terrorists. Busby argued that counterterrorism should be viewed as "police work" with law enforcement agencies deployed to deal with terrorism:

Good police work is catching terrorists the United States now has on the books a law which enables our law enforcement agencies to better combat terrorism.³⁹³

Bush did not have to deal with any major terrorist attack during his time in office. Despite this the Bush administration remained vigilant about the prospect of terrorism in the build-up to the First Gulf War. In a speech at the Coast Guard Academy in 1989 Bush acknowledged that terrorism was a security challenge, along with "armed insurgencies" and "narcotics traffickers" and argued that the country needed to be "prudent and cautious" in its readiness to deal with these threats.³⁹⁴ The threat of terrorism however became a more urgent challenge in the build-up to the First Gulf War, when in September 1990 he warned Saddam Hussein "that Iraqi support for terrorism would indeed have

388 Ibid.

389 Morris D. Busby, "U.S. counterterrorism policy in the 1980s and the priorities for the 1990s", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 13:1, (Jan – Feb 1990) 7-13.

390 Ibid.

391 Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 645-646.

392 Morris D. Busby, "U.S. counterterrorism policy in the 1980s and the priorities for the 1990s".

393 Ibid.

394 George Bush: "Remarks at the United States Coast Guard Academy Commencement Ceremony in New London, Connecticut," May 24, 1989, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17057>.

serious consequences.”³⁹⁵ In 1991, Bush would define his foreign policy as heralding a “historic period of cooperation” between countries, that would enable the US and its allies to bring about a “new world order.”³⁹⁶ For Bush, foreign policy challenges could be resolved through cooperation:

Freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace. An era in which nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony.³⁹⁷

Bush’s counterterrorism legacy would be built on cooperation. Nine months into his presidency, *The New York Times*, on 10 October 1990, revealed that US counterterrorism investigators had revised their opinion on possible perpetrators of the Lockerbie Pan Am attack and that instead of Iran, Libya was now alleged to have perpetrated this attack.³⁹⁸ More information became public when on 15 November 1991 two Libyan intelligence officers were accused.³⁹⁹ In response to these developments White House Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater suggested that “all options were on the table.”⁴⁰⁰ *The New York Times* though speculated that Bush,

Was seriously contemplating a punitive raid like the one ordered on Libya by President Reagan in 1986 or was primarily interested in taking a tough public stand that would leave Colonel Qaddafi guessing and, by implicitly threatening military action, put him on notice against terrorist actions.⁴⁰¹

But on 27 November 1991, Bush in conjunction with Britain and France issued parallel indictments against the two Libyan suspects and pressed for their transfer for trial before a U.S. or UK court. France also joined in on this diplomatic action by accusing Libya of attacking one of their aircraft in 1989. At the same time, the US and UK announced a series of further demands: that Libya accept responsibility for the crime, pay appropriate compensation, and cooperate in the criminal investigation. Bush demanded Libyan compliance

395 Ibid.

396 George Bush: "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Persian Gulf Crisis and the Federal Budget Deficit," September 11, 1990, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=18820>

397 Ibid.

398 Michael Wines, "Libya now linked to Pan Am blast", *The New York Times*, October 10, 1990, <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/10/10/world/libya-now-linked-to-pan-am-blast.html> .

399 Andrew Rosenthal, "U.S. accuses Libya as 2 are charged in Pan Am bombing," *The New York Times*, November 15, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/11/15/world/us-accuses-libya-as-2-are-charged-in-pan-am-bombing.html> .

400 Ibid.

401 Ibid.

with these demands and cessation of further acts of terrorism.⁴⁰² But when these charges were presented at the UN, the threat of Security Council sanctions was made clear to the Libyans. Bush as a former UN ambassador clearly believed that international institutions could achieve his aims in counterterrorism, especially as he had three permanent members of UN on the same page.

In January 1992, Bush continued on this diplomatic offensive beginning by demanding Libyan compliance to the indictments.⁴⁰³ This was followed with further resolutions in March 1992 asking for a binding commitment under UN Charter “to cease all forms of terrorist action and all assistance to terrorist groups and that it must promptly, by concrete actions, demonstrate its renunciation of terrorism.”⁴⁰⁴ When Libya failed to comply, Bush in conjunction with UK and France introduced economic sanctions. With Libya proving non-compliant, Bush ratcheted up pressure threatening further economic sanctions as his counterterrorism officials promised that the administration would give Libya every opportunity to comply.⁴⁰⁵ By 11 November 1993, despite Bush having lost his election against Clinton, in agreement with Clinton he carried through on his threat of further sanctions.⁴⁰⁶

Bush would leave Clinton with two specific foreign policy headaches, the Bosnian secessionist conflict in Yugoslavia and the humanitarian intervention in Somalia. Forces of nationalism and ethnic animosity that had been kept in check under the totalitarian communist dictatorship of Josip Broz Tito in the Republic of Yugoslavia were now beginning to rear their heads by June 1991. Moves for secession created tension between the various provinces that had been welded together to create Yugoslavia. Bush’s initial stance had been to maintain the status quo and territorial integrity, but the breakup of the country was already underway as Croatia and Slovenia had declared independence in 1991. Cyrus Vance, Bush’s interlocutor for peace, together with the United Nations, would try to find a solution through the Geneva Accord in November 1991. However, this would only deliver an uneasy peace.

402 George Bush: "Statement Announcing Joint Declarations on the Libyan Indictments," November 27, 1991, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=20281>.

403 *UN Security Council*, "Resolution 731", January 21, 1992. [https://undocs.org/S/RES/731\(1992\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/731(1992)).

404 *UN Security Council*, "Resolution 748", March 31, 1992, [https://undocs.org/S/RES/748\(1992\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/748(1992)).

405 Paul Lewis, "U.S. delays Sanctions on Libya in Pan Am blast" *The New York Times*, October 3, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/03/world/us-delays-sanctions-for-libya-in-pan-am-blast.html>.

406 Paul Lewis, "U.N. tightens sanctions against Libya," *The New York Times*, November 11, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/11/12/world/un-tightens-sanctions-against-libya.html>.

In Somalia, Bush's intervention for humanitarian reasons was a case where the caution and prudence that he had advocated, had deserted him. In a country torn apart by rival warlords, the President supported a mission to open up food distribution routes following a UN Security Council resolution calling on the US to contribute to a force. Both these conflicts would set in motion a new danger for American foreign policy as these became the crucible for the evolution in terrorism as non-state actors evolved and borrowed many of the tactics of their state sponsored peers in perpetuating terrorism.

Conclusions

This chapter has explored the antecedents in counterterrorism that set the context into which Clinton came to power. It has been argued that the beliefs of Clinton's conservative critics were formed in the earlier decade during the twelve years of the Republican administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. Clinton's critics have speculated that a more muscular response to terrorism than the one he adopted would have resulted in preventing '9/11'. The evidence that some of the critics have provided to sustain this argument was that Reagan, by adopting the 'war model' of counterterrorism, achieved better outcomes in being able to effectively challenge terrorism. This was not the case.

In unpacking the evidence, this chapter has found that Reagan, having asserted before coming to power that the Soviet Union had a hidden hand in terrorist attacks, found it hard to sustain this account against the scepticism of the CIA, other than when DCI Casey was in charge of the agency. This chapter has brought forward evidence to suggest that the CIA under Casey was made to 'force-fit' the data to sustain the narrative of Soviet complicity in terrorism. Despite this, the declassified 1987 national intelligence estimate showed there were significant gaps in what the CIA could establish with any certainty on Soviet complicity in terrorism, although this report does suggest Casey may have been vindicated since it found more links between the Soviet Bloc and terrorism than had been previously known. However, as this chapter has also presented, whilst the explanation of who was behind terrorist attacks was focused on targeting the Soviet Union for ultimate responsibility, the Reagan Administration found before the end of 1984 that its arguments proved

incomplete as Americans wanted a more convincing case of what and how the President was going to respond to the threat of terrorism.

The intervention of Shultz was a major milestone in the development of the US counterterrorism approach, and while Shultz self-effacingly described it as an evolution it was nonetheless revolutionary. The idea that the US would undertake a military response, the adoption of the 'war model' on the presumption of culpability in terrorism was new. Despite this strategy coming from a high office in the Reagan cabinet, this advocacy of the use of force on the presumption of guilt of terrorist attacks was not universally accepted, not least by the Pentagon. This disagreement drew on fault lines within the administration between State and Defense and, as this chapter has explored, created a tension at the heart of US counterterrorism under Reagan that contributed to the delivery of the inconsistent application of counterterrorism policy.

The proposed muscular response to terrorism was never fully realised in practice. In the case of hostages in both the TWA hijack and *Achille Lauro* incident, the issues of national sovereignty of other nations complicated US efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice, let alone the possibility of launching military strikes against them. Whilst the response to Libyan sponsored acts of terrorism appeared to have been carefully planned and delivered, this did not result in quelling Qaddafi's support for groups that used terrorism against US interests. The armed response to Qaddafi ended up with the Lockerbie tragedy. When the Iran-Contra scandal broke, the Reagan counterterrorism response that had achieved its zenith with Libya, reached its nadir of credibility as the administration was shown to have consorted with groups accused of sponsoring or carrying out terrorism.

The George H.W. Bush Presidency may only have lasted four years, but it came at a time when the last rites of the Cold War were being delivered. The Bush administration moved the rhetoric on counterterrorism from the 'war model' and the language of war to a coercive stance that focused on law enforcement and diplomacy. Bush stuck to this approach and though he did use the threat of retaliation against Saddam Hussein on terrorism, that decision needs to be viewed within the overall Bush approach to the build-up to the First Gulf War. More salient is his approach to dealing with Libya and the aftermath

of the Pan Am bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland. The FBI helped the Bush administration create the threshold of proof that was needed to launch the indictments against Libya. The administration description of counterterrorism as “police work” would see Bush set a precedent that would be followed by Clinton. Bush also showed that with patient diplomacy much could be achieved against states who sponsored terrorism. However, his legacy from the interventions in Somalia and Bosnia would result in terrorism evolving from state sponsored actors to non-state actors coming to the fore.

Chapter Two: The Spectre Evolves (1993-94).

Introduction

President William Jefferson Clinton would be inaugurated shortly before two terrorist attacks struck America in 1993. This chapter seeks to answer the following questions. First how did Clinton understand the problem of terrorism before coming to power? Second how did Clinton respond to terrorist attacks in his first two years in office? Third, how did Clinton manage and lead the intelligence agencies? Fourth, how did the problem of terrorism manifest itself during Clinton's first two years in office?

This chapter argues that when Clinton came to power, he was a foreign policy novice. Clinton's initial foreign policy appointments did not suggest that there was familiarity or expertise in dealing with terrorism. With multiple foreign policy challenges in his inbox, including those posed by the disintegration of the Balkans and a worsening security situation in Somalia, two conflicts that he had inherited from President George H. W. Bush, the Clinton Administration was oblivious to the genesis of non state terrorist movements that was evolving around the world. Moreover, in his first two years Clinton's disconnect with the CIA leadership would have profound consequences as he would remain unappreciative of the challenges facing the CIA going through the readjustment of post Cold War security challenges. Thus, Richard Clarke, the lone loud voice on counterterrorism in the White House, would note ruefully: "in 1993 the Clinton Administration came to office with an agenda to deal with the post-Cold War era, and terrorism was not on it."⁴⁰⁷

Candidate Clinton

Clinton did not to have speak about the issue of terrorism in great detail before becoming President. Born on 19 August 1946 in Hope, Arkansas, his intellectual promise had led him to continue his studies after Georgetown

⁴⁰⁷ Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 73.

University with a prestigious Rhodes scholarship at Oxford. Having then graduated from Yale Law School, Clinton would practice law in Arkansas, one of the poorest states in the US, where in time he would be elected Governor twice, from 1979-81 and 1983-92. Nonetheless, as *The New York Times* editorial would note in 1992 when he campaigned for the presidency, there was a question mark about how he had deferred the draft or whether in fact he evaded it, when many of his generation had perished in the muddy fields and jungles of Vietnam?

Despite having a strong academic career and serving an internship in Senator Fulbright's Foreign Relations Committee, Clinton demonstrated little appetite to engage in foreign policy during his presidential run. All that *The New York Times* discovered about his foreign policy beliefs was that he "despised" the Vietnam War, concluding that this election would "provide an illuminating test" of his foreign policy understanding.⁴⁰⁸ In later years, critics of Clinton, would use the circumstances behind his avoiding the draft as cause to suggest that Clinton had no understanding of the military and was cowardly on national security issues.⁴⁰⁹ Like many of his generation, Clinton's opposition to Vietnam was not a secret. In his memoirs, he recollected that in 1970, just before leaving for Yale, he had given a speech where he said he "respected the military but opposed the Vietnam War."⁴¹⁰

The primaries leading up to the 1992 general presidential election were marked by worsening economic news, scandals and questions about Clinton, as Governor of Arkansas. The 1992 election should have been one where the re-election of President Bush, having defeated errant dictator Saddam Hussein in the Persian Gulf War, was a formality but even before the primary season had begun. But polls had taken an ominous turn. In March 1992, a *New York Times/CBS* poll indicated President Bush's approval rating had slipped from its high of eighty nine per cent after the Gulf War to forty per cent.⁴¹¹ At the start of the election cycle, none of the candidates, Bush nor his Democratic Party

408 *The New York Times*, Bill Clinton's Vietnam Test", February 14, 1992. <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/02/14/opinion/bill-clinton-s-vietnam-test.html>.

409 Bossie, *Intelligence failure*, 66-67.

410 Clinton, *My Life*, 173.

411 Robin Toner, "The 1992 campaign: poll; In poll, Voters are unhappy with all the choices," *The New York Times*, March 3, 1992. <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/03/us/the-1992-campaign-poll-in-poll-voters-are-unhappy-with-all-the-choices.html>.

challengers Bill Clinton and Paul Tsongas, enthused the voters.⁴¹² Despite President Bush's foreign policy achievements, eighty two per cent of those polled said they were most concerned about the economy.⁴¹³ Also, as the Bureau of Labour Statistics indicated, the national unemployment figure had climbed to 7.5%, the highest since 1977, to one of the highest post-war levels.⁴¹⁴ Clinton's pitch to voters on education, economics and welfare reform turned out to be smart move.⁴¹⁵ Just before the New Hampshire Primary, news broke of Clinton's marital issues and his affair with model Gennifer Flowers. Clinton overcame this setback to finish a creditable second in the primary and retain momentum behind his campaign. Over the coming months as he moved to secure the Democratic nomination, Clinton was pulling ahead of all the candidates whilst President Bush continued to fall back in the polls.⁴¹⁶

Taking his inspiration as the torchbearer for a generation of "progressive politicians", Clinton claimed that he was inspired by President John F. Kennedy and civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, for his acceptance speech in July 1992.⁴¹⁷ He lambasted Reagan and Bush for the inequalities of twelve years of Republican rule and called for a "new covenant" with the American people.⁴¹⁸ Implicit within this new covenant was a reduction of defence spending as he promised the American people that:

The end of the Cold War permits us to reduce defense spending while still maintaining the strongest defense in the world, but we must plow back every dollar of defense cuts into building American jobs right here at home.⁴¹⁹

Clinton's foreign policy inexperience and lack of specificity was worrying, not least to some within his Democratic Party. Foreign policy direction from Clinton was vague and unspecific and appeared to be focused on the post-Cold War dividend, from reduced military expenditure. Anthony

412 Ibid.

413 Ibid.

414 *United States Department of Labor*, Bureau of Labor statistics, "Labor force statistics from the current population survey,"

https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNU04000000?perids=Annual+Data&periods_option=specific_periods&years_option=all_years.

415 Clinton, *My Life*, 330.

416 R.W. Apple Jr. "The 1992 campaign: Overview; Poll gives Clinton a post-Perot, post-convention boost", *The New York Times*, July 18, 1992. <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/07/18/us/the-1992-campaign-overview-poll-gives-clinton-a-post-perot-post-convention-boost.html>.

417 Clinton, *My Life*, 145.

418 William J. Clinton: "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in New York," July 16, 1992, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25958>.

419 Ibid.

Lake's papers, who would serve both in the Clinton election team and then in the administration, include letters from a number of Clinton's supporters expressing concern about the lack of specificity on foreign policy and suggesting measures such as publishing an open letter to the media signed by well-known foreign policy experts in America, who would "confirm their belief in Governor's [Clinton's] competence to carry out a thoughtful foreign policy."⁴²⁰ The media struggled to find clues as to the direction of Clinton's foreign policy. In an article that appeared in *The New York Times* a month before the election, Thomas Friedman characterised Clinton as an "ideological peacock" who he argued was "all things to all people."⁴²¹ Whilst there were no clues especially as to his counterterrorist stance, the article did note that his foreign policy election advisors were "dominated by old hands from the faction of the Carter Administration most averse to using force abroad."⁴²² The article found that a Clinton presidency would put "much greater weight on promoting democracy abroad" and "reorganize American forces that would save \$60 billion."⁴²³ In picking Vice-Presidential running mate, Albert "Al" Gore, Clinton hoped that Gore would address some of the shortcomings of his own foreign policy inexperience.⁴²⁴ Gore had served in Vietnam and in Congress, on the House Intelligence and Senate Armed Services committees, and "had a good grasp on foreign policy issues."⁴²⁵

In the presidential debates President Bush, Clinton and independent candidate Ross Perot all appeared on the same stage for the first time. There was a fair amount of debate over who was most fit to lead the US in foreign policy. In the first debate, Bush asserted his credentials and criticised Clinton. The second debate, a Town Hall style meeting concentrated on issues related to the US economy. In the third debate, while again domestic issues dominated, there was more on Iraq and Saddam Hussein. Whilst Russia was mentioned twenty times in the three debates, Iran and Iraq four times and borderless threats

420 Adrian Karatnycky to Tony Lake July 31, 1992 Re: Foreign policy experts for Clinton, Letter, Box 11, *Anthony Lake Papers, 1916-2003*, Manuscript division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

421 Thomas L. Friedman, "The 1992 campaign – Issues: Foreign policy- Looking Abroad: Clinton and Foreign policy, A special report.; Clinton's foreign policy agenda reaches across broad spectrum," *The New York Times*, October 4, 1992. <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/04/us/1992-campaign-issues-foreign-policy-looking-abroad-clinton-foreign-policy.html>.

422 Ibid.

423 Ibid.

424 Clinton, *My Life*, 414.

425 Ibid.

like drugs eleven mentions, the subject of terrorism never came up.⁴²⁶ According to *CNN/USA Today* polls, Perot was considered by audiences the unlikely winner of the first and third debates; Clinton resoundingly won the second debate where he showed great empathy with the Town Hall gathering; while Bush appeared utterly detached.⁴²⁷ President Bush's foreign policy record was not proving persuasive, with *The New York Times* noting in their post-election analysis that only "one in 10 voters cited foreign policy as the most important issue to them."⁴²⁸ Clinton's strategy on concentrating his election messaging paid off, as he secured a major victory over Bush by winning three hundred and seventy of the Electoral College votes over Bush's one hundred and sixty eight. Clinton's victory having built on domestic issues nonetheless was an important moment for US foreign policy. As Harvard political scientist Michael Sandel observed in *The New York Times*, the day after Clinton was elected, "America's role in the world at the end of the Cold War is [was] badly in need of imaginative redefinition, and that is not usually the forte of the foreign-policy or diplomatic establishments."⁴²⁹

Clinton's cabinet of cold warriors

Clinton's key trio of cabinet appointments did not have any men who had spoken about terrorism, prior to coming to office. Clinton's nominee for Secretary of State was Warren Christopher who had served in the Carter administration and was a commercial lawyer by training. Christopher was portrayed in the media as having shown "dignified managerial acumen" during the Iran hostage crisis.⁴³⁰ Co-workers of Christopher described him in the past, as "stiff, and formal."⁴³¹ He was regarded as a political tactician and negotiator but not a visionary policy maker since he preferred to deal with issues on a "case

426 "1992 Debates", *Commission on presidential debates*, <http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=1992-debates>.

427 All Politics, CNN, Time Magazine "The Debates 96" 1992 Presidential Debates. *CNN.com*, <http://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1996/debates/history/1992/index.shtml>.

428 Robin Toner, "The 1992 elections: President – the overview; Clinton captures presidency with huge electoral margin; wins a Democratic Congress," *The New York Times*, November 4, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/11/04/us/1992-elections-president-overview-clinton-captures-presidency-with-huge.html>.

429 Friedman, "The 1992 campaign – Issues: Foreign policy".

430 Thomas L. Friedman, "The transition; Clinton's new foreign policy thinkers; Like-minded ex – Carter team mates," *The New York Times*, December 23, 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/12/23/world/transition-clinton-s-new-foreign-policy-thinkers-like-minded-ex-carter-teammates.html>.

431 Ibid.

by case” basis.⁴³² In his confirmation process, terrorism was only mentioned four times in his nine thousand and five-hundred-word testimony.⁴³³

Les Aspin promised more as Secretary of Defense, having been described in *The New York Times* as a “defense intellectual” and a “whizz kid.”⁴³⁴ Having served on the House Armed Services Committee, Aspin had briefly discussed the issue of terrorism in his book at the time of the Persian Gulf War, but had not engaged in any detail on terrorism.⁴³⁵ In his confirmation hearings, Aspin acknowledged that the Bush administration’s policies posed security challenges in the Balkans, Iraq and Somalia, he did not identify potential hotspots for terrorism. He acknowledged the possibility of “regional/ethnic and religious” disputes, but did not present these in terms of posing any threat to US security through terrorism:

These dangers do not put the United States at risk. Only a power like the former Soviet Union could pose a threat, Rather, the threats posed here potentially threaten U.S. vital interests. Saddam Hussein threatened vital interests when he appeared to be headed for control of much of the world's oil through the tactics of brutal invasion. Ethnic and religious violence in the former Yugoslavia threatens the peace of the region and provokes calls for action based on conscience.⁴³⁶

The final appointment in the triumvirate of national security appointments would be Anthony “Tony” Lake as Clinton’s National Security Advisor. Described in the media as “puckish and deeply committed to traditional liberal values, yet power orientated and a careful bureaucrat,” Lake was the intellectual foreign policy warrior. Having gained his PhD from the renowned Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton, Lake would bring intellectual foreign policy heft to Clinton’s cabinet. It looked a good fit with the intellectually sharp president. Clinton had attended Georgetown, Oxford, and Yale, while Lake was Harvard, Cambridge, and Princeton.⁴³⁷

432 Leslie H. Gelb, “Foreign affairs; Clinton’s security trio,” *The New York Times*, December 20, 1992. <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/12/20/opinion/foreign-affairs-clinton-s-security-trio.html> .

433 “Statement of Hon. Warren M. Christopher of California, Nominee for Secretary of State,” Nomination of Warren M. Christopher to be Secretary of State: Hearing, First Session January 13 and 14, *Committee on Foreign Relations, 103rd Congress*, (1993).

434 Leslie H. Gelb, “Foreign affairs; Clinton’s security trio”.

435 Les Aspin, *The Aspin papers: Sanctions, Diplomacy and War in the Persian Gulf*, (Washington D.C.: Centre for strategic and international studies, 1991) 79.

436 “Statement of Rep. Les Aspin D-Wis., Chairman Committee on Armed Services,” Nomination of Les Aspin to be Secretary of Defense: Hearing, First Session, January 7, *Committee on Armed Services, 103rd Congress* (1993).

437 Leslie H. Gelb, “Foreign affairs; Clinton’s security trio”.

Lake however had first hand foreign policy expertise whereas Clinton had limited foreign policy exposure as Governor of Arkansas. Lake had served as a Foreign Service Officer in the State Department with significant postings in Vietnam during the 1960s and was special assistant to Henry Kissinger in Richard Nixon's White House. He resigned over the Cambodia campaign in 1970 and joined Edmund Muskie's attempt to secure the Democratic presidential nomination in 1972, then later re-joined the State Department during the Carter administration as Director of Policy Planning. When Reagan won the 1980 election, Lake left government service to become Professor of International Relations at Amherst College in Massachusetts and then neighbouring Mount Holyoke College before joining the Clinton presidential campaign as an advisor.⁴³⁸ Lake would go on to have the greatest role in shaping Clinton's first term foreign policy agenda according to White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta, who observed in 1995 "There are very few times that Tony ultimately is reversed or changed or modified."⁴³⁹

Lake, whose archived papers have enabled this research to look deep into the workings of the Clinton administration, helped define Clinton's agenda of promoting the twin causes of democracy promotion and free market liberalism. On 21 September 1993, in a speech at Johns Hopkins University, Lake defined the aims of Clinton's foreign policy when he outlined its philosophy based on "core concepts of Democracy and Market Economics".⁴⁴⁰ In aiming to outline the role the US would play, there appeared to be much that had earlier been heard from Aspin about threats of "ethnic, religious or factional hatreds," but again no direct mention of the challenge from terrorism.⁴⁴¹ In Lake's foreign policy vision the main foreign policy priority was to be given to strengthening market democracies by "enlarging" the number of democratic nations. This Lake asserted would "help foster and consolidate new democracies and market economies". In delivering this plan the Clinton administration would "counter the aggression – and support the liberalization –

438 Steven Lee Myers, "Experienced Player Who Shuns Spotlight: Anthony Lake," *The New York Times*, December 6, 1996. <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/12/06/us/experienced-player-who-shuns-spotlight-anthony-lake.html>.

439 Jason Deparle, "The man inside Bill Clinton's foreign policy," *The New York Times*, August 20, 1995. <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/08/20/magazine/the-man-inside-bill-clinton-s-foreign-policy.html>.

440 Anthony Lake, "From Containment to enlargement, Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies" Washington D.C. September 21, 1993, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/lakedoc.html>.

441 Ibid.

of states hostile to democracy and markets.” Finally, there would also be a humanitarian aid programme to support countries where necessary.⁴⁴² Though Lake touched upon crises all around the world including the challenges following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Balkans, Africa including Somalia, Latin America and Chile post-Pinochet, he gave no recognition to any borderless threats such as terrorism, narcotics or even climate change. Nonetheless based on Lake’s ability to foresee problems before they developed the president believed Lake’s appointment held the best hope for an effective counterterrorism strategy. As he recalled in his memoirs, “success in foreign affairs is often defined by preventing or defusing problems before they develop into headaches and headline grabbers.”⁴⁴³

An inexperienced President and an inexperienced CIA Chief.

In 1992, with the Cold War over, the CIA was searching for a purpose. At least, that appeared to be the view held on Capitol Hill. Since its establishment in 1947, the CIA had often found itself caught up in political cross hairs on foreign policy actions be it the Bay of Pigs in 1961 or the ‘Iran-Contra’ scandal of the 1980s. Three forces came together to create a crisis in the 1990s. First, voices demanding that the Agency reorganise and define its role in the post-Cold War world.⁴⁴⁴ Second the ambitions of the Clinton administration to scale back on US defence spending which would have a knock on effect on intelligence budgets.⁴⁴⁵ Third, the revelations in the aftermath of the Soviet spy Aldrich Ames being caught.⁴⁴⁶ Ames had been spying right under the noses of his minders and the system of oversight at the agency was under scrutiny⁴⁴⁷. Christopher Moran has

442 Ibid.

443 Clinton, *My Life*, 502.

444 Bud Shuster, “Dialogue- American Intelligence: Do we still need the CIA? Independence means integrity,” *The New York Times*, May 19, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/05/19/opinion/dialogue-american-intelligence-we-still-need-cia-independence-means-integrity.html>.

445 Douglas Jehl, “Clinton and Congress: intelligence budget cut likely for intelligence,” *The New York Times*, June 18, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/06/18/us/clinton-and-congress-intelligence-budget-cut-likely-for-intelligence.html>.

446 Bill Miller and Michael Isikoff, “CIA officer charged with selling secret,” *The Washington Post*, Feb 23 1994, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/local/longterm/tours/scandal/ames.htm>.

447 “An Assessment of the Aldrich H. Ames Espionage case and its implications for US intelligence”, November 1, 1994 Part One, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Federation of American Scientists*, https://fas.org/irp/congress/1994_rpt/ssci_ames.htm.

argued that this period in the CIA's history was one of its "biggest crisis."⁴⁴⁸ Expert leadership would be needed from the incoming CIA Director. At the end of the Cold War, New York Senator Daniel P. Moynihan publicly questioned the future role of the CIA, accusing the agency of being "dysfunctional and incompetent" and critiquing its pervasive culture of secrecy.⁴⁴⁹ Moynihan was no lightweight politician with cabinet level experience of four administrations (Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon and Ford).⁴⁵⁰ Moynihan's evidence, which has subsequently been challenged by some historians, claimed that the CIA had failed to foresee a number of major political crises including the Arab Israeli War of 1973 and Indian nuclear weapons testing.⁴⁵¹ Perhaps the most cardinal sin the CIA had committed was their overoptimistic assessment of the capability of the Soviet economy during the Cold War.⁴⁵² Moynihan argued that CIA's peculiar structure had encouraged errors and had led to overestimating Moscow's capabilities during the Cold War.⁴⁵³ The need for reform at the CIA was overdue but had not been addressed by the previous administrations as Amy Zegart, highlighted in her book of 2007.⁴⁵⁴ This problem would remain unattended because as Zegart found between 1991 just after Moynihan's criticisms of the CIA, till '9/11' in 2001, there would be six inquiries into the CIA and nothing would change.⁴⁵⁵ Moynihan urged a more dramatic set of actions including calling for a disestablishment of the CIA, with many of its functions being transferred to the State Department. He went public with an op-ed in *The New York Times* arguing his case.⁴⁵⁶ He also sent letters to opinion formers around the US arguing his case.⁴⁵⁷ Paul McGarr would argue that Moynihan's efforts had been a:

... rhetorical assault on the CIA [which] marked the opening salvo in a protracted campaign that, over the following decade, until his death, in March 2003, would see the one-time member of the Senate Select

448 Christopher Moran, *Company Confessions: Revealing CIA secrets*, (London: Biteback publishing, 2015), 218.

449 Ibid., 217.

450 Ibid.

451 Ibid.

452 Michael Wines, "Evolution in Europe; C.I.A. accused of overestimating the Soviet economy," *The New York Times*, July 23, 1990, <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/07/23/world/evolution-in-europe-cia-accused-of-overestimating-soviet-economy.html>.

453 Daniel P. Moynihan, *Secrecy: The American Experience*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 154.

454 Zegart, *Spying blind*, 5

455 Ibid.

456 Shuster, "Dialogue- American Intelligence: Do we still need the CIA? Independence means integrity"

457 Daniel P. Moynihan Personal office file, Part II, Personal office file 1787-2000, Box II, Folders 34-36, *Daniel P. Moynihan Papers, 1765- 2003*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

Committee on Intelligence, lobby relentlessly for reform of America's intelligence community...⁴⁵⁸

Moynihan was not the only dissenting voice questioning the role of the CIA in the early 1990's. The House of Representatives Select Committee on Intelligence also felt that the CIA was at "a watershed".⁴⁵⁹ In an article in the influential *Washington Quarterly* just prior to Woolsey's appointment in 1993 Paula Scalingi, a staff member of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Intelligence, argued that both the House and Senate Intelligence committees had made "suggestions on reorganization and the need to improve countrywide management" in the aftermath of the ending of the Cold War.⁴⁶⁰ Scalingi appeared to reflect much of the foreign policy concerns within the Beltway in identifying six areas of concern: "proliferation of weapons of mass destruction"; "political and economic developments" with the former Soviet Union; the "strategic nuclear threat"; "instability in Eastern Europe"; Middle East conflicts; and finally "arms control monitoring and support."⁴⁶¹ If these six areas were the focus on foreign policy concerns in Washington, unsurprisingly Terrorism was not receiving much within the beltway.

Two headaches for the incoming CIA Director was having to deal with budget cuts on the CIA and the fallout of the Aldrich Ames scandal. The CIA argued in 1992 to Moynihan warning against budget cuts arguing that they "performed the first line of defense".⁴⁶² The CIA defined argued that as the early warning system of potential and developing threats to the US, they claimed was "a major undertaking and major undertakings do not come cheap."⁴⁶³ Alongside this, to make matters challenging from the overall morale with the Agency, Aldrich Ames had been caught as a KGB agent, in March 1993, two months after Clinton's inauguration. When the news broke that Ames was a KGB mole, it provided further evidence that the agency needed root and branch reform if it was to be fit for purpose for the post-Cold War world. In what looked very much like an institutional failure within the CIA, Ames behaviour and conduct had

⁴⁵⁸ McGarr, "Do we still need a CIA?"

⁴⁵⁹ Paula L. Scalingi, "U.S. Intelligence in an Age of uncertainty: Refocusing to meet the challenge," *The Washington Quarterly*, 15.1 (Winter 1992) 145-156.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 147.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 151- 153.

⁴⁶² Moran, *Company Confessions*, 219.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 219-220.

gone unnoticed and Ames had profited by accumulating a vast fortune spying for the Soviets.⁴⁶⁴

James “Jim” Woolsey was appointed CIA Director on 5 February 1993. Woolsey would have a torrid time in his job and would end up leaving before two years was out. Woolsey had multiple challenges coming into the job. Three appear to have played a role in Woolsey’s early departure. First, there had not been enough thought given to the CIA directorship appointment as Woolsey’s bipartisan connections were seen as an asset over his abilities. Second, Woolsey got caught up in fighting for the agency’s budget without receiving presidential support. Third, Woolsey’s style of interacting with the president, his boss, did not work out. Of the three issues, it could be argued that Clinton’s work style in dealing with Woolsey appear to cause the most problems for Woolsey.

The appointment’s process for Woolsey was mishandled. Given the challenge facing the CIA, President Clinton in choosing Woolsey appears either not to have understood the challenges facing the CIA or, as is more probable, his advisors seem not to have factored challenges facing the CIA when nominating Woolsey. Moran has argued that Clinton kept the CIA at arm’s length and the evidence appears to suggest that Clinton failed to demonstrate an understanding of the magnitude of the challenges facing the CIA.⁴⁶⁵ Woolsey had only ever met Clinton once, at a fundraiser, prior to his interview with the president-elect and his prospective National Security team.⁴⁶⁶

Prior to his nomination to be CIA Director, Woolsey had been an Under-Secretary of the Navy in the Carter administration and had gone back to practising law in Washington D.C. in 1992. John Prados has claimed that in 1993, besides having some dealings with the Office of Naval intelligence in his role as Navy Under-Secretary, “much of what Woolsey learned about the spy trade is likely to have come later from discussions with other Carter administration alumni.”⁴⁶⁷ Prados also offers the interesting insight that it was Woolsey’s prior connections with Vice President Gore and Aspin that brought him to the attention of the Clinton camp.⁴⁶⁸ In his confirmation hearings,

464 Michael J. Sullick, *American spies: Espionage against the United States from the Cold War to the present*, (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 190.

465 Moran, *Company Confessions*, 221.

466 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 242.

467 John Prados, “Woolsey and the CIA,” *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, 49: 6 (1993), 33- 38.

468 Ibid.

Woolsey sounded visionary with his now famous quip: “We have slain a large dragon. But we live now in a jungle filled with a bewildering variety of poisonous snakes. And in many ways, the dragon was easier to keep track of.”⁴⁶⁹ However, Woolsey would mention the threat from “terrorism’ only once during his nomination statement.⁴⁷⁰ Coming into office, Woolsey had to start addressing the major strategic concerns expressed within the legislature about the culture of the CIA. In this task, Woolsey was hampered by lack of knowledge about CIA’s “operational record” and “of the widening threats to national security.”⁴⁷¹ The challenge from terrorism as it was evolving would be just one such threat.

Woolsey found that much of his time was taken up fighting for his budget on Capitol Hill with the Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Dennis DeConcini, one of the many recipients of Moynihan’s letters. This was not going to be an easy challenge for its Director.⁴⁷² Clinton had committed to cut the intelligence budget by seven billion dollars for the period of 1993-97 from the figures proposed by the president, George H.W. Bush, during the election.⁴⁷³ Woolsey also appeared not to have taken on board concerns expressed by the legislature on excessive secrecy, as Prados argues when he accuses the CIA Director of operating a “secrecy cult” reluctant to even reveal the most general budget figures who preferred to have “no discussion on increasing and reducing budgets.”⁴⁷⁴ Moreover, the secrecy culture that Moynihan had claimed enveloped the CIA was worsening. Woolsey had to apologise, for example, to the Senate committee for burying the \$347 m cost of the new CIA headquarters.⁴⁷⁵

Woolsey’s undoing stemmed from his inability to build an effective relationship with Clinton. According to Coll, in one of his early meetings Clinton had informed Woolsey that he should view himself as just one of the president’s policy advisors and provide him with the intelligence, so the President could make his own assessments as he did with advice from the rest

469 Dougal Jehl, “CIA nominee war of budget cuts,” *The New York Times*, February 3, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/02/03/us/cia-nominee-wary-of-budget-cuts.html>.

470 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 220.

471 Moran, *Company Confessions*, 221.

472 Ibid., 220.

473 Ibid., 221.

474 Prados, “Woolsey and the CIA”, 38.

475 Tim Weiner, Senate committee receives apology from Spy agency,” *The New York Times*, August 11, 1994, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/08/11/us/senate-committee-receives-apology-from-spy-agency.html> .

of his foreign policy team.⁴⁷⁶ This type of working relationship has been much criticised. Bossie commented that the pattern was set early on in that Woolsey's "proactive" stance was rebuffed and that "Clinton preferred allowing his CIA director to sit outside his office and read the daily briefing, rather than discuss important issues of national security face-to-face."⁴⁷⁷ The relationship between the president and his CIA director, especially regarding how they dealt with their intelligence briefings, has been the source of much speculation and scrutiny. Since much of the Presidential Daily Briefs remain classified, it is the personal recollections of CIA briefers that this debate has pivoted upon.

Presidential Daily Briefs are critical for presidents in building up a picture of current and future foreign policy issues. Gregory Treverton, a respected intelligence scholar, has observed that "the relationship between intelligence and policy has, not surprisingly, had its ups and downs; at times it has been easy and complementary and at others, contentious and accusatory."⁴⁷⁸ He compared three presidents, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush and found differences in approach between the three men leading to question whether the process of briefings "was the best use of a morning half hour of the president's time."⁴⁷⁹ Treverton observed that Clinton was different from his predecessor Bush, who had been a Director of the CIA, but nonetheless observed he "consistently and thoroughly" consumed the briefs.⁴⁸⁰ According to David Priess, an intelligence briefer to both Clinton and George W. Bush, Clinton was a poor timekeeper and often his meetings would be overrunning which is why many an intelligence briefer would find themselves waiting outside the Oval Office.⁴⁸¹

For Clinton, poor timekeeping would be a constant feature as confirmed in an interview with Dr. Robert Wescott, the Chief Economist on President Clinton's Council of Economic Advisors.⁴⁸² Priess offers as an explanation from Clinton:

476 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 242.

477 Bossie, *Intelligence failure*, 22.

478 Gregory F. Treverton, *First callers: The President's daily brief across three administrations*, (Washington D.C.: Centre for the study of intelligence, 2016), 2.

479 Ibid., 26.

480 Ibid.

481 David Priess, *The President's Book of Secrets: The Untold story of intelligence briefings to America's Presidents from Kennedy to Obama*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2016), 192-93.

482 Interview with Dr. Robert Wescott, Keybridge Research, Washington D.C., September 8, 2016

As I got more comfortable with the brief and working with intelligence officers, I found it more fruitful and more practical on most days to read it myself early in the morning – and then to make a ...set of notes ... for what further information I wanted.⁴⁸³

Clinton was acting exactly as he had signaled, he would when Woolsey was interviewed for his job. Clinton, who was a voracious reader, would often have a deeper perspective on a topic by reading from articles in journals or newspapers and would attach a cutting with his notes.⁴⁸⁴ He told Woolsey that he needed to get information, that he would reflect and make notes, and then discuss for follow up with his advisors. The mismatch of Woolsey's expectations and Clinton's would lead to degenerating into a "mutually ill-informed, and strangely nonchalant" relationship.⁴⁸⁵

Clinton's modus operandi for dealing with security briefings appears to be how a modern Chief Executive would deal with research information, which often requires reviewing, reflecting, and considering his strategic options. In discussions with his national security team, Clinton appears to have taken soundings and opinions. In delegating to Gore to "drill down" on issues, Clinton reflects the work style of a president that involves the office of the Vice President in the effective functioning of the administration.⁴⁸⁶ In analysing recently declassified President's Daily Schedule, and by corroborating it with Lake's notes, it is possible to get a picture of the President's security briefings and who from his national security team attended. In his first term this would usually be the President along with VP Gore, Mack McLarty (Chief of Staff), Lake, Sandy Berger (Deputy National Security Advisor), and Leon Fuerth (Assistant to the Vice President on National Security).⁴⁸⁷

In coming to an assessment of Woolsey's tenure as a CIA Director, some authors like Weiner have described Woolsey as a hapless Director "that lost almost every fight he picked", the CIA historian Douglas Garthoff has provided a different perspective.⁴⁸⁸ Garthoff's assessment is kinder on Woolsey in suggesting that he was a "logical candidate" for DCI because of his background

483 Priess, *The President's Book of Secrets*, 193.

484 Ibid., 194.

485 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 242.

486 Priess, *The President's Book of Secrets*, 196.

487 Office of Scheduling, "President Clinton's Daily Schedule for February 1993. *Clinton Digital Library*,

<https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/12632> .

488 Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 515.

in national security roles.⁴⁸⁹ In assessing Woolsey's record on terrorism, Garthoff suggests that in 1993 the DCI tasked Deputy Director of Intelligence, Admiral Studeman, to conduct a study on terrorism, narcotics and proliferation.⁴⁹⁰ Woolsey appeared to bring in changes to address some of the shortcomings in the management and operations of the CIA, and is credited with introducing the tiering process that prioritised intelligence challenges, that the future CIA leader, George Tenet, would put into practice and would become the source of much debate as to how the CIA prioritised the threat from al Qaeda in Clinton's second term.⁴⁹¹ Woolsey's biggest contribution to the fight against terrorism was based on his assessment that technical methods of collection ought to be enhanced over human intelligence. Though this created an exodus of talent from the agency, it could be argued that these were Cold War warriors who were unsuited to the late twentieth century needs of counterterrorism.⁴⁹² A senior intelligence officer Jack Devine has claimed that under Woolsey the CIA through this prioritisation on technology would support the development of "drones".⁴⁹³

The brief tenure of Woolsey also brought to the fore the biggest challenge in counterterrorism – the need for effective inter-agency co-operation. Early in the Woolsey era, "the F.B.I. under Director Louis Freeh moved aggressively to establish a larger presence overseas in working with foreign partners."⁴⁹⁴ This development would start to blur the lines of demarcation that existed between the FBI's domestic and CIA's foreign responsibility. The DCI had to passively watch as the budgets were moved out of the CIA into the FBI, leading Woolsey to make "a pessimistic assessment" to Deputy National Security Advisor, Samuel "Sandy" Berger "with respect to foreign intelligence / law enforcement coordination and urged that this policy area receive greater future NSC and even presidential attention."⁴⁹⁵ Garthoff concludes that the "needs of the cross agency cooperation to support national policy ... were so broad that only an arrangement made at a Presidential level would suffice."⁴⁹⁶

489 Douglas F. Garthoff, *Directors of Central Intelligence as Leaders of the US Intelligence Community*, (Washington D.C.: Centre for the Study of Intelligence, 2005), 221

490 *Ibid.*, 223

491 *Ibid.*, 227.

492 Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 516.

493 Jack Devine with Vernon Loeb, *Good Hunting: An American spymasters' story*, (New York: Picador, 2014), 191.

494 Garthoff, *Directors of Central Intelligence as Leaders of the US Intelligence Community*, 229.

495 *Ibid.*

496 *Ibid.*, 230.

Woolsey agreed to leave the administration at the end of 1994. His departure was not mourned. *The New York Times* editorial described him as a “tinkerer” with the challenges faced by the CIA.⁴⁹⁷ The fallout from the aftermath of the Ames spy scandal had highlighted that Woolsey was incapable of rising to meet the challenges at the CIA. Sullick has argued that based on the report produced by the Inspector General of the CIA, Fred Hitz, the failure to detect Ames went as far back as Bill Casey.⁴⁹⁸ However it was on Woolsey’s watch that the revelations about Ames had surfaced and Woolsey needed to show leadership and act to bring about change. Woolsey however was not prepared to take firm action and disappointed some CIA long termers. Jack Devine’s opinion in his book , was typical of the view of long-term CIA staff who felt let down by Woolsey:

I went to the auditorium at headquarters to hear Woolsey announce the reprimands of my colleagues and explain his reasoning for them.... Most of those in the audience were expecting to Woolsey to come down much harder and announce a spate of firings... I sensed they most of those on hand were not satisfied. They surprisingly seemed to want harsher penalties for their own colleagues, largely because of the pain and humiliation the Agency had suffered.⁴⁹⁹

Woolsey’s brief tenure had highlighted three issues. The challenge to transform the CIA to repurpose it for the new post-Cold War world was a major task requiring exceptional leadership. Second, Woolsey appeared to be out of tune with the presidential style and priorities to deliver a post-Cold War peace dividend. With the Democratic Party’s electoral humiliation in the November 1994 midterm elections, Woolsey could have gained greater cover if he had managed to survive with the Senate Intelligence Committee changing to the Republicans. Third, the management of counterterrorism had inched forward but greater challenges lay on the horizon on inter agency cooperation. As the spectre of terrorism loomed over the US, the clock had already started ticking on the terrorist challenge.

Clinton and the FBI: A troubled start

497 *The New York Times*, “A tinkerer leaves the CIA December 30, 1994.
<https://www.nytimes.com/1994/12/30/opinion/a-tinkerer-leaves-the-cia.html>.

498 *Ibid.*, 202.

499 Devine, *Good Hunting*, 177.

Clinton's relationship with the FBI and its Director would prove to be a challenge right from the outset of his presidency. Whilst the FBI Director unlike the CIA Director, does not report directly to the President, nonetheless the FBI head has since its inception of the post, been an important relationship with the president. Initially, Clinton had a difficulty filling the Attorney General role but having finally secured Janet Reno, the first woman to hold that position, Clinton appeared to be making headway after the fraught nominations process with his initial choice of Kimba Wood having to withdraw.⁵⁰⁰ Though ultimately it was not her decision to respond in a heavy-handed way to facing down the armed insurgency by Branch Dravidians in Waco Texas, as it had been the decision made by the then FBI Director William Sessions, Reno generated positive headlines, for her decision to accept responsibility for this horrific loss of life in the explosions and shootings that had followed.⁵⁰¹ However, an ethics violation had forced the President to fire the FBI Director William Sessions.⁵⁰² This would be the first time a sitting President would fire an FBI Director. Clinton's choice for the new FBI Director, Judge Louis Freeh, turned out to be very unfortunate for the rest of his presidency. Freeh had begun his career in the FBI but had then progressed as Assistant United States Attorney to the high profile of United States District Judge of the Southern District of New York and started as FBI Director, on 1 September 1993.

Clinton's relationship with Freeh started on an upbeat note but degenerated rapidly. At the time of his appointment, Freeh had described Clinton as "engaging and welcoming" and the president in appointing Freeh had reciprocated by describing Freeh as a "law enforcement legend."⁵⁰³ By late 1993, the relationship had turned sour. First the controversy over Whitewater land deals, had strained the Clintons (both the president and First Lady) relations with Freeh.⁵⁰⁴ To make matters worse, Clinton's handling of the White House travel office White House stated the firings were done because financial

500 Richard L. Berke, "Judge withdraws from Clinton List for Justice Post," *The New York Times*, February 6, 1993.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1993/02/06/us/judge-withdraws-from-clinton-list-for-justice-post.html>.

501 Anthony Lewis, "Abroad at home; After the buck stops," *The New York Times*, April 23, 1993.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1993/04/23/opinion/abroad-at-home-after-the-buck-stops.html>.

502 David Johnston, "Removed from the job, by the President," *The New York Times*, July 20, 1993

<https://www.nytimes.com/1993/07/20/us/defiant-fbi-chief-removed-from-job-by-the-president.html>.

503 Freeh, *My FBI*, 48, 58.

504 *Ibid.*, 248.

improprieties in the Travel Office operation during previous administrations had been revealed by an FBI investigation. Critics contended the firings were done to allow friends of President Bill Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton to take over the travel business and that the involvement of the FBI was unwarranted. Media attention forced the White House to reinstate most of the employees in other jobs and remove the Clinton associates from the travel role. Freeh 's view of the president had turned and with revelations about extra marital affairs also coming to the media attention he viewed the president as lacking a "a moral compass" and self-discipline."⁵⁰⁵

The spectre of terrorism at home

The first of two terrorist attacks on US soil in 1993 occurred on 25 January, just five days after Clinton's inauguration. Two employees of the CIA who were waiting at a red traffic light to turn into the gates of the Langley campus were shot dead in their cars, and three more employees were wounded, by a single gunman who emerged from his own car and walked along the line of traffic firing an AK-47 assault rifle into each victim's vehicle. At first sight it appeared to be another example of the mass shootings that occurs from time to time in the US judging by the muted response in the media. *The New York Times* carried the news on page 14 on 26 January 1993⁵⁰⁶. Details were brief, and the fatalities were named as Frank Darling and Lansing Bennett.

There was no immediate comment about the shooting from the White House and there would not be any comment despite there being four press conferences on 27, 28, 29 January held by White House spokespersons.⁵⁰⁷ The president also did not make any comment and the media appeared to be focused on the president's legislative efforts prohibiting military personnel from discriminating against or harassing homosexual or bisexual service members or

505 Ibid., 252.

506 B. Drummond Ayres Jr., "Gunman kills 2 near C.I.A. entrance," *The New York Times*, January 26, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/01/26/us/gunman-kills-2-near-cia-entrance.html>.

507 William J. Clinton: "Press Briefing by Dee Dee Myers," January 27, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=60021> ; William J. Clinton: "Press Briefing by George Stephanopoulos," January 27, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=60066> ; William J. Clinton: "Press Briefing by Dee Dee Myers," January 28, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=60073> ; William J. Clinton: "Press Briefing by George Stephanopoulos," January 29, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=60122> .

barring openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual persons from joining the military.⁵⁰⁸ On 11 February, the shooter was named in the media as Mir Aimal Kansi. Kansi's motives behind the shooting were not known though media reports suggested evidence of preplanning, in terms of building a big cache of ammunition.⁵⁰⁹ President Clinton remained silent on this and sent first lady Hillary Clinton to represent him at the memorial service that followed. It would be a year before the president visited the CIA to express his sorrow for this loss.⁵¹⁰ Weiner has suggested that by sending his wife to honour the dead Clinton created "much fury" at Langley⁵¹¹. Kansi would flee the country and was not apprehended until four and half years later in a hotel in Pakistan by the FBI. In the later hearing, the court document showed that Kansi freely revealed his motives for the attack to FBI agents while he was in custody:

As part of his oral statement... defendant enumerated political reasons "why he wanted to do this shooting. He said he was "upset" because U.S. aircraft had attacked parts of Iraq, he was "upset with the CIA because of their involvement in Muslim countries," and he was concerned with "killing of Pakistanians [sic] by U.S. components."⁵¹²

The CIA had claimed at the time of the shooting, "US officials knew nothing of Kasi's identity or affiliations".⁵¹³ By 17 February 1993, media reporting suggested that Pakistani and US law enforcement officers were on his tail. Journalists also suggested that Kansi was a disaffected young man and "not particularly close to his family".⁵¹⁴ The narrative that developed was of a lone wolf. At the CIA there were developments that suggested that both this and the attack that followed had been perpetrated by a foreign government.⁵¹⁵

The second terrorist attack was of a different magnitude and signaled wider aims and ambitions of the individuals and networks intent on attacking

508 William J. Clinton: "Exchange with Reporters Prior to a Meeting with Representatives of the Close-Up

Foundation," January 29, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsba.edu/ws/?pid=46455>.

509 Bill Millar and Patricia Davis "Suspect in CIA shooting may have fled the US," *The Washington Post*, February 11, 1994, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/02/11/suspect-in-cia-shooting-may-have-fled-the-us/03645ecc-b5c9-45a3-9b75-5ed73c8f8797/?utm_term=.3d567d03e866.

510 William J. Clinton: "Remarks to Central Intelligence Agency Employees in Langley, Virginia," January 4, 1994, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsba.edu/ws/?pid=50120>.

511 Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 512.

512 Opinion by Justice A. Christian Compton, "Mir Aimal Kasi vs Commonwealth of Virginia, Record Nos. 980797, 980798, Circuit Court of Fairfax County, Virginia (1998),

<http://www.courts.state.va.us/opinions/opnscvwp/1980797.pdf>

513 "A look back... Murder at CIA's front gate", CIA.gov, <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/murder-at-cia.html>.

514 John Ward Anderson and Kamran Khan, "CIA suspects divided personality," *The Washington Post*, February 17, 1993, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/02/17/cia-suspects-divided-personality/c2905503-ea96-41fa-94b7-4718275e8cc5/?utm_term=.d54d592d7a6d.

515 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 252.

the US. This attack on 26 February 1993 less than two months into the Clinton Presidency was more prominent than the CIA shooting in that the target was the landmark building of the World Trade Center in the heart of the business district of lower Manhattan. The attack killed six people with over a thousand-people injured as they fled the blast. Unlike the first attack it would receive more coverage. On the day of the attack, *The New York Times* suggested that while the method of the attack was known, the FBI was no nearer to identifying a perpetrator or a motive.⁵¹⁶ *The New York Times* would cover this story over six hundred times during the course of 1993 with articles, opinion pieces and editorials; the *Washington Post* would devote over one hundred and seventy stories⁵¹⁷.

In his radio address on the day after the attack, Clinton promised the “full measure of Federal law enforcement resources” to investigate the attack.⁵¹⁸ On the 28 February, two days had passed and yet no motive for the attack had been announced by either the City of New York or by the President⁵¹⁹. Warren Christopher, who was on a diplomatic trip to the Middle East, would make no comment in an article that appeared the day after the president’s radio address, carrying news of his efforts to secure Middle East peace.⁵²⁰ Behind the scenes, the counterterrorist effort was in full swing with a “seven day, twenty-four hour task force to collect intelligence” on both these attacks at the CIA counterterrorist Center.⁵²¹ Despite attempts by the NSA, efforts to describe this attack as a state sponsored effort perpetuated by the usual suspects of Iran, Iraq and Libya was proving too difficult to find.⁵²² By 5 March there were reports that a Middle Eastern connection had been established. In a lucky break for the FBI, one of the co-conspirators Mohammad Salameh returned to the Ryder van

⁵¹⁶ Ralph Blumenthal, “Explosion at the Twin Towers: The Investigation; Bomb Is definite answer, but all else is mystery,” *The New York Times*, Feb 26, 1993. <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/02/28/nyregion/explosion-twin-towers-investigation-bomb-definite-answer-but-all-else-mystery.html> .

⁵¹⁷ Matthew V. Storin, “While America slept: coverage of terrorism from 1993- September 11, 2001,” *The Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy*, Harvard University, 2002, https://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/2002_07_storin.pdf?x78124 .

⁵¹⁸ William J. Clinton: “The President’s Radio Address,” February 27, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46253> .

⁵¹⁹ Robert D. McFadden, Explosion at the Twin Towers : The Overview; Inquiry into the explosion widens; Trade Center shut for repairs,” *The New York Times*, February 28, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/02/28/nyregion/explosion-twin-towers-overview-inquiry-into-explosion-widens-trade-center-shut.html> .

⁵²⁰ Elaine Sciolino, “On the road, Christopher is finding his footing,” *The New York Times*, February 28, 1993. <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/02/28/world/on-the-road-christopher-is-finding-his-footing.html> .

⁵²¹ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 251.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 251-252.

rental depot claiming that his truck had been stolen and wanting his \$400 deposit back!⁵²³ Salameh would be apprehended by the FBI on 4 March 1993. This would lead the FBI to suspect Ramzi Yousef.

On March 7, *The New York Times* reported on its front page that following news of Salameh's arrest, Muslims were facing a hostile reaction described by one American Muslim as "a frenzy of stereotyping", with mosques being vandalised and increased surveillance near the mosque to check license plates.⁵²⁴ This would prove to be a major challenge to Clinton as further attacks, despite not having anything to do with Muslims, would be blamed on them. On the same day, the paper in another article was describing the attackers as "Muslim fundamentalists."⁵²⁵ Though the same article reluctantly accepted that terrorism from the Middle East had finally arrived on US shores, the cause they speculated was due to Muslim immigration with the claim that "in the last few years [there has] been a substantial immigration of Muslims to the United States, some of whom are fundamentalists who could potentially be used to form terror networks here."⁵²⁶ However, a month later the motive for the attack would finally become apparent and it had nothing to do with immigration but with disaffection over US foreign policy in the Middle East. *The New York Times* would reveal the contents of a letter it had received on 24 March:

Such attacks, they said, would be forthcoming unless the United States met a series of demands, including an end to diplomatic relations with Israel and an end to interfering "with any of the Middle East countries interior affairs".⁵²⁷

Terrorism was evolving from the Reagan era. Though this attack was carried out in retaliation for US foreign policy Ramzi Yousef had appeared to have no state affiliation or backing. Yousef, who would appear on the FBI's most wanted list, would go on the run, and would not be apprehended until

523 Ralph Blumenthal, "The Twin Towers: The investigation; Insistence on refund for a truck results in an arrest in explosion," *The New York Times*, March 5, 1993. <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/03/05/nyregion/twin-towers-investigation-insistence-refund-for-truck-results-arrest-explosion.html>.

524 Deborah Sontag, "The Twin Towers: Backlash; Muslims in United States fear upsurge of hostility," *The New York Times*, March 7, 1993. <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/03/07/nyregion/twin-towers-backlash-muslims-united-states-fear-upsurge-hostility.html>.

525 Richard Bernstein, "The Twin Towers: Terrorism; blast shatters the illusion that U.S. soil is immune from assault," *The New York Times*, March 7, 1993. <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/03/07/nyregion/twin-towers-terrorism-blast-shatters-illusion-that-us-soil-immune-assault.html>.

526 Ibid.

527 Alison Mitchell, "Letter explained motive in bombing, officials now say," *The New York Times*, Sunday March 28, 1993. <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/03/28/nyregion/letter-explained-motive-in-bombing-officials-now-say.html>.

1995.⁵²⁸ The other alleged perpetrator of the bombing, Abdul Rahman Yasin, remains at large to this day. In October 1993 it would also emerge that tapes of conversations had been unearthed that appeared to show that the FBI had prior knowledge of the bombing. It was claimed that an undercover operative had planned to substitute harmless powder for the bomb ingredients in an effort to thwart the perpetrators of the attack but through the intervention of an FBI supervisor this plan had been “messed up”.⁵²⁹

Clinton would address the issue of terrorism on at least twenty-three occasions between the attack and next major terrorist incident on US soil at Oklahoma City in April 1995.⁵³⁰ The one opportunity Warren Christopher would have to speak on terrorism he would remain silent.⁵³¹ Throughout 1993 and 94 the president would repeatedly speak on the subject of terrorism but remained measured and took care to differentiate the actions one or two radicalized individuals with the whole of the Muslim community. On 22 July

528 Most wanted, 436. Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, *F.B.I.* https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/topten/topten-history/hires_images/FBI-436-RamziAhmedYousef.jpg/view

529 Ralph Blumenthal, “Tapes depict proposal to thwart bomb used in Trade Center blast,” *The New York Times*, October 28th, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/28/nyregion/tapes-depict-proposal-to-thwart-bomb-used-in-trade-center-blast.htm> l.

530 William J. Clinton: “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at the Adult Learning Center in New Brunswick, New Jersey,” March 1, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46264>; William J. Clinton: “Remarks on Receiving the Rotary International Award of Honor and an Exchange with Reporters,” March 4, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46293>; William J. Clinton: “Exchange with reporters following a meeting with Tilden Middle School Students,” March 4, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46294>; William J. Clinton: “Remarks on Signing the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Amendments of 1993 and an Exchange with Reporters,” March 4, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46295>; William J. Clinton: “The President’s News Conference with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt,” April 6, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46410>; William J. Clinton: “Remarks on the Dismissal of FBI Director William Sessions and an Exchange with Reporters,” July 19, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46868>; William J. Clinton: “Interview With the New York and New Jersey Media,” July 22, 1993. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46892>; William J. Clinton: “Remarks Announcing the Nomination of Louis Freeh to be FBI Director,” July 20, 1993. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46871>; William J. Clinton: “Remarks and an Exchange with Reporters on Immigration Policy,” July 27, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46906>; William J. Clinton: “Remarks to the 48th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City,” September 27, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=47119>; William J. Clinton: “Remarks at the ground-breaking Ceremony for the Pan Am Flight 103 Memorial in Arlington, Virginia,” December 21, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46261>; William J. Clinton: “The President’s News Conference with President Leonid Kravchuk of Ukraine,” March 4, 1994, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=49755>; William J. Clinton: “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union,” January 24, 1995, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=51634>; William J. Clinton: “Statement on the Apprehension of Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf,” February 8, 1995, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=50955>; William J. Clinton: “The President’s News Conference with Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany,” February 9, 1995, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=50959>; William J. Clinton: “Remarks to the Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom Policy Conference,” March 1, 1995, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=51049>; William J. Clinton: “The President’s News Conference with Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan,” April 11, 1995, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=51220>.

531 William J. Clinton: “Press Briefing by Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Secretary of Treasury Lloyd Bentsen,” July 7, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=60173>.

1993, in an interview with New York media, he acknowledged that people had the “right to be concerned” about Islamic immigration and he would come forward with proposals.⁵³² In front of journalists and flanked by his Attorney General, the president addressed the concerns raised by the terrorist attacks, specifically the questions raised in the media about uncontrolled immigration. In a speech that recognised the concerns but still adhered to the principles of America welcoming immigrants, the president set out his position:

...we must not, and we will not, surrender our borders to those who wish to exploit our history of compassion and justice. We cannot tolerate those who traffic in human cargo, nor can we allow our people to be endangered by those who would enter our country to terrorize Americans. But the solution to the problem of illegal immigration is not simply to close our borders. The solution is to welcome legal immigrants and legal legitimate refugees and to turn away those who do not obey the laws.⁵³³

He went on:

There's no question that the World Trade Center bombing has caused us to review a whole range of issues, not just involving immigration, in terms of our ability to deal with the whole threat of actual or potential terrorism. And when that happened, we began in earnest to review not only this issue but the capacity of our law enforcement agencies to deal with it, and we will continue to do that.⁵³⁴

In retrospect, the press conference should also have flagged up the troubles that the Attorney General Janet Reno was hinting in relation to poor information sharing between the intelligence agencies:

When I came into office, I found a service that too often did not communicate with law enforcement and vice-versa, that too often was not in communication with other Federal Agencies. I think it's imperative that we bring everyone together to communicate to do everything that we can to address the critical issue of terrorism.⁵³⁵

The problems that Reno was alluding to were not new but had been evolving over some time. As Coll notes, the CIA's counterterrorist centre that had been created in the mid 1980's during the hostage crises and with the support of Casey, had changed significantly.⁵³⁶ By 1993 the counterterrorist capability was

532 William J. Clinton: "Interview with the New York and New Jersey Media," July 22, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46892>.

533 William J. Clinton: "Remarks and an Exchange with Reporters on Immigration Policy," July 27, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=46906>;

534 Ibid.

535 Ibid.

536 Coll, *Ghost wars*, 252-253.

struggling with a large bureaucracy that was “dispersed” across the intelligence community. Moreover, “inter agency rivalry” and the budget cuts compounded the situation.⁵³⁷ The challenge between the legalistic mechanisms that Clinton envisioned in his speech which required the law enforcement agencies be deployed, versus the portrayal of terrorists as enemy combatants coming into America, was also creating a tension at the very heart of US counterterrorism. Also, there was no directive on paper as to which federal agency would take the lead.⁵³⁸ The Reagan policy of the State Department taking the lead had fallen apart following the Iran-Contra fallout. President George H.W. Bush had not had much call to focus on counterterrorism and now it appeared that Warren Christopher was not engaged with the issue either.

Combined with the challenges at the policy making level, there were other challenges facing the administration with the FBI. The FBI secrecy culture, where FBI agents would refuse to work with agents from other offices or interagency teams, was impeding the progress on counterterrorism within the CIA’s counterterrorist centre.⁵³⁹ This was made worse following the World Trade Center bombing when information on radicalised individuals was held back on the basis that there were laws in place banning “disclosure of grand jury evidence”⁵⁴⁰. In short, the US was ill-prepared for the challenge of terrorism.

The genesis of al Qaeda

The challenge from al Qaeda had been evolving over many years. The organisation was determined to right perceived wrongs against Islam. Fawaz Gerges, the noted academic on the Middle East, has argued that the emergence of al Qaeda was during the mid 1990’s.⁵⁴¹ Therefore, this thesis needs to consider Clinton’s beliefs and policies before and after al Qaeda came to power. This will then allow this thesis to explore how Clinton dealt with the threat from al Qaeda specifically. Gerges has identified two driving forces in al Qaeda. The first force he describes as the “entropy of local jihadist movements” which he

537 Ibid., 253.

538 Ibid.

539 Ibid., 255.

540 Ibid.

541 Fawaz A. Gerges, *The rise and fall of al-Qaeda*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 69.

pinpoints to the mid 1990's and the "reverberations of the Afghan jihad."⁵⁴² The entropy which describes the attacks like the World Trade Center and the shooting at Langley was infrequent and rare. In 1994 the State Department's own reports that out of the three hundred and twenty-one attacks during 1994, which it stated was a twenty-five per cent decrease over 1993, it was the lowest annual total in twenty-three years⁵⁴³. Only sixty-six of those attacks were described as "anti -US."⁵⁴⁴ Unsurprisingly, the issue of terrorism appeared to have been relegated to the back burner and the CIA's counterterrorist capability was engaged in internal turf battles. There were developments that suggested this complacency was ill advised. Between 1950 to the 1990's, much of the "militancy" associated with Islamism was inward focused, between Islamist groups fighting amongst themselves between those who were "obsessed with "renegade" [authors quotation marks] with Qur'anic based states or states governed by the sharia (Islamic law)."⁵⁴⁵ By 1988, with the Afghan-Soviet conflict concluding, one of the primary leaders of the Afghan Resistance Sheik Abdullah Yusuf Azzam created al Qaeda. Evan Kohlman, who at one time worked for the FBI and now acts as a terrorism consultant, has written that after the war against the Soviet Union, al Qaeda was determined to continue the jihad until the liberation of Jerusalem was achieved.⁵⁴⁶

Osama bin Laden was born on 30 July 1957 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia⁵⁴⁷. Rohan Gunaratna, the noted academic on terrorism, has suggested that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan persuaded bin Laden to get engaged on his jihadist life when two months after the invasion he flew from Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan "to assess the situation"⁵⁴⁸. However, it was when bin Laden and Azzam joined up to create the Afghan Services Bureau in 1984 that would provide a template for an organisational structure that could further the cause of waging a jihad as it provided the basis from which to recruit, train and fund potential jihadists, initially to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan.⁵⁴⁹ It would be claimed during the trial of Ramzi Yousef, the 1993 World Trade Center bomber,

542 Ibid.

543 US Department of State, Patterns of Global Terrorism, 1994, *Federation of American scientists*, https://fas.org/irp/threat/terror_94/index.html .

544 Evan Kohlman, *Al- Qaida's jihad in Europe: The Afghan Bosnian network*, (Oxford: Berg, 2004) 9.

545 Gerges, *The rise and fall of al- Qaeda*, 30

546 Ibid., 9.

547 Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside al Qaeda: Global network of terror*, (London: Hurst & company, 2002) 16, 21.

548 Ibid., 17.

549 Ibid., 18.

that he was one of those trained in the camps set up for jihadists.⁵⁵⁰ The aims of the jihadist movement in the 1980's was not focused on challenging the West but to create a Muslim caliphate by overthrowing secular or moderate Islamic leaders of states who would not enforce Sharia law⁵⁵¹. The al Qaeda jihadists were to form an Islamic rapid reaction force in supporting the overthrow of moderate Islamic regimes.⁵⁵²

During this period tensions became clear over the focus of the Afghan Service Bureau. The Egyptian jihadist fighters of the Bureau wanted to train the Mujahedeen in "terrorist techniques" so that these fighters could join the Egyptians in extending the focus of effort to a campaign in Egypt. Azzam wanted the focus of the efforts and the money the bureau was raising to be directed on Afghanistan alone. Bin Laden shared the aims of the Egyptian fighters and soon a split developed. With this, bin Laden broke from Azzam to create his own al Qaeda organisation, based out of Peshawar, in Pakistan.⁵⁵³ Events however conspired to help bin Laden when, on 24 November 1989, Azzam and his two sons were killed in a bomb blast in "mysterious circumstances."⁵⁵⁴ Bin Laden could now turn al Qaeda into "his own image, as an unflinchingly hostile global terrorist force", determined to destroy America and Israel and re-establish the Caliphate by way of a global jihad.⁵⁵⁵

The spectre of terrorism abroad: Bosnia and Somalia.

Two opportunities presented themselves to bin Laden to extend his power in claiming to lead a worldwide jihad - Bosnia and Somalia. The experience in Bosnia would turn out to be a useful "stepping stone" from which to escalate his activities⁵⁵⁶. Though not all Mujahedeen were members of al Qaeda, the Mujahedeen would bring with them combat experience from Afghanistan to the Bosnian War. This is evidenced by the case of Anwar Shaban, as argued by RAND corporation researchers in their book *Eurojihad* by Angel Rabassa and

⁵⁵⁰ Kohlman, *Al-Qaida's jihad in Europe*, 7.

⁵⁵¹ Gunaratna, *Inside al Qaeda*, 21.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁵⁴ Kohlman, *Al-Qaida's jihad in Europe*, 10

⁵⁵⁵ Gunaratna, *Inside al Qaeda*, 23

⁵⁵⁶ Kohlman, *Al-Qaida's jihad in Europe*, 226.

Cheryl Benard.⁵⁵⁷ Shaban, an imam of a mosque in Vienna, was an Afghan war veteran who would go onto command the Bosnian army's Mujahedeen contingent.⁵⁵⁸ The RAND researchers claimed that during the War Crimes Tribunal hearing in 2008, it was revealed that Shaban reported directly to al Qaeda leadership.⁵⁵⁹ Rabasa and Benard also found evidence of al Qaeda recruitment and training being provided for European Muslims who were sent to training centres in Indonesia and then either led terrorist operations in Europe or went to fight in the Bosnian War.⁵⁶⁰

The conflict in the Balkans had risen out of the collapse of the communist system and the rise of ethno-nationalistic sentiments. Although the main characteristics of the Balkans conflicts were driven by Serb resistance to the self-determination of other former Yugoslav ethnic and nationalist groups coupled with the promotion of the idea of a Greater Serbia, the conflict would also see the concept of *jihad* exported successfully out of Afghanistan to take root in Europe and then further West.

The break-up of Yugoslavia resulted in a complex set of wars mainly between Serbs, Croats and Bosnians that would witness somewhere between one thousand to five thousand, depending on estimates at different points in time, foreign Muslim fighters from outside the region entering the conflict and forming the *Bosanski mudžahedini* (Bosnian mujahedeen) or *El Mudžahid* to support and fight for the outgunned, under siege Bosnian Muslim community. Some of the fighters who had arrived in the Balkans appear to have been driven by religious fervour to support their Muslim brethren. Among them were fighters who had gained military experience in fighting against the Soviets in Afghanistan. These mujahedeen fighters in Afghanistan had been given no chance after the Soviet invasion in 1979 as evidenced by the prediction of the American ambassador that Moscow's forces would "wipe out the resistance in month."⁵⁶¹ The arrival of the mujahedeen into Bosnia was confirmed by the announcement of the Pakistani government of the closure of mujahedeen offices

557 Angel Rabasa and Cheryl Benard, *Eurojihad: Patterns of Islamist Radicalization and Terrorism in Europe*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

558 Ibid., 45.

559 Ibid., 46.

560 Ibid., 47.

561 Theodore L Eliot Jr, *Gorbachev's Afghan Gambit* (Cambridge, MA: Institute for Foreign policy research 1988) 1.

in the country and the threat of official deportation for any illegal foreign fighters who attempted to remain in Pakistan.⁵⁶²

There is one final element that is important in the evolution of terrorism arising out of the Bosnian conflict - money. The Balkan wars saw an explosion of funds from Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and Kuwait being channeled through Islamic charities and non-governmental organisations moving into countries “where Muslims were perceived to be under threat.”⁵⁶³ The Saudi’s alone are claimed to have provided some \$600 million. Much of that money was routed through the Islamic charities based in Saudi Arabia such as the “Saudi al-Haramin foundation.”⁵⁶⁴ The Islamic charity named “Third World Relief Agency”, headquartered out of Sudan, raised millions of dollars to assist in al Qaeda operations in Bosnia and Croatia. The link between funding of al Qaeda and its part in attacks on America would receive greater attention after ‘9/11’⁵⁶⁵. Ramzi Yousef was alleged to have told the US authorities in 1999 that had he had access to more money, he would have built a larger bomb.⁵⁶⁶

Clinton’s foreign policy nightmare that he inherited in Somalia would result in a dramatic reappraisal of his foreign policy, but it would also lead to criticism on his counterterrorist efforts. In 1996, less than two years after US troops had left Somalia, Thomas A. Henriksen (then a scholar associated with the Hoover Institute) described US involvement as “peripheral” to US interests, resulting in “failure”.⁵⁶⁷ Clinton had not intervened in Somalia but had inherited an ongoing foreign policy challenge from President George H.W. Bush in 1993. On 4 December 1992, less than two months before Clinton took office, Bush had deployed US troops to join a multinational effort in Somalia, saying:

I understand the United States alone cannot right the world's wrongs. But we also know that some crises in the world cannot be resolved without American involvement, that American action is often necessary as a catalyst for broader involvement of the community of nations. Only

562 Ibid., 16.

563 Gunaratna, *Inside al Qaeda*, 132.

564 Ibid.

565 David Johnston and Don Van Natta Jr. “Traces of terror: The Hearings; Congress inquiry will look into 9/11 will look back as far as ’86,” *The New York Times*, June 5, 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/06/05/us/traces-terror-hearings-congress-s-inquiry-into-9-11-will-look-back-far-86.html> ; Lee Wolosky, Maurice R. Greenberg and William Wechsler, “Task force report :Terrorist financing,” *Council on foreign relations*, 2002,

<https://www.cfr.org/report/terrorist-financing>; John Roth, Douglas Greenburg and Serena Wile, “Monograph on Terrorist Financing: Staff report to the commission, *National commission on Terrorist attacks* 2004, http://www.shieldor.net/images/stories/PDF/911_terrfin_monograph.pdf.

566 Matthew Levitt, "Stemming the Flow of Terrorist Financing: Practical and Conceptual Challenges," *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, 27: 1 (Winter/Spring 2003): 59-70.

567 Thomas H. Henriksen, *Clinton's Foreign Policy in Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, and North Korea*, (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1996) 12-13.

the United States has the global reach to place a large security force on the ground in such a distant place quickly and efficiently and thus save thousands of innocents from death.⁵⁶⁸

The Somalia deployment was expected to be a “short low risk and low-cost success” and was agreed with the blessing of the President-Elect Clinton and overwhelming public support.⁵⁶⁹ More recently, in an article by Stefano Reccia, a Cambridge University academic, it has been argued that the intervention was more about pragmatic reasons of stabilising a deteriorating security situation rather than any major altruistic motive about humanitarian concerns.⁵⁷⁰ Reccia argues that as peace “was collapsing” by sending in troops, Bush aimed to buy time before a larger peacekeeping force could be deployed.⁵⁷¹ Unfortunately, a month after Clinton had come to power, the security situation had deteriorated and what appeared to be achievable by the Bush administration was now proving to be a headache for Clinton, as the US military was faced with a number of humanitarian and security challenges, not least by the insurgent forces of rebel military commander Mohammad Farah Aideed.⁵⁷² It would however be the events of 3 October 1993 that would lead to the focus on the intervention coming under scrutiny. Gertz has argued that “Bill Clinton’s legacy from Somalia is that the United States became less safe and Bin Laden became more dangerous.”⁵⁷³

On October 3 forces loyal to Aideed would shoot down two US Black Hawk helicopters and, in a major street battle, kill eighteen US Army Rangers. In television pictures broadcast on CNN and across the world, the body of an American airman was shown being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu by baying crowds. Despite these events, in an Address to the Nation on 7 October 1993, the president would reiterate the aims of the mission and would commit to “getting this job done in Somalia, not only quickly but also

568 George Bush: "Address to the Nation on the Situation in Somalia," December 4, 1992, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=21758>.

569 McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism*, 154

570 Stefano Reccia, “Pragmatism over principle: US intervention and burden shifting in Somalia, 1992-93,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, February 28, 2018.

571 Ibid.

572 Diana Jean Schemo, Feb 21-27 “Anti-American riots; From hunger pangs to withdrawal pains in still violent Somalia,” *The New York Times*, February 28, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/02/28/weekinreview/feb-21-27-anti-american-riots-hunger-pangs-withdrawal-pains-still-violent.html>.

573 Gertz, *Intelligence failure*, 160.

effectively.”⁵⁷⁴ The President had judged the mood of the nation correctly as polls showed that between 37 per cent in an *ABC* poll and 43 per cent in an *CNN/USA Today* poll did not want US to withdraw.⁵⁷⁵ Clinton, however, would not get the job done and by the time all the US troops finally pulled out in March 1994, *The New York Times* would imply that the mission had failed:

In recent months, banditry and looting have increased in the cities and countryside. Although 19,000 United Nations troops remain, the American physical presence, with tanks and helicopters and a force as large as 26,000, acted as a psychological deterrent. United States and United Nations officials say they fear that unless Somali efforts for a political solution succeed, conditions will deteriorate.⁵⁷⁶

The Somalian experience would lead to a change in the direction of US foreign policy. As McCrisken has argued, the Clinton administration “lost much of their enthusiasm” from engaging in projects on humanitarian grounds.⁵⁷⁷ This would lead to calamitous outcomes in the Rwandan civil war between Tutsis and Hutus, leading to a massacre in April 1994 of Tutsis – an event so shocking that the UN would label it as a genocide.⁵⁷⁸ Samantha Power, an academic who would become the US ambassador to the United Nations between 2013 and 2017, would describe the conduct of the Clinton administration as having been a “bystander to genocide.” in 2001.⁵⁷⁹

Gertz’s argues that Clinton allowed bin Laden to claim the events as a “victory” thus enabling him to gain confidence.⁵⁸⁰ In developing his arguments, Gertz cites Yosef Bodansky to argue that bin Laden considered it a “milestone” in the evolution of al Qaeda.⁵⁸¹ Bodansky was an Israeli American counterterrorism expert who had served on the Congressional Task force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare in the House of Representatives between 1988 to 2004 and had published a book in 1999, called *Bin Laden: The*

574 William J. Clinton: "Address to the Nation on Somalia," October 7, 1993, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=47180>.

575 McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism*, 168.

576 Donatella Lorch, “US troops leave Somalia; What began as a mission of mercy closes with a little ceremony,” *The New York Times*, March 26, 1994, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/03/26/world/last-us-troops-leave-somalia-what-began-mission-mercy-closes-with-little.html>.

577 *Ibid.*, 169.

578 *Ibid.*

579 Samantha Power, “Bystanders to Genocide,” *The Atlantic*, September 2001, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2001/09/bystanders-to-genocide/30457/>.

580 Gertz, *Intelligence failure*, 151.

581 *Ibid.*, 149.

Man who declared war on America.⁵⁸² Gertz develops this idea suggesting that the events in Somalia had been used by bin Laden to claim a “public relations triumph.”⁵⁸³ As evidence of this triumph, Gertz cites three boastful media interviews made by bin Laden in 1997 (with *The Independent* newspaper correspondent Robert Fisk), 1998 (*ABC* TV network’s John Miller) and finally on 31 January 2002, (with *CNN*).⁵⁸⁴ In all these interviews bin Laden tries to argue that his actions in Somalia had “America dragging its tail’s in failure defeat and ruin.”⁵⁸⁵ Finally, Gertz would cite a *Wall Street Journal* article of 6 August 2002 to argue that the cumulative effect of these media interviews gave bin Laden the confidence to attack the US.⁵⁸⁶

Published evidence appears to confirm that bin Laden was behind the scenes in supporting the actions of Aideed in Somalia. Abdel Bari Atwan, the editor in chief of London based Arabic newspaper, *Al Quds-al Arabi*, has claimed that bin Laden was directing efforts from Sudan and this was not the first time the al Qaeda leader had engaged in activities in Africa.⁵⁸⁷ The first occasion was claimed to be the bombing of US troops, killing two in Yemen in December 1992.⁵⁸⁸ According to Atwan, the actions in Somalia were masterminded by Abu Ubayadah-al Banshiri, described as “al Qaeda’s military commander.”⁵⁸⁹

Michael Scheuer, the senior CIA officer who would lead Agency counterterrorism efforts against bin Laden between 1996-1998, would also confirm this involvement by bin Laden in Somalia in his book.⁵⁹⁰ Scheuer explained that US troops fell into a well organised trap set by al Qaeda and that they were “lure[d]” into this conflict.⁵⁹¹ Scheuer anchored his arguments by citing Michael Vlahos, a renowned American academic and media commentator on US counterterrorism strategy. Scheuer and Vlahos put forward four arguments to support their assertion that this was a pre-planned effort by al Qaeda in engaging the American troops. First, the Somalian intervention

582 Yosef Bodansky, *Bin Laden: The Man who declared war on America*, (Roseville, Calif.: Prima publishing, 2001).

583 Gertz, *Intelligence failure*, 151.

584 *Ibid.*, 159-160.

585 *Ibid.*, 159. Excerpt taken from the last of the three interviews with CNN on January 31, 2002.

586 *Ibid.*

587 Abdel bari Atwan, *The Secret History of al Qaeda*, (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2006) 49.

588 *Ibid.*

589 *Ibid.*

590 Scheuer, *Osama bin Laden*, 117.

591 *Ibid.*

created the narrative of “historical resonance of an infidel invader” coming into Muslim lands which had the effect of aiding radicalisation and recruitment to al Qaeda. Second, to try and provoke the Americans into a protracted conflict which would create a “steady flow” of casualties that bin Laden believed would damage public opinion and lead to America withdrawing. Third, this vacuum would clear the way for al Qaeda to achieve its goal of destroying Israel and those Arab regimes that were believed complicit with the West and the Shia nations. And fourth, this would create a grand Sunni coalition of “manpower, financial, [and] logistical” resources so that the US would be drawn into a “confrontation with all Islamic peoples”.⁵⁹²

However, this narrative of bin Laden as the hidden mastermind of terrorist attacks became known much later. As Coll has pointed out, the view of the intelligence agencies in 1993/94, was that bin Laden was a rich financier of jihadist causes but had “no solid evidence to associate him with terrorist attacks. Bin Laden seemed soft, scholarly, and more of a tycoon and a lecturer than a terrorist tactician.”⁵⁹³ Richard Clarke, Clinton’s counterterrorism coordinator, has also pointed out that in 1993 there was no connection made to any attacks to any network or to bin Laden.⁵⁹⁴ Nothing much was heard from bin Laden during this period in early 1990’s. In comparison with the late 1990’s when bin Laden gave frequent media interviews, the al-Qaeda leader did only one interview with Robert Fisk, on 6 December 1993, where he did not mention Somalia but admitted offering “training and assistance” to the mujahedeen in defeating the Soviet Union and his support for Bosnia. Given bin Laden’s media handling capabilities, had the al Qaeda leader boast about Somalia, where the US servicemen had been killed, he undoubtedly would have. Instead bin Laden was too busy in this interview building up his profile as a great mujahedeen fighter with a lot of luck or divine support:

Once I was only 30 metres from the Russians and they were trying to capture me. I was under bombardment, but I was so peaceful in my heart that I fell asleep... I saw a 120mm mortar shell land in front of me, but it did not blow up. Four more bombs were dropped from a Russian plane

⁵⁹² Scheuer, *Ibid.* citing Michael Vlahos *Terror's mask: Insurgency within Islam*. Johns Hopkins University, Applied Physics Laboratory, 2002.

⁵⁹³ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 265

⁵⁹⁴ Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 79.

on our headquarters, but they did not explode. We beat the Soviet Union. The Russians fled.⁵⁹⁵

All bin Laden commits to about Somalia in the Fisk interview was that he had been watching events closely.⁵⁹⁶ Only in the late interviews of 1997/ 98 does bin Laden construct a much more robust narrative to draw supporters to his cause. The opportunity to create a narrative that aimed to inform his followers of a valiant history of resistance against imperialist forces was too good an opportunity to miss. These interviews in 1997 and 1998 allowed bin Laden to position himself as the Islamic resistance fighter *primus inter pares*.

Whilst it could be plausibly argued that a boastful jihadist sitting in Sudan, relating tales of daring to a British journalist may have not been taken seriously by those in Washington, the more likely explanation appears to be that the issue of terrorism was relegated to the back burner in the first two years of the Clinton presidency and that bin Laden was not on the intelligence services radar as a threat. The inbox was getting bigger as the Clinton team appeared to be overwhelmed by the demands of foreign policy challenges. As Lake observed in his daily notes, the administration had been landed with “150 A priorities.”⁵⁹⁷ These daily notes, scribbled on five by three inch index cards, are now lodged with the Library of Congress and give a valuable insight into the challenges that appeared on the foreign policy agenda.⁵⁹⁸ Analysis of these cards indicate that between the date of the first card on October 1st 1993 and the end of the year, “Somalia” appeared on nineteen occasions. Meanwhile, “Haiti” (where Clinton was trying to push out the dictatorship of Raoul Cedras who had gained power by overthrowing the democratically elected government) and “Bosnia/Croatia” appeared nine times. There were no mentions of terrorist attacks, bin Laden, or al Qaeda in 1993. Lake’s daily notes do reveal, however, that the word “Osama” was on the agenda in a meeting with Richard Clarke and the president as early as 27 July 1994. Other agenda items on the same note for

595 Robert Fisk, “Anti-Soviet warrior puts his army on the road to peace: The Saudi businessman who recruited mujahedin now uses them for large-scale building projects in Sudan. Robert Fisk met him in Almatig,” *The Independent*, December 6, 1993, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/anti-soviet-warrior-puts-his-army-on-the-road-to-peace-the-saudi-businessman-who-recruited-mujahedin-1465715.html>.

596 Ibid.

597 No title, Box 44, *Anthony Lake Papers, 1916 -2003*. Manuscript division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
598 These cards, which are over five hundred in number make up the repository of papers stored at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. and cover the period of 1993-96. These cards which were dated appear from the 1 October 1993 to 25 September 1996. Box 43- 46, *Anthony Lake Papers 1916-2003*, Manuscript Division. Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

that meeting were “terrorism,” “bilateral coord[ination],” “Iraq,” “missile program” “artillery for Bosnia and an inexplicable item, “Moose passport”!⁵⁹⁹

Critics of Clinton would use Somalia as an example to argue that Clinton approached the task of countering the threat of terrorism through “criminal justice” instead of “going to war.”⁶⁰⁰ Gertz had accused Clinton of loathing the military.⁶⁰¹ That appears to be an overstatement in that Clinton in 1993 did project military power, but it would be against an old foe of the United States, Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. In a Department of Justice report which was prepared in conjunction with the FBI and Secret Service, it was found that on 14 -15 April 1993, when former President George H. W. Bush was due to make a private visit to Kuwait to mark the Allied victory in the Gulf War, an attempted assassination of the president, his family and his retinue had been planned by seventeen perpetrators who were found to be members of the Iraqi Intelligence services.⁶⁰² On 26 June 1993, President Clinton ordered a Tomahawk missile strike on Iraqi intelligence headquarters, which was described by the administration as being a “proportionate response”.⁶⁰³

In exploring this attack further, three conclusions arise which suggest that the Clinton administration became more circumspect about this projection of military power. First, by October, doubts arose over the quality of intelligence that had led to the action and, as *The New York Times* reported, it now seem questionable whether there was credible proof of the alleged plot against Bush and his entourage.⁶⁰⁴ Second, President Clinton in reflecting on the strike also appeared in his memoirs to concede that whilst his aim of wanting to “hit Iraq harder” had been achieved, all they had actually done was kill eight civilians.⁶⁰⁵ Third, the pollster Frank Luntz has argued that Clinton would pay a great deal of attention, and shape his policy, based on focus groups and public opinion. By Christmas Day 1994, journalist Richard Bernstein was suggesting that the

599 No title, Box 44, *Anthony Lake Papers, 1916 -2003*, Manuscript division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

600 Gertz, *Intelligence failure*, 191, 207.

601 *Ibid.*, 67.

602 Department of Justice, “Section D: The Bush Assassination attempt” in *The FBI Laboratory: An investigation into Laboratory practice and alleged misconduct in explosives -related and other cases*, *Federation of American Scientists*, <https://fas.org/irp/agency/doj/oig/fbilab1/fbil1toc.htm>.

603 Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 513.

604 Tim Weiner, “Plot by Baghdad to assassinate Bush is questioned,” *The New York Times*, October 24, 1993. <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/25/world/plot-by-baghdad-to-assassinate-bush-is-questioned.html>

605 Clinton, *My Life*, 526.

problem of terrorism required vigilance but cautioned against “overreacting” to what he viewed as “rare incidents.”⁶⁰⁶

Acting on terrorism?

In reviewing progress towards creating an effective counterterrorism strategy, 1993 and 1994 saw Clinton moving at a glacial pace to address the challenges that existed within his intelligence capability. The Somalia debacle appears to have had at least one positive impact towards the development of the Clinton administration’s counterterrorism efforts, in that Richard Clarke would emerge as an “indispensable figure” in Clinton’s team. Not only would Clarke manage the troop withdrawal from Somalia, but he would also become the point man to coordinate a multi-agency effort on combating the emerging terrorist threats.⁶⁰⁷ His responsibilities for leading counterterrorism coordination would not, however, be formalised until 1995. This appointment was crucial because the greatest challenge that faced the administration if it was to provide an effective counterintelligence capability to challenge terrorism would be to address the lack of inter-agency cooperation.

In 1994, Clinton made three specific interventions, which looked like addressing the problems of inter-agency cooperation and management. On 3 May 1994, he issued Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 24 which resulted in a joint CIA and Department of Justice Task Force led by Director Woolsey and Attorney General Janet Reno, directing both the parties to create “understanding of their respective needs... to cooperate earlier, more closely and consistently in which they have separate but parallel interests.”⁶⁰⁸ This arrangement was formalised through the creation of the National Counterintelligence Policy Board, chaired by Lake. PDD24 also suggested the creation of the National Counterintelligence Center to drive “interagency activities”.⁶⁰⁹ It appears the Clinton administration had grasped the nettle of creating a cohesive intelligence structure in support of counterterrorism

606 Richard Bernstein, “Terrorism, Difficult to prevent or forget,” *The New York Times*, December 25, 1994. <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/12/25/nvregion/terrorism-difficult-to-prevent-or-forget.html>.

607 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 388

608 “U.S. Counterintelligence effectiveness,” Presidential Decision Directive /NSC-24, The White House, Washington D.C. May 3, 1994, *Federation of American Scientists*, <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd/pdd-24.pdf>.

609 Ibid.

although as this thesis reveals, it would not end up being realised in practice. According to a statement issued by White House Press Secretary Jake Siewert on 5 January 2001, fifteen days before the end of Clinton's second term, the counterintelligence board still had not been formed.⁶¹⁰

Clinton appears to have tried again to improve federal coordination when in September 1994, he issued PDD 29 to improve "Security Policy coordination".⁶¹¹ This aimed to extend the interagency cooperation by extending the National Security Policy Board to include the Pentagon, Departments of Justice, State, Energy, Commerce, the Office of Management and Budget, the White House National Security Council, the CIA and the DIA⁶¹². The aim of this initiative is more an effort to streamline budgets and prevent duplication. Whilst both these procedural moves appeared to suggest that the administration recognised the deficits in counterintelligence capability and a desire to streamline budgets, no specific moves appear to have been made in bolstering counterterrorism capability.

Conclusions

This chapter has begun the exploration of Clinton's record on counterterrorism. Specifically, it has explored three key elements. First, what did the President and the rest of his administration address or recognise in the challenge of terrorism in the first two years of the presidency? Second, how fit for purpose was the CIA to pivot away from traditional superpower challenges faced during the Cold War toward the challenges presented by terrorism? Third, what and how did the challenge of terrorism come to be understood and manifest itself during these two years?

In exploring these questions, this chapter has suggested that President Clinton, before he came to power, showed no appreciable understanding or interest in the challenge of terrorism. This lack of expertise and interest, however, was not unusual since the last major terrorist incident was already four years old and President George H.W. Bush had not been as vociferous as the

610 William J. Clinton: "Press Briefing by Jake Siewert," January 5, 2001, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=47888>.

611 "Security Policy Coordination," Presidential Decision Directive/ NSC-29, The White House, Washington D.C., September 16, 1994, *Federation of American Scientists*, <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd/pdd-29.pdf>.

612 Ibid.

Reagan Administration on this issue. Moreover, the Clinton electoral strategy relied on focussing on pocketbook issues of economy and jobs to differentiate himself from President Bush. If the observations of his National Security advisors are to be believed, once in power President Clinton appears to have been overwhelmed by the foreign policy challenges he faced. The fracturing of the Balkans and the security nightmare of Somalia were hard lessons for an inexperienced Cold Warrior centric administration to try and address. Warren Christopher focused on what he knew best, which could be argued was the traditional diplomatic challenges that earlier administrations had focused on in terms of the Middle East and the Balkans. Meanwhile, Les Aspin, the intellectual giant, was caught up with the 'gays in the military' issue which took up a good deal of his attention in the early months of the Clinton presidency. It could however be argued that with a misfiring CIA whose role and future looked uncertain, the administration was not getting the information about the evolution of the terrorism threat.

Whilst with the benefit of hindsight it was always possible for critics to say that Clinton should have paid greater attention to terrorism at the start of his administration, as Coll has suggested the view on bin Laden was that he was not considered a threat by the intelligence agencies. Getz's claims that bin Laden appears to have telegraphed his intentions of attacking America appears to be an over simplification of the evidence. In 1993 when he had decided to boast of his invincibility to Robert Fisk of *The Independent*, he did not mention Somalia. It was only from 1997 onwards that bin Laden was becoming increasingly known around the world. Both Fisk in his 1997 interview and Miller in his 1998 ABC interview, would be used by bin Laden to build a platform for his message. Having been feted in the Western media for his efforts against the Soviet Union, he was using the very same media to build his own narrative of inflicting military defeat against the Americans. There is evidence to suggest he was involved in Somalia, but the CIA remained unaware of his existence until the mid 1990's. By then al Qaeda had evolved into the leading Islamic resistance movement against the world. To be able to add a list of military triumphs would not only draw in more supporters but raise more funds.

The CIA, as this chapter has explored, was in the midst of an existential crisis in terms of its culture, budget, and operating scope, and was badly in need

of experienced leadership. Garthoff's assertion that Woolsey was the logical candidate turned out not to be the case. The mission and vision of the CIA was under threat and it required a change manager who not only understood the challenge of leading a covert organisation but could address congressional concerns of excessive secrecy that had created a bloated organisation and a headquarters building project that did not chime with the mood of austerity in defence matters as projected by the President. As a leader, Woolsey appears to have lost the support of his President, which was unfortunate, but he should perhaps have known what he was letting himself into when Clinton had suggested that he viewed the CIA more as a policy think tank and did not see its Director as his foreign policy consigliere – that job had already gone to Lake. Woolsey's inflexible management style appears to have hindered his progress in the administration due to his lack of transparency over budgets, his desire to read aloud to the President when Clinton preferred to read alone and raise questions after, and his lack of taking firm action over the Ames spy scandal all appear to suggest he was a man out of tune with the needs of the job. While he recognised the need for cooperation in building counterterrorism intelligence capability and sponsoring the innovative drone programme, his greatest challenge lay with the new Director of FBI, Louis Freeh who saw himself as the leader of the Intelligence community. The FBI was not however without its problems. As Zegart had concluded the FBI in the early 1990's had been set up as to prosecute individuals and support local law enforcement but not for "managing a coordinated national counterterrorist programme."⁶¹³

Finally, the recently concluded Soviet Afghan War had created a cadre of non-state fighters with the capability and confidence to militarily challenge a superpower, and now under Clinton's watch that fighting capability was being exported to the Bosnian conflict as jihadists extended their reach into Europe. Support from charities within the Arab World and the awakening of a religious revivalism amongst leading figures such as Abdullah Yusuf Azzam and Osama bin Laden may have given this movement momentum, but it was the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Kasi and Yousef that turned grievance into action. For a military superpower like the United States at the height of its unchallenged

613 Zegart, *Spying blind*, 123.

supremacy in the early 1990s, their actions may have seemed to be mere pin pricks, but each attack successfully executed gave the forces adopting terrorist tactics against the United States greater momentum and confidence. If these attacks were not enough, then the experience in Somalia should have been a bugle call to the intelligence agencies that something was afoot, and the alarm bells should have started ringing within the administration. On the basis of what it seems was known at the time, the attacks of 1993 did not seem to require the Clinton administration to change tack to snuff out the threat from bin Laden, because at that stage the intelligence agencies appear not to have had any proof that suggested a threat of greater magnitude, not least because the al Qaeda leader was at this point willing to speak freely with a British journalist, to brag about his activities in Afghanistan.

In reflecting on the counterterrorism decisions made during 1993/94 the perseverance with the strategy of domestic law enforcement into investigating terrorism, that had been evident in the response to the Pan Am 103 bombing, suggests mission creep for a national security machinery that was not set up for that task. In hindsight, it does appear that the evolution of the fissiparous threat from terrorism appeared not to have been recognised. The strategy of viewing terrorism through state sponsored actions led to a muscular response against Saddam Hussein, albeit with question marks attached. However, to adopt the same strategy against an adversary like bin Laden, who only appears in administration documentation once in two years between 1993 and 1994, suggests as Clarke has argued that to strike at bin Laden at this stage would have been a disproportionate reaction given what was known.

Nonetheless, Clinton's PDD's suggests that in 1994 he was inching towards a solution to getting better intelligence cooperation which could be argued was fundamental to challenging a threat like non-state terrorism. The challenge of delivering this solution was further complicated by difficulties at the CIA and between the FBI Director and Clinton. In terms of opportunity to address foreign policy issues, Clinton's 1994 midterm election loss was a body blow. Foreign policy, which had been predicated on delivering the end of Cold War peace dividend, would now come under greater pressure from new Speaker of the House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, and vociferous Republicans.

Chapter Three: The Many Faces of the Spectre (1995-96).

Introduction

On 19 April 1995, Timothy McVeigh carried out the biggest ever domestic terrorist attack on the American mainland when he bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, the home of multiple federal law enforcement agencies. McVeigh's attack marked the midpoint in a series of terrorist incidents over 1995 and 1996 in locations as diverse as Manila, Tokyo, Atlanta and Riyadh, that stretched the Clinton administration's counterterrorism capabilities. Whilst these attacks were perpetrated by a diverse set of actors with different motivations, 1996 also saw the first *fatwa* issued by Osama bin Laden against the United States. This chapter explores not only these attacks but also the counterterrorism response made by the Clinton administration and the US intelligence agencies. In doing so, this chapter explores and reflects upon three key questions. First, how did Clinton understand the problem of terrorism and present it to the American people? Second how effectively did he influence Congress to pass legislation to address terrorism? And third, how did Clinton organise and lead the intelligence community and garner other federal resources to address the challenges from terrorism?

This chapter will show why during this two-year period, Clinton demonstrated reluctance in his statements to focus upon the evolving threat of non-state actors, even though these were overwhelmingly the perpetrators of the attacks the US faced. This chapter explores how Clinton could justifiably claim that his law enforcement approach to counterterrorism was paying dividends. Although the FBI struggled to bring the perpetrators of the attacks to justice, their penetrating investigations suggested the administration was rising to the challenge of terrorism. However, as this chapter argues, Clinton had multiple opportunities to promote a greater understanding of the threat from non-state actors, not only in his post-attack references but also during his 1996 re-election campaign. Clinton's difficulty in articulating the threat gave his critics the ammunition to argue that he was negligent in facing the challenge

Gathering Storms

The events of the first three months of 1995 would see terrorism pushed up the ladder of priorities.⁶¹⁴ Two events in Manila and Tokyo would demonstrate the increasing capabilities of non-state actors on terrorism. The first event was the discovery of a plot to bomb twelve airliners simultaneously and to assassinate the Pope during a papal visit to Manila. On 7 January 1995 in the early hours of the morning, the local fire brigade was called to deal with an incident in a flat in downtown Manila. Police also arrived and upon entering the flat found sophisticated bomb making ingredients, timers and switches.⁶¹⁵ Evidence found at the scene pointed to an elaborate plot to bomb twelve US airliners simultaneously using miniature bombs, as they were crossing the Pacific.⁶¹⁶ Route details were also found of a Papal visit to Manila indicating an attempt was to be made on Pope John Paul II's life. A laptop was also found in the burnt-out rubble of the flat belonging to Ramzi Yousef, the man being hunted for the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. When Federal Aviation Authorities (FAA) and national security personnel were alerted to the magnitude of these finds there was plenty of consternation, with no one knowing "when the attacks were to start or how to stop them."⁶¹⁷

Few details have been made public about this plot. Neither President Clinton nor Warren Christopher mention it in their respective autobiographies, although it is mentioned in Richard Clarke's account.⁶¹⁸ As a kneejerk response, FAA officials "order[ed] up virtually every pertinent security measure in the book at West Coast and Asian Airports."⁶¹⁹ Planes were grounded under Presidential authority – a move ordered by Leon Panetta, then White House Chief of Staff. Tighter security measures followed in mid-January 1995, including extensive baggage searches, restrictions on carrying containers and liquids, and searches of US carrier planes. The White House also extended this to foreign carriers flying to the US. Alongside these measures a program of

614 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 226

615 *Ibid.*, 21.

616 *The 9/11 commission report*, 153.

617 *Ibid.*

618 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 93.

619 *Ibid.*, 21.

counterterrorism actions was also outlined some days later on 24 January 1995.⁶²⁰

This discovery of the plot coincided with a major terrorist attack on 23 January in Beit Lid, Israel. *The New York Times* referred to it as the work of “Islamic radicals” designed to derail the Palestinian peace talks.⁶²¹ In October 1994, in a rare statement on terrorism, Christopher who had rarely spoken of the threat from terrorism, mentioned Hamas, Hezbollah, “and other extremists”, singling out Iraq and Iran as state sponsors of terrorism.⁶²² On 24 January 1995 the White House gave a briefing on the direction of counterterrorism policy. It included several new initiatives including a new Executive Order which was issued on 23 January 1995 (E.O. 12947):

This EO is designed to address the issue of terrorist financing by blocking transfers to these [named in the attachment] terrorist groups and individuals and by freezing accounts, while we are not certain about the volume of funds that we will seize or stop, we know that we are sending a very powerful message to potential donors by criminalizing this activity. The executive order, as you know, designates 12 terrorist organizations...And it also designates 18 individuals who are associated with these groups.⁶²³

It left open the possibility of adding other names.⁶²⁴ The list of terrorist organisations included those directly associated with state sponsored terrorism such as Abu Nidal, Hamas and Hezbollah but made no mention of al Qaeda.⁶²⁵ The statement also announced the intention of the administration to bring forward anti-terrorism legislation.⁶²⁶ The aim of this legislation was to “strengthen our ability not only to deter terrorist acts, but to also punish those who engage in such terrorism.” It had five key aims. It would:

1. Give federal jurisdiction over any international terrorist act committed in the United States;

620 William J. Clinton: "Background Briefing by Senior Administration Officials," January 24, 1995, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=59442>.

621 Clyde Haberman, “Suicide bomb kill 19 in Israel; shadow cast over peace talks,” *The New York Times*, January 23, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/23/world/suicide-bombs-kill-19-in-israel-shadow-cast-over-peace-talks.html>.

622 Christopher, *In the Stream of history*, 200.

623 Executive order 12947, “Prohibiting Transactions with Terrorists Who Threaten to disrupt the Middle East Peace Process” January 23, 1995, *Government Publishing Office*, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-1995-01-25/pdf/X95-110125.pdf>.

624 Ibid.

625 Executive order 12947, “Prohibiting Transactions with Terrorists Who Threaten to disrupt the Middle East Peace Process.” (Annex).

626 William J. Clinton: "Background Briefing by Senior Administration Officials."

2. Criminalize any plan to conspire to commit terrorist acts abroad;
3. Provide fast track deportations for any foreigner suspected of engaging in terrorist activity;
4. Provide “mechanisms” to stop terrorist to raising funds in the US to support international terrorism actions;
5. All potential bomb making ingredients to carry a chemical signature that would make them easier to detect and therefore aid investigators.⁶²⁷

The White House also mentioned other provisions, described as “technical in nature.”⁶²⁸ This included the provision that the FBI would become the lead agency on counterterrorism in a new counterterrorism centre working with “military experts.”⁶²⁹ The provision of using the military, especially in domestic matters, would require a significant amendment of the *Posse Comitatus* Act of 1878 which limited the powers of the federal government in using federal military personnel to enforce domestic policies within the US. In the press conference that followed, the spokesperson managed expectations of what this legislation could hope to achieve by suggesting that it “would not eliminate terrorism ... but would help”.⁶³⁰

The next time the administration referred to this legislation was on 8 February 1995, when the president announced the capture of Ramzi Yousef.⁶³¹ Yousef was captured in Islamabad, Pakistan in a joint operation between Pakistan Special Forces and “a hastily assembled team of all the American officials who could handle weapons and kick down doors.”⁶³² Though Yousef’s capture did not immediately end the heightened security protocols at US airports, there would be some relaxing over time.⁶³³

The statement that followed from Clinton gave further clues as to his evolving counterterrorism strategy. Three elements stood out. First, Clinton presented Yousef’s capture as an act of cooperation by the Pakistani government, avoiding the more colourful language employed by Benjamin and

627 Ibid.

628 Ibid.

629 Clinton, *My Life*, 65.

630 Ibid.

631 William J. Clinton: “Statement on the Apprehension of Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf,” February 8, 1995, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=50955>.

632 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 25.

633 Ibid.

Simon in describing the capture by gun-toting Americans kicking down doors. Yousef's capture was described as an act of law enforcement where the suspect "had been arrested and turned over to US authorities in accordance with International law."⁶³⁴ The multilateral stance on counterterrorism was consistent with previous statements by the Bush administration.⁶³⁵ Clinton's statement emphasised this, by stating: "We will continue to work with other nations to thwart those who would kill innocent citizens to further their own political aims."⁶³⁶ His statement also repeated the promise to introduce new legislation that would "strengthen our abilities to act quickly and decisively against this threat to peace." The next day on 9 February 1995, Clinton contacted Congress asking for a prompt and favourable consideration for the proposals of his anti terrorism legislation.⁶³⁷

Yousef's capture would make front page news in *The New York Times* on 9 February 1995 as the alleged perpetrator of the World Trade Center attack.⁶³⁸ There was still no mention of events in Manila. The first media reports of the Manila plot would only appear in May 1995 during Yousef's trial and that of Abdul Hakim Murad.⁶³⁹ By then, the media had already moved onto another terrorist attack that was much closer to home in Oklahoma City in April 1995. Three elements out of the investigations from the Manilla fire would reveal the close association between bin Laden and Yousef. First, Pakistani intelligence sent a report that was forwarded both to the CIA and FBI that revealed the guest house where Yousef had been staying and which had been subsidised by bin Laden.⁶⁴⁰ Second, it was alleged that the Manila apartment used by Ramzi had been paid by a brother-in-law of bin Laden.⁶⁴¹ Third, the Manila police sent a "briefing report" to American investigators disclosing that they had found details of a plot to hijack an aircraft and "dive it at the CIA headquarters."⁶⁴²

634 Ibid.

635 Morris D. Busby, "U.S. counterterrorism policy in the 1980s and the priorities for the 1990s"

636 William J. Clinton: "Statement on the Apprehension of Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf."

637 William J. Clinton: "Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Legislation to Combat Terrorism," February 9, 1995, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=50967>.

638 David Johnston "Fugitive in Trade Center blast is caught and returned to the US," *The New York Times*, February 9, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/02/09/nyregion/fugitive-in-trade-center-blast-is-caught-and-returned-to-us.html>.

639 "Terrorists plotted to blow up 11 U.S. jumbo jets" May 28, 1995, *Baltimore Sun*, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1995-05-28/news/1995148047_1_bojinka-philippines-plot.

640 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 274.

641 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 25.

642 Coll, *Ghost Wars* 275.

The significance of the discoveries in Manila would be re-examined by the '9/11' National Commission. The commission would conclude that the strategy of blowing up planes was a meaningful change from hijackings, which had been perpetrated by earlier terrorists. The Commission argued that hijackings had been abandoned as a mode of attack as it was felt by terrorists to be "too complex."⁶⁴³ Also, the bombing of the Pan Am flight had shown that "it was a promising means to inflict mass casualties," and generate headlines.⁶⁴⁴ Another conclusion that also signaled that terrorism was evolving, from state to non-state, was the assertion that any hijacked plane would have "no friendly countries to land."⁶⁴⁵

The events of Manila signaled a significant capability uplift of non-state actors as terrorism took a darker turn. On 20 March 1995 news reached Washington, DC of a poison gas attack, suspected to be Sarin, on the Tokyo Metro in Japan. The attack claimed twelve lives, severely injured fifty more, and caused minor impairments to an estimated five thousand people. Sarin is a highly toxic nerve gas, thought at the time to be held only by countries with chemical warfare capability. When the Japanese police finally traced the attack to a religious cult called Aum Shinrikyo, the significance of a non-state actor being able to access a weapon of this magnitude was considered serious. As Benjamin and Simon argue: "this attack also pulled the rug out from under one of the hallowed verities of counterterrorism—namely, that terrorist groups might want to acquire weapons of mass destruction for the sake of bargaining leverage but would not actually use them."⁶⁴⁶ For Clinton, this attack focused his mind on the dangers posed by biological weapons falling into the hands of non-state actors. Richard Clarke noted that the US had no capability to deal with a biological weapons attack since the "old Cold War civil defense program had withered and died even before the end of Cold War."⁶⁴⁷ Clarke observes that the president wanted answers so began to inform himself by reading books and consulting experts:

Some books he sent to us for our comments. Some he discussed directly with experts from outside the government. The books just reinforced

643 *The 9/11 commission report*, 153.

644 *Ibid.*, 154.

645 *Ibid.*, 153.

646 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 229.

647 Clarke, *Against all Enemies*, 158.

what he had already decided: we needed to do more to prevent terrorists from getting their hands on these weapons and we needed to be ready if they did.⁶⁴⁸

The response to the developments in Tokyo was a joint effort by the Clinton administration working with Republican and Democrat Senators to sponsor a bill to equip and train emergency personnel and medical services to respond to a biological, chemical or nuclear attack on America. The bill was sponsored in the Senate by Republicans Richard Lugar and Pete Domenici and Democrat Richard Lugar and came to be known as Defense against Weapons of Mass Destruction Act in 1996. The justification argued by Senators was that following the disintegration of the Soviet Union a threat from bio weapons required the US to be ready to meet the challenge not just from state sponsored actors but also groups or individuals.⁶⁴⁹ North Korea, Iraq, Iran and Libya were specifically identified as posing the greatest threat.⁶⁵⁰ One of the key requirements that the Act specified was that coordination of this effort was to be out of the White House, with Clarke being given overall responsibility.

Clinton continued to be mindful of this threat of bioterrorism throughout his presidency. Both PDD (Presidential Decision Directive) 35 and 39 issued in 1995 and PDD 62 supported a program of action against bioterrorism, including ensuring intelligence agencies remained focused on this threat. *The New York Times* would report that by 1998 the US government was spending \$1 billion a year on combatting bioterrorism.⁶⁵¹ The administration took the threat of bioterrorism so seriously that by 1998 the Pentagon was vaccinating every member of the Armed Services against Anthrax.⁶⁵² The administration appears to have been prescient as George Tenet, Director of the CIA from 1996, would reveal how in 1999 al Qaeda “spared no effort” to develop bio weapons capability by recruiting Pakistani scientists.⁶⁵³ The more startling revelation from Tenet was that in parallel with ‘9/11’ planning there was an operation to develop an Anthrax attack on the US. It was only with the capture

648 Ibid., 162.

649 “Appendix E : Threat Findings of the Nunn-Lugar -Domenici Act,” *Rand.org*, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1251/MR1251.AppE.pdf

650 Ibid.

651 Judith Miller, “Clinton seeks additional \$300 million to fight bioterrorism,” *The New York Times*, June 9, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/06/09/us/clinton-seeks-additional-300-million-to-fight-bioterrorism.html> .

652 Ibid.

653 Tenet, *At the Center of the storm*, 278.

of the scientists in December 2001 through a CIA covert ops that further tragedy was prevented.⁶⁵⁴ The criticism that Clinton only focused on terrorism when it was in the public eye is therefore unfounded.⁶⁵⁵

Clinton's Counterterrorism Strategy: Multilateral Cooperation and Law Enforcement.

Terrorism was evolving, and the president needed a robust strategy that could deal not just with threats of bio terrorism but bring clarity to how he dealt with the challenge of non-state actors. Early in 1995, at the World Economic Forum in Davos Switzerland, Clinton had touched on terrorism as one of a number of threats to economic stability in an interconnected world:

This [the currency crisis in Mexico] is not just true for economic affairs but also for a whole range of other problems, like attacking the capital movements by drug cartels and organized crime, dealing seriously with the interconnection of global terrorisms or environmental policies that have regional impact or social policies that bear on the global population issue.⁶⁵⁶

Clinton argued that by strengthening and adapting international institutions, like the UN, countries could hope to overcome the challenge posed by these borderless threats.⁶⁵⁷ It was becoming evident both in this and his statement after Yousef's capture, that Clinton's counterterrorist approach utilised global interconnectivity and jurisdictional cooperation. Clinton needed to deliver a future proof strategy that would not only be able to cope with terrorism from state sponsored actors but also rise to the threat of non-state actors. Shultz was the last person that had thrown a proverbial hand grenade into counterterrorism thinking when he had spoken of pre-emptive retaliation and use of the military.

Though the administration would mention terrorism on thirty occasions between January and March 1995, the direction was clear. Law enforcement would be the primary pillar in counterterrorism strategy. On 6 March 1996,

654 Ibid., 278-279.

655 Getz, *Intelligence Failure*, 177.

656 William J. Clinton: "Remarks to the World Economic Forum," January 26, 1995, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=51667>.

657 Ibid.

Tony Lake addressed the issue of force against terrorism in a speech at George Washington University.⁶⁵⁸ This speech set out with the goal of addressing “when to use force how to use it.” Lake reiterated the administration’s position by stating:

We’re waging a tough counter-terrorism campaign with stronger laws ... increased funding, manpower and training for law enforcement...sanctions against states that sponsor terrorism...and closer cooperation with foreign governments... we’ve tracked down terrorists and brought them to justice around the world.⁶⁵⁹

Lake left the door open for use of force “against aggression” and preventing terrorism, when he argued for the use of force in “seven circumstances”:

1. To defend against direct attacks on the United States, its citizens, and its allies;
2. To counter aggression;
3. To defend our key economic interests, which is where most Americans see their most immediate stake in our international engagement;
4. To preserve, promote and defend democracy, which enhances our security and the spread of our values;
5. To prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, international crime and drug trafficking;
6. To maintain our reliability, because when our partnerships are strong and confidence in our leadership is high, it is easier to get others to work with us, and to share the burdens of leadership.
7. And for humanitarian purposes, to combat famines, natural disasters and gross abuses of human rights with, occasionally, our military forces.⁶⁶⁰

In comparison with Weinberger’s six principles on the use of force from 1984, Lake’s “circumstances” are more focused on supporting democracy promotion and humanitarian intervention. Lake’s speech appears not to have received universal support within the White House. In a joint email from Bennet Freeman and Tom Malinowski⁶⁶¹ to Tony Blinken⁶⁶² that “the list [the seven circumstances] is so broad that it doesn’t answer the question; it implies we will use force when we feel like it.”⁶⁶³

658 Anthony Lake, Remarks at George Washington University “Defining missions, setting deadlines: Meeting New Security challenges in the Post-Cold War world” *The White House*, Washington D.C., March 6, 1996.

<https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/textonly/WH/EOP/NSC/html/speeches/tlgwu.html>.

659 Ibid.

660 Ibid.

661 Bennett Freeman: Deputy Assistant Secretary of State (April 1999-Jan 2001). Tom Malinowski: Senior Director on the National Security Council, Policy Planning staff (1998-2001).

662 Tony Blinken: NSC Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Strategic Planning and NSC Senior Director for Speechwriting (1994-200)

663 Bennet Freeman and Tom Malinowski, “Lake Speech” [email] to Tony Blinken, *Clinton Presidential Records*, Lake -Use -of Force- Background 3/6/96[1] [3385], Little Rock, Arkansas.

In retrospect this was a missed opportunity. Lake could have described the evolution of terrorism in more detail by drawing a comparison between terrorism perpetrated by state sponsored attackers versus non-state perpetrators. This would have enabled him to situate US counterterrorism policy against non-state actors by using intelligence gatherings followed by diplomatic pressure and judicial process in its proper context. Lake's lack of focus on non-state actors could be explained by Tenet's revelations that between 1991-96 bin Laden was viewed within the administration as "principally a financier of terrorist attacks."⁶⁶⁴ Yousef had shown what a terrorist without state backing could achieve; so too had the perpetrators of the Tokyo Gas attack. The debate about terrorism would have benefitted if Lake had extended America's vision beyond the 'traditional' adversaries based in the Middle East and North Korea.

Rising from the Rubble of Oklahoma City Bomb

Clinton had a major political problem coming into 1995. The 1994 midterm elections had delivered a bitter result for the Democrats. Following a 54-seat swing from Democrats to Republicans, the Grand Old Party gained a majority of seats in the House of Representatives for the first time since 1952. It was also the largest seat gain for the Republicans since 1946, and the largest for either party since 1948. It had also brought to power Newton Leroy (Newt) Gingrich. A Pennsylvanian but who represented Georgia, Gingrich would become the Speaker of the House in 1995. His election victory had been on the back of a policy vision, "Contract with America", a document that he had co-authored with Dick Armey, another Republican congressman who would also become House Majority Leader in 1995. 'Contract with America' was presented as an alternative to Clinton's vision for America including cutting the size of government and lowering taxes. It has been argued by historian Steven Gillon that Gingrich seized the mantle of offering a "third way," from Clinton.⁶⁶⁵ In his

664 DCI Testimony Before the Joint Inquiry into Terrorist Attacks Against the United States, "Unclassified Version of Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet's Testimony Before the Joint Inquiry into Terrorist Attacks Against the United States", *Central Intelligence Agency*, https://www.cia.gov/news-information/speeches-testimony/2002/dci_testimony_06182002.html.

665 Gillon, *The Pact*, 136-137.

memoirs, the president accepted the responsibility for the Democratic Party's losses:

Contribut[ing] to the demise by allowing my first weeks to be defined by gays in the military; by failing to concentrate on the campaign until it was too late; and by trying to do too much too fast in a news climate where my victories were minimized, my losses magnified, and the overall impression was created that I was just another pro tax, big government liberal, not the New Democrat who had won the presidency.⁶⁶⁶

The struggle between Clinton and Gingrich would become the defining agenda during the rest of the Clinton presidency. It would come to impact on Clinton's counterterrorism legislative ambitions. *Time Magazine* would refer to them as the "famous fraternal twins of American power, yin and yang of the Baby Boom, polar extremes of Pennsylvania Avenue."⁶⁶⁷ Clinton and Gingrich's rivalry was a struggle to define the American political agenda. At times it was rancorous, bitter, and personal. Clinton accused Gingrich of personal smears by stating that Gingrich had described the president as "the enemy of normal Americans."⁶⁶⁸ There was also the issue of foreign policy leadership. Clinton complained that Gingrich was marginalising him "under which he [Gingrich] as Prime Minister set the course for domestic policy, while I as President was restricted to handling foreign affairs."⁶⁶⁹ Into this maelstrom of political difficulty, Delaware Senator Joe Biden introduced the Omnibus Counterterrorism Bill on 2 February 1995 in the Senate.⁶⁷⁰ The bill was a Democratic led initiative; along with Biden, six Democrats and one Republican senator supported this bill.⁶⁷¹ A similar bill was introduced on the same day in the House of Representative by Democrat Congressman Charles Schumer. The prospects for the bill to pass unchallenged looked bleak in a House where Republicans were in the ascendancy. However, as the bill slowly progressed, events would overtake the legislation's progress.

666 Clinton, *My life*, 629.

667 Gillon, *The Pact*, 135, citing Lance Morrow, "Newt's World" *Time*, December 25, 1995.

668 Clinton, *My Life*, 633.

669 *Ibid.* 650.

670 Sen. Joseph Biden, "S.390 - Omnibus Counterterrorism Bill, 104 Congress," *Congress. Gov.*, February 10, 1995, <https://www.congress.gov/104/bills/s390/BILLS-104s390is.pdf>.

671 Cosponsors were Democrat Senators Arlen Specter, Herb Kohl, Robert Kerrey, Alfonse D'Amato, Barbara Mikulski, and Diane Feinstein. The sole Republican was Jon Kyl.

The bomb that destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah building on a bright spring morning in Oklahoma City on 19 April 1995 would be described by FBI Director Louis Freeh as the “worst terrorist attack [upon the US] by its citizenry.”⁶⁷² This attack would prove to be pivotal in terms Clinton’s attention to terrorism. It would also highlight some of the fault lines that existed in the media’s understanding of terrorism. Though the perpetrator of the attack would be quickly identified as Timothy McVeigh, a white American, the media continued to run with the narrative of a Middle Eastern perpetrator. This, despite the FBI posting McVeigh’s picture!

McVeigh was from the fringes of US society. According to the *Washington Post*, he came from a broken home and a failed army career. A “drifter” with a love of “guns and explosives”, he reportedly held a misplaced belief in a government conspiracy to spy on him by implanting a microchip in his buttocks.⁶⁷³ His motives for the bombing, according to a *New York Times* report, appeared to be an act of rage fuelled by his belief that the federal government’s actions in violently ending the sieges at Ruby Ridge, Idaho in 1992 and Waco, Texas in 1993, challenged his way of life.⁶⁷⁴ McVeigh’s bomb was a seven-thousand-pound fuel and fertiliser device. The explosion killed one hundred and sixty-eight people, including nineteen children who attended a day care centre in the building. A further seven hundred people were injured. One of the most moving images from the attack was of a firefighter appearing from the rubble with a blood-stained infant’s body cradled in his arms that still continues to stir emotions.⁶⁷⁵

In the immediate aftermath, several journalists reported that official sources were describing the bombing as an act of Middle Eastern terror. On the day of the attack, Connie Chung, the anchor on *CBS Evening News*, referred to a “US government source” who claimed that it “has Middle Eastern terrorism written all over it.”⁶⁷⁶ On *ABC News*, the anchor suggested that the perpetrators

672 Freeh, *My FBI*, 207.

673 Dale Russakoff and Serge F. Kovalski “An ordinary boy’s extraordinary rage,” *The Washington Post*, July 2, 1995. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/longterm/oklahoma/bg/mcveigh.htm>.

674 John Kifner, “McVeigh’s mind: A report; Oklahoma bombing suspect, Unravelling of a frayed life,” *The New York Times*, December 31, 1995. <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/12/31/us/mcveigh-s-mind-special-report-oklahoma-bombing-suspect-unraveling-frayed-life.html>.

675 YouTube video, Oklahoma City bombing in April 1995, *Youtube*, Oct 19, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9B5vACr99No>.

676 CBS News, “CBS News Special report” Broadcast April 19, 1995, 8pm Eastern time, You Tube, August 21, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZ9Li_sx1jk.

were “terrorists, possibly Islamic, driving in a blue GM Chevrolet carrying 12 pounds of explosives.”⁶⁷⁷ On 20 April, despite the FBI releasing a sketch of McVeigh,⁶⁷⁸ Wolf Blitzer at *CNN* suggested:

There is still a possibility that there could have been some sort of connection to Middle East terrorism. One law enforcement source tells me there’s a possibility that they may have been contracted out as freelancers to go out and rent this truck that was used in the bombing.⁶⁷⁹

The pattern was repeated in the print media. Daniel Pipes, the conservative editor of *Middle East Quarterly*, was cited in *USA Today* on 20 April claiming that: “People need to understand that this is just the beginning. The fundamentalists are on the upsurge, and they make it very clear that they are targeting us. They are absolutely obsessed with us.”⁶⁸⁰ Though *The New York Times* offered a more balanced account of the possible perpetrators, including (correctly) speculating that they could have something to do with the events of Waco, Texas and right wing militia groups, they also carried the CNN story of men described of “Middle Eastern appearance.”⁶⁸¹ They also added: “some Middle Eastern groups have held meetings there and the city is home to at least three mosques.”⁶⁸²

Despite McVeigh having been apprehended on the day of the bombing on a traffic charge by an Oklahoma Patrolman, in a fortuitous turn of events for the FBI, the *Los Angeles Times* still carried an analysis on April 21 that continued to imply a Muslim connection. Under the heading: “Terror in Oklahoma City”, the newspaper gave a list of the recent history of “Terror Indictments” in the US. Of the 171-people indicted for “terrorism and related activities” in the 1980’s, it showed that only 11 were connected to Arab groups—just 6 per cent of the total—with seventy-seven per cent of the suspects US-based. Yet on the right side of the chart, under “Terrorist Group Profiles,”

677 ABC News, “Oklahoma City Bombing: ABCDCBX1880Q- 0,” April 19, 1995 , 5:04, *AP Archive*, <http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/OKLAHOMA-CITY-BOMBING/081bcc1f2bc8412f8802817357fbab5d?query=ABCDCBX1880Q-0> .

678 Geraldine Giordano, *Terrorist attacks: The Oklahoma City Bombing*, (New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 2003) 42.

679 Council of American – Islamic Relations, A rush to judgement: A special report on Anti – Muslim stereotyping, harassment and hate crimes following the bombing of Oklahoma City’s Murrah building, April 19, 1995” *CAIR*, September 1995, 5, Online at https://www.cairoklahoma.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/1995-A_rush_to_judgement.pdf .

680 *Ibid.*, 7.

681 David Johnston, “At least 31 dead, scores are missing after a car bomb attack in Oklahoma City wrecks 9-story Federal Office Building,” *The New York Times*, April 19, 1995, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0419.html#article>.

682 *Ibid.*

only four organizations were given detailed explanations—all of them Arab groups.⁶⁸³ The venting against Muslims continued across the country with the *Chicago Tribune*'s Georgie Anne Geyer pontificating, also on April 21:

The Islamic radicals hate us, even while they use America for fund-raising and haven. Point: They look upon "secular" and "ungodly" America as the "Great Satan," which they must destroy with the only methods they know. This intention is not senseless to them at all: It is as utterly cold and deliberate as those of any extremists or fanatics throughout history.⁶⁸⁴

Clinton's response was more measured, combining the role of chief magistrate and mourner in the three days after the bombing. On April 19, he stated: "The United States will not tolerate it. And I will not allow the people of this country to be intimidated by evil cowards."⁶⁸⁵ On 20 April he went out of his way to dampen media speculation by stating: "I ask the American people not to jump to any conclusions."⁶⁸⁶ Clarke recalls that his own initial reaction was one of scepticism at claims of a Middle East perpetrator and suggested to the President "not to assume the bombing in Oklahoma City was by an Arab or Islamic group. It didn't smell right."⁶⁸⁷ On 21 April the President declared a National Day of Mourning.⁶⁸⁸ On the same day, at a press conference, he defended his counterterrorism record by stating:

We have increased the counterterrorism budgets and resources of the FBI and the CIA. We arrested a major terrorist ring in New York before they could consummate their plans to blow up the U.N. and tunnels in New York City. We've retrieved terrorists who have fled abroad.... broke up a major terrorist ring ... brought together all the various agencies of the Federal Government that would be involved in rescue ... was seen in the very efficient way that they carried out their work at Oklahoma City....⁶⁸⁹

The president also met with congressional leaders "for "expedited consideration" of his bill⁶⁹⁰. *The New York Times* observed that the bill had been

683 Shane Harris, *The Watchers: The Rise of America's Surveillance State*, (New York: Penguin, 2010).

684 Georgie Anne Geyer, "The "No questions asked" country for terrorists," *The Chicago Tribune*, April 21, 1995, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1995-04-21/news/9504210194_1_senseless-bombing-islamic .

685 William J. Clinton: "Remarks on the Bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma," April 19, 1995, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=51239> .

686 William J. Clinton: "Remarks on the Bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma".

687 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 97.

688 William J. Clinton: "Proclamation 6789—National Day of Mourning in Memory of Those Who Died in Oklahoma City," April 21, 1995, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=51258>.

689 William J. Clinton: "Remarks and an Exchange with Reporters on the Oklahoma City Bombing," April 21, 1995. *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=51254> .

690 Bill Clinton, *My Life*, 651.

dragging along in Congress, but the terrorist attack renewed focus on it.⁶⁹¹ On 3 May the president sought to bolster the bill by adding provisions, including increased penalties for providing explosives or firearms to commit acts of terrorism.⁶⁹² The Oklahoma bombing also enabled the president to alter the narrative of Gingrich. Gingrich had argued in the 1994 election that big government was a drag on American Society.⁶⁹³ But as the president noted in his memoirs, the victims in this attack were federal employees and their families, at their workplace, and he wanted to “change the bitterness and bigotry” that had been created by Gingrich’s rhetoric.⁶⁹⁴ As Richard Perloff, an academic writing on political communications has noted, the first responders tending the injured in the bombing had shown millions of Americans the power of big government to step in and help.⁶⁹⁵ As the president tried to heal the nation, he noted in his memoirs that the political momentum that he had temporarily lost was starting to return in the aftermath of Oklahoma bombing:

Americans to reassess their own words and attitudes towards government and towards people whose views differed from their own... The haters and extremists didn’t go away, but they were on the defensive for the rest of my term... Timothy McVeigh took the demonization of government beyond the limits of humanity.⁶⁹⁶

Clinton’s optimism that America had turned a corner and bipartisan rancour could give way to cooperation at least on counterterrorism appeared not to have been misplaced initially. In the aftermath of the attack, on 25 April Republican Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole expressed his support for fast-tracked anti-terrorism legislation, declaring: “Partisanship.... stops at evils edge.”⁶⁹⁷ Senate Judiciary Committee Chairmen had also struck a similarly positive note by supporting the president’s call to expedite the legislation.⁶⁹⁸ But

691 Neil A. Lewis, “Terror in Oklahoma : In Congress; Anti-terrorism bill: Blast turns a snail into race horse,” *The New York Times*, April 21, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/04/21/us/terror-oklahoma-congress-anti-terrorism-bill-blast-turns-snail-into-race-horse.html>.

692 Bill Clinton, *My Life*, 651.

693 Maureen Dowd, “The 1994 Elections: Leaders the G.O.P. Leader; G.O.P.’s rising star pledges to right wrongs of the left,” *The New York Times*, November 10, 1994, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/11/10/us/1994-elections-leaders-gop-leader-gop-s-rising-star-pledges-right-wrongs-left.html>.

694 Clinton, *My Life*, 652.

695 Richard Perloff, *Political communication: Politics, Press, and Public in America*, (New York: Routledge 2008), 414.

696 Clinton, *My Life*, 654.

697 Michael Ross, “Terror in Oklahoma City: senate plans quick action on passing Anti- Terrorism laws: Reaction to Oklahoma City bombing draws bipartisan support. Broader power for law enforcement,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 1995, http://articles.latimes.com/1995-04-25/news/mn-58770_1_oklahoma-city-bombing.

698 Ibid.

as the *Los Angeles Times* observed, “while Republicans and Democrats were remarkably united over those proposals, partisan sniping crept into the debate as it began to shift, inevitably, to the emotional issue of gun control.”⁶⁹⁹ Clinton was not prepared to allow Gingrich into the debate on the role that government should play in people’s lives. Clinton wanted to ensure that his proposals on counterterrorism were being viewed as responsive to people’s needs, not government overreach. He used the challenge of terrorism to argue that government had a role in fixing it. On 5 May 1995, he set out this vision:

The dark possibilities of our age are visible now in the smoke, the horror, and the heartbreak of Oklahoma City.... We see that threat again in the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York, in the nerve gas attack in the Tokyo subway...That is why I have insisted that Congress pass strong antiterrorism legislation...there is nothing patriotic about hating your country or pretending that you can love your country but despise your Government.⁷⁰⁰

This tour de force had a purpose. Just as Reagan had used terrorism to drive his foreign policy agenda, Clinton was using the fight against terrorism to re-establish his political leadership of the country. As Mike McCurry, the White House Press Secretary (1994-98), recalled:

It wasn’t consciously trying to tie conservative extremism in the House [of Representatives] to the militia groups. But it was very clearly... about extreme rhetoric that declares government is not the solution, it’s the problem... our rhetoric was subliminally a way to push Gingrich and the Republicans more and more to the extreme side.⁷⁰¹

Clinton and McCurry understood that with the presidential election less than two years away, the optics of this debate over Anti-Terrorism legislation would be driven by political necessities of standing tough on terrorism. Also, as Benjamin and Simon observed, “with partisan warfare between... Gingrich’s Republicans and the White House then in full spate, the debate on the bill [would] become charged and nasty.”⁷⁰² Senator Dole, who had declared himself a candidate for the presidential election, wanted to put his mark on the legislation and wrote to the president berating him for referring to the legislation in his speech as the president’s own initiative:

699 Ibid.

700 William J. Clinton: "Remarks at the Michigan State University Commencement Ceremony in East Lansing, Michigan," May 5, 1995, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=51317>.

701 Michael Takiff, *A Complicated Man: The life of Bill Clinton as told by those who know him*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) 251.

702 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 227.

Mr. Dole dressed down the President for calling the Senate bill his own. The Kansas Republican noted that Mr. Clinton had referred to the bill “my proposal,” “my anti-terrorism bill” and “the legislation I proposed. “With all due respect, Mr. President,” Mr. Dole wrote, “this legislation is a bipartisan product, incorporating many initiatives proposed by Republicans and Democrats alike. “The bill does not belong to any one party or any one political figure,” he continued. “It belongs to the American people.”⁷⁰³

The challenge to overcome Republican objections to the anti-terrorism legislation required Clinton to be able to address the ‘gun lobby’s’ and civil liberty group’s objections. The ‘gun lobby’ were against restrictions of registration of weapons even if this was shown to restrict potential terrorists from acquiring weapons. They were also against chemical markers to be tagged in the manufacture of black gunpowder, a vital ingredient for a bomb maker. In June 1995, the Democrats were forced to agree to a compromise that removed smokeless and black gunpowder and the registration of weapons, from the legislation.⁷⁰⁴ Civil liberty groups were also concerned about the legislation. “A recurring theme in all the bills is the notion that we have never had a federal anti-terrorism statute”, was the view of Stacy Burdett, assistant director of government and national affairs at the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, a Jewish civil rights organisation.⁷⁰⁵ Mary Cooper, a contributor to *Congressional Quarterly*, noted in June 1995 noted that Americans were less enthusiastic on any curbs on civil liberties: “While an overwhelming 89 per cent of respondents expected a similar attack in the near future, 58 per cent said they would not support increased government surveillance of American citizens.” This concern was also reflected in some sections of Congress. “We were pledged to protect and defend the Constitution,” Rep. Patricia Schroeder, Democrat, said at a June 12 hearing on the House bill. “And I think we want to defend it rather than amend it with the bill.” Congressman Steven H. Schiff, Republican echoed that sentiment saying: “We don't want to rush so rapidly into

703 Katharine Q. Seeley, “Dole asks of cooperation on terrorism bill”, *The New York Times*, June 3, 1995.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1995/06/03/us/dole-asks-for-cooperation-on-terrorism-bill.html>.

704 Jerry Gray, “Senate votes to aid tracing of explosives,” *The New York Times*, June 6 1995,

<https://www.nytimes.com/1995/06/06/us/senate-votes-to-aid-tracing-of-explosives.html>.

705 Mary H. Cooper, “Combatting Terrorism : Will the proposed legislation be effective” *Congressional Quarterly*, June 21, 1995 online at <http://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/document.php?id=cqresrr1995072100> .

this that we neglect the civil liberties protections that are also an important part of society.⁷⁰⁶

The situation was not helped by FBI director Louis Freeh intervening in the debate. In an opinion piece in *The New York Times*, eleven days after the Oklahoma bombing, Freeh signalled his dissent to legislative measures being proposed by the Administration, suggesting that some of them breached American civil liberties. Freeh stated that “his agency did not need the relaxing of investigative guidelines” such as those that had appeared in the Omnibus Counterterrorism Act bill on wiretapping.⁷⁰⁷ This led the editorial from the *Times* to suggest that the measures were both “unnecessary and unwise provisions dictated more by political expediency than by law enforcement needs.” The editorial concluded by noting a comment from Jaimie Gorelick, then Deputy Attorney General, who suggested that the debate on civil liberties and keeping American safe was a “false choice.”⁷⁰⁸ Gorelick who was interviewed for this research but did not want to go on record with any comments about Freeh - although when he was mentioned she did appear to roll her eyes!⁷⁰⁹

The passage of the bill was tortuous and resulted in a bill that met some but not all of the Clinton’s aims. House Republicans continued to resist wiretapping and chemical identifier provisions despite pleas from law enforcement officials.⁷¹⁰ The House finally passed the bill on 14 March 1996 by a vote of 229–19. As the *Congressional Quarterly* observed:

The revised measure no longer included many of the new powers originally sought by sponsors and the administration to fight terrorism. Gone were proposals to bar fundraising in the United States by foreign terrorist groups, ease deportation of suspected alien terrorists, expand federal surveillance capabilities in terrorism cases and make it easier to prosecute people linked to gun crimes. Instead, the most prominent provision was one that did not appear in the committee bill and was only marginally related to terrorism — the restrictions on death row appeals.⁷¹¹

706 Ibid.

707 *The New York Times*, “False choice on terrorism”, April 30, 1995.
<https://www.nytimes.com/1995/04/30/opinion/false-choices-on-terrorism.html> .

708 Ibid.

709 Interview with Jaime Gorelick at the offices of Wilmer Hale, September 16, 2016

710 “President signs Anti-Terrorism Bill.” *CQ Almanac 1996*, 52nd ed., Congressional Quarterly, 1997.
<http://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/cqa196-1092313> .

711 Ibid.

In the Senate, Biden lamented “I hope we can put some teeth back in this bill.”⁷¹² Clinton ratcheted up the pressure by publicly calling on legislators to “stop foot dragging” five days before the first anniversary of the Oklahoma bombing.⁷¹³ After negotiations between Senate and the House Democrats and Republicans, some elements of the original bill were restored including stopping terrorist fundraising, allowing the military to be involved in cases that involved chemical or biological weapons, and banning the dissemination of bomb building technology. Republicans, however, prevailed on limiting death row appeals, deporting aliens, and preventing wiretapping. The final bill passed in the Senate on 17 April 1996, two days before the first anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing. The President signed the bill, reluctantly noting that this was far from perfect and he had not got some critical elements of the bill through.⁷¹⁴ Clinton stated he would keep trying to improve it, but as memories of Oklahoma started to fade and with opposition growing from the gun lobby and libertarians, the bipartisan unity witnessed immediately after Oklahoma had dimmed.

Presidential Decision Directive 39: A Turning Point in Counterterrorism

The president had announced his intention to bring forward legislation on terrorism before Oklahoma but there was always the possibility that it might meet resistance. Thus, two months after the bombing, Clinton issued Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 39.⁷¹⁵ With two major terrorist attacks in Tokyo and Oklahoma in the space of a month, along with the Manila fire revealing the possibility of further attacks, terrorism in its many guises appeared to pose a clear and present danger. Over the eleven pages of PDD-39, the administration sought to crystallise its intentions across three areas: “Reducing the vulnerability to terrorism at home and abroad”; “Deterring terrorism”; and “Responding to terrorism”.⁷¹⁶ The actions stipulated by the President in his

712 Ibid.

713 *The New York Times*, “Clinton challenges Congress to pass terrorism bill he’d approve,” April 14 1996, <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/04/14/us/clinton-challenges-congress-to-pass-terrorism-bill-he-d-approve.html>.

714 William J. Clinton: “Statement on Signing the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996,” April 24, 1996, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=52713>.

715 Presidential Decision Directive / NSC -39 “US Policy on counterterrorism” The White House, Washington D.C., June 21, 1995, *Federation of American Scientists*, <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd/pdd-39.pdf>.

716 Ibid.

speeches were now reinforced in the written directive. The PDD was notable in that since coming to office this was the first time in three years the administration was addressing the problem of terrorism.

The opening statements did not indicate any change from previous policy beyond stating that terrorism was a “potential national threat to national security as well as a criminal act.”⁷¹⁷ He also reaffirmed previous statements that the US will work “closely: with foreign governments in pursuing its counterterrorism goals. Similarly, the veiled threat of retributive action against those who “sponsor or support terrorists” along with not making concessions to terrorists was still there. In reducing vulnerabilities to terrorist attack, it directed all the heads of federal departments such as State, Transportation, Defense etc. along with the heads of law enforcement and intelligence branches (FBI / CIA), to act to protect their own staff and facilities. In the section on “Deterring terrorism,” the president outlined the need for public diplomacy to reinforce the message that terrorism will not succeed. In terms of reducing terrorist capabilities, earlier policy positions on sharing intelligence, supporting other nations in their counterterrorism efforts, and disruption of terrorist aims on fund raising was kept. The US would take steps to indict terrorists and bring them justice thus keeping with the administration’s aims on adopting law enforcement as the driver for counterterrorism. The only new initiative was an annual assessment of the terrorist threat through an “interagency exercise committee.” Though there was nothing that could be considered revolutionary, the Directive did at least codify all earlier policy statements in one place.

In its actions on “Responding to Terrorism” PDD 39 for the first time in US counterterrorism history sought to define a coherent counterterrorism approach for federal agencies and departments.⁷¹⁸ The Intelligence community, along with the Department of Justice through the FBI, was given the task of prevention.⁷¹⁹ However, the FBI’s role was enhanced with the PDD stating that the FBI would be the “lead agency for investigating terrorist acts planned or carried out by foreign or domestic terrorist groups in the U.S., or which are

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

⁷¹⁸ Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 230.

⁷¹⁹ Presidential Decision Directive / NSC -39 “US Policy on counterterrorism.”

directed at U.S. citizens or institutions abroad.”⁷²⁰ The overall leadership of counterterrorist effort could not be clearer:

Within the United states, the Department of Justice, acting through the FBI, shall direct the efforts of other members of the law enforcement community, and coordinate with other Federal agencies, to prevent or preempt terrorist acts, and to ensure efficient direction of investigations related to terrorism. Towards this end, law enforcement agencies shall provide, on a timely basis any information related to terrorism to the FBI, which shall ensure appropriate action and dissemination of information to other members of the law enforcement community.⁷²¹

With these powers the FBI became the primary counterterrorist arm of the Clinton administration. It not only kept its domestic purview on being lead agency on post incident response, but it now had the responsibility to keep tabs on foreign threats to the US plus becoming the repository for all information about suspected terrorists that could pose a threat to the US. Though the State Department retained its lead agency role providing support and coordination after an attack had taken place for “international terrorist incidents,” whilst the Department of Justice retained its lead role for domestic incidents with regard to prosecuting suspected terrorists, the FBI after PDD 39 became the primary counterterrorism agency. The CIA still had the task to “collect, analyze and disseminate all source foreign intelligence on terrorist groups” and the need to “maintain a clandestine service capability for preventing, pre-empting and disrupting international terrorist activities.”⁷²²

In issuing this PDD the president created two major centres of federal effort on counterterrorism information - the FBI and the CIA. Information sharing would be key to tracking terrorists. Though Clinton recognised this challenge by ordering that the “CIA and FBI shall ensure timely exchanges of terrorist information and close cooperation”, there was no process to achieve this beyond either goodwill of CIA or FBI staff. PDD 39 also directed that a “Deputies committee Coordinating Sub group on Counterterrorism,” named Counterterrorism Coordination Sub Group of the NSC (CSG), be created to coordinate counterterrorism activity across the intelligence agencies and various federal departments. Though this committee tried to address the

⁷²⁰ Ibid.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

⁷²² Ibid.

challenges of interagency cooperation, this was fraught with difficulty. Evidence suggests that during the first two years of Clinton administration the CIA and FBI had been at loggerheads. Reports of reconciliation lunches having to be hosted by Lake, involving Woolsey and Freeh, to get better interagency cooperation is evident in Benjamin and Simon's account of their time in the White House.⁷²³ The president, they claim, had tried to bring the two agencies together to deal with terrorism by setting up a "shotgun wedding."⁷²⁴

The most critical challenge in making PDD 39 work was ensuring that CSG functioned effectively. Chairmanship of this committee was given to Clarke.⁷²⁵ Clarke's background appeared to show that Clinton had chosen a man with significant civil service experience, having worked in the earlier Bush administration in both the State Department and White House. Those who worked for Clarke, such as Daniel Benjamin, Special Assistant to the president as director for transnational threats on the NSC, also had a very high opinion of their former boss, as confirmed in a personal interview in 2016.⁷²⁶ But there are hints that not everything was quite right in terms of temperament and personality. In Benjamin's book with Simon, the authors mention that though Clarke had become the "second youngest Assistant of Secretary of State", his management style had "little patience" and he had a "reputation for bright ideas and bullying tactics."⁷²⁷ Rob Wescott, who encountered Clarke as a member of Clinton's economic team, has described him as an "alarmist" and "maverick."⁷²⁸ Freeh described him in his book as the "self-appointed Paul Revere of 9/11".⁷²⁹ Though Clinton mentions many meetings in his book that Clarke would have attended, including the gathering at which bin Laden appears to have been discussed in July 1994, he does not offer an opinion of his main counterterrorism advisor.⁷³⁰ Clarke did not return requests to be interviewed for this thesis so only secondary opinion is available. He comes across as quite a polarising figure.

723 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 238, 299- 300.

724 Tim Weiner, *Enemies: A History of the FBI*, (London: Penguin, 2013) 387.

725 "US Policy on counterterrorism", Presidential Decision Directive / NSC -39.

726 Interview with Dan Benjamin, Union Station, Washington D.C., September 8, 2016

727 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 231.

728 Interview with Dr Robert Wescott, offices of Keybridge Associates, Washington D.C., September 8, 2016.

729 Freeh, *My FBI*, 297-299.

730 Clinton, *My Life*, 797.

Freeh also appears to have had issues with PDD 39. In a four-page memo that he attached to PDD 39, Lake informs Clinton that “NSC had to reconcile conflict between the Treasury and the FBI.”⁷³¹ Freeh, it appears, was against the idea of having any Treasury representative on the CSG on terrorism “as he felt confusion over responsibility for managing domestic terrorist incidents, and in part because the CSG coordinates sensitive operational matters that are beyond Treasury's purview.” Moreover, the FBI also objected to the CSG’s coordinating role because: “under certain remote conditions the Bureau’s freedom of action would be unduly constrained by the CSG’s coordinating role and its involvement in handling of domestic terrorist incidents originating overseas.” The CSG would end up becoming a forum for discussion rather than directing a coordinated programme of action because of FBI resistance. As Lake had to concede to Freeh: “Since the text now makes clear that the CSG does not make decisions, direct agencies to take action, or get involved in criminal investigations or prosecutions, FBI has withdrawn its objection.”⁷³²

Freeh was concerned about the level of information sharing that was expected in counterterrorism cases as he felt that that it could impact the prosecution of a suspect. Clinton had directed that the “Directors of Central Intelligence and FBI together shall personally ensure that their agencies achieve maximum cooperation regarding terrorism” with the caveat “as legally permissible.” The White House had explicitly instructed that the FBI and the CIA “share where appropriate, terrorism related and law enforcement information.”⁷³³ Despite the existence of a prior authorisation from his line manager Janet Reno, the Attorney General, Freeh was unpersuaded to share information.⁷³⁴ At issue was how Freeh and others interpreted the law. The challenge was not just in information sharing between the CIA and FBI but also within the FBI itself.

As the FBI conducts investigations in coordination with the United States Attorney’s Office (USAO), each USAO has attorneys assigned to work

731 Memorandum for the President, “Presidential Decision Directive on U.S Counterterrorism policy”, Anthony Lake to President Clinton, White House, June 12, 1995 [Memorandum], *Federation of American Scientists*, <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd/pdd-39.pdf>.

732 Ibid.

733 Ibid.

734 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 227.

with the FBI's investigations. Agents and attorneys determine a course for the investigations as the aim is to arrest and then prosecute. Once sufficient intelligence has been collected, the FBI and the USAO seek "Attorney General Use Authority" for each piece of intelligence collected under FISA (Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act warrant) before it can be used in court.⁷³⁵ Information collected under these FISA warrants, if the person had done nothing wrong, was generally not shared with FBI agents. The wall was put in place to ensure the methods used were conducted under proper legal authority and that the disclosure of the collection in federal court did not damage the long-term collection strategies of US intelligence. After obtaining "use authority," the case would go ahead as any other federal case—through the use of indictments, arrests, and trials within the justice system. In 2004, just ahead of the 9/11 commission report, this wall would become a point of contention as the right-wing *Washington Times* would use an overly critical op-ed criticising Jaime Gorelick, US Deputy Attorney General (1994-97), blaming her for stopping the FBI sharing the information:

At issue was the oft-noted wall of separation that prevented counterterrorism agents and federal prosecutors from communicating with one another... the practical effect of the wall was that counterintelligence information was generally kept away from law enforcement personnel who were investigating al Qaeda activities....Gorelick ...clearly indicated that the Clinton administration had decided as a matter of policy to go even beyond the law's already stringent requirements in order to further choke off information sharing.⁷³⁶

In an investigation that would be carried out by Barbara Grewe, Senior Counsel for Special Projects as part of the '9/11' Commission, Grewe arrives at some interesting conclusions regarding the FBI's understandings in a detailed report that appears to debunk much of the criticism that Clinton's Justice Department was preventing intelligence sharing.⁷³⁷ One of the key conclusions in Grewe's report was that "FBI agents working intelligence matters could freely share information with agents working on parallel criminal matters. The only controls

735 This law sets up procedures for the physical and electronic surveillance and collection of "foreign intelligence information" between "foreign powers" and "agents of foreign powers" suspected of espionage or terrorism.

736 The Washington Times, "Jaime Gorelick's Wall", *The Washington Times*, April 15, 2004, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2004/apr/15/20040415-094758-5267r/>

737 Barbara A. Grewe, "Legal barriers to information sharing: The erection of a wall between Intelligence and Law enforcement investigation," August 20, 2004, *Federation of American Scientists*, <https://fas.org/irp/eprint/wall.pdf>.

[that existed in place] were on information sharing between FBI and criminal prosecutors”⁷³⁸.

Grewe outlined some challenges that was clear from her investigation. One was the “linear approach” of first collecting intelligence on a suspect then launching a prosecution. This would work well if, for example, a potential suspect who had been caught spying was being prosecuted. However, in the case of a terrorism suspect, this method was not “so neat.”⁷³⁹As she noted: “there could be multiple plots and overlapping participants and bringing criminal charges against one set of individuals did not end the need for ongoing intelligence.”⁷⁴⁰ Grewe’s analysis leads to the conclusion that having decided to prosecute terrorists using the criminal justice system, the system was struggling to develop procedures where it could protect individual rights and still carry through with prosecutions.

Grewe’s report illustrates the challenges the FBI and the Intelligence community faced. Though PDD 39 would be described as bringing much needed focus on terrorism management, described “as the first major step towards centralizing control over federal counterterrorism policy in the White House,” it still had a long way to go.⁷⁴¹ The risks of using counterterrorism measures through presidential executive orders was also problematic because, if Clinton was not to be successful in the 1996 election, an incoming president could have replaced these measures. Despite the legal issues on intelligence sharing created by PDD 39, the change brought about by PDD 39 meant that counterterrorism was “now more forceful and clearly stated than in years.”⁷⁴²

Clinton, through PDD 39, instructed the CIA to build “a robust capability to collect, analyse and disseminate all-source foreign intelligence on terrorist groups and activities abroad.”⁷⁴³ This resulted in the creation of the bin Laden tracking station, code named “Alec Station”, in January 1996. From interviews, it appears that the tracking station was not based at Langley but in an industrial park in the nearby town of Mclean. It was staffed by up to thirteen

738 Ibid., 13.

739 Ibid., 24.

740 Ibid.

741 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 230.

742 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 318

743 “US Policy on counterterrorism,” Presidential Decision Directive / NSC -39.

people, predominantly dedicated female analysts.⁷⁴⁴ The station was, however, integrated into the CIA set up so “that within the CIA’s budgeting and cable routing systems, the unit would have administrative status, privileges, and autonomy enjoyed by more traditional stations.”⁷⁴⁵ This was significant as previously both the State Department and the CIA were traditionally organised by geographical areas of responsibility, but the tracking station broke the mould by focusing on a borderless threat from al-Qaeda. The station offered the CIA the ability to track their adversaries across multiple geographical regions around the world. As Cindy Storer, one of the analysts who worked within the station confirmed in an interview, this appeared to be a “one stop shop” that had multiple capabilities.⁷⁴⁶ Coll also has confirmed this by stating that the station enabled the CIA to have “operations, analysis, signals intercept, overhead photography” all in one place.⁷⁴⁷ As bin Laden’s name started appearing in embassy and intelligence transcripts it made sense to have one central coordinating point to review, analyse and then disseminate this information across the intelligence community. Moreover, with new funds being made available, it looked like Clinton had finally started to address the challenge posed by bin Laden.⁷⁴⁸

Terrorism and the 1996 Presidential Election.

Ahead of the November 1996 presidential election, terrorist attacks around the world pushed terrorism onto the agenda. Three suspected terrorist incidents between November 1995 and July 1996 set the tone for that debate. On 13 November 1995, a car bomb went off outside a US military training facility in the Saudi Arabian capital city of Riyadh. The explosion killed six people including five Americans, one of whom was in the military. According to *The New York Times* report the day after, two previously unheard-of groups, the “Tigers of the Gulf” and the “Islamic Movement for Change” had claimed

744 Interview with Cindy Storer, University of Warwick, April 28, 2015.

745 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 319.

746 Interview with Cindy Storer, University of Warwick, April 28, 2015.

747 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 319.

748 Ibid.

responsibility.⁷⁴⁹ The report suggested that while the bomber's anger was directed towards the Saudi royal family, they had added a warning to the Americans who they described as "crusaders" and ordered them to leave Saudi Arabia, otherwise the groups would "exert all available means to evict these forces from the island of Islam."⁷⁵⁰ The second attack came on 14 June 1996. An enormous truck bomb detonated near the United States Air Force base in Dhahran, targeting the eight-storey Khobar Towers that housed USAF personnel. Nineteen servicemen were killed along with five hundred people of different nationalities injured. This attack created diplomatic tensions between the US government and the Saudi Arabian government. As Benjamin and Simon noted: "despite demands from Washington that U.S officials be kept informed, the Saudis quickly shut the door on the investigation."⁷⁵¹ The Khobar Towers bombing had happened thousands of miles away in Saudi Arabia, but on 17 July 1996 when TWA Flight 800 from New York City to Rome blew up over the Atlantic Ocean just twelve minutes after taking off from JFK airport, it brought the threat of terrorism back into the spotlight for Americans. Speculation centred on the possible reasons for the explosion, varying from missile attack to onboard bomb.⁷⁵² Two hundred and thirty passengers were killed, and it looked to most observers like a repeat of the 1988 Pan Am tragedy. Though four years later the crash investigation would conclude that a fuel tank explosion, and not terrorism, was the cause of this particular air disaster these attacks ahead of the presidential election brought terrorism into the agenda. In comparison, in the 1992 election terrorism was hardly mentioned by either candidate.

On 5 August 1996, Clinton defended his stance on fighting terrorism by stating "...the fight against terrorism must be both a national priority and a national security priority".⁷⁵³ On 11 August, on the eve of the 1996 Republican convention, the president accused the Republican Party "of being a handmaiden for the 'gun lobby'" because of their refusal to pass key provisions in his

749 Elaine Sciolino, "Bomb kills 4 Americans in Saudi Arabia," *The New York Times*, June 14, 1995. <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/11/14/world/bomb-kills-4-americans-in-saudi-arabia.html> .

750 Ibid.

751 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 242.

752 Matthew Purdy, "T.W.A Flight 800: The overview; investigators suspect explosive device as likeliest cause for crash of Flight 800," *The New York Times*, July 19, 1996. <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/07/19/nyregion/explosion-aboard-twa-flight-800-overview-investigators-suspect-explosive-device.html> .

753 William J. Clinton: "Remarks on International Security Issues at George Washington University," August 5, 1996, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=53161> .

proposed anti-terrorism legislation.⁷⁵⁴ In response Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole and other leading members of the GOP stated that Clinton was “ineffective and negligent” on terrorism as evident by the attack on Khobar Towers and the attack on TWA Flight 800.⁷⁵⁵

In presenting their arguments the Republicans presented three areas they argued justified their accusations. First, on immigration, they accused Clinton of being “lax in carrying out a four-month-old law to deport suspected terrorists.”⁷⁵⁶ They cited Clinton’s unease on the immigration provisions at the signing of the Anti-Terrorism bill when the president had stated: “this bill also makes a number of major ill-advised changes in our immigration laws having nothing to do with fighting terrorism.”⁷⁵⁷ However, as a contemporaneous report in *The New York Times* indicates, the laxity in immigration appears not to be the case.⁷⁵⁸ Second, they claimed that Clinton had adopted ‘politically correct’ standards at the CIA that complicated efforts to recruit informants abroad who could help in the battle against terrorism.”⁷⁵⁹ Coll suggests that under John Deutch, who had taken over the leadership of the CIA after Woolsey, the CIA hired targets from different ethnicities that had many of the veteran white males up in arms at the CIA.⁷⁶⁰ Third, the Republicans and Dole both wanted to return to the muscular response on terrorism that had earlier been argued by Shultz. *The Washington Post* reported that the Republicans had called on the President “to bomb strongholds of terrorists suspected of plotting attacks on Americans.” Dole declared at the Republican convention,

On my first day in office...I will . . . put terrorists on notice: If you harm one American, you harm all Americans. And America will pursue you to the ends of the Earth. In short, don't mess with us unless you are prepared to suffer the consequences.⁷⁶¹

754 John F. Harris, “Clinton attacks GOP for rejecting NRA- opposed provision,” *The Washington Post*, August 11, 1996. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1996/08/11/clinton-attacks-gop-for-rejecting-nra-opposed-provision/ff5ba9ac-153f-453a-b8b8-2decfd8b764a/?utm_term=.6ca7a86aa57e .

755 John Mintz, “Republicans seize upon unusual issue to assault Clinton: Terrorism,” *The Washington Post* August 25, 1996. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1996/08/25/republicans-seize-upon-unusual-issue-to-assault-clinton-terrorism/192012c6-eb4c-4321-91e4-d737e2ef9a2b/?utm_term=.b583b289d6f8

756 Ibid.

757 Lena Williams, “A law aimed at terrorists hits legal immigrants,” *The New York Times*, July 17, 1996.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1996/07/17/nyregion/a-law-aimed-at-terrorists-hits-legal-immigrants.html>.

758 Ibid.

759 Mintz, “Republicans seize upon unusual issue to assault Clinton.”

760 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 317.

761 Mintz, “Republicans seize upon unusual issue to assault Clinton.”

Dole and the Republicans argued that Clinton had “given a green light to a terrorist state, Iran, to expand its influence in Europe, and he relies on the United Nations to punish Libyan terrorists who murdered American citizens.” The Republican fusillade against the president concluded: “Terrorist states have made a comeback during Bill Clinton's administration”. It was Newt Gingrich, however, who inadvertently made the most prescient condemnation when he alleged that Republicans were more willing than Clinton to use force against Middle Eastern terrorist cells by stating: “We don't wait around until after they take out the World Trade Towers.”⁷⁶²

The concerted Republican attack on Clinton’s counterterrorism record was triggered, the Dole campaign claimed, by Clinton’s own attack on the National Rifle Association (NRA) and its role in blocking part of his proposed terrorism bill. As *the Washington Post* reported: “they think he set a precedent by attacking them and the NRA for blocking efforts to require insertion of tiny chemical markers called taggants in explosives, to trace explosives' origins.” A Dole campaign spokesman accused Clinton of using terrorism as “a political tool” when it was a high-priority national security issue. Rather than taking a bipartisan approach, the Republicans felt justified in their attacks since “He's the guy who started it.”⁷⁶³

The accusation by the Republicans that Clinton had been negligent on terrorism was without merit. Clinton had tried once more following the Centennial Park bomb during the Summer Olympics in Atlanta on 27 July 1996, to get the wiretapping provision put back in, but that again was unsuccessful.⁷⁶⁴ While not as devastating as the Oklahoma City bombing, the Atlanta attack still killed two and injured one hundred people. Like Oklahoma City, it was perpetrated by a domestic attacker, Eric Robert Rudolph, a dishonourably discharged army veteran who had previously attacked abortion clinics and gay nightclubs.⁷⁶⁵ However, it would be after the Khobar Towers attack that Republican purse strings would open as the GOP could not be seen as

762 Ibid.

763 Ibid.

764 President Signs Anti-Terrorism Bill." CQ Almanac 1996, 52nd ed., *Congressional Quarterly*, 1997.

765 CNN Library, Eric Robert Rudolph Fast Facts, September 8, 2017, *CNN.com*, <https://edition-cnn.com/2012/12/06/us/eric-robert-rudolph---fast-facts/index.html?r=https%3A%2F%2Fedition.cnn.com%2F2013%2F09%2F18%2Fus%2Folympic-park-bombing-fast-facts%2Findex.html>.

withholding funding towards protecting US servicemen, serving overseas. Two months before the election on 9 September 1996, Clinton unveiled a \$1.1 billion spending package on counterterrorism. Out of this spending package, the Department of Defense received \$353.3 million towards protecting US troops against the threat of terrorism by upgrading protection and facilities.⁷⁶⁶ The Departments of Commerce Justice and State shared between them \$313.3 million towards protecting embassies, doubling the number of agents on counterterrorism including overseas locations and introduction of technology to aid computer identification. The Department of Transportation received \$236.6 million towards the FAA for screening explosives and passenger profiling.⁷⁶⁷ The rest of the money (\$214m) was shared between various federal agencies to protecting domestic infrastructure such as museums. As a result of increased allocation to federal agencies, the FBI saw its counterterrorism budget tripled, to \$301 million a year.⁷⁶⁸

Clinton made a brief mention in the first presidential election debate on 6 October 1996 that his administration had “stood up to the new threats of terrorism” but Dole made no effort to respond to the claim and it did not come up again in the remaining two debates.⁷⁶⁹ In November 1996, Clinton was victorious over Dole, taking three hundred and seventy Electoral College votes to Dole’s one hundred and fifty-nine. As Wilson McWilliams has argued, in “the election of 1996, the tumult and shouting was mostly contrived.”⁷⁷⁰ Clinton’s victory had been secured, as McWilliams goes onto explain, due to his voters holding the view that “the economy was prosperous, the country was at peace, and Americans were enjoying a decent level of well-being.”⁷⁷¹ Though terrorism continued to be a problem that would continue to plague the Clinton administration throughout its second term, the events of 1995 and battle over 1996 legislation had been a turning point in Clinton’s approach to counterterrorism.

766 Ibid.

767 Ibid.

768 Weiner, *A History of the FBI*, 392.

769 “October 6, 1996 Debate Transcript,” *Commission on Presidential Debates*, <http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-6-1996-debate-transcript>.

770 Wilson C. McWilliams, “The Meaning of the Election” in *The Election of 1996: Reports and Interpretations*, Gerald M. Pomper, Walter D. Burnham, Anthony Corrado, Marjorie R. Hershey, Marion R. Just, Scott Keeter, Wilson C. McWilliams, and William G. Mayer, (Chatham N.J: Chatham House Publishers, 1997) 241.

771 Ibid., 243.

Sudan and Khobar Towers

The Khobar Towers bombing, and the failed efforts made to bring diplomatic pressure to extradite bin Laden from Sudan, would be criticized by Clinton's detractors. Gertz and Bossie would argue that Clinton failed to extradite bin Laden from Sudan when he had the chance.⁷⁷² Bossie would also accuse Clinton of not responding with force against the attackers of the American base in Khobar Towers.⁷⁷³ The evidence, however paints a different picture. Bin Laden had been based in Sudan since 1991, under the protective care of the Sudanese regime and its spiritual ruler, Hassan al-Turabi. There are two differing views of bin Laden during this period. Tenet would claim in his testimony to the '9/11' Commission that bin Laden was "principally a financier of terrorist attacks" during the period of 1991-96⁷⁷⁴

However, the '9/11' Commissions' report, published in 2004, describes bin Laden in this period as building a "true global terrorist network."⁷⁷⁵ The report suggests this network covered the Near and Middle East, South East Asia, and North Africa, and included alliances that extended to the United States itself.⁷⁷⁶ Hassan al-Turabi had protected and supported bin Laden since 1991, but it has been claimed that the Sudanese regime was "tiring of its guest" and bin Laden was "becoming too powerful", a state of affairs that did not fit in with al-Turabi's aim of wanting to "control" bin Laden.⁷⁷⁷ Bossie presents this as a missed opportunity to capture bin Laden.⁷⁷⁸ Clarke, however, dismisses this as a "fable".⁷⁷⁹ Clarke argues that the circumstances of bin Laden's departure from Sudan were "murky", and that the Sudanese were trying to distance themselves from bin Laden in the face of sanctions. Clarke goes on to suggest that despite the Counterterrorism Security group putting out feelers to different nations to capture bin Laden and put him on trial, "there were no takers."⁷⁸⁰ Clarke's

⁷⁷² Gertz, *Breakdown*, 28-29; Bossie, *Intelligence Failure*, 18.

⁷⁷³ Bossie, *Intelligence failure*, 177.

⁷⁷⁴ DCI Testimony Before the Joint Inquiry into Terrorist Attacks Against the United States, "Unclassified Version of Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet's Testimony Before the Joint Inquiry into Terrorist Attacks Against the United States", *Central Intelligence Agency*, https://www.cia.gov/news-information/speeches-testimony/2002/dci_testimony_06182002.html

⁷⁷⁵ *The 9/11 Commission report*, 58

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁷ Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 133.

⁷⁷⁸ Bossie, *Intelligence failure*, 18.

⁷⁷⁹ Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 142

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

version of events was confirmed by the ‘9/11’ Commission report, which noted that “Ambassador Carney (US Ambassador to Sudan) had only instructions to push the Sudanese to expel bin Laden... (as he) had no legal basis to ask for more...there was no indictment.”⁷⁸¹ Michael Scheuer, the first head of the bin Laden tracking station, would claim that bin Laden left Sudan on 18 May 1996 for Afghanistan.⁷⁸² Bin Laden’s time in Sudan is notable for a major evolution on al Qaeda’s approach to terrorism. One of the alleged co-founders of al-Qaeda, Abu Hajer al-Iraqi, issued a *fatwa* signalling a shift in al Qaeda’s approach from fighting the armies of their opponents to “killing civilians”⁷⁸³ Wright argued in his account of Abu Hajer that the:

Former conception of al-Qaeda as a mobile army of mujahideen... was now cast aside in favour of a permanent subversion of the West...America was the only power capable of blocking the restoration of the ancient Islamic caliphate, and it would have to be confronted and defeated.⁷⁸⁴

Bin Laden issued his own *fatwa* in 1996, which appears to have generated little Western media attention even though it was serendipitously synchronised with the Clinton Administration’s increased counterterrorism funding proposals. The *fatwa* was first published on 23 August in London based Arabic newspaper *Al Quds al-Arabi*. It was titled the “Declaration of Jihad on Americans Occupying the Country of the Two Holiest Sites.”⁷⁸⁵ Summers and Swan describe this *fatwa* as “Jeffersonian” and “frighteningly reasoned.”⁷⁸⁶ Scheuer has described bin Laden’s *fatwa* as a “declaration of war” that was “homespun” in style.⁷⁸⁷ Scheuer’s analysis suggests that bin Laden had three aims: first, to push the US out of Muslim lands; two, to destroy Israel and all other apparently complicit countries that supported the US; and finally, “to settle accounts with the heretical Shia”.⁷⁸⁸

781 *The 9/11 Commission report*, 110.

782 Scheuer, *Osama bin Laden*, 105.

783 Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 131-134, 199.

784 *Ibid.*, 199.

785 Usama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, “Declaration of Jihad against the Americans Occupying the land of the Two Holiest Sites,” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/declaration-of-jihad-against-the-americans-occupying-the-land-of-the-two-holiest-sites-original-language-2/>

786 Anthony Summers and Robbyn Swan, *The eleventh day: the ultimate account of 9/11*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 2011), 261.

787 Scheuer, *Osama bin Laden*, 110-111.

788 *Ibid.*, 111.

The attack on Khobar Towers and the investigations that followed proved to be a challenge for Clinton's Middle East policy as well as his deploying the FBI in counterterrorism investigations in overseas locations. Al Qaeda's involvement in the attack on the Khobar Towers airbase on 25 June 1996 has never been conclusively proved. The '9/11' Commission suggested that the attack was "principally, perhaps exclusively" carried out by "Saudi Hezbollah, an organisation that would receive support from Iran."⁷⁸⁹ It also went on to hint there were "also signs that al Qaeda played some role, as yet unknown." It indirectly suggested an association by saying that some of bin Laden's associates took credit for this attack.⁷⁹⁰ On 7 July, *The New York Times* produced a report suggesting that despite no further clues available about the perpetrator "American official (had) failed to understand the magnitude of threat they faced."⁷⁹¹ It put forward four arguments. First, the CIA misjudged the capabilities of militants in Saudi Arabia. Second, the US Air Force had "underestimated" the potential for damage at the site. Third, the base commander had failed to act on advice from the Pentagon regarding tightening security. Fourth, the local Saudi military commander had "balked" at expanding the base perimeter and the US commanders had not persisted with their demands by appealing higher up the Saudi command chain.⁷⁹² Subsequently, a report by the Senate Intelligence Committee on 12 September 1996 would exonerate the CIA by stating that the agency had previously highlighted the threat from Iranian backed Hezbollah.⁷⁹³ A memo from Sandy Berger in the Clinton Library archives that had not been made public before appears to suggest that following a confidential Pentagon review, the White House had concluded that the fault for failing to protect the base lay with the base commander along with the chain of command at the Pentagon for not taking sufficient measures to protect the base.⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁸⁹ *The 9/11 Commission report*, 60.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹¹ Douglas Jehl, "Fatal lapses- A special report.; How US missteps and delay opened door to Saudi blast," *The New York Times*, July 7, 1996, <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/07/07/world/fatal-lapses-special-report-us-missteps-delay-opened-door-saudi-blast.html>.

⁷⁹² *Ibid.*

⁷⁹³ Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "No Intelligence failure in Saudi Arabia", September 12, 1996, *Congressional Record Senate*, S. 10374 -10377, <https://www.congress.gov/crec/1996/09/12/CREC-1996-09-12-pt1-PgS10374.pdf>.

⁷⁹⁴ Terry Schwalier – Collection, 2006-0649-F, "Meeting with Secretary Cohen & General Shalikashvili, July 31, 1997, Oval Office", *Clinton Presidential Library*, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/14582>

The investigation into the Khobar Towers bombing highlighted deep tensions between the FBI and the White House. Richard Clarke recounts that the investigation faced challenges right from the outset, noting that “within days [of the attack] the Saudi authorities had arrested four men, obtained their confessions and executed them.”⁷⁹⁵ This, despite “US appeals to hold up the executions.”⁷⁹⁶ Another view, from Benjamin and Simon, argues that Freeh was out of his depth in negotiating with the Saudis to get any information.⁷⁹⁷ They state:

Bandar bin Sultan [Saudi Ambassador to the US] ... continually played to the Americans’ belief that the Iranians were behind the bombing but refused to offer assistance – access to the suspects the Saudis had apprehended, and investigative material without getting a veto over US response...At the same time Bandar was playing Iago to Freeh’s Othello, seeking to sow dissension within the government and undercut U.S. efforts to pursue the investigation.⁷⁹⁸

Freeh, unsurprisingly, has a different reading of the situation. Freeh suggests that he was given access to the information by the Saudi’s and found that “almost beyond a doubt that the Khobar Tower attacks has been sanctioned, funded, and directed by senior officials of the government of Iran.”⁷⁹⁹ Freeh claimed of an effort by the State Department to prove Iranian complicity in the attack on Khobar Towers and Clinton of “indifference” over the fate of the Americans killed in the attack.⁸⁰⁰ Freeh claimed that Clinton’s reluctance to pressurise the Iranians stemmed from his desire to “normalise relations with Iran” following the election victory of “moderate” Mohamed Khatami, as President of Iran.⁸⁰¹ Freeh, would add that it was through the efforts of the George W. Bush administration was he was able to get justice for the victims. Freeh suggests that with the help of the prosecutor James Comey, the FBI would finally get forty-six indictments against fourteen defendants for the Khobar Towers bombing.⁸⁰² Freeh however did not present the full picture of Clinton’s response to Khobar. The military historian David Crist, writing in 2012, relates

⁷⁹⁵ Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 113.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁷ Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 301.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁹ Freeh, *My FBI*, 29

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid., 20-24, 33.

⁸⁰¹ Ibid., 23.

⁸⁰² Ibid., 31-32.

the events of Clinton's support for a CIA counterattack covert operation – Operation Sapphire.⁸⁰³ In Crist's account he relates the details of a CIA operation that “created havoc” by openly targeting Iranian intelligence agents, even walking up to their homes and knocking on doors, which immediately raised suspicions of complicity with the US, which according to Crist, led to some agents feeling the “hangman's noose”.⁸⁰⁴ Crist claims, that war planning was underway in Clinton's Pentagon but it was the possibilities offered by the election of the reformer President Khatami, that led Clinton to pursue diplomatic entreaties to improve relations with Iran.⁸⁰⁵

Conclusions

Terrorism in 1995-96 came in many shapes and forms. As this chapter has shown, Clinton remained focused on coercive counterterrorism. This chapter in its exploration of Clinton's counterterrorism policy has argued that as his first term in office was ending, the issue of dealing with domestic terrorism required a great deal of presidential attention. Both domestic terrorism and foreign terrorist attacks such as the Khobar Towers attack had brought home to the president the complex and multi-dimensional nature of the problem. The FBI who had been given the lead in counterterrorism, was also beginning to struggle especially in having to deal with foreign perpetrators. The FBI had been serendipitous in apprehending Timothy McVeigh the perpetrator of the Oklahoma City bombing but had struggled with the obstinacy of the Saudi government in investigating the Hezbollah attack on Khobar Towers. The CIA had set up the bin Laden tracking station in January 1996, with the support and help of Anthony Lake, Clinton's National Security Advisor. Bin Laden, by August 1996, had made clear in his fatwa that he was declaring war against the US. However, there still remained questions about CIA leadership as before the end of 1996, Deutch would have resigned, unwilling to carry on at the CIA. The CIA still did not have a strong fix on bin Laden. Time was running out. Clinton's strategy in 1995 - 96 was defensive counterterrorism in that he had at least got some legislation on the statute books that allowed him to direct funds

803 David Crist, *The Twilight War: The Secret History of America's thirty-year conflict with Iran*, (New York: Penguin books, 2012), 409.

804 Ibid.

805 Ibid., 414.

into the FBI for counterterrorism and through the use of presidential Executive orders, put in measures to protect American infrastructure and lives.

These two years in Clinton's counterterrorism journey are critical. First, because Clinton's understanding of the challenge of terrorism improved significantly versus the first two years of his presidency. Right from the outset, following the Tokyo gas attack, the president looked to educate himself as to the challenge posed by terrorism. Clinton remained committed to this project right throughout his presidency, even when it had faded from the public eye. The Oklahoma City bomb was his call to action that he needed to bring urgency to the multi-faceted challenge of terrorism beyond just responding to terrorists getting WMD's. Oklahoma also brought home to the president that there was no straightforward way to define the challenge of terrorism. In framing the problem of terrorism, Clinton needed to show that his language did not reflect the rash statements of the media. Neither could he, after Khobar Towers, name the problem as solely to do with one militant Islamic group. The accusation by Timothy Naftali, that Clinton would have done more to educate the American public on the challenge of al-Qaeda could not begin until much later. The Oklahoma attack had also shown the pernicious face of xenophobic attitudes by the mainstream media. Clinton would have risked tearing apart US-Muslim relations if he had chosen to speak directly about the threat developing from Islamist radicals. Moreover, the CIA in 1996 had yet to achieve the threshold of evidence for the president to seek to accuse al Qaeda of anything more than shouting insults at America. It was more the case that the majority of US media had ignored this man sitting in Afghanistan hurling insults at America and threatening a jihad.

Second, the struggle on getting anti-terrorism legislation may with the benefit of hindsight appear puzzling but, terrorism had not intruded into American lives to the extent that it did after '9/11'. The attack by McVeigh was discomfiting for most Americans but when the perpetrator turned out to be a militant white supremacist, the belief of the threat diminished, especially amongst Republicans. The pictures on TV of first responders rushing to comfort the wounded, plus the fact that law enforcement had found the perpetrator in two days, may have given the American public a false sense of security. The perception of threat that was initially speculated by the media failed to

materialise despite ugly xenophobic speculation fed in part by rumours from within the law enforcement community. Reagan had maintained the spectre of the Soviet Union in building his case on tough counterterrorism measures but with Clinton did not want to pander to the voices of xenophobia in the media. Americans grasped that there was a challenge of terrorism but how and who was perpetrating these attacks were never clarified beyond allusions to the Middle East and North Korea. Buffeted by the obduracy of the gun lobby and obstinacy of the libertarians, the legislature was not convinced enough to adopt tough measures. It took the attack on Khobar Towers to release the purse strings but then the Republican Party could not be seen to be the party not protecting US troops two months before the General Election of 1996.

Third, Clinton's strategy faced problems and therefore needed a two-pronged approach – legislation and Executive orders. Having lost his majority in the November 1994 midterm elections, Clinton was not going to find it easy to get legislation through a Republican controlled Congress. The unanimity of purpose expressed by Republicans immediately after the Oklahoma bombing vanished soon after as they came under pressure from the NRA and civil libertarians on both sides of the aisle. The result: a war of attrition between both parties, worsened by the start of the American presidential election cycle. Moreover, pre '9/11' the civil libertarians were not prepared to sacrifice personal liberty and sanction what they perceived as government overreach, despite the horrendous events of Oklahoma. Even today, more than twenty years after the Oklahoma City bombing, the Electronic privacy information centre, a US lobby group that campaigns on emerging civil liberties issues, views the Clinton Anti-terrorism wiretap provisions as a landmark moment, in breach of civil liberties.⁸⁰⁶ Though the final legislation would not turn out to be what the president had wanted, it gave the legal basis and funding for counterterrorism—something that had not existed since Reagan's day. Moreover, the follow up request for funding could only have happened because both the Executive and Legislature became much more attuned to the challenge of terrorism. With the attack on Khobar Towers coming ahead of the 1996 presidential elections, the Republicans also would have faced further scrutiny from the Democrats on their

806 Electronic Privacy Information Center, "Counterterrorism proposals," *EPIC.org*.
<https://www.epic.org/privacy/terrorism/>

attention to terrorism had they not supported Clinton's funding requests. Fourth, PDD 39 was a clear statement of intent of Clinton's coercive counterterrorism strategy. The president remained committed to the 'law enforcement model' over the 'war model' in pursuit of his counterterrorism aims. Clinton quite rightly put greater emphasis on prevention of terrorism by ensuring that the maximum authority the state could provide to its intelligence agencies within the legal framework was provided. However, its success required the goodwill of both the CIA and the FBI to share the information on suspected terrorists. This challenge was understood by Lake and Clinton, but the administration persevered more in hope than expectation that the FBI and CIA could be made to coordinate via Clarke. The problems that later emerged on intelligence sharing became part of the findings of the 9/11 commissions.⁸⁰⁷ Some of these issues were found by the Department of Justice in 1995 and steps were taken to address this at this time, as is clear in Barbara Grewe's report to the '9/11' commission. This report also confirms that lack of intelligence sharing was a 'local' decision made by the FBI management. Grewe's report also highlights a bigger problem with information sharing, that the linear process of investigations followed by prosecutions was not working when it came to the challenge from terrorism investigations. Fifth, the events in response to Khobar Towers attack shows that Clinton was prepared to contemplate a military response to the attack. His counterterrorism response was coercive in that Operation Sapphire, disrupted Iranian intelligence. However, the president understood the value of peace over a hasty response to war and with the election of Khatami, made the pragmatic decision to seek peace over war in response to the terrorist attack rather than perpetuate the cycle of violence by responding militarily when there were prospects for peace.

In retrospect, 1995-96 were pivotal years in Clinton's counterterrorism development. Faced with both domestic terrorism from white nationalists, foreign terrorist attacks from state sponsored actors like Hezbollah and threats of war from non state actors like bin Laden, Clinton did not opt for a 'one size fits all' counterterrorism model. Along with developments of WMD attacks in Tokyo in early 1995, the president acted by first putting defensive

⁸⁰⁷ *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 400-410.

counterterrorist measures that protected US infrastructure and lives. Next, he moved the agenda on, in the face of Republican opposition, to an offensive capability by ensuring that both domestic and foreign intelligence services received funding and White House support to deliver on the aims of the administration to tackle terrorism. Now it was the turn for both Freeh and soon to be appointed CIA Director to rise up to this challenge.

Chapter Four: The Spectre Strikes (1997-98).

Introduction

Clinton was inaugurated for his second term on 20 January 1997. Having overcome the challenge of Senator Dole for the presidency, the President still had the Republicans as the majority party in Congress. This created difficulties throughout 1997 and 1998. These ranged from trying to tie the president's hands over foreign policy, to abruptly withdrawing support when the president had responded militarily to terrorism having offered bipartisan support. 1997 was also the period where bin Laden's intentions would become apparent both rhetorically through his fatwa and media interviews but also in his actions. Unlike Clinton's first term, in his second term his cabinet included people who had first-hand experience of seeing the evolution of the threat from bin Laden. In the NSC his new advisor Sandy Berger already had significant exposure to the challenge from terrorism in working closely with Richard Clarke and the eventual CIA Director George Tenet in the White House. The simultaneous attack on 7 August 1998 on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania would be a challenge for Clinton's counterterrorism efforts in responding to this attack by al Qaeda. The attack, which would kill over two hundred people and injure four thousand, would highlight the growing ability of al Qaeda. Without previously having used force to respond to terrorism, thirteen days after the Embassy attack Clinton would respond with Tomahawk missiles on sites in Afghanistan and Sudan. At a time when Clinton's personal life was in the news, this response would lead to questions by some journalists. This chapter will explore three questions: First, how did the challenge of terrorism develop during 1997-98? Second, how did Clinton and Congress respond to the threat of terrorism during this period? Third, how did Clinton manage the intelligence agencies to support his counterterrorism goals?

A new team on counterterrorism

On 20 January 1997, Clinton began his second term in office. On counterterrorism, his second term appointments showed promise, but they still had much to do as a report in 1997 on the implementation of PDD 39 would reveal. Madeleine Albright was nominated as Secretary of State. Albright had been UN Ambassador during Clinton's first term. Albright would be unanimously confirmed in January 1997 and would become the first female Secretary of State. Described in *The New York Times* as displaying "a scholarly grasp of foreign policy," Albright had served in President Jimmy Carter's NSC and as UN ambassador during Clinton's first term.⁸⁰⁸ Like Shultz, she had a Ph.D. and was an intellectual heavyweight. Though she would mention terrorism four times during her statement to the Senate she did not unveil any specific policy directions, beyond: "It matters to Americans who travel abroad or go about their daily business at home whether the scourge of international terrorism is reduced."⁸⁰⁹ Joining Albright was William Cohen, a former Senator, who took over at the Pentagon. Renowned for his "independence and intellect," Cohen showed an immediate awareness of the challenge of terrorism, stating in one of his first speeches in April 1997:⁸¹⁰

We've seen by way of example of the World Trade Center the international aspects of international terrorism coming to our home territory. We've also seen domestic terrorism with the Oklahoma bombing. So, it's a real threat that's here today. It's likely to intensify in the years to come as more and more groups have access to this kind of information and the ability to produce them.⁸¹¹

Samuel 'Sandy' Berger took over as National Security Advisor. Berger had been Lake's deputy but had been involved on counterterrorism with Clarke throughout Clinton's first term.⁸¹² Interviewed some years later by the University

808 *The New York Times*, "Madeleine Albright's Agenda", January 23, 1997,

<https://www.nytimes.com/1997/01/23/opinion/madeleine-albright-s-agenda.html>.

809 Congressional Record, Nomination of Madeleine Korbil Albright, of the District of Columbia, to be Secretary of State, 105th Congress, 1st Session 143:5, January 22, 1997, *Congress. Gov.*, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/1997/1/22/senate-section/article/s590-3>.

810 Dana Priest, "An 'Outsider' set to take over Pentagon", *The Washington Post*, January 22, 1997,

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/govt/admin/stories/cohen012297.htm>.

811 "DOD News briefing: Secretary of State William S. Cohen, April 28, 1997", *U.S. Department of Defense*,

<http://archive.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=674>.

812 Clark, *Against all enemies*, 91, 118-120, 14.

of Virginia, Miller Centre Oral History Project, Berger was asked about the administration's understanding of al Qaeda as he came into office.

Did we see the mosaic of radical Islam in '93? No. I don't think we saw it clearly until—and as you get to '96 and '97, late 1995, we set up something called al-Qaida Station, which is a dedicated CIA operation focused on al-Qaida. We start becoming much more aggressive about going after al-Qaida cells, but the real wake-up call for us was '98.⁸¹³

The final piece in Clinton's national security structure was George Tenet. Tenet who had already been working at the CIA in an acting capacity since July 1996, after the departure of John Deutch would finally be confirmed and take over in July 1997. That would be after the original nominee for CIA Director, Tony Lake, had to withdraw his nomination in the face of fierce Republican opposition.⁸¹⁴ Partisan politics destroyed Lake's nomination hopes. The Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee had made it in an “innuendo laden” inquiry with the aim to “get him” and stop his nomination.⁸¹⁵ Tenet appeared the most colourful of Clinton's nominees: “He was universally liked – a man with a mock roguish grin who chomped on unlit cigars and played the part of intelligence community insider with a conspiratorial glint in his eye.”⁸¹⁶ Tenet's communication style was described “as direct” with the ability to win “the trust of superiors by delivering bad news in a way that did not upset them.”⁸¹⁷ This was a good fit with both Berger and Clarke who were also reputed to be straight talking men. The new team, except Cohen, had all seen the growth of al Qaeda from within Clinton's inner circle during his first term. Although he was not a CIA insider, Tenet had been dealing with the CIA as the NSC's senior director for intelligence programs. Berger and Clark had been within the Clinton inner National Security Circle right from the start.

813 Presidential Oral Histories: Bill Clinton, Samuel R. Berger Oral History, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs; National Security Advisor, March 24-25, 2005, *UVA Miller Centre*, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/samuel-r-berger-oral-history-deputy-assistant-president>.

814 Tim Weiner, “Lake pulls out as nominee for C.I.A., assailing process as endless political circus,” *The New York Times*, March 18, 1997, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/03/18/us/lake-pulls-out-as-nominee-for-cia-assailing-process-as-endless-political-circus.html>.

815 Jane Mayer, “Tony Lake is missing”, *The New Yorker*, March 31, 1997, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1997/03/31/tony-lake-is-missing>.

816 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 240-241.

817 Coll. *Ghost Wars*, 356.

At the start of his second term, counterterrorism management put in place in 1996 was working well. In a Government Accounting Office report that appeared in September 1997⁸¹⁸ The report indicated that as a result of PDD 39, the overall focus on terrorism had increased throughout the federal government.⁸¹⁹ Surprisingly for a report produced by the Congressional “watchdog,” it did not include an evaluation of how the various groups or subcommittees were functioning but passed on the self-evaluation from the groups themselves.⁸²⁰ The report was positive in that it reported on the significant progress had been made as a result of PDD-39. Specifically, improvements were noted on crisis management and the management of the preparation for and response to the consequences of a terrorist attack.⁸²¹

PDD 39 also called for efforts to prevent terrorist attacks. Here too, the results showed positive results in that forty federal agencies, bureaus and agencies had come together to create the Interagency Intelligence Committee on Terrorism.⁸²² The purpose of this forum was to be able to share information on terrorist threats. The process for sharing the information was, however, more surprising in that it was to be achieved by “detailing staff to one another’s organizations.”⁸²³ The report also diligently detailed the roles of the FBI, CIA and the Pentagon in counter-terrorism measures. However, information on how these agencies worked and cooperated is not available. The report was notable in presenting evidence that showed progress being made across the federal government within each government department and agency, but its silence on how they were cooperating with each other beyond delegating members of staff is problematic in retrospect.

The failure in the “unity of effort” within the intelligence community would be a key finding of the ‘9/11’ commission.⁸²⁴ One possible clue comes from within the GAO report that hinted of problems on cooperation between agencies and departments of the federal government that arose out of not having

818 The Government Accounting Office (in 2004 renamed as the Government Accountability office - GAO) is “an independent, nonpartisan agency that works for Congress. Often called the “congressional watchdog,” GAO investigates how the federal government spends taxpayer dollars.” *Government Accountability Office*, About GAO, online at <https://www.gao.gov/about/index.html> .

819 “Combatting Terrorism: Federal Agencies efforts to implement National policy and strategy”, GAO / NSIAD 97-254, September 1997, *US General Accounting office*, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/160/155997.pdf> .

820 *Ibid.*, 24-25.

821 *Ibid.*, 38-69.

822 *Ibid.*, 31.

823 *Ibid.*, 32

824 *The 9/11 Commission report*, 407- 28.

one common definition of counterterrorism across the federal government.⁸²⁵ The report provided an example where ‘counterterrorism’ by the FBI meant that it covered “the full range of its activities” including “preventative and crisis management efforts.” The Pentagon however, used ‘counterterrorism’ measures to refer to “offensive measures to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorist attacks” and used ‘anti-terrorism’ for defensive measures including infrastructure protection.⁸²⁶ As Alex Schmid noted in 2004, this definitional problem was still present even after ‘9/11’ and impacted what could realistically be achieved in counterterrorism.⁸²⁷ Clinton had made important steps in getting the focus on terrorism through PDD 39, but there was still some way to go.

Ominous Developments on Terrorism.

1997 would not see another attack of the size of Oklahoma City or Khobar Towers against America. However, Bin Laden was not keeping quiet. In the next two years, America would come to know more about him. Coming into 1997, Coll has claimed that the CIA and the White House counterterrorism office still found bin Laden’s paramilitary and terrorist ambitions “something of a mystery.”⁸²⁸ Bin Laden had become established in Kandahar, Afghanistan, under the protection of Taliban warlord Mullah Omar.⁸²⁹ In March 1997, in his first major TV interview to a Western TV station, bin Laden told Peter Arnett of CNN that he was continuing with his fatwa against the US owing to their support for Israel, troop deployment in Saudi Arabia, and ‘crimes’ against Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq.⁸³⁰ When asked whether withdrawal from Saudi Arabia would end the call for jihad, bin Laden did not answer directly but changed the topic by suggesting that the US “must desist from aggressive intervention against Muslims in the whole world.” While bin Laden lauded the attack on US troops in Khobar Towers in 1996, he also denied personal responsibility, implying that this was not an al Qaeda operation “as he was not

825 “Combatting Terrorism: Federal Agencies efforts to implement National policy and strategy”, *General Accounting office*, GAO / NSIAD 97-2543, 16.

826 *Ibid.*, 16.

827 Alex Schmid, Terrorism – The Definitional problem, *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*, 36:2 (2004).

828 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 343.

829 Scheuer, *Osama bin Laden*, 107.

830 Transcript of CNN interview between bin Laden and Peter Arnett in March 1997, *Findlaw.com*, <http://news.findlaw.com/cnn/docs/binladen/binladenintvw-cnn.pdf>.

there.” Bin Laden spoke of numerous Western attempts to assassinate him, boasting that they had failed because divine providence favoured him. He remained circumspect about his plans by stating, ominously, that “you’ll see and hear about them in the media.”⁸³¹

Al Qaeda’s targeting of America would become manifest in Africa. Al Qaeda had been interested in attacking US targets in Africa since as early as 1993.⁸³² Canadian intelligence officer Tod Hoffman, has claimed that by 1996 the State Department had been informed by the CIA that they had evidence of an “active terrorist cell” in Kenya.⁸³³ It would also be the same year when Prudence Bushnell took over as US Ambassador to Kenya. Bushnell would be the first American diplomat who would find herself at the front line against al Qaeda in Africa. Born in 1946, her mother had been in the wartime Office of Strategic Service (OSS) and her father in the Foreign Service. By the time Bushnell had turned seventeen, she had lived in Germany, France, Pakistan, and Iran, picking up key language skills along the way.⁸³⁴ After college, in 1979 Bushnell followed the family trade and gained a significant amount of foreign service experience in countries such as Senegal and India. In 1993, she was appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, responsible for Sub Saharan Africa. As part of her senior leadership training, she claimed to have trained with the CIA and FBI, including “shooting weapons; driving a Humvee; riding in Bradley vehicles and tanks...and jump[ing] off 35-foot tower[s]”.⁸³⁵ In short, she was an all-action diplomat.

Bushnell’s appointment to the ambassadorship of Kenya in 1996 came within a context that she recognised as complex. In an interview in 2005, Bushnell suggested that there was a disconnect between PDD 39, the anti-terrorism rhetoric of both President and Congress, and the realities of post-Cold War politics:

Clinton had felt compelled to give the American people their peace dividend, while Congress thought that now the Cold War was over, there was no need for significant funding of intelligence, foreign affairs or

831 Ibid.

832 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 129- 131.

833 Tod Hoffman, *Al Qaeda declares War: The African embassy bombings and America’s search for justice*, (Lebanon, NH: Fore Edge, 2014), 35.

834 Charles S. Kennedy, Interview with Ambassador Prudence Bushnell, July 21- 29 2005, *Frontline Diplomacy: The Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training*, Manuscript/Mixed Material, 2010, Library of Congress Washington D.C. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mfdipbib001525/>.

835 Ibid.

diplomacy...Newt Gingrich and the Congress closed the federal government a couple of times. Agencies were starved of funding across the board. Needless to say, there was no money for security....⁸³⁶

In the same interview, she provided a glimpse into the administration's understanding of al Qaeda:

As ambassador, I was told that there was an al Qaeda cell in Nairobi and that interested the intel community in Washington. Bin Laden at that time considered a terrorist financier, not an activist, at least so far, I was told... I was aware that a "walk in" [Jamal Al -Fadl] had warned us in December 1997 that the embassy may be bombed but I was assured ... that he was considered a "flake."⁸³⁷

Mustafa Mahmoud Said Ahmed in November 1997 had walked into the US embassy in Nairobi with details of an al Qaeda plot to detonate a bomb at the embassy. Bushnell's recollections are useful in contextualising this activity, as well as the events that followed in 1998. In hindsight, it is possible to divine greater significance about discounting evidence from walk-in informants to the US embassy who was not believed in the build to the attack on this embassy. As Hoffman claims, the informant had made earlier claims of attacks that had not materialised.⁸³⁸

Bushnell struggled with the State Department to get them to take her concerns about the security at the US embassy seriously. Key officials at the State Department viewed her as a "nuisance" and was "irritated" by her warnings about possible attack from al Qaeda.⁸³⁹ Despite being an Ambassador and part of the State Department leadership, Bushnell was not made privy to any intelligence concerning threats, which, she claimed later was issued on a "need to know basis."⁸⁴⁰

Bin Laden Ramps up his Rhetoric.

On 23 February 1998, bin Laden issued his second fatwa against the United States, in the name of the so-called World Islamic Front. In bin Laden's own

836 Ibid.

837 Ibid.

838 Hoffman, *Al Qaeda declares War*, 37-38.

839 Ibid.

840 Ibid.

words, he was proclaiming a “declaration of war”.⁸⁴¹ Bin Laden’s statement, faxed to *Al Quds Al Arabi*, began by restating his grievances in three closely argued paragraphs. Bin Laden claimed that since the Gulf War, the United States had been:

occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim peoples.⁸⁴²

His second point spoke of a “crusader-Zionist alliance” that had wreaked havoc on Iraq and was continuing to “annihilate” its people and “their Muslim neighbours.” Third, he claimed that US aims were “religious and economic” in support of Israel in a manner designed to “divert attention from its occupation of Jerusalem and murder of Muslims there”. The fatwa declared: “All these crimes and sins committed by the Americans are a clear declaration of war on Allah, his messenger, and Muslims.” Bin Laden also asked all Muslims:

to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it ... We also call on Muslim ulema, leaders, youths, and soldiers to launch the raid on Satan's U.S. troops and the devil's supporters allying with them, and to displace those who are behind them so that they may learn a lesson.⁸⁴³

None of the major newspapers ran stories about bin Laden’s second fatwa. Just like the 1997 CNN interview, bin Laden did not generate much of a public reaction. In private, however, furious efforts were being made to capture him.

The Clinton administration made no public response to this TV interview, but behind the scenes, the counter-terrorism wheels were rolling. In a closed hearing of the Congressional Select Committee on 10 April 1997, the bin Laden tracking centre reported that it was “now running operations designed to collect target[ed] intelligence in Afghanistan, for use in the future” in case the US wanted to mount a covert operation to capture or attack al Qaeda.⁸⁴⁴

841 “Jihad against Jews and Crusaders,” World Islamic Front Statement, February 23, 1993, *Federation of American Scientists*, <https://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm> .

842 Ibid.

843 Ibid.

844 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 347.

Meanwhile, Gary Schroen, a CIA station chief, attempted to persuade Ahmed Shah Massoud, an Afghan leader of the Northern Alliance fighting the Taliban, to solicit his help to “eliminate” bin Laden.⁸⁴⁵

Chasing bin Laden

The criticism made by Bossie was that Clinton was only focused on terrorism when it was in the public eye and scored him political points.⁸⁴⁶ The evidence does not support this, as the events before and after the Embassy bombing demonstrates. Diplomacy and CIA covert action were all tried before the events of the Embassy attack despite None of these efforts would generate media coverage and therefore Clinton’s critics could claim, without basis, that the administration had been inattentive to terrorism.

Diplomatic efforts to pressurise the Taliban to hand over bin Laden had been underway since February 1995.⁸⁴⁷ Diplomatic cables show that Warren Christopher had reached out to the Taliban and offered “to work with you to expel all terrorists and those who support terrorism.”⁸⁴⁸ The Taliban response, however, was uncompromising. First, they demanded that the US officially recognise the fledgling Taliban government that had come to power in Afghanistan. Failure to do so, they warned, would mean that “every Afghan [could] become a bin Laden.”⁸⁴⁹ Second, they tried to pin the blame for terrorist actions against other Afghani warlords.⁸⁵⁰ The third response was to deflect. They claimed that they did not know where bin Laden was staying in Afghanistan. These claims by the Taliban stretches credibility, as bin Laden was under Mullah Omar’s protection.⁸⁵¹ To fend off further US diplomatic pressure, they alluded to plans in development with Saudi Arabia which would resolve the bin Laden issue.⁸⁵² Peter Tomsen, US envoy to Afghanistan in 1989-92, later

845 Ibid.

846 Bossie, *Intelligence failure*, 177.

847 “Meeting with the Taliban in Kandahar : More questions than answers,” *The National Security Archive*, Volume VII : The Taliban File, US Embassy (Islamabad Cable February 15, 1995, Confidential, 7 pp, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB97/tal7.pdf>.

848 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 335.

849 “Afghanistan: Raising Bin Ladin with the Taliban.” Taliban File Part III, U.S. Embassy (Islamabad), Cable Mar 4, 1997, Confidential, 5 pp, *The National Security Archive*, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB134/Doc%201.pdf>.

850 Ibid.

851 Michael Scheuer, *Through our enemies’ eyes: Osama bin Laden, radical Islam and the future of America*, (Dulles, Virginia: Potomac books, 2006) 167.

852 Ibid.

declared to the 9/11 Commission that the State Department had “no clear policy on Afghanistan,” which made the chances of apprehending bin Laden and bringing him to justice an unlikely prospect.⁸⁵³

The next diplomatic attempt was to solicit the help of Saudi Arabian intelligence, a notoriously prickly and unreliable partner. The Saudi initiative was part of a backchannel diplomatic effort masterminded by Prince Turki bin Faisal Al Saud, the Saudi intelligence chief.⁸⁵⁴ Bin Laden’s fatwa of February 1998 had vilified both the US and Saudi Arabian Royal family. Prince Turki had been bin Laden’s “patron” during the anti-Soviet jihad in the 1980s. The NSC believed that Turki would have some purchase over bin Laden and bring him to heel.⁸⁵⁵ Coll has however claimed that the motivations for Prince Turki’s offer of help needs to be viewed from “the lens of Saudi Arabian politics” rather than any altruistic desire to help America.⁸⁵⁶ Bin Laden had railed against both America and Saudi Arabia’s monarchy in his fatwa. Coll further claims that there were “differences and suspicions” over what occurred when Prince Turki met Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban. The results of the visit would remain unknown to US intelligence, and suspicion remained that Prince Turki had offered Mullah Omar vast sums of money to make the bin Laden problem go away. Coll’s assessment of Turki’s actions seems plausible in light of his reluctance to share details with the Americans as he claims that Saudi Arabia “had little desire to put Bin Laden on trial” as courtroom revelations might prove to be an embarrassment to the Saudi authorities.⁸⁵⁷

Clinton had remained focused on terrorism at home whilst the diplomatic effort had been underway. In May, Clinton had issued two further national security directives PDD 62 and PDD 63 on 22 May 1998. PDD 62 aimed to disrupt terrorist financing.⁸⁵⁸ PDD 63 focused on critical infrastructure protection.⁸⁵⁹ As a result of PDD 62’s focus on terrorist financing, Clarke recounts that “money exchanges (*hawala*)”, “Islamic charities and non-

853 *The 9/11 commission report*, 110.

854 Opinion “Prince Turki’s resume”, *The New York Times*, August 2, 2005.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/02/opinion/prince-turkis-rsum.html> .

855 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 272.

856 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 397.

857 *Ibid.*, 402.

858 “Protection Against Unconventional Threats to the Homeland and Americans Overseas” (5/22/1998),

Declassified Documents concerning Presidential Decision Directive 62 (PDD-62), *Clinton Digital*

Library, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/16200> .

859 “PDD-63 - Critical Infrastructure Protection, 5/20/1998,” *Clinton Digital*

Library, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/12762> .

governmental organizations” that drove the fundraising for al Qaeda, along with bin Laden’s fortunes, were all targeted.⁸⁶⁰ However this initiative also faced challenges in implementation.

The US investigations into terrorist fund raising found a direct link with donors from Saudi Arabia.⁸⁶¹ In trying to find a solution, however, the US faced problems in dealing with the Saudi government. Clarke’s experience of dealing with Saudis had been disappointing, “with aching slow progress, broken promises and denial.”⁸⁶² Clarke states that this continued “despite Saudi promises to provide additional information and support, little was forthcoming” regarding information on wealthy Saudis who were accused of bankrolling al Qaeda. To make matters worse, Clarke also faced internal resistance to some of these efforts from what he describes as “interagency obstructionists.”⁸⁶³ However, views expressed about Clarke himself suggest that he was not effective in dealing with the other federal departments. Dr. Robert Wescott, who served for two years (1999-2001) as Special Assistant to the President for Economic Policy at the National Economic Council at the White House and then as Chief Economist at the President’s Council of Economic Advisers, was deeply involved in the deterrence of terrorist financing. According to Wescott’s recollection, Treasury opinion of Clarke as he tried to address gaps in terrorist financing was of a “maverick” who appeared to be “alarmist” in his fears about al Qaeda.⁸⁶⁴ Clarke efforts would start to see results in blocking terrorist financing in 2000.⁸⁶⁵

The CIA were also considering covert action to seize bin Laden. Tenet recounts that the plan was to snatch bin Laden from a location near Kandahar where he had been holed up since coming to Afghanistan.⁸⁶⁶ Specifically, it would involve a snatch team breaching a ten-foot wall, seizing bin Laden by “roll[ing] him up in a rug”, and “hiding him in the desert...until the United States could stealthily get an aircraft to ‘exfiltrate’ him.”⁸⁶⁷ The high-risk plan was developed in the CIA’s ‘Alec Station’. Interviews conducted for this study

860 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 192.

861 *Ibid.*, 193.

862 *Ibid.*, 194.

863 *Ibid.*, 195.

864 Interview with Dr Robert Wescott, Offices of Keybridge LLC, Washington D.C., September 8, 2016.

865 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 196.

866 *Ibid.*, 395.

867 Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 113.

with former operatives from ‘Alec Station’ have confirmed that there was “determined and laser-like focus” to bring bin Laden to justice.⁸⁶⁸ In May 1998, three months before the attack on the East African embassies, there is some cautious confidence in ‘Alec Station’, as evidenced by heavily redacted emails, one of which is to Michael Scheuer from Gary Schroen, station chief of the CIA in Islamabad, Pakistan. The e-mail relates that “planning for ubl [Osama bin Laden] rendition is going well.” In the email, Schroen is cautiously optimistic about getting a “green light -50:50; odds [that]it will succeed 40-60 (if we define success as either ubl in custody or dead)”.⁸⁶⁹ The 9/11 Commission report also details a memorandum of operation, from the CIA management, giving legal authorisation for the capture operation. Despite misgivings among some senior CIA officers towards covert paramilitary operations, the memorandum gained broad agreement and sent to the National Security Council for final approval.⁸⁷⁰ The plan of attack had progressed to the point where the CIA and FBI were engaged in “graded rehearsals... spread over three time zones...bringing in personnel from the region.”⁸⁷¹

Tenet and White House backed away from deploying this plan based on fears, there would inevitably be gun fight and civilian casualties would be unavoidable. Tenet believed that at best the idea had a 40 per cent chance of success – not the highest odds for a covert action where plausible deniability of US sponsorship is paramount.⁸⁷² Moreover, CIA leadership were not confident that the “surrogates”, the Afghan tribesmen who were going to deliver the plan on the ground, were not going to end up killing bin Laden rather than capturing him and offering him to US operatives.⁸⁷³ Tenet and his management were also sceptical about the likelihood of success:

Mike Scheuer, the head of ‘Alec Station’, was strongly in favour of going ahead with the operation. I took his recommendation seriously, but six senior CIA officers stood in the chain of command between Mike and me. Most of them were seasoned operations officers, while Mike was an analyst not trained in conducting paramilitary operations. Every one of the senior operations officers above Mike recommended against

868 Interview with Cynthia Storer, April 29, 2015, University of Warwick.

869 “[Title Excised]” “*Planning for the UBL Rendition Is Going Very Well,*” to Michael F Scheuer, From [Excised], Central Intelligence Agency Email, *The National Security Archive*, The Central Intelligence Agency’s 9/11 File, Central Intelligence Agency Email, May 5, 1998. <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB381/>.

870 *The 9/11 Commission report*, 113.

871 Ibid.

872 Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 113.

873 Ibid.

undertaking the operation. They believed the chances of success were too low and the chances of killing innocent women and children too high.⁸⁷⁴

The White House too was sceptical as evidenced in a memo from Berger to Tenet, referenced in the 9/11 Commission's report, which suggested that there was a lack of "hard evidence" against bin Laden. Moreover, there was nervousness around "the danger of snatching him and bringing him to the United States only to see him acquitted."⁸⁷⁵ In the same report, Richard Clarke described the plan as "half- assed".⁸⁷⁶ In the light of these concerns, Tenet did not take the plan to the president for final authorisation.⁸⁷⁷ Though the White House had become unenthusiastic, it appears that the CIA Director's unwillingness to believe in the capabilities of the 'Alec Station' to carry out this plan, led to it being scrubbed. Capturing bin Laden was not going to be easy, especially if within the CIA management team, they were not unanimously agreed on the course of action.

The Embassy Attacks and its Aftermath.

On 7 August 1998 at 10.32 am, a truck packed with 2,000 pounds of explosives entered the rear parking lot between the Embassy building and the Cooperative Bank. The bomb blew apart the rear of the Embassy and caused the adjacent seven-storey office building to collapse.⁸⁷⁸ Bushnell had been attending a meeting with Kenya's Minister of Commerce in the Cooperative Bank building and recalls being blown off her feet.⁸⁷⁹ The attack claimed the lives of twelve US diplomats and more than two hundred Kenyans, with some 4000 people injured.⁸⁸⁰ In a highly coordinated attack, ten minutes later a second truck bomb exploded outside the US embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania resulting in the loss of eleven lives and injury to over two hundred people.⁸⁸¹

874 Ibid., 113-114.

875 *The 9/11 Commission report*, 113.

876 Ibid. 111.

877 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 395.

878 Charles S. Kennedy, Interview with Ambassador Prudence Bushnell.

879 Ibid.

880 James Risen and Benjamin Weiser, "Unheeded warnings: A special report; Before bombings, omens and fears", *The New York Times*, January 9, 1999. <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/09/world/unheeded-warnings-a-special-report-before-bombings-omens-and-fears.html>.

881 Hoffman, *Al Qaeda Declares War*, 7.

In his Sunday night radio address on the 9 August 1998, Clinton expressed righteous anger while speaking of his “determination to never give up.”⁸⁸² He defended his counterterrorism approach to date:

Over the past several years, I have intensified our effort on all fronts in this battle: apprehending terrorists wherever they are and bringing them to justice; disrupting terrorist operations; deepening counterterrorism cooperation with our allies and isolating nations that support terrorism; ... This year I appointed a national coordinator to bring the full force of our resources to bear swiftly and effectively.⁸⁸³

Reactions to the attack were a mixture of bewilderment, anger, and shock. Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, would condemn the attacks as “indiscriminate terrorism.”⁸⁸⁴ Albright has described her reaction as being “mesmerized as our TV pictures showed our embassies shrouded in smoke.”⁸⁸⁵ In public, she struck a resolute note as she vowed to “spare no effort to use all means at our disposal to track down and punish the perpetrators of these outrageous acts.”⁸⁸⁶ John Kerry, Democratic Party Senator and member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, brought a measure of realism to the situation by stating: “There's always a tension between how much money do you want to spend and how many embassies do you want to turn into fortresses.”⁸⁸⁷ John Kyl, Republican Senator and Chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Technology, Terrorism and Government Information, agreed with Kerry’s assessment that Embassies could never be immune from terrorist attack but called for a security review. In his opinion, the intelligence services were failing in their counterterrorism efforts because Clinton had been unable to give them enough resources:

I suspect these embassies may have been chosen because their security wasn't as hard, and that's a real concern...But you can never harden security beyond the possibility of attack. That's why you need the human intelligence, and we don't have enough of it.⁸⁸⁸

882 "The President's Radio Address," August 8, 1998, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=54763>.

883 Ibid.

884 William Claiborne, “Bomb explodes at 2 U.S. embassies in Africa; Scores Dead,” *The Washington Post*, August 8, 1998, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/efricabombing/stories/main080898.htm>.

885 Albright, *Madam Secretary*, 365.

886 Ibid.

887 Thomas W. Lippmann, “Embassies can never be fully protected,” *The Washington Post*, August 8, 1998, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/efricabombing/stories/security080898.htm>.

888 Ibid.

For White House insiders on the frontline on counterterrorism, the reactions varied. Benjamin and Simon described the mood amongst some in the administration as “paralysing, and overtaxing.”⁸⁸⁹ Richard Clarke would note that “al Qaeda had now followed up a fatwa ...[with] declaring war on the United States with an actual act of war.”⁸⁹⁰ Freeh, the administration’s counterterrorism lead, would describe the attack as “lethal in the extreme” and part of a “global terrorist war.”⁸⁹¹ At the CIA, Tenet faced difficult questions about his decision not to authorise the Tarnak Farm raid:

I paid a visit to ‘Alec Station’ which by this time had been moved back to CIA headquarters... one of Scheuer’s subordinates quivering with emotion confronted me about my Tarnak farm decision. “If you had allowed us to go ahead with our response... these people might still be alive.”⁸⁹²

Within thirteen days of the attack, Clinton responded with missile strikes with Operation “Infinite Reach’ against targets in Afghanistan and Sudan.

Operation ‘Infinite Reach’- Political Deflection?

Robert Fisk, who interviewed bin Laden in 1993, would describe Clinton’s description of bin Laden as Public Enemy No 1 in August 1998 as “infantile”.⁸⁹³ The same week on 20 August 1998, thirteen days after the attacks on the East African embassies, seventy Tomahawk missiles would be fired at targets in Afghanistan and Sudan. The mission’s chief objective was to eliminate the al Qaeda leadership including bin Laden while he was attending a meeting in Afghanistan. CIA intelligence had suggested that the al Qaeda leadership was planning to meet at Khost in Afghanistan to review the embassy bombing and decide on next steps. With al Qaeda culpability confirmed within hours after the attack, the logic and legality of striking back seemed appealing to the White House.⁸⁹⁴ The planning for the mission was to be put together in “a small group” to maintain secrecy led by Berger.⁸⁹⁵ Despite some scepticism within the CIA, as to the reliability of the information about bin Laden’s attendance at the Khost

889 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 152.

890 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 181.

891 Freeh, *My FBI*, 222.

892 Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 114-115.

893 Robert Fisk, “Public Enemy Number 1 – a title he always wanted,” *The Independent*, August 22, 1998, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/public-enemy-no-1-a-title-he-always-wanted-1173134.html>.

894 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 258.

895 Micah Zenko, *Between threats and wars: US discrete military operations in the Post-Cold War world*, (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2010) 59.

meeting, the decision to strike at Bin Laden was described by Bruce Riedel, then a senior CIA analyst, as too good an opportunity to miss, calling it the “Christmas tree effect - what else do you want to go after?”⁸⁹⁶ Clarke’s recollection of the mood of the National Security team suggests that the need to respond with an overt show of force was their paramount concern: “If al Qaeda could issue fatwas declaring war on us, we could do the same and more to them.”⁸⁹⁷

The decision to strike was not without political risk. At that moment, Clinton was facing a personal crisis as revelations about his relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinsky had become public. On 17 August 1998, three days before the strikes, Clinton stunned the nation by finally admitting to the extra-marital relationship.⁸⁹⁸ It remains a matter of conjecture how much the Lewinsky affair impacted his thinking. Historian William Chafe has suggested that the President was under immense pressure.⁸⁹⁹ Appearing live on television before a Grand Jury, an embarrassed and defensive Clinton tried to explain that he had not lied to the special prosecutor regarding the affair.⁹⁰⁰ Chafe characterises a president who in the days leading up to the attack was “alternating between begging for forgiveness [from his wife, Hillary] and planning the strikes on al Qaeda.”⁹⁰¹ Coll would describe these developments as “strange, strange days on Pennsylvania Avenue.”⁹⁰² Struggling with personal and political crises, Clinton appeared withdrawn, isolated and introspective.⁹⁰³ Clarke, Benjamin and Simon all claim the President decided to retaliate despite knowing that there existed a risk that he would face accusations of trying to detract public attention from the Lewinsky scandal.⁹⁰⁴ Clarke offers the revealing insight that Clinton asked Berger to pull together a plan that would go beyond proportional retaliation. Clinton said: “Listen, retaliating for those attacks is all

896 Ibid., 60.

897 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 184.

898 Peter Baker and John F. Harris, “Clinton admits to Lewinsky relationship, challenges Starr to end personal prying,” *The Washington Post*, August 18, 1998, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/clinton/stories/clinton081898.htm>

899 William H. Chafe, *Bill and Hillary: The Politics of the Personal*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2012), 288-292.

900 James Bennet, “Testing of the President; The Overview; Clinton admits Lewinsky liaison to Jury: Tells nation it was wrong, ‘but private,’” *The New York Times*, August 18th, 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/08/18/us/testing-president-overview-clinton-admits-lewinsky-liaison-jury-tells-nation-it.html> .

901 Clinton, *My Life*, 803.

902 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 498.

903 Chafe, *Bill and Hillary*, 291.

904 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 187; Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 358.

well and good, but we gotta get rid of those guys once and for all” and then added, “You understand what I am telling you.”⁹⁰⁵ Clinton's actions were the most robust on terrorism since taking office as the Embassy attacks were a turning point for him:

bin Laden was poisoned by the conviction that he was in possession of the absolute truth and therefore free to play God by killing innocent people. Since we had been going after his organization for several years, I had known for some time that he was a formidable adversary. After the African slaughter I became intently focused on capturing or killing him and with destroying al Qaeda.⁹⁰⁶

The decision to respond militarily was taken by the president and Albright.⁹⁰⁷ The intelligence identified two sites - Khost near Kandahar in Afghanistan and a pharmaceutical plant at al Shifa in Khartoum in Sudan. At al Shifa, the CIA had discovered “a precursor ingredient of nerve gas” which could be used for a “later attack” produced under the guise of manufacturing pharmaceuticals.⁹⁰⁸ Clarke has also claimed in his memoir that the CIA presented a “slam dunk” of evidence to suggest not only that blame lay with al Qaeda for the Embassy attacks but also that they had evidence that al Qaeda’s principals were scheduled to meet in Afghanistan on 20 August.⁹⁰⁹

The strikes would fail to kill bin Laden, although the missiles destroyed the al Shifa plant in Sudan. In her memoirs, Albright noted that the response by Clinton at Khost killed “perhaps twenty members of the bin Laden’s network” and “injured several dozen others.”⁹¹⁰ Albright justified this action by stating that the “response [to the Embassy bombing] had shown... that we could hit the enemy on its home ground and that America could not be attacked with impunity.” She also noted that “the simultaneous missile strikes were meant to replicate the pattern of two terrorist bombings.” Coordinated media announcements by Clinton, Albright, Berger and Cohen, followed after the missile strikes. At 1.55pm, on 20 August 1998, Clinton appeared at a school in

905 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 185.

906 Clinton, *My Life*, 798.

907 Albright, *Madam Secretary*, 366.

908 *The 9/11 commission report*, 116.

909 Clark, *Against all enemies*, 184.

910 Albright, *Madam Secretary*, 370.

Martha's Vineyard and according to Albright, 'startled' reporters with this announcement.⁹¹¹

Clinton began by explaining the difference between state and non-state terrorists as he referred to the perpetrator of the attacks as "groups affiliated with Usama bin Ladin [sic], a network not sponsored by any state but as dangerous as any we face."⁹¹² This would be the first public naming of bin Laden by Clinton. He justified the attacks by offering four reasons:

First, because we have convincing evidence these groups played the key role in the Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania; second, because these groups have executed terrorist attacks against Americans in the past; third, because we have compelling information that they were planning additional terrorist attacks against our citizens and others with the inevitable collateral casualties we saw so tragically in Africa; and fourth, because they are seeking to acquire chemical weapons and other dangerous weapons.⁹¹³

At 5.55 pm, on the same day, Albright and Berger held a joint press conference in Washington D.C. In a pre-prepared statement, Albright explained:

Thanks to some excellent intelligence work, we were able quickly to determine the identity of those responsible for these latest attacks. We have also received solid information of new threats against U.S. citizens and embassies and installations.... we acted to preempt future terrorist acts and disrupt the activities of those planning for them.... We will work hard to identify future threats and thwart them. As today's strikes illustrate, there will be no sanctuary or safe haven for terrorists.⁹¹⁴

Providing further details of the attack, Berger claimed that the US had been "concerned about the threat from... bin Laden and his network for some time."⁹¹⁵ Berger argued that the administration had pressured the Sudanese to "disassociate" themselves and then pressured the Afghans to have him "expelled." He reminded the media about the *fatwa* which he claimed, "increased our sense of attention and focus on this group." Berger named bin Laden based on the "substantial amounts of credible information from many sources and many methods" that he claimed had been collected by the

911 Ibid.

912 William J. Clinton: "Remarks in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan," August 20, 1998, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=54798>.

913 Ibid.

914 William J. Clinton: "Press Briefing by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and National Security Advisor Sandy Berger," August 20, 1998, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=48285>

915 Ibid.

intelligence services. In responding to media questioning, Berger reiterated: “We had very specific information about very specific threats with respect to very specific targets.” Regarding the choice of targets, Berger clarified that “the so-called pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum, which we know with great certainty produces essentially the penultimate chemical to manufacture VX nerve gas” had been severely damaged. Questioned whether bin Laden was still alive following the missile attack on Khost, Berger stated:

We have no idea of bin Laden's whereabouts or whether he was in a camp at this time. Our intent was to target an infrastructure related to bin Laden and his groups, an infrastructure of equipment, of people, of munitions, of training facilities.⁹¹⁶

He also argued that the attack on Khost was not just about killing bin Laden, but preventing future attacks:

we had information that there would be a gathering today at this location of a number of groups associated with the bin Laden network. And that was a factor in our thinking, but so was perhaps in an even more compelling way the fact that we had this threat information that there would be further attacks on United States facilities in the near future.⁹¹⁷

William Cohen, the Secretary of Defense, struck a more sanguine tone to manage expectations but remained defiant, when he appeared on *CNN* on the same day by stating:

We recognize these strikes will not eliminate the problem, ...But our message is clear. There will be no sanctuary for terrorists and no limit to our resolve to defend American citizens and our interests -- our ideals of democracy and law -- against these cowardly attacks.⁹¹⁸

The reactions to the attacks were mixed. *The New York Times* reported that Clinton had received broad support from his arch opponents in Congress, including the Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott.⁹¹⁹ Republican Senator Dan Coats, however, would accuse Clinton of “lies and deceit and manipulations and deceptions” suggesting the president’s record “raises into doubt everything he does and everything he says,

916 Ibid.

917 Ibid.

918 CNN, “US Missiles pound targets in Afghanistan, Sudan”, *CNN.com*, August 21, 1998. <http://edition.cnn.com/US/9808/20/us.strikes.02/>.

919 James Bennet, “U.S. fury on 2 continents: The Overview; U.S. cruise missiles strike Sudan and Afghan targets tied to terrorist networks,” *The New York Times*, August 21, 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/08/21/world/us-fury-2-continents-overview-us-cruise-missiles-strike-sudan-afghan-targets.html>.

and maybe even everything he doesn't do and doesn't say.”⁹²⁰ Polling suggested that the American public was suspicious about the timing of the attack coming so soon after the Lewinsky revelations. *CNN* polling carried out on the day of the strikes indicated that two-thirds of all Americans approved of Clinton’s actions with sixty-one per cent saying they had confidence in the president “as a military leader”.⁹²¹ The poll also revealed some anxiety from Americans with forty-seven per cent of Americans expressing the fear that this strike would give rise to further terrorism.⁹²² A survey in the *Los Angeles Times* also confirmed public support for the missile responses.⁹²³

Unsurprisingly the support for the president from America’s detractors was not there. The Sudanese government described Clinton’s actions as a “criminal act”.⁹²⁴ On *CNN* a spokesperson for the Sudanese government claimed that the destruction of the pharmaceutical plant was inexplicable, as it had “nothing to do with chemical weapons.”⁹²⁵ *The New York Times* reported that the governments of both Afghanistan and Sudan were now aggrieved as Clinton had not gained “permission” from these states before launching this attack.⁹²⁶ Though there was no immediate response from bin Laden, a group called Saad al Faquih (later accused by US Treasury of being associated with al Qaeda in 2004),⁹²⁷ claimed:

such strikes will only give [groups allied with bin Laden] more reasons to commit such acts of violence. They will not lack men or ammunition, and they are scattered all over the globe.... the conduct of the United States and Saudi Arabia has justified violence in the eyes of bin Laden and his men.⁹²⁸

The mood of public positivity and bipartisan support changed sharply over autumn 1998. Gingrich changed his tune on the strikes describing them as “pinpricks” in September 1998.⁹²⁹ On 12 October 1998, Seymour Hersh

920 Ibid.

921 Keating Holland, “Most Americans support Sudan, Afghanistan strikes,” *CNN.com*, August 21, 1998, <http://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1998/08/21/strike.poll/>.

922 Ibid.

923 Mark. Z. Barabak, “US raids get broad support; Clinton issues not significant,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 23, 1998, <http://articles.latimes.com/1998/08/23/news/mn-15911>.

924 Howard Schneider and Nora Boustany, “Khartoum condemns criminal act,” *The Washington Post*, August 21 1998, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/eafricabombing/stories/Arabreax082198.htm>

925 CNN, “US Missiles pound targets in Afghanistan, Sudan.”

926 James Bennet, “U.S. fury on 2 continents.”

927 “U.S. Treasury Designates Two Individuals with Ties to al Qaida, UBL Former BIF Leader and al-Qaida Associate Named Under E.O. 13224”, *US Department of Treasury*, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/js2164.aspx>

928 Howard Schneider and Nora Boustany, “Khartoum condemns criminal act.”

929 *The 9/11 Commission report*, citing an internal email between Steven Simon and Sandy Berger, 117.

published an article in *The New Yorker*, challenging “every aspect of the Administration’s planning” claiming to have conducted over a hundred interviews with well-placed sources in the departments of Defense, Justice, State and the CIA in the weeks since the strikes.⁹³⁰ In what amounted to a devastating exposé of the failures in Clinton’s counterterrorism policies, Hersh cast severe doubts over the operation. Hersh argued that 'Operation Infinite Reach' was an attempt to deflect from the revelations of the Lewinsky scandal. Hersh appeared to find evidence that suggested the administration was in “disarray” about how to respond to the Embassy attacks. Infinite Reach, he suggested, bordered on a violation of international law and was put together in an “unseemly rush”. Hersh claimed to have found evidence proving that Clinton had “misrepresented and overdramatized evidence suggesting the Tomahawk [missile] raids had prevented further attacks.”⁹³¹

Hersh questioned the method and conduct in running the operation. Due to the high degree of secrecy observed in the planning of the mission, Hersh argued that with the exception of General Shelton, Commander in Chief of US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) who led the operation, none of the other Service chiefs were consulted, thus preventing a complete review of the military strike options. It was also claimed by one of Hersh’s sources in the Pentagon, described as a “four-star general”, that the targeting data was “weak” and the potential link to “bin Laden’s activities was very remote.” For good measure, Hersh also cited this same source as saying, “there’s no evidence that such bombings have any significant impact on terrorism.” The unnamed four-star general also observed that Berger and Albright were “too quick to advocate force as a solution to diplomatic problems”, adding with an apparent laugh that “Madeleine is willing to fire missiles at anybody.”⁹³²

Hersh’s presentation of the events cannot be taken at face value as other research has since emerged that suggests his analysis only presents a partial explanation of events. First, Hersh suggested that the mission had limited involvement from other military chiefs. Clarke offers an insider perspective view by noting that not only General Shelton, but also the Joint Chiefs and the

930 Seymour Hersh, “The Missiles of August,” *The New Yorker*, October 11, 1998, 34-37.

931 Ibid.

932 Ibid.

CIA were involved in the planning.⁹³³ Second, Hersh citing an unnamed four-star General claimed that the targeting data was weak. Only after the missiles had struck was the data considered unreliable in the missiles not killing bin Laden. Data unreliability was a risk that Tenet had acknowledged as a possibility.⁹³⁴ The military planners in their evidence to the ‘9/11’ Commission confirmed that the strike location was reviewed multiple times and even on the day of the missile strike.⁹³⁵

An unsympathetic reading would suggest that Clinton, having failed to kill bin Laden, was instead presenting this as an attempt to destroy al Qaeda facilities in Afghanistan. There is no evidence to suggest that killing bin Laden was the only objective though the president does acknowledge that bin Laden was scheduled to be at the camp in Khost.⁹³⁶ While eliminating bin Laden might have proved to be a more popular narrative in some parts of America, the more plausible explanation appears to have been Cohen’s more sanguine explanation on CNN that this was a signal that the US was not going to tolerate terrorist activity against America.⁹³⁷ Hersh’s other claim – namely, the attack was overdramatic – is also doubtful. Micah Zenko, an American political scientist, has argued that the Republicans would not have supported a ground offensive against al Qaeda, leaving Clinton with few choices, other than to consider an aerial attack.⁹³⁸ Risking men and machine by an aerial bombing mission over multiple sites had challenges and as the 9/11 commission stated:

The Tomahawk’s long range, lethality, and extreme accuracy made it the missile of choice. However, as a means to attack al Qaeda and UBL [Usama bin Laden]-linked targets pre-9/11, cruise missiles were problematic.⁹³⁹

Hersh also argued that there was no basis to target the al Shifa plant in Sudan. Hersh used the testimony of a US bishop to suggest that the al Shifa pharmaceutical plant was not manufacturing chemical weapons.⁹⁴⁰ Hersh does not add whether this bishop was a chemical weapons expert, but it is probably

933 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 186.

934 Zenko, *Between threats and wars*, 62.

935 Staff Statement No 6, “The Military”, *9/11 commission hearings*, September 4, 2003, https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/staff_statements/staff_statement_6.pdf.

936 Clinton, *My Life*, 803.

937 CNN, “US Missiles pound targets in Afghanistan, Sudan”.

938 Zenko, *Between threats and wars*, 60.

939 Ibid.

940 Ibid.

fair to say that it would be highly unusual for a man of the cloth to be a WMD specialist. The choice of the al Shifa plant was based on soil samples collected outside the plant and satellite imagery.⁹⁴¹ Satellite imagery also confirmed that al Shifa was a heavily guarded facility and if as the Sudanese claimed this was a milk powder plant, this was unlikely to be so heavily guarded.⁹⁴²

Hersh's second source is more plausible. Hersh used the testimony of "a senior inspector" in the Organization of Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).⁹⁴³ The inspector cast doubt on both the method used for the collection of the soil samples and the procedures for handling the soil samples. According to Hersh, CIA procedures fell "far short of the standards espoused by the O.P.C.W. Hersh concluded that there were enough grounds to be sceptical of the Clinton administration's claims about the evidence collected from al Shifa, as there was "no such thing as one hundred per cent certainty" on soil sample evidence to make claims about the existence of WMDs.⁹⁴⁴ Zenko has also offered evidence to argue that while "presence of Empta [of the ingredients allegedly found at the site and used in the manufacture of nerve gas] it did not guarantee that the plant manufactured VX or merely a warehouse or transshipment point for the nerve gas."⁹⁴⁵ Zenko has further claimed that the planning group behind the strikes accepted "Tenet's word" about the al Shifa plant.⁹⁴⁶ Paul Pillar, an intelligence officer who attended pre-strike planning meetings, has also claimed that the majority opinion amongst CIA officials present was not to include al Shifa.⁹⁴⁷

Despite doubts over targeting al Shifa, Clarke was reported to be in support of the strike. Another participant, described as a "senior military participant", was not.⁹⁴⁸ Zenko reports that the meeting, which did not include Clinton, concluded with Berger suggesting that the "Clinton administration would be pilloried if the United States bypassed bombing al Shifa and Bin Laden went ahead with chemical attacks." Berger, it is claimed, stated at this meeting that after the Tokyo subway gas attack in 1995 Clinton had consistently

941 Zenko, *Between threats and wars*, 61.

942 Ibid.

943 Hersh, "The Missiles of August."

944 Ibid.

945 Zenko, *Between threats and wars*, 61.

946 Ibid.

947 Ibid., 62.

948 Ibid.

worried about WMD.⁹⁴⁹ In an interview for this research, despite nearly twenty years having elapsed since the missile attack on al Shifa, John McLaughlin, Deputy Director of the CIA and one of the men that viewed the original intelligence, still stands by the initial assessment that the evidence indicated existence of materials that are to be used in the manufacture of nerve gas.⁹⁵⁰ At the time of the strike, though it was claimed that the plant had a connection to bin Laden though in 1999 the US government admitted there had been a mistake and the plant owner, Salah Idris, had no connection to terrorism.⁹⁵¹ The ‘9/11’ Commission in 2004 concluded that they had not viewed any evidence to corroborate CIA’s evidence that the plant manufactured WMD’s.⁹⁵²

Four conclusions arise from the analysis of the events that have become known in the aftermath of the missile response by Clinton. First, Attorney General Janet Reno had doubts about the legality of the military strikes.⁹⁵³ According to Hersh, Reno had wanted extra time to build a more compelling case against bin Laden. She believed that the evidence the US had produced so far against bin Laden did not “meet the standards of international law.” Reno pointed out that the “administration [still] had not accumulated clear evidence of a link between bin Laden and the targets to be attacked.”⁹⁵⁴ The US was in an awkward position because, as a signatory to the UN charter Article 5, had previously agreed to outlaw armed reprisals.⁹⁵⁵ Legal opinion remains divided on this issue. Abraham Sofaer, a judge and a former advisor to Reagan’s State Department, argued in 1998 that Clinton had acted lawfully.⁹⁵⁶ Jules Sobel, an American Constitutional law professor, offered a more balanced view in 1999:

It is untenable for international law to permit one nation to attack another merely because it alone claims that a group operating in the other country is launching terrorist attacks against it⁹⁵⁷.

Second, Clinton’s counterterrorism response strategy was inconsistent with stated policy. The abrupt change of strategy was never adequately

949 Ibid.

950 Interview with John McLaughlin, March 24, 2016. Washington D.C.

951 Andrew Marshal, “US admits Sudan bombing mistake,” *The Independent*, May 4, 1999, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/us-admits-sudan-bombing-mistake-1091397.html>.

952 *The 9/11 Commission report*, 118.

953 Hersh, “The Missiles of August.”

954 Ibid.

955 Jules Lobel, “The use of force to respond to terrorist attacks: The bombing of Sudan and Afghanistan,” *Yale Journal of International Law*, 24:4 (1999), 540.

956 Ibid., 541. citing, Abraham Sofaer, “US acted legally in Foreign raids”, *Newsday* October 19, 1998.

957 Ibid. 543.

explained. In the 1997 National Security Strategy, prior to the strike, Clinton had stated counterterrorism response would be through “a comprehensive program of diplomatic, economic and intelligence activities.”⁹⁵⁸ The National Security Strategy published in October 1998, had the word “military” inserted into this list of programs.⁹⁵⁹

Third, though some Republicans in 1998 and Bossie in 2003 would accuse Clinton of deliberate political deflection, the evidence does not support their accusations.⁹⁶⁰ Clarke has claimed that the president urged Berger to draw up a plan of retaliation, the day after the embassy bombing.⁹⁶¹ Zenko confirms this in his account.⁹⁶² Clinton was made aware of and accepted the risk that a military response could lead to accusations of political deflection.⁹⁶³ A contemporaneous report suggests that the president was able to “compartmentalize his life” between getting ready for his Senate testimony and planning this strike.⁹⁶⁴ The ‘9/11’ Commission would conclude the accusations described as ‘wag the dog’, after a popular movie of the same name was a “political slur” on the president by his opponents.⁹⁶⁵ ‘Wag the dog’ was a comedy released in 1997 was a fictional account of how a Hollywood producer and a White House spin doctor fabricate a war to distract the public from a presidential sex scandal.

Fourth, the Pentagon and the White House differed on the use of force against al Qaeda. Clarke had brought together a small group who suggested that, instead of trying to strike bin Laden out in a single knockout blow, a programme of ‘rolling strikes’ should be considered against the al Qaeda. The plan was grandly titled with ancient Roman connotations *Delenda Est. Delenda est* meant ‘must be destroyed’ and was evoked by the Romans in their battle against the Carthaginians in 201 BC. Undersecretary of State Tom Pickering

958 “A National Security strategy for a New century,” May 1997, *The National Security Strategy Archive*, <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1997.pdf>.

959 “A National Security strategy for a New century,” October 1998, *National Security Strategy Archive*, <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1998.pdf>.

960 John F. Harris, Strikes planned in midst of scandal, *The Washington Post*, August 21, 1998, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/efricabombing/stories/decision082198.htm>; Bossie, *Intelligence failure*, 190.

961 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 185.

962 Zenko, *Between threats and wars*, 59-60.

963 Clinton, *My Life*, 799.

964 James Bennet, After the attacks : The President; Clinton, dogged by Scandal, juggled politics and bombing , *The New York Times*, August 22, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/08/22/world/after-attacks-president-clinton-dogged-scandal-juggled-politics-bombing.html>.

965 *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 118.

agreed with Clarke when he read the plan: “al Qaeda must be destroyed.”⁹⁶⁶ This plan of action, however, did not receive Pentagon support. Clarke faced opposition on further strikes in Afghanistan from William Cohen, the Secretary of Defense, who described them as “primitive” and also by General Shelton, the planner behind Infinite Reach, who regarded them disparagingly as “Jungle Gyms.”⁹⁶⁷ There was concern that repeated missile strikes with no clear strategy would not solve the problem by destroying al Qaeda.⁹⁶⁸ Moreover, there were concerns among the military planners that the intelligence needed for these strikes was proving “hard to get”.⁹⁶⁹ General Shelton suggests that the White House had elevated expectations from what a military strike could achieve, and it was “not magic.”⁹⁷⁰

The Pentagon’s own follow-up mission – ‘Operation Infinite Resolve’ – also did not materialise as the White house remained reluctant to sign this off.⁹⁷¹ Berger would claim that this was due to the military planners not being able to create strike options creatively without high collateral damage.⁹⁷² The military remained unconvinced that counterterrorism through force was the right solution even though they went through the motions of planning and preparing military strikes. Lieutenant General Kerrick, Clinton’s advisor at the White House, would later describe the military as “reluctant warriors in the war against terrorism to take on al Qaeda.”⁹⁷³ The most probable explanation is from the ‘9/11’ Commission, who claimed that there was no “actionable intelligence” that could satisfy the planners or lead military planners to nullify fears of collateral damage.⁹⁷⁴

Counterterrorism without Force

Clinton’s most immediate action after the missile attacks was Executive Order 13099, on 20 August 1998, which amended the Executive Order 12947 of 23 January 1995. Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda went on the list of proscribed

966 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 197.

967 *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 120.

968 *Ibid.*, 121.

969 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 199.

970 Staff Statement No 6, “The Military.”

971 Zenko, *Between threats and wars*, 66.

972 *Ibid.*

973 *Ibid.*

974 Staff Statement No 6, “The Military”

terrorists and organisations that “threaten to disrupt the Middle East.”⁹⁷⁵ Clinton, in the second half of 1998, continued to focus on bin Laden by increasing diplomatic pressure against the Taliban and ensuring the legal indictments on bin Laden were now up and running.

The diplomatic efforts would be directed towards the Afghan Taliban with the aim of putting pressure on them, so they would apprehend and hand over bin Laden to the Americans. Albright claims that the State Department kept reiterating to the Taliban, in talks lasting over two years, that bin Laden was a terrorist and the Taliban ought to “help bring him to justice”.⁹⁷⁶ Albright further states that the Taliban responded with a “menu of lame excuses,” that it would “violate the Taliban’s cultural etiquette to mistreat a beneficiary of their hospitality”. The Taliban, Albright claimed, suggested that if they were to hand over bin Laden, who they described as a hero following his efforts against the Soviets in Afghanistan, they would face accusations of taking Saudi money and risk being overthrown.⁹⁷⁷

The Taliban would use delaying tactics to prevent further missile attacks with the American negotiators. The State Department cables that are lodged in the National Security Archive show a series of diplomatic attempts to persuade and pressurize the Taliban to part with bin Laden and hand him over to the Americans. Two days after the missile response by Clinton, on 22 August 1998, Mullah Omar, the leader of the Afghani Taliban and host to bin Laden, contacted the US government.⁹⁷⁸ The US government sent Michael Malinowski, “a senior member of the State Department’s Bureau of South Asian Affairs,” to talk to him.⁹⁷⁹ The cables confirm there was a hardening of anti-American opinion among the Taliban and by Mullah Omar. They assert that the US missile attacks resulted in the spread of bin Laden's anti-American message by uniting elements of the fundamentalist Islamic world. Omar wants to tease the

975 “Executive Order 13099: Prohibiting transactions with terrorists who threaten to disrupt the Middle East Peace process,” August 20, 1998, *Government Publishing Office*, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-1998-08-25/pdf/98-22940.pdf>.

976 Albright, *Madam Secretary*, 371-372.

977 Ibid.

978 “Afghanistan: Taliban's Mullah Omar's 8/22 Contact with State Department,” August 23, 1998, Confidential, NODIS, 4 pp. [Excised], The Taliban file Part IV, U.S. Department of State, Cable, *The National Security Archive*, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB134/Doc%202.pdf>.

979 Albright, *Madam Secretary*, 371.

Americans by suggesting that whilst he had no “specific message he had some advice:”⁹⁸⁰

He said that in order to rebuild US popularity in the Islamic world and because of his current domestic political difficulties Congress should force President Clinton to resign. He said he was aware of no evidence that bin Laden had engaged in or planned terrorist attacks while on Afghan soil.⁹⁸¹

Though Albright would characterise this response of Mullah Omar as “malarkey,” efforts to persuade the Taliban to surrender bin Laden would continue to the end of 1998.⁹⁸² On 1 October 1998, another telex ratcheted up the pressure citing the president’s words that the “United States will hold the Taliban responsible for any further terrorism conducted by the Usama Bin Laden network, as long as the Taliban provides sanctuary to members of that network.”⁹⁸³ Diplomatic pressure on the Taliban was also exerted through Pakistan, an ally of the Taliban, with a request via the Pakistan Foreign minister Shamshad Ahmed to the Taliban on 6 October. This stated, “that U.S. patience was growing thin,” and bin Laden’s extradition was something the US needed to have “settled ‘in a matter of days’ rather than weeks or months.”⁹⁸⁴ In response to this threat from the US, the Taliban responded by repeating previous answers of violating the code of Pashtun hospitality if they were to hand over bin Laden on 11 October 1998. The response from the US Ambassador to Pakistan, William Milam, would be more diplomatic than Albright’s as he would describe the Taliban’s reaction in the cables as “specious”.⁹⁸⁵

Though further efforts to persuade the Taliban would continue, the Taliban were impervious to US pressure. Even when the US offered on 19 October to use Saudi Arabia as a country where bin Laden could be extradited to, the Taliban remained unconvinced.⁹⁸⁶ In response, the Taliban requested

980 "Afghanistan: Taliban's Mullah Omar's 8/22 Contact with State Department." The Taliban file Part IV, U.S. Department of State, Cable, *The National Security Archive*,

981 Ibid.

982 Albright, *Madam Secretary*, 371.

983 "Message to Mullah Omar," October 1, 1998, Secret, NODIS 7 pp, Taliban File Part IV, U.S. Department of State, Cable, *The National Security Archives*, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB134/Doc%207.pdf>

984 "Pakistan: Ambassador Raises bin Laden with Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmed" October 6, 1998, Secret, 2 pp. [Excised], Taliban File IV, U.S. Embassy (Islamabad), Cable, *The National Security Archives*, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB134/Document%201%20-%20ISLAMA%2007510.pdf>.

985 "Pakistan: Ambassador Raises bin Laden with Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmed" October 6, 1998, Secret, 2 pp. [Excised], Taliban File IV, U.S. Embassy (Islamabad), Cable, *The National Security Archives*, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB134/Document%201%20-%20ISLAMA%2007510.pdf>.

986 "Usama bin Ladin: Coordinating our Efforts and Sharpening our Message on bin Ladin," October 19, 1998, Secret, 7 pp. [Excised], Taliban File IV, U.S. Embassy (Islamabad), Cable, *The National Security Archives*, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB134/Document%202%20-%20ISLAMA%2007841.pdf>.

clarification as to how bin Laden would be treated by the Saudi's.⁹⁸⁷ It was becoming clear to Milam that the US had not progressed, as he acknowledges in the cable that "there is little indication that anything we have said on bin Laden to the Taliban has registered with Taliban leader Mullah Omar..."⁹⁸⁸ Through the delays and obfuscations, the Taliban had managed to see off another missile attack, as memories of the first attack had faded.⁹⁸⁹

The Taliban would continue to frustrate US efforts to bring bin Laden to justice with Clinton having to adopt an alternate strategy. Even when the US threatened further military action, as was evident on 11 November 1998, the Taliban would deflect or offer platitudes. In response to these threats, they would make the extraordinary claim that bin Laden could not be held personally responsible for people he may have trained or have had contact with him. They would also offer reassurances that bin Laden would not cause any further trouble as he was now "totally under the control" of the Taliban.⁹⁹⁰ All the efforts with the Taliban would fail by Albright's admission.⁹⁹¹ As she conceded "we [the US State Department] decided to pull every lever, we could simultaneously," the effort to extradite bin Laden was failing. In the end, the administration would respond by agreeing on a coordinated set of measures with the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to deny Afghan Airlines landing rights, freeze financial assets, and curtail the travel of the Taliban leadership to travel internationally.⁹⁹²

The Clinton administration also implemented the legal processes in the US to indict bin Laden. On 4 November 1998, Mary Jo White the United States District Attorney for New York, along with Lewis D. Schiliro of the New York F.B.I. Office, announced charges for the bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.⁹⁹³ As US Attorneys are federal prosecutors but report to Attorney General Reno, this was a Federal prosecution. U.S. Attorney for the

987 "Usama Bin Laden: High-Level Taliban Official Gives the Standard Line on Bin Laden With a Couple of Nuances, In October 11 Meeting with Ambassador," October 12, 1998, Secret, NODIS, 10pp. [Excised], Taliban File IV, U.S. Embassy (Islamabad), Cable, *The National Security Archives*, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB134/Doc%209.pdf>.

988 Ibid.

989 Ibid.

990 "Usama Bin Ladin: Message Delivered to Taliban Representative," Nov 11, 1998, Secret, NODIS 4 pp. [Excised], Taliban File IV, U.S. Department of State, Cable, *The National Security Archives*, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB134/Doc%2011.pdf>.

991 Albright, *Madam Secretary*, 372.

992 Ibid., 371-372.

993 , "Press Release" November 4, 1998, United States District Attorney, Southern District of New York, *Federation of American scientists*, <https://fas.org/irp/news/1998/11/prladen.pdf>.

Southern District of New York has had a unique, top-dog status ever since President Theodore Roosevelt appointed Henry Stimson, later Secretary of State and, three times, Secretary of War, to the post. People who work in the Southern District went to the best law schools, were elected to law reviews, and clerked for federal judges. The eight-page indictment was succinct, and to the point, in that, it charged bin Laden on one count of “Conspiracy to attack defense utilities of the United States.”⁹⁹⁴ The charge sheet provided background on al Qaeda and the connection with bin Laden as its’ emir.⁹⁹⁵ It also detailed the al Qaeda network across multiple countries in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia and explained how the al Qaeda network directed operations through the “*majlis al shura* (the consultation council).” It then provided background to the charges about producing counterfeit passports, to threatening and attacking Americans to trying to procure nuclear materials⁹⁹⁶. *The New York Times*, in reporting the indictment, would also note the five-million-dollar reward being offered for bin Laden, though it did express scepticism about the prospects of bin Laden ever facing trial in the US.⁹⁹⁷ The announcement of the indictment from the White House did not go smoothly. On 4 November, Joe Lockhart appeared to have been surprised by reporters getting wind of this news though he did acknowledge the five-million-dollar reward.⁹⁹⁸ Lockhart promised there would be a statement, but nothing materialised from the White House.

The Distraction of the Impeachment.

Autumn 1998 brought domestic and foreign policy challenges for Clinton. On the domestic front, the president faced the possibility of impeachment arising out of revelations from the investigations that had extended into his private life. Despite polling data in August 1998 showing Americans “unmoved” by the salacious reports arising out of the president’s private life, some in the

994 “United States v Usama bin Laden, a/k/a “Usamah Bin- Muhammad Bin Laden,” a/k/a “ Shaykh Usama Bin-Laden” , a/k/a Mujahid Shaykh, a/k/a “Abu Abdallah” a/k/a “Qa Qa” Defendant , United States District Court, Southern District of New York, *Federation of American Scientists*, [Undated]

<https://fas.org/irp/news/1998/11/indict1.pdf>.

995 Ibid.

996 Ibid.

997 Benjamin Weiser, Saudi in indicted in bomb attacks on US embassies, *The New York Times*, November 5, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/05/world/saudi-is-indicted-in-bomb-attacks-on-us-embassies.html>.

998 William J. Clinton: "Press Briefing by Joe Lockhart," November 4, 1998. *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=48148> .

Republican Party felt it was too good an opportunity to miss.⁹⁹⁹ On 9 September 1998, Special Investigator Kenneth Starr, appointed by Congress to investigate the alleged irregularities over the Whitewater land deals, released the report of his five-year investigation. Congress received from Starr a four hundred and forty-five-page report with an added thirty-six boxes of materials. Starr seemed to take no account of the public mood and pushed ahead, accusing the president of violating the public trust and outlining eleven grounds for impeachment.¹⁰⁰⁰ Clinton noted Starr's report had the word 'sex' more than five hundred times and the word 'Whitewater,' twice.¹⁰⁰¹

The Starr report landed two months before the midterm elections due in November 1998. Clinton's fate was dependent on how Republican Speaker Gingrich would use this to move the election and Senate Minority Leader Dick Gephardt would mount a defence of the president in the country. Though Gephardt and Clinton were in the same party, at the start of his presidency they had disagreed over Clinton's North America Free Trade agreement in 1993.¹⁰⁰² In having to share the burden of leading a minority party in the House, it had necessitated Clinton and Gephardt to cooperate in ensuring the Republicans did not block the president at every turn. In the months before the release of the Starr report, Gephardt had supported Clinton over the missile strikes. As Gillon has noted, "Gephardt was determined to save his [Clinton's] presidency as much as Gingrich was now set on destroying it."¹⁰⁰³

During September 1998, the media remained focused on Clinton's private life.¹⁰⁰⁴ On 21 September, Clinton made a significant speech at the UN where much of his speech centred on the challenge of terrorism. The president stated that "terrorism is now on the top of the US agenda" and challenged the rest of the world to put it high on their agenda, too.¹⁰⁰⁵ The president remained

999 "Americans unmoved by prospect of Clinton, Lewinsky Testimony" U.S. politics & policy, *Pew Research Center*, August 4, 1998 <http://www.people-press.org/1998/08/04/americans-unmoved-by-prospect-of-clinton-lewinsky-testimony/>

1000 *The Guardian*, "The prosecutor's case", September 12, 1998 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1998/sep/12/clinton.usa> .

1001 Clinton, *My Life*, 809.

1002 Keith Bradsher, "Last call to Arms on the trade pact," *The New York Times*, August 23, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/08/23/business/last-call-to-arms-on-the-trade-pact.html> .

1003 Gillon, *The Pact*, 240.

1004 Brian Knowlton, "I sinned, he Says in apology that includes Lewinsky: Clinton vows he will stay and fight" *The New York Times*, September 12, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/12/news/i-sinned-he-says-in-apology-that-includes-lewinsky-clinton-vows-he-will.html> .

1005 William J. Clinton: "Remarks to the 53d Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City," September 21, 1998, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=54944> .

upbeat on his assessment of the challenge from terrorism by also rejecting bin Laden's clash of cultures arguments:

Let me urge all of us to think in new terms on terrorism, to see it not as a clash of cultures or political action by other means or a divine calling but a clash between the forces of the past and the forces of the future, between those who tear down and those who build up, between hope and fear, chaos and community.¹⁰⁰⁶

The media did not cover Clinton's UN speech but remained preoccupied with his grand jury testimony.¹⁰⁰⁷ This major speech on terrorism, received limited coverage in the media. Alongside the UN meeting, the president had tried to host a meeting with leaders from western nations including Great Britain, Italy and Bulgaria on furthering his economic and social vision. *The New York Times* reported even this through the filter of his struggles.¹⁰⁰⁸

Gephardt's defence of Clinton was influential in protecting the president and insulating the Democratic Party ahead of the midterms. Gephardt ensured that the process to select the House Judiciary Committees' Democratic impeachment staff were two combative figures who could engage in the partisan infighting. His two choices would be described in *The New York Times* as "Abbe Lowell, a hard-driving Washington lawyer... [and] the aggressive press spokesman James M. Jordan."¹⁰⁰⁹ Gephardt also called for fairness in the impeachment process, positioning the Republicans as having been unfair to the president.¹⁰¹⁰ On 8 October 1998, the House voted 258-176, along partisan lines, to open an impeachment inquiry.¹⁰¹¹ Polls though were still indicating on 12 October that sixty-two per cent of all Americans were opposed to impeaching the president.¹⁰¹²

1006 Ibid.

1007 Clinton, *My Life*, 812.

1008 James Bennet, "The testing of a president: The president: With a nation glued to television, Clinton sticks with his peers," *The New York Times*, September 22, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/22/us/testing-president-president-with-nation-glued-television-clinton-sticks-with-his.html>.

1009 Alison Mitchell, "The testing of a president: The Democratic leader: Frustrated with the president, but a first line of defense" *The New York Times*, October 4, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/10/04/us/testing-president-democratic-leader-frustrated-with-president-but-first-line.html>.

1010 Ibid.

1011 R.W. Apple Jr; "The Testing of a president: The Overview; House in a partisan 258- 176 vote approves a broad, open ended impeachment inquiry," *The New York Times*, October 9, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/10/09/us/testing-president-overview-house-partisan-258-176-vote-approves-broad-open-ended.html>; Eric Schmitt, "White House and G.O.P. Duel over impeachment panel," October 22, 1998 *The New York Times*, October 9, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/10/22/us/white-house-and-gop-duel-over-impeachment-panel.html>.

1012 CNN all politics, "Poll: Americans remain opposed to Clinton impeachment", October 12, 1998, *CNN.com*, <http://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/1998/10/13/poll/>.

In this febrile atmosphere, Clinton and Gingrich engaged in a battle to determine the fate of his presidency with less than two years left. In October 1998, Gingrich had felt confident enough to predict that Republicans could strengthen their majority by thirty-two seats in the House and five in the Senate.¹⁰¹³ Though Gingrich felt optimistic that the Lewinsky revelations would be a bonus for the Republican Party, he also understood that he would need to transcend the views of conservatives in his party who wanted only to focus on impeachment and morality.¹⁰¹⁴ Gingrich had to balance the needs of those within his party that wanted to focus the election on morality and impeachment versus those in his party, that sought to reflect American public opinion, and only pass a motion of censure on the president.¹⁰¹⁵ Also, Gingrich wanted to broaden out the campaign themes beyond issues of impeachment to address issues such as welfare reform, tax relief and defence spending.¹⁰¹⁶ However, in the final weeks before the election, the National Republican Congressional Committee ran TV spots in thirty marginal seats questioning Clinton's character.¹⁰¹⁷ Clinton's response was not to engage in questions of character but to get on with running the country. He passed a "superb" budget which saw progress on Democratic party campaigns on Social Security reform, funding of new teachers and the environment.¹⁰¹⁸ The president's campaign strategy was to turn the Republican's own strategy against them. As Clinton reflected in his memoirs, "As Gingrich had shown with the 'Contract with America' in 1994, if the public believed one party had a positive agenda and the other didn't, the party with the plan would win."¹⁰¹⁹

The results of the November 1998 midterms had conclusively demonstrated to the Republicans the error of judgement in focusing the election on the president's character and personal life.¹⁰²⁰ In Senate, the Democrats drew

1013 Romesh Ratnesar, "Clinton crisis: Why the midterms matter" *CNN.com*, October 19, 1998, <http://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/time/1998/10/12/midterms.html> .

1014 Gillon, *The Pact*, 253.

1015 Alison Mitchell, "The 1998 campaign: Impeachment; Subtext of Clinton's fate dwarfs election issues", *The New York Times*, November 1 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/01/us/the-1998-campaign-impeachment-subtext-of-clinton-s-fate-dwarfs-election-issues.html>

1016 Gillon, *The Pact*, 253.

1017 "Election 98, Lewinsky factor never materialized", *CNN.com*, November 4, 1998, <http://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/1998/11/04/impeachment/index.html>.

1018 Clinton, *My Life*, 820.

1019 *Ibid.* 814.

1020 Francis X. Clines, "The 1998 Elections: The Message—The scandal; At the polls, tolerance for Clinton runs deep", *The New York Times*, November 4, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/04/us/1998-elections-message-scandal-polls-tolerance-for-clinton-runs-deep.html> .

level with the Republicans, and the House results showed a loss of five seats by the Republicans. The vote reflected public opinion that Clinton should not be impeached.¹⁰²¹ Gingrich acknowledged the “miscalculation” by the Republicans,

We probably should have almost maniacally focused on cutting taxes, reforming Government, working on saving Social Security and accepted the fact that that was a better fight for us than drifting into September and October where there really were -- as people kept saying -- there were no national themes.¹⁰²²

It was over for Gingrich and he resigned on 7 November 1998.¹⁰²³ Clinton was not out of the woods yet, but his arch-nemesis was defeated, and political authority was returning to the president's battered reputation as year-end polls indicated the American public's unwillingness to support the impeachment of their president.¹⁰²⁴ Throughout this period, issues on foreign policy and national security had received limited attention. Clinton's speech on terrorism had received scant coverage. The midterm elections had shown Americans had had enough of sex and scandal. Clinton's job performance had nothing to do with his personal morality, which anyway was a private matter for the president.¹⁰²⁵ As the polling showed, Clinton's job approval had risen by six points to seventy-two per cent at the end of this saga.¹⁰²⁶

Alongside the twin domestic challenges of contesting the midterms and mounting a defence against an impeachment Clinton faced a foreign policy challenge in Iraq. The developments in Iraq would be judged by the '9/11' Commission to have prevented Clinton from continuing with his policy of military involvement against terrorism.¹⁰²⁷ On the same day that the mid-term elections took place it was reported by the *New York Times* that an international

1021 Richard L. Berke, The 1998 elections: The nation- The overview; Democrats hold off G.O.P advance, weakening impeachment prospects; Schumer ousts D'Amato; Pataki wins, *The New York Times*, November 4, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/04/us/1998-elections-nation-overview-democrats-hold-off-gop-advance-weakening.html>.

1022 Richard L. Berke, The 1998 elections: Congress – The reasons; Without a new tune to whistle, G.O.P kept humming 'scandal,' *The New York Times*, November 5, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/05/us/1998-elections-congress-reasons-without-new-tune-whistle-gop-kept-humming.html>.

1023 Alison Mitchell, “The Speaker steps down: The career; The fall of Gingrich, irony in an odd year,” *The New York Times*, November 7, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/07/us/the-speaker-steps-down-the-career-the-fall-of-gingrich-an-irony-in-an-odd-year.html>.

1024 Adam Nagourney and Michael R. Kagay, “Impeachment: The Polls; Public support for the president, and for closure, Emerges Unshaken”, *The New York Times*, December 21, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/21/us/impeachment-polls-public-support-for-president-for-closure-emerges-unshaken.html>.

1025 Gary C. Jacobson, “Impeachment politics in the 1998 Congressional Elections,” *Political Science Quarterly*, 114:1 (Spring 1999), 31-51.

1026 Alison Mitchell, “The Speaker steps down: The career; The fall of Gingrich, irony in an odd year”.

1027 *The 9/11 Commission report*, 199.

coalition was being put together to respond to the threat of Saddam Hussein.¹⁰²⁸ Iraq was in violation of UN inspection requirements. *The New York Times* editorial reported on 19 November that Clinton was exploring radical solutions to deal with Saddam Hussein, including the possibility of removing Saddam from power:

Weary of endless confrontations with Iraq, President Clinton, Congress and Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain are now rallying around the idea of overthrowing Saddam Hussein. The thought is certainly alluring. The installation of a democratic government in Baghdad would probably eliminate the threat of Iraqi aggression.¹⁰²⁹

The threat of impeachment had not gone away despite the midterm election results. On 11 December 1998, the House Judiciary Committee approved three articles of impeachment on a 21-16 party line vote. The three articles of impeachment accused President Clinton of lying to a grand jury, committing perjury by denying he had sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky and obstructing justice. Clinton declared that he was "profoundly sorry" and willing to accept blame.¹⁰³⁰ The polls were still suggesting that the American public was against the impeachment.¹⁰³¹ It was also looking bad for the Republicans as they continued to push through with the impeachment.¹⁰³² Clinton explains that during this period Republican moderates were facing increasing pressure from a hard-line activist core within the Republican party like House Majority Whip Tom DeLay "firing up the radio networks to demand my impeachment. The moderates were beginning to hear from anti – Clinton activists in their home districts."¹⁰³³

Clinton remained focused on his job despite calls for impeachment. On 17 December 1998, the President with the support of British Prime Minister Tony Blair jointly launched air strikes, in operation 'Desert Fox' against Iraq.

1028 Steven Lee Myers, US says it is able to strike Iraq from the Persian Gulf, *The New York Times*, November 4, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/04/world/us-says-it-is-able-to-strike-iraq-from-the-persian-gulf.html> .

1029 "Unseating Saddam Hussein," *The New York Times*, November 19, 1998,

<https://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/19/opinion/unseating-saddam-hussein.html> .

1030 Alison Mitchell and Lizette Alvarez, "Testing of a President: The hearings; Debate on impeachment begins as lawyers make final pleas; Panel's first vote likely today," *The New York Times*, December 11, 1998,

<http://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/11/us/testing-president-hearings-debate-impeachment-begins-lawyers-make-final-pleas.html> .

1031 Adam Nagourney and Michael R. Kagay, "Impeachment: The Polls; Public support for the President, and for closure, emerges unshaken," *The New York Times*, December 21, 1998,

<http://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/21/us/impeachment-polls-public-support-for-president-for-closure-emerges-unshaken.html> .

1032 Ibid.

1033 Clinton, *My Life*, 831.

This frustrated the Republicans even more, as they would be perceived as trying to impeach the Commander in Chief, on the eve of war. This would not sit well with the American public.¹⁰³⁴ Clinton justified the military action on intelligence suggesting that there were “unaccounted” chemical and biological weapons that were deemed to be at the target sites.¹⁰³⁵ Subsequently, the *Washington Post* would claim the attacks had knocked out Iraq’s alleged weapons producing infrastructure in a mission that was “stunning in its specificity.”¹⁰³⁶ On 19 December 1998, the House of Representatives voted to impeach Clinton. The charges were lying under oath and obstruction of justice. Two other counts failed, including one accusing Clinton of abuse of power. Clinton would observe in this moment of high drama in US politics:

The House Vote certainly wasn’t about whether the House managers accusations constituted impeachable offenses as historically understood. If the Watergate scandal had been applied to my case, there would have been no impeachment. This was about power, about something the House Republican leaders did because they could, and because they wanted to pursue an agenda I opposed and had blocked.¹⁰³⁷

The events of the last three months of 1998 were a distraction from attention to terrorism. It was especially damaging as US counterterrorism efforts were coalescing, especially within the CIA. Though foreign policy challenges remained, such as cooperation from Taliban or Saudi Arabia, the most positive development that took place over this period was the rethink on intelligence capability within the CIA. Clinton had also shown that despite the pressures of impeachment when he was confident on the recommendations from the CIA, he was willing to use the military, as he demonstrated against Saddam. The impeachment process was a power struggle between a Republican Congress determined to exploit the opportunity of salacious revelations about the president to damage him. The Starr inquiry had not focused on Whitewater but sex. Despite the wishes of the American public the Republicans had pushed ahead because of a cabal of hardline activists that were determined to damage

1034 Francis X. Clines and Steven Lee Myers, “Overview; Impeachment vote in House delayed as Clinton launches Iraq air strike, citing military need to move swiftly,” *The New York Times*, December 17, 1998 <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/17/world/attack-iraq-overview-impeachment-vote-house-delayed-clinton-launches-iraq-air.html>.

1035 Clinton, *My Life*, 833.

1036 William M. Arkin, “Analysis: The Difference was in the details,” *The Washington Post*, January 17, 1999 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/iraq/analysis.htm>

1037 Clinton, *My Life*, 836.

Clinton. As Gingrich, who was on his way out of power said, Republican motivation for impeaching Clinton was defined as, “because we can.”¹⁰³⁸

Conclusions

This chapter has pivoted around the events of the 1998 Embassy attacks and the response by Clinton. Three forces were beginning to shape Clinton’s counterterrorism. First the increasing bellicosity and confidence evident in the fatwa and media interviews of bin Laden. Bin Laden was setting out his agenda and urging his supporters to carry the fight to America. Second, Clinton refreshed his cabinet and, in bringing in Albright and Cohen, he got two lieutenants that demonstrated a greater familiarity with the challenge posed by terrorism. The coming together of Berger, Lake and Tenet created a triumvirate that presented an optimistic outlook for counterterrorism in Clinton’s second term. All three of them had lived through the collective experience of the growth of non-state terrorism and had contributed in supportive roles to Clinton’s first term legislative and presidential orders achievements. However, like their predecessors, Christopher, and Aspin, they did not show clarity of understanding in the evolution of terrorism from state-sponsored actors to more non-state actors. Third, Clinton was trying to use all available options on counterterrorism against bin Laden. The claim by Bossie that Clinton was negligent on terrorism does not appear to be sustained. The problem, however, was that through much of 1997-98 the intelligence being received was sub-optimal. This limited both covert and overt missions to seize bin Laden.

1997 began ominously but with a promise of improved counterterrorism management from Clinton. Bin Laden, on CNN, continued to rail against the US. Though he denied responsibility for involvement in the attacks on Khobar Towers, he was more circumspect about his plans. Clinton, however, had secured the nomination of Albright and Cohen at State and Defense departments. Albright and Cohen showed a higher understanding of the challenge from terrorism than had been evident from their predecessors in the Clinton Cabinet. Joining them would be Berger as National Security Advisor

¹⁰³⁸ Gillon, *The Pact*, 258.

and Tenet at the CIA both of whom had gained experience of counterterrorism during Clinton's first term. With Clarke continuing in his role, Clinton's second term promised much more focused effort on counterterrorism, and so it proved to be.

Although Bin Laden was a man with a clear sense of mission, the US media's sporadic interest in him presented him as a curious phenomenon rather than a clear and present danger. The first part of 1998 showed the challenges that diplomacy faced in the face of Taliban obduracy. The Taliban, the de facto rulers of Afghanistan, were prepared to protect a non-state actor like bin Laden, despite bin Laden not acting in the interests of Afghan security. With the actual and perceived threat from attacks by the US, this curious phenomenon demonstrated the fractious environment in which the US was operating with diplomatic efforts to try and find a solution to bin Laden. The use of Prince Turki to mediate and who had his reasons for joining the US effort also does not show that Clinton's diplomatic efforts were going to be supported by the Saudi's. The discussions over whether to seize bin Laden, which got nowhere, again showed that the CIA had not yet robust enough capability to address the terrorist threat. Thus, at the end of 1997 and beginning of 1998, an uneasy state of counterterrorism existed in America.

In reflecting on the embassy attacks, in hindsight, it is always possible to suggest more could have been done. Missteps on protecting the embassy such as not giving credence to walk in informants or giving greater confidence to warnings from Ambassador Bushnell may be lessons that could be learnt in hindsight. However, without turning embassies into fortresses, a complete security solution was never going to be achievable as pointed out by Senators Kerry and Kyl. Nonetheless, the emergency injection of a billion dollars in the aftermath of the attack by Congress did indicate that embassy protection had been neglected.¹⁰³⁹

Clinton faced challenges in deciding how to respond to the terrorist attacks. Most critical was the timing of the attacks which had come in the midst of the presidents' struggles over the Lewinsky revelations. Clinton had also faced the challenge of incomplete intelligence information, as the day before the attack

¹⁰³⁹ Albright, *Madam Secretary*, 373.

Tenet had confessed to gaps. Though the president continually challenged his staff to check the intelligence on the targets, the intelligence did not prove to be reliable in the end. The choice of the al Shifa plant is still inexplicable based on the information currently available. In deciding to respond with missiles, the president also chose options that would pose minimal risk to US military personnel, given the reluctance of the military to engage in armed response to terrorism.

The response to the missile strikes changed from supportive to questioning. Much of the polling data after the missile response demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with the president. So too was the broad bipartisan support the president received from the Republicans. Gingrich's switch to criticise Clinton in September 1998 is inexplicable beyond suggesting political opportunism. In October 1998, Hersh's article would also raise a litany of doubts and accusations against the president, some of which were justified. Hersh was right to draw attention to Reno's discomfort over the potential breach of Article 51 of the UN charter. However, some of Hersh's other accusations against Clinton seem groundless. For example, Hersh's charge that General Shelton alone worked in secrecy without consulting other military chiefs appears without basis. Hersh is more credible when he provides the opinion of the UN investigator to support the claim that al Shifa had been a mistake versus the view of the American bishop. Hersh's account is one-sided in his criticism of Clinton. His rush to judgement that events in the president's life influenced the missile response is fallacious. Hersh's criticisms were valid in that it drew attention to some of the challenges that the administration faced in responding to the attack, but it fails to provide the complete picture which has since come to light - that the intelligence underpinning this response was incomplete. Events dominated the latter half of 1998 both in Afghanistan and Washington. In Afghanistan, despite the frenetic pace of activity, the Taliban through their delaying tactics managed to deter further aggression from Clinton. The lack of adequate intelligence that would have the confidence of both the White House and the CIA would be the explanation for Clinton not carrying further military action in Afghanistan. The military also appeared less than convinced to carry through more missions. In diplomacy the Taliban may have delayed and toyed but as the action against Saddam proved, Clinton was prepared to use the

military once the intelligence was there. Also, further executive orders from the president to address gaps on controlling access to funds by al Qaeda seems to show the president still being vigilant on the threat from al Qaeda.

The political opportunism to exploit the moral failure of the president by the Republicans is unedifying. Regarding counterterrorism, it was a political distraction and occupied much of the president's last quarter of 1998. It also acted like a dragging anchor on US counterterrorism. The president had used all means that the state had to deploy and focus attention on al Qaeda. The challenges on US counterterrorism against al Qaeda was hampered not just by intelligence gaps but also by Republican efforts to undermine the president's authority and tie the president's hand, as more evidence will be presented in the next chapter suggests, when having understood the potency of bin Laden, he was scaling up his effort against the al Qaeda leader.

Chapter Five: The Spectre Strikes Again! (1999-2001).

Introduction

The last two years of the Clinton administration would begin with the Republican failure to impeach him in the Senate in the first two months of 1999 and end with a Republican president, George W. Bush, seizing a highly disputed election through the intervention of the Florida Supreme Court. Coming into 1999, despite facing the politically motivated challenge by the Republicans to his presidency, Clinton had brought federal-led efforts to tackle the threat of terrorism on multiple fronts, with specific focus being on bin Laden. Clinton had labelled bin Laden 'Public enemy no 1' after the attacks on the East African embassies. His administration had tried unsuccessfully to coax the Taliban to hand him over. The CIA's bin Laden tracking station and overall counterterrorism capability was restructured, and according to George Tenet, an overall review of counterterrorism was under way under Cofer Black. Limits to al Qaeda's financing and legal indictments against bin Laden had also been implemented in 1998. This chapter, therefore, explores three questions covering the last two years of his presidency until 19 January 2001. First, how prepared was Clinton in meeting the threat of terrorism in the two remaining years of his administration? Second, how did intelligence agencies conduct themselves during this period to meet the threat of terrorism? Third, what counterterrorism legacy did Clinton leave the incoming administration in January 2001?

Impeachment Distractions Part II.

In the first two months of 1999, the Republicans failed to impeach President Clinton in the Senate. The president faced two charges in the Senate: one of perjury over his testimony about the Lewinsky relationship and the other of obstruction of justice for attempting to cover up details of the Lewinsky and other affairs.¹⁰⁴⁰ Clinton busied himself preparing his State of the Union speech

¹⁰⁴⁰ Alison. Mitchell, Impeachment: The overview – Clinton impeached; He faces a Senate trial, 2D in history; vows to do job till term's last hour," *The New York Times*, December 20, 1998

and refused to be drawn in to speculation over impeachment. Anti-impeachment rallies were held by the president's supporters in January 1999.¹⁰⁴¹ The president described the atmosphere before his State of the Union as "surreal" in the midst of this political cause célèbre.¹⁰⁴² In a speech lasting one hour eighteen minutes and forty seconds, the president did not refer once to the impeachment.¹⁰⁴³ However, the president in a speech largely dedicated to covering domestic and economic issues still found time to discuss terrorism as he stated:

We must also meet threats to our Nation's security, including increased dangers from outlaw nations and terrorism. We will defend our security wherever we are threatened, as we did this summer when we struck at Usama bin Ladin's [sic] network of terror. The bombing of our Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania reminds us again of the risks faced every day by those who represent America to the world.¹⁰⁴⁴

In *The New York Times*, the president's performance was praised:

The president ... towering above the three branches of government... presented the case for continuance in office. Thirty-nine times he exhorted his Congressional audience that it "must" or "should" tackle some urgent problem, and every time he did, the implication was obvious: the lawmakers had more important business than impeachment...It was all a vintage display of Mr. Clinton's oratorical and political gifts, a masterly show that managed to make the gathered lawmakers...look somehow small by comparison.¹⁰⁴⁵

Despite constitutional questions being raised as to whether a sitting president could be impeached, Kenneth Starr was still maintaining that he had the legal authority to indict a sitting president.¹⁰⁴⁶ Even before the final vote had been called the vote, on the charge of perjury seemed to be doubtful if it could obtain the majority in the Senate.¹⁰⁴⁷ The Republicans would have needed a two-thirds majority in the Senate to carry the vote. On 12 February 1999, ten

<https://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/20/us/impeachment-overview-clinton-impeached-he-faces-senate-trial-2d-history-vows-job.html>.

1041 Andrew Jacobs, "The trial of the President; Anti impeachment rallies were held in 17 cities," *The New York Times*, January 20, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/20/us/the-trial-of-the-president-anti-impeachment-rallies-held-in-17-cities.html>.

1042 Clinton, *My Life*, 841.

1043 William J. Clinton: "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," January 19, 1999, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=57577>.

1044 Ibid.

1045 John M. Broder "State of the Union: news analysis; By day and night, an argument for survival," *The New York Times*, January 20, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/20/us/state-of-the-union-news-analysis-by-day-and-night-an-argument-for-survival.html>.

1046 Don Van Natta, Jr "Starr is sure he has constitutional authority to indict Clinton in office," *The New York Times*, January 31, 1999, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/politics/013199clinton-starr.html>.

1047 Eric Schmitt, "Majority vote to convict on perjury seems in doubt," *The New York Times*, February 11, 1999, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/politics/021199impeach-rdp.html>.

Republicans switched sides to join with Democrats on Article 1 of the impeachment to vote fifty-five to forty-five on acquitting the president of perjury charges. On Article 2, five Republicans switched side to join the Democrats, and the resulting vote was fifty votes for and against, resulting in acquittal.¹⁰⁴⁸ Following his acquittal, Clinton would repeat his apology to the American people saying he was “profoundly sorry” for his actions and ask for “reconciliation and renewal” to carry on his task.¹⁰⁴⁹ The bitter after-effects of this long drawn out impeachment trial was “bad blood” between both sides and Republicans speculating that Clinton would get revenge by helping his Vice President Al Gore become President.¹⁰⁵⁰ Though the spectre of terrorism did not materialise during the impeachment vote, except when the Senate chamber had to be cleared on reports of a bomb scare, the president’s attention having been distracted by this impeachment proceedings would have an impact on counterterrorism operations in February 1999.¹⁰⁵¹

Hunting ‘Public Enemy No 1.’

Finding al Qaeda and bin Laden had begun in earnest after the East African embassy bombings and continued in the remaining eighteen months of the Clinton presidency. There is substantial evidence to suggest that having called out bin Laden as ‘Public Enemy No. 1,’ Clinton wanted to follow through on this rhetoric. The White House continued to explore ways of finding a solution to bin Laden. Clarke has claimed the president’s “intent was clear: kill bin Laden.”¹⁰⁵²

The challenge for military planners was the continued questions on the reliability of intelligence in pinpointing bin Laden. A report in *The New York Times* in April 1999 spoke of American commandos near the Afghan border

1048 Congressional Record, Trial of William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States, Senate February 12, 1999, *Congress. gov.*, Online at <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/1999/02/12/senate-section/article/S1457-2>.

1049 William J. Clinton: "Remarks on the Conclusion of the Senate Impeachment Trial and an Exchange with Reporters," February 12, 1999, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=56912>; CNN, “Clinton’s evolving apology for the Lewinsky affair,” *CNN.com* February 12, 1998, <http://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/1999/02/12/apology/>.

1050 David E. Rosenbaum, “Road to reconciliation appears long and hard after acquittal,” *The New York Times*, February 14, 1999, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/politics/021499impeach-govern.html>.

1051 Alison Mitchell, “The Presidents acquittal: The overview; Clinton acquitted decisively: No majority for either charge,” *The New York Times*, February 13, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/13/us/president-s-acquittal-overview-clinton-acquitted-decisively-no-majority-for.html>.

1052 Clark, *Against all enemies*, 204.

ready at a moment's notice to capture bin Laden.¹⁰⁵³ The article also highlighted the challenge facing the mission planners that "they still do not know how to find him[bin Laden]."¹⁰⁵⁴ This report in *The New York Times* is problematic in that much of the information cannot be substantiated on a planned commando operation as Clarke had noted about the "reluctance of the military to plan for serious commando operations in Afghanistan."¹⁰⁵⁵ Clarke argues that the unwillingness by the military to get engaged in devising commando operations led the White House to plan further cruise missile attacks. He therefore suggests that submarines had been moved closer to the coast of Pakistan to be able to launch cruise missiles to hit targets in Afghanistan, in a time efficient manner. Clarke offers one explanation as to the challenge faced by planners in dealing with intelligence. He suggests that by the time the data is processed and acted upon, there is no certainty that bin Laden would still be at the same location the information had shown. The process for cruise missile launches upon sighting bin Laden would be a meeting of the Principals committee (which would include Clarke, Berger, and Tenet, together with other National Security staff) to review the information before asking the president for authorisation to launch missiles and a further two hours would elapse before a missile could hit the target in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁵⁶

Clarke's account of an aborted missile strike illustrates the dilemma faced by the Washington counterterrorism team. Clarke provides the briefest of details in suggesting that a planned attack on a "luxury mobile home camp" where bin Laden was suspected of staying.¹⁰⁵⁷ Clarke states that "Tenet and I recommended against that attack."¹⁰⁵⁸ In Coll's recounting of the same incident, further details begin to emerge.¹⁰⁵⁹ In February 1999, the CIA tracking team using "sighting equipment, satellite beacons to determine GPS coordinates, secure communications" reported an "isolated airstrip to land C-30 planes". Coll claims that bin Laden had travelled to Helmand province to join this hunting party. Coll corroborates this claim that bin Laden was at this hunting

1053 Tim Weiner, "US hard put to find proof bin Laden directed attacks," *The New York Times*, April 13, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/04/13/world/us-hard-put-to-find-proof-bin-laden-directed-attacks.html>.

1054 Ibid.

1055 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 199.

1056 Ibid., 199-200.

1057 Ibid., 200.

1058 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 200.

1059 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 446-447.

camp “based on interviews with seven U.S. officials familiar with the event”. He also cites the National Commission Staff statement on military operations referred in earlier chapters of this thesis along with media accounts in the *Washington Post*.¹⁰⁶⁰ Coll also suggests that from 1996 bin Laden “circulated in the Afghan hunting world.”¹⁰⁶¹ Clarke, Berger, and Tenet asked many questions to the team on the ground to validate the information. Coll adds that “Clarke worried that the sightings by the Afghan tracking team might not be reliable” as they were far from home. Clarke had described these CIA assets as “feckless.”¹⁰⁶² Based on Coll’s account, on 10 February 1999 the decision was provisionally agreed to launch cruise missiles, instead of special forces, but “days passed” and nothing happened.¹⁰⁶³ Gary Schroen, who had supported going ahead with the missile strike, had stated in exasperation:

Let’s just blow the thing up. And if we kill bin Laden, and five sheikhs are killed, I’m sorry. What are they doing with bin Laden? He’s a terrorist. You lie down with the dog, you get up with fleas?¹⁰⁶⁴

The decision to abort the strike came from the White House fearful that the target was not al Qaeda, but “a falcon hunting party from a friendly Arab state.”¹⁰⁶⁵ There was some frustration at the time including at the bin Laden tracking station which believed this was an opportunity missed.¹⁰⁶⁶ Tenet offered another explanation: “Before the decision could be made as to whether to launch a strike, we got word UBL [bin Laden] had moved on.”¹⁰⁶⁷ Coll offers three conclusions as to circumstances that led to the strike being called off.¹⁰⁶⁸ First, the consequences of any deaths of members of the UAE royal family, an ally of the US, were alleged on this hunting trip, would have made the fallout from the missile strike in 1998 on the al Shifa plant in Sudan, “seem mild by comparison.” Second, he suggests the aborted mission was “two days before the president faced the final vote on impeachment”. Third, as there was no “100 per cent guarantee that bin Laden was in the hunting camp” as the satellite did

1060 “The Military,” *9/11 Commission Staff Statement No 6*, https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/staff_statements/staff_statement_6.pdf; Barton Gellman, “Broad effort launched after ’98 attacks,” *The Washington Post*, December 19, 2001.

1061 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 446.

1062 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 199.

1063 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 447.

1064 Ibid.

1065 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 200.

1066 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 447- 448.

1067 Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 123.

1068 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 448 - 449.

not produce a picture of sufficient clarity and the tracking team could “not close enough” to produce a definitive identification.¹⁰⁶⁹ Even the gung-ho Gary Schroen had to admit:

Nobody wanted to say, well, you blew up a camp full of U.A.E. princes and half of the royal family of the UAE’s dead – and you guys didn’t get him [bin Laden].¹⁰⁷⁰

Clinton’s focus on bin Laden did not receive universal support in all sections of the media. Though there was limited reporting of aborted missions, the single-minded focus on bin Laden did cause comment. Commentators, some of whom were past members of the intelligence community, such as Milt Bearden, the media used to shape public perception. Milton Bearden had a thirty-year career in the CIA and was highly experienced, having been station chief in Pakistan, Nigeria, Sudan and Germany. Bearden had operated for Bill Casey in Afghanistan in dealing with Mujahedeen.¹⁰⁷¹ Bearden was a source in the article discussed earlier, from April 1999 suggesting commandoes were on standby in the mountains of Afghanistan. Bearden had commented in that article that the Clinton administration was putting too much focus on bin Laden and had created a “North Star.”¹⁰⁷² With this analogy, Bearden implied that the Clinton administration’s attention on bin Laden was shining too much light on him. He was also sceptical, despite the indictments against bin Laden having been issued in November 1998, stating “I’m not sure what evidence, linked him to all of the terrorist acts of this year -- of this decade, perhaps.”¹⁰⁷³ Bearden would follow this up with an op-ed in August 1999.¹⁰⁷⁴ He cautioned against “hype and hysteria” about a possible clash of civilisations between Islam and the United States. Bearden appeared not to be convinced by statements from the administration stating, as Berger had done, that there was reliable evidence to connect bin Laden with the East African embassy bombings. He suggested that through the administration’s focus on bin Laden, who Bearden described as a “revolutionary figure” and “not since Che Guevara’s face” adorned college

1069 Ibid.

1070 Ibid., 449.

1071 Milton Bearden with James Risen, *The main enemy, The inside story of the CIA’s final showdown with the KGB*, (New York: Presidio Press, 2004).

1072 Tim Weiner, “US hard put to find proof bin Laden directed attacks.”

1073 Ibid.

1074 Milt Bearden, “Making Osama bin Laden’s day”, *The New York Times*, August 13, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/08/13/opinion/making-osama-bin-laden-s-day.html>.

dorm posters have the threat “been blown out of proportion”. He suggested the administration “exercise restraint in its statements ‘about bin Laden and “balance its dealings with the Taliban.” While accepting that bin Laden “is a real threat” and “should be relentlessly pursued by American law enforcement” he argued that this could be:

Done without dangerously inflating the bin Laden myth through official statements and through the media's characterization of him as something he is not: a sort of ‘North Star’ of terrorism.¹⁰⁷⁵

Adapting to Covert Action

In his critique of Clinton’s response to the East Africa embassy bombing, Bossie accused Clinton of not taking that ultimate step and putting boots on the ground. In making his case, he cited the view of Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter’s national security advisor, at a post ‘9/11’ meeting stating, “I hope we are not going to the same chicken s--- stuff like we did before, send some cruise missiles through a tent up a camel’s a---.”¹⁰⁷⁶ The evidence below does not support this view. Clinton considered and authorised covert action attempts to eliminate bin Laden.

Following the challenges posed by unreliable intelligence in missiles responses against bin Laden, Clarke argued that the counterterrorism parameters for cruise missile deployments should be broadened to the al Qaeda network.¹⁰⁷⁷ This proposal met resistance from Albright and Cohen. Clarke noted their comments in the Principals committee meeting:

So, we spend millions of dollars’ worth of cruise missiles and bombs blowing up a buck’s fifty’s worth of jungle gyms and mud huts again” or “Look we are bombing Iraq every week, we may have to bomb Serbia. European, Russian, Islamic press are already calling us the Mad Bomber. You want to bomb a third country.”¹⁰⁷⁸

Some Republicans were also not in favour of deploying cruise missiles or bombing raids on al Qaeda targets. Bob Barr, a congressman from Georgia, had been one of the leaders in the House on impeachment. Barr wanted to use

¹⁰⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Bossie, *Intelligence failure*, 207.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 201.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Ibid.

covert means to restore political assassinations and argued against the use of the military to target terrorists, so he proposed on 14 April 1999 The Terrorist Elimination Act.¹⁰⁷⁹ He would try three times in 1998, 1999 and 2001 but Congress did not want to sanction political assassination attempts.¹⁰⁸⁰ Barr stated in support of his proposal in 1999:

It is dishonest, costly and dangerous to use massive military force to remove those leaders who threaten American lives, commit terrorist acts or war crimes, or who destabilize regions of the world. Our federal government should never put the lives of our troops at risk when there is an alternative method of accomplishing the same goals.¹⁰⁸¹

In light of counterterrorism policy facing objections to further cruise missile or bombing raids, covert operations were authorised by Clinton.¹⁰⁸² Clarke would observe, “that people that had once worried whether Bill Clinton would use too much force and now there was criticism that he was too much.”¹⁰⁸³ Covert operations also had its challenges, as the Church Commission’s recommendation of the 1970s had been codified into law in the US, forbidding political assassination by the CIA.¹⁰⁸⁴ Media reports that appeared in the aftermath of ‘9/11’ in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* both confirm that Clinton gave orders to kill bin Laden.¹⁰⁸⁵ *The Washington Post* reported:

Clinton signed three highly classified Memoranda of Notification expanding the available tools. In succession, the president authorized killing instead of capturing bin Laden, then added several of al Qaeda's senior lieutenants, and finally approved the shooting down of private civilian aircraft on which they flew.¹⁰⁸⁶

Tenet seems to have interpreted these authorisations from Clinton differently:

1079 Congressional Record, “The Terrorist Elimination Act of 1999,” 106 Congress, 1st Session, 145:51, April 14, 1999, *Congress.Gov*, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/1999/4/14/extensions-of-remarks-section/article/>.

1080 “Terrorist Elimination Act of 1999”, Government tracking, H.R. 1403 (106th), <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/106/hr1403/details>.

1081 Ibid., “The Terrorist Elimination Act of 1999”, 106 Congress, 1st Session, April 14, 1999.

1082 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 204.

1083 Ibid., 202.

1084 “Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities,” *United States Senate*, <https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/investigations/ChurchCommittee.html>.

1085 Baron Gellman, “Broad effort launched after ’98 attacks,” *The Washington Post*, December 19, 2001, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2001/12/19/broad-effort-launched-after-98-attacks/888eedf6-3ed1-4d13-8391-449b8a97cd06/?utm_term=.817b4362410b; Judith. Miller, Jeff Gerth, Din Van Natta Jr., “A nation challenged: the response”; Planning for terror but failing to Act”, *The New York Times*, December 30, 2001, <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/30/us/a-nation-challenged-the-response-planning-for-terror-but-failing-to-act.html>.

1086 Gellman, “Broad effort launched after ’98 attacks”.

Almost all of the “authorities” President Clinton provided to us with regard to Bin Laden were predicated on the planning of a capture operation. It was understood that in the context of such an operation, Bin Laden would resist and might be killed in the ensuing battle. But the context was almost always to capture him first. This was the way people up and down the CIA chain of command understood the president’s orders.¹⁰⁸⁷

Tenet also added that Attorney General Reno had made it clear to him that “she would view an attempt simply to kill bin Laden as illegal”. Tenet also clarified this further in his book:

Almost every authority granted to the CIA prior to 9/11 made it clear that just going out and assassinating UBL [bin Laden] would not have been permissible or acceptable.¹⁰⁸⁸

Clarke does not agree with the CIA’s understanding:

Some have claimed that the lethal authorisations in the field were convoluted and the “people in the field” did not know what they could do. Every time such an objection was raised during those years, an additional authorization was drafted with the involvement of all agencies and approved by the President’s signature.¹⁰⁸⁹

Clarke concluded acidly that the explanation by the CIA was “an excuse to cover the fact that they were pathetically unable to accomplish the mission.”¹⁰⁹⁰ The 9/11 Commission who investigated these claims would report that in December 1998, Clinton authorised the “tribals [Afghan resistance]” “that they could kill bin Laden if a successful capture operation was not feasible.” Clinton, in February 1999:

Crossed out key language he had approved in December 1998 and inserted more ambiguous language. No one we interviewed shed light on why the President did this. President Clinton told the Commission he had no recollection.¹⁰⁹¹

The commission noted that the authorisation changed again, later in 1999 and “the lawyers returned to the language used in August 1998, “which authorised force only in the context of the capture operation.” No explanation is provided by the 9/11 Commission, if by ‘authorising force’ this authorisation covered

1087 Tenet, *At the Center of Storm*, 109.

1088 *Ibid.*, 110.

1089 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 204.

1090 *Ibid.*

1091 *The 9/11 Commission report*, 133.

elimination of bin Laden. No members of the Commission who were interviewed would elaborate further on this. The report concluded without giving a definitive view on the competing claims between Tenet and Clarke:

It is possible to understand how the former White House officials and the CIA officials might disagree as to whether the CIA was ever authorized by the President to kill bin Laden.¹⁰⁹²

The White House would meet resistance from the Pentagon in undertaking covert action. The same article in *The Washington Post* suggested that “Clinton sounded out General Henry H. Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, about the prospect of using Special Forces to surprise bin Laden's fighters on the ground.”¹⁰⁹³ Shelton, who was in charge of Special operations command, demurred on this idea from the president, considering this option “naïve.” According to an unattributed source in *The Washington Post*, Shelton wanted a large-scale operation:

Shelton... "wanted nothing to do" with a tiny incursion known in the Special Forces community as "going Hollywood." And the political leadership, the colleague said, wanted nothing to do with something larger.¹⁰⁹⁴

There is evidence that this research has found that suggests that covert operations were planned but not deployed. There is a heavily redacted DIA Intelligence Assessment that shows the engagement in conducting electronic tracking of bin Laden by the DIA in September 1999.¹⁰⁹⁵ One of the meetings that yielded confirmation about the planning of covert mission, which does not feature in the final report of the ‘9/11’ Commission, concerns an operation developed by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), under the leadership of Colonel Anthony ‘Tony’ Shaffer.¹⁰⁹⁶ Shaffer confirmed that the operation was codenamed Able Danger and used profiling data called Link analysis to build up profiles of possible recruits to al Qaeda who could then be targeted through either military or law enforcement means. In his heavily redacted account of events, published in 2012, Shaffer claimed that had he been allowed to proceed

1092 Ibid.

1093 Gellman, “Broad effort launched after ‘98 attacks.”

1094 Ibid.

1095 "Usama Bin Ladin/ Al-Qaida Information Operations," September 1999, Top Secret, 15 pp, Defense Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Assessment, *The National Security Archives*, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB97/tal28.pdf>.

1096 Interview with Colonel Tony Shaffer, University of Warwick, November 16, 2016.

with his efforts, none of the ‘9/11’ terrorists would have succeeded.¹⁰⁹⁷ Shaffer supplied substantive information concerning the methods that the DIA was considering. He claims he was ultimately frustrated by what he describes as “bureaucratic roadblocks” by SOCOM (US Special Operations Command) lawyers without specifying what these were.¹⁰⁹⁸ In a final twist to Shaffer’s account, the ‘9/11’ Commission did not include any references to his mission. Following interviews with various members of the ‘9/11’ Commission who were contacted during this research, Alexis Albion emailed a note from the ‘9/11’ Commission on ‘Able Danger’. The note, which is placed with the *Federation of American Scientists*, concludes by saying:

The Commission did not mention ABLE DANGER in its report. The name and character of this classified operation had not, at that time, been publicly disclosed. The operation itself did not turn out to be historically significant, set against the larger context of U.S. policy and intelligence efforts that involved Bin Ladin [sic] and al Qaeda.¹⁰⁹⁹

Instruments of Peace

Clinton’s determination to deal with challenges posed by al Qaeda out of Afghanistan saw him continue to pressurise the Taliban. Clinton would unleash a diplomatic offensive against the Taliban in Afghanistan in the last two years of his presidency. On July 4, 1999, President Clinton wrote a letter to Congress reporting on the “National Emergency” with respect to the Afghan Taliban, in which he was more forthcoming than ever before about al-Qaeda and the threat it posed to US security.¹¹⁰⁰ This letter is important as it provides a documentary understanding of the administration’s threat perception of al-Qaeda, eighteen months before Clinton left office.¹¹⁰¹ The letter focuses on the security threat posed by the Taliban because it is providing “safe haven” to bin Laden and al Qaeda. The letter alleges that the Taliban was enabling bin Laden and al Qaeda to create a “network of terrorist training camps and to use Afghanistan as a base from which to sponsor terrorist operations against the United States.” The letter

1097 Anthony Shaffer, *Operation Dark Heart: Spycraft and Special Operations on the frontlines of Afghanistan*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2012),164-179.

1098 Ibid., 178.

1099 “9/11 Public Discourse Project statement on Able Danger,” August 12, 2005, *Federation of American Scientists*, <https://fas.org/irp/news/2005/08/pdp081205.pdf>.

1100 William J. Clinton: "Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the National Emergency with Respect to the Taliban," July 4, 1999, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=57839>.

1101 Ibid.

also directly blames bin Laden and al Qaeda for the East African Embassy attacks and warns that they “are currently planning additional attacks against the United States.” The letter shows Clinton’s willingness to follow through on his policy of punishing those who harboured terrorists. The letter characterises the Taliban, for their support of al Qaeda, as “an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.”¹¹⁰² This letter was issued on the same day as Executive order 13129, which confirmed much of the intent expressed in the letter to Congress by bringing in a package of economic measures to deter the Taliban from continuing to provide a base to al Qaeda.¹¹⁰³ The letter to Congress did not receive media attention. The pressure on the Taliban led to some concessions, as *Reuters* reported, that the Taliban were claiming that bin Laden had been asked to desist from using Afghanistan as a base for terrorist operations.¹¹⁰⁴ This message from the Taliban was another delaying ploy as two months later, another defiant statement from Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader, emerged, stating, “American sanctions will not force us to give over Osama.”¹¹⁰⁵ In the media Milton Bearden also struck a sympathetic note towards the Taliban in his August op-ed, but did not offer any alternatives to Clinton’s approach:

Washington should open a serious dialogue with the Taliban, who are as eager to rid themselves of their bin Laden problem as we are to bring him to justice. Both Washington and the media should understand that the Taliban, whose tribal system of justice has developed over centuries, have no more obligation to extradite Osama bin Laden to the United States.¹¹⁰⁶

Clinton persisted with ratcheting up diplomatic pressure. On 15 October 1999 he gained unanimous support at the UN Security council for Resolution 1267 (1999):

The Taliban turn over Usama [sic] bin Laden to appropriate authorities in a country where he would be brought to justice. In that context, it decided that on 14 November all States shall freeze funds and prohibit

1102 Ibid.

1103 "Executive Order 13129—Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions with the Taliban," July 4, 1999, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=57838>.

1104 Reuters “Bin laden in Afghanistan,” *The New York Times*, July 10, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/07/10/world/bin-laden-in-afghanistan-taliban-concedes.html>.

1105 “Afghan refuses plea to eject bin Laden,” *The New York Times*, August 12, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/08/12/world/afghan-refuses-plea-to-eject-bin-laden.html>.

1106 Bearden, “Making Osama bin Laden’s day.”

the take-off and landing of Taliban-owned aircraft unless or until the Taliban complies with that demand.¹¹⁰⁷

On 19 October 1999, *The New York Times* reported that the president was continuing to increase pressure on the Taliban and was bringing in both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General, urged other nations like Iran and Tajikistan to “stop providing military aid,” to the Taliban.¹¹⁰⁸

Some in Congress were not in favour of the US engaging with the Taliban. Describing bin Laden as “our one-time ally”, the noted isolationist Congressman Ron Paul, in the fringes of the Republican Party, was critical of the president's sanctions against Afghanistan stating:

Sanctions are one thing, but seizures of bank assets of any related business to the Taliban government infuriates and incites the radicals to violence....Conventional war against the United States is out of the question, but acts of terrorism, whether it is the shooting down of a civilian airliner or bombing a New York City building, are almost impossible to prevent in a reasonably open society....It is hard for the average citizen of these countries to understand why we must be so involved in their affairs, and resort so readily to bombing and boycotts in countries thousands of miles away from our own.¹¹⁰⁹

Clinton would over the year gradually intensify the options against the Taliban, and as 1999 ended there was an ominous note to the White House rhetoric as Joe Lockhart said at a press briefing:

The head of the counterterrorism unit at the State Department, Michael Sheehan, met with the Taliban yesterday and delivered a message that any terrorist activities by the bin Laden group we would hold the Taliban responsible.¹¹¹⁰

Intelligence Upgrade

1107 “Security council demands that Taliban turn over Usama bin Laden to appropriate authorities” October 15, 1999, United Nations, Press release SC/ 6739, *UN.org*, <https://www.un.org/press/en/1999/19991015.sc6739.doc.html>.

1108 Barbara Crossette, US steps up pressure on Taliban deliver Osama bin Laden,” *The New York Times*, October 19, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/10/19/world/us-steps-up-pressure-on-taliban-to-deliver-osama-bin-laden.html>.

1109 “US foreign policy of military intervention brings death and destruction,” 106 Congress, 1st Session, 145:163, November 17, 1999, *Congress.gov*, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/1999/11/17/house-section/article/h12149-6?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22Taliban%22%5D%7D&r=32>.

1110 Ibid.

1110 "Press Briefing by Joe Lockhart," December 14, 1999, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=47794>.

In early 1999, the CIA was facing three distinct but interrelated issues—intelligence reliability, low morale at the bin Laden tracking station, and lack of funding. An urgent resolution to these challenges was needed as Tenet believed that al Qaeda would strike again.¹¹¹¹ Tenet was aware of the dissatisfaction at the White House and the Pentagon over the intelligence efforts. In mitigation, he saw that the “critical high hurdle” of “information, discipline and time” was not there and that “we rarely had the information in sufficient quantities or the time to evaluate and act on it.”¹¹¹² To try and resolve the challenge of information reliability and low morale, Tenet overhauled both strategy and personnel on counterterrorism at the CIA. In doing this, Tenet had two aims. First, he wanted the opportunity to re-examine the CIA’s “baseline strategy” on bin Laden to improve information reliability.¹¹¹³ Second, Tenet needed to find a solution to Michael Scheuer, head of bin Laden tracking station. Scheuer was getting frustrated by what he perceived as White House reluctance in authorising missions to kill or capture bin Laden.¹¹¹⁴ This “dishevelled, blunt, undiplomatic career officer ... felt the United States ought to kill bin Laden as a matter of greatest urgency.”¹¹¹⁵ The mood at ‘Alec Station’ at the end of 1998 was dark:

Scheuer and his staff had become so passionate about going after bin Laden that he felt his superiors weren’t getting it.... A bunker mentality set in at ‘Alec Station’. Them against us. Up on Langley’s seventh floor, in the executive suites, the top brass started to view Scheuer as a hysteric, spinning doomsday scenarios, a sort of Kurtz-like figure.¹¹¹⁶

The White House was losing patience with Scheuer. He was perceived as too “myopic” and his “angry” emails seem to have annoyed the people working around him on counterterrorism.¹¹¹⁷ Clarke described Scheuer’s attitude in the same interview as:

Throwing tantrums and everything doesn’t help....Fine that you came to the same conclusion that we all came to, fine that you’re all worked up about it, and you’re having difficulty getting your agency, the rest of your agency, to fall in line, but not fine that you’re so dysfunctional

¹¹¹¹ Coll, *Ghost wars*, 453.

¹¹¹² Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 109.

¹¹¹³ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 451.

¹¹¹⁴ Ibid., 450.

¹¹¹⁵ Ibid., 451.

¹¹¹⁶ Ned Zeman, David Wise, David Rose and Bryan Burrough, “The Path to 9/11 : Lost warnings and fatal errors,” *Vanity Fair*, November 2004, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2004/11/path-to-9-11-200411>.

¹¹¹⁷ Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 451.

within your agency that you're making it harder to get something done.¹¹¹⁸

Tenet justified the need for change also to ensure alignment with the White House on running cover operations.¹¹¹⁹ Tenet's aides described the local Afghan's employed by the CIA to run covert operations as "weekend warriors," "middle -aged ... prosperous Afghan fighters with a few Kalashnikovs in their closets." There were also concerns in the White House over the reliability of the local Afghans as to how much effort they would put towards trying to capture bin Laden versus their preference of shooting him.¹¹²⁰

Tenet made two substantial changes to overhaul his counterterrorism organisation in 1999. Tenet appointed Cofer Black as the Head of US counterterrorism. Black, described as "a cross between a mad scientist and General George Patton," had extensive field experience having been a station chief in Africa and Latin America.¹¹²¹ He was well-versed in the mechanics of counterterrorism and human intelligence gathering including, surveillance, counter surveillance, electronics and weapons.¹¹²² Next, Tenet replaced Scheuer with Richard Blee, described as "a fast track Executive Assistant from the seventh floor" to take over the leadership of the bin Laden Station.¹¹²³ Few details are available on Blee's background, and he remains a shadowy figure in CIA history. Scheuer was "exiled" to another part of the CIA.¹¹²⁴ Black was asked to carry out a root and branch review of the Agency's efforts against bin Laden.¹¹²⁵ Black quickly arrived at the same conclusion as Clarke on al Qaeda: that instead of the US concentrating all energy on bin Laden alone, they needed to broaden its approach to target the whole of the al Qaeda leadership structure and training facilities in Afghanistan.¹¹²⁶ The handling of Michael Scheuer by the CIA has generated comments both from Scheuer loyalists and supporters of Tenet. Michael Morrell, who would rise to become Deputy Director of the CIA would note in 2015 would note that "'Alec Station' did not get the support [from

1118 Zeman, et.al., "The Path to 9/11."

1119 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 455.

1120 Ibid.

1121 Mark Mazzetti, *The way of the knife: The CIA, a secret army, and a war at the ends of the earth*, (New York: Penguin, 2013), 11.

1122 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 266.

1123 Ibid., 451.

1124 Ibid.

1125 Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 117.

1126 Ibid., 119.

the CIA management] to do its job.”¹¹²⁷ Though Morrell was an analyst like Scheuer, he would claim that Scheuer lacked the temperament, describing him as “a zealot,” and did not have the operations experience to lead the bin Laden tracking station.¹¹²⁸

Tenet’s other challenge was funding the increased counterterrorism activity. He had stated that by “the mid-late 1990s, American intelligence was in Chapter 11”, a reference to the US Bankruptcy Code. He needed greater funds to be able to recruit, train and improve both human and signals intelligence but they were not forthcoming.¹¹²⁹ Tenet twice requested increased funding, on 5 November 1998 and then again on 15 October 1999. Tenet states in his memoirs, that he succeeded only “in annoying the administration... but did not loosen any purse strings.”¹¹³⁰ Evidence for Tenet’s claims is found in Coll who states, “that an American government that spent hundreds of billions of dollars annually on defence and national security directed at an infinitesimally tiny fraction of the money to disrupt and combat an enemy group...”¹¹³¹ The exact breakdown of figures devoted to the CIA on counterterrorism remains classified, and in May 2000 Tenet refused a request to disclose the CIA budget.¹¹³² A declassified FOIA release supports Tenet’s claims that the CIA had only received a small increase as it showed for fiscal year’s 1997 and 1998, the CIA received a minimal increase of \$0.1 billion across the two fiscals.¹¹³³ In his testimony to the ‘9/11’ Commission, Tenet provides more details.¹¹³⁴ In this document, Tenet states that during the Clinton presidency, the CIA’s budget declined eighteen per cent in real terms and lost sixteen per cent of its personnel. However, just before the events of ‘9/11’ the budget on counterterrorism was fifty per cent greater than it had been for the years 1997-98. Tenet requested an increase in the budget of two billion dollars annually until 2005. He notes with

1127 Morrell, *The Great War of our Time*, 15.

1128 Ibid., 15, 18.

1129 Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 108.

1130 Ibid., 107.

1131 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 437.

1132 Justin Brown, “The top secret at CIA: its own budget,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 26, 2000, <https://www.csmonitor.com/2000/0526/p2s1.html>.

1133 “Statement by the Director of Central Intelligence Regarding the Disclosure of the Aggregate Intelligence Budget for Fiscal Year 1998”, March 20, 1998, News & Information, *Central Intelligence Agency*, <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/press-releases-statements/press-release-archive-1998/ps032098.html>.

1134 “Written Statement for the Record of the Director of Central Intelligence Before the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States” March 24, 2004, News & Information, *Central Intelligence Agency*, https://www.cia.gov/news-information/speeches-testimony/2004/tenet_testimony_03242004.html.

specifying a number, “only small portions of these requests were approved.”¹¹³⁵ in retrospect, funding on counterterrorism activities would be driven as much by the assessment the CIA produced of the threat of al Qaeda. If as the evidence suggests, the CIA was in two minds, between the feedback from the ‘Alec Station’ analysts who were convinced that bin Laden posed a major challenge to US Security, versus those within the CIA structure advising Tenet, it is not unsurprising a coherent picture was presented to the administration to Congress and the president, to loosen purse strings. Nonetheless the funding of the CIA in the later years after 1998 remains a question on Clinton’s attention to al Qaeda that cannot be satisfactorily resolved until, the budget figures for the CIA between 1998-2001 are fully declassified.

Prioritising the Threat from al Qaeda.

Tenet’s leadership would come under the spotlight after he left office. In 2007, Scheuer challenged Tenet’s assessment of the workings of the bin Laden station and Scheuer’s leadership. Tenet had described the White House mood to the bin Laden tracking team as reluctance to approve plans that had a lot of “ifs and maybes.”¹¹³⁶ Scheuer also had been led to believe by Tenet that it was Tenet’s neck on the line if the CIA failed to call the intelligence correctly. This was evident in a subsequently declassified internal email to his colleagues at the bin laden tracking station:

Having a chance to get ubl [Osama bin Laden] three times in 36 hours and foregoing the chance has made me a bit angry. I’ve driven [redacted] officers relentlessly – at times ruthlessly [redacted] and the Administration has passed up a half -dozen good to excellent chances to complete the operation. My perception is that every time a chance comes up the DCI finds himself alone at the table, with other principles basically saying ‘well go along with your decision Mr. Director,’ and implicitly saying that the agency will hang alone if the attack does not get bin Ladin [sic].¹¹³⁷

1135 Ibid.

1136 Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, 113.

1137 “‘your note,’” From Michael Scheuer, to [excised] Central Intelligence Agency Email, May 17, 1999, The The Central Intelligence Agency’s 9/11 file, *The National Security Archive*, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/368949-1999-05-17-your-note-from-michael-f-scheuer-to.html> .

Scheuer accused Tenet of being “disingenuous” and two-faced in “denigrating” the intelligence and analysis being generated by ‘Alec Station’ to the White House, whilst at the same time shifting the blame for covert missions being cancelled onto the White House.¹¹³⁸ Just for good measure, Scheuer followed this revelation with a withering assessment of Tenet’s leadership who he described as “never... [moving] from cheerleader to leader.”¹¹³⁹ Scheuer’s attack may appear as the views of one disgruntled CIA employee, but others have raised questions on Tenet’s attention to the challenge of bin Laden in the last two years of the Clinton presidency. Coll has stated that in winter 1999, Tenet’s assessment of the threats to the US listed “bin Laden second after the proliferation of unconventional weapons.”¹¹⁴⁰ Significantly, in the same assessment, Tenet placed “virtually no emphasis on Afghanistan as a cause or context of bin Laden’s menace”. Neither, it seems, did Tenet consider “the Taliban as a threat to the United States.”¹¹⁴¹ Coll has argued that the reasons for Tenet’s lack of focus on bin Laden can be explained away by his being able to develop his own vision of the challenge. Coll describes Tenet as a “synthesizer and manager of other people’s views.” Coll would conclude that Tenet accepted the bin Laden problem on its own terms, as a traditional antiterrorism or policing issue best addressed by lighting covert capture or decapitating missile strikes.”¹¹⁴² The ‘9/11’ Commission noted the existence between 1998 -2001 of a number of “good analytical papers” but found:

There were no complete portraits of his [bin Laden’s] strategy or of the extent of his organization’s involvement in past terrorist attacks. Nor had the intelligence community provided an authoritative.... scale of the threat his organization posed to the United States.¹¹⁴³

Tenet’s prioritisation of the threat on al Qaeda would also be reflected in his financing of counterterrorism operations within a stretched budget, with Coll arguing that in an environment of scarce budgets, Tenet did not tear down other bureaus of the CIA and pour every dollar into the campaign against al-

1138 Michael F. Scheuer, “Tenet tries to shift the blame. Don’t buy it”, Outlook & opinions, *The Washington Post*, April 29, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/27/AR2007042702052.html> .

1139 Ibid.

1140 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 454.

1141 Ibid.

1142 Ibid.

1143 *The 9/11 Commission report*, 342.

Qaeda”.¹¹⁴⁴ John MacGaffin, another Tenet deputy at the CIA, would state: “Tenet could never bring himself to take money or people from old programs to support new ones.”¹¹⁴⁵

CIA staff interviewed during the course of this research did not share Coll’s pessimistic assessment of Tenet but would not go on record with comments. Tenet did not make himself available for this research. In all the interviews carried out with CIA staff both past and present, the universal opinion was that Tenet had brought a period of stability and lifted morale. Deputy Director McLaughlin offered in his interview that with hindsight people had become more critical of the CIA leadership but accepted that everybody in the CIA could have done more and it was not just down to the Director of the CIA alone.¹¹⁴⁶ Douglas Garthoff, the CIA official historian, noted:

Combined with public comments that Tenet’s call for “war” in 1998 had gone unheeded within the community, the criticism [from the 9/11 Commission and external critics like Coll] drew attention once again to the large potential for gaps between DCI statements of goals and actual changes.¹¹⁴⁷

Finally, with no data being declassified by the CIA on their budgets, GAO evidence to Congress in March 1999 does give some clues as to the administration’s priorities. The GAO reported that for the fiscal year 1999, Congress authorised \$9.7 billion to “combat terrorism”.¹¹⁴⁸ Some of that investment went to the FBI as they set up their bin Laden tracking unit in 1999, “to handle al-Qa’ida [sic] related counterterrorism matters.”¹¹⁴⁹ It also noted that Clinton had requested for the fiscal year 2000, a \$ 3 billion increase from its original budget of \$6.7 billion increasing the total spent on counterterrorism to nearly \$ 10 billion. Out of this proposed \$ 10 billion, \$8.6 billion was dedicated to counterterrorism. Though no breakdown is available for combating al Qaeda,

1144 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 436.

1145 Zeman et. al, “The Path to 9/11.”

1146 Interview with Deputy Director of the CIA, John McLaughlin, March 24, 2016, Washington D.C.

1147 Garthoff, *Directors of Central Intelligence as Leaders of US intelligence*, 277.

1148 Henry L. Hinton Jr, “Combatting terrorism: Observations on Federal Spending to combat terrorism,” Testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans Affairs, and International Relations, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives, March 11, 1999, *Government Accounting Office*,

<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GAOREPORTS-T-NSIAD-GGD-99-107/html/GAOREPORTS-T-NSIAD-GGD-99-107.htm>.

1149 “Report of the U.S. Select committee on intelligence and U.S. House Permanent Select committee on intelligence,” Joint inquiry into intelligence community activities before and after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, December 2002, 107 Congress, 2 d Session, S. Rept. No. 107- 351, H. Report no 107- 792, 5, *Federation of American Scientists*, https://fas.org/irp/congress/2002_rpt/911rept.pdf.

there is evidence to suggest that Clinton's focus on WMD's saw the budget increase from \$1.23 billion in 1999 to \$1.39 billion in 2000 to tackling the challenge posed by WMD's being acquired by non-state terrorists, something that he had focused on following the events of 1995.¹¹⁵⁰

Millennium Technological Challenge

As the millennium approached, counterterrorism and intelligence focus was on preventing a computer apocalypse where commuters would not recognise the new date impacting air travel and banking systems.¹¹⁵¹ Clarke had also been concerned about the opportunities this would create for terrorists to exploit the situation.¹¹⁵² A response plan was created to respond to this unique combination of circumstances.¹¹⁵³ Midnight passed without incidents and computers all around the world avoided the problems. The challenge of dealing with the Taliban in an effort to extradite bin Laden was still a problem that had not found a solution. Clinton continued to believe in diplomatic efforts and tried to enlist the help of Pakistan. On his South Asian trip of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in March 2000, the president made a determined effort to woo the new Pakistan head of state, General Pervez Musharraf, who had seized power in a coup in 1999. Clinton is reported as saying "I offered him the moon when I went to see him, in terms of better relations with the United States, if he'd help us get bin Laden..."¹¹⁵⁴ However, neither this offer nor the UN sanctions that had specifically requested countries to stop dealing with the Taliban had any efforts because as the '9/11' commission noted, "Pakistani arms continued to flow across the border."

The Taliban continued to pose a challenge for Clinton. Henry Crumpton, a clandestine officer who worked in Pakistan and Afghanistan, describes efforts by the CIA jointly with the Northern Alliance under Ahmed Shah Masood against al Qaeda.¹¹⁵⁵ The effort to enlist Masood was beneficial to the Northern Alliance also as in 2000, there was a wider campaign against

1150 Hinton "Combatting terrorism: Observations on Federal Spending to combat terrorism."

1151 *The New York Times*, "Watching for the Y2k bug," December 30, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/12/30/opinion/watching-for-the-y2k-bug.html>.

1152 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 209.

1153 *Ibid.*, 212.

1154 *The 9/11 Commission report*, 183.

1155 Henry Crumpton, *The Art of intelligence: Lessons from a life in the CIA's clandestine service*, (New York: Penguin, 2013), 145-148.

Taliban under consideration by non-Taliban entities within Afghanistan.¹¹⁵⁶ The State Department offered support to this group but Rick Inderfurth, Assistant Secretary in the State Department, suggested that US policy had two aims – maintain tough sanctions against the Taliban but at the same time continue to maintain dialogue.¹¹⁵⁷ This did not extend to giving full support to the Northern Alliance as there were doubts about Masood.¹¹⁵⁸

Drones provided one solution to improving the speed at which information could reach Washington D.C. on tracking suspected terrorists, though implementing turned out to become a challenge for the White House. In Spring 2000, Richard Clarke, and Charles Allen, who ran all CIA counterintelligence operation and Admiral Scott Fry, head of operations at the Joint Chiefs of Staff developed a plan to send commandoes into Afghanistan. However, to obtain timely information on possible suspects drones were identified as a possible solution. Video feed from these drones would alert Washington as to the location of terrorist suspects. Clarke describes the challenge in implementing solution, the toughest being to get interagency cooperation to launch this solution.¹¹⁵⁹ Charles Allen has claimed that one of those that were reluctant at first was CIA senior management.¹¹⁶⁰ The bin Laden tracking unit developed plans that would see twenty drones each flying fifteen-hour missions. The early novelty and excitement of using drones to capture imagery in Afghanistan is vividly described by Coll, who relates stories of White House visitors arriving late at night to watch footage from drones:

As a secret society of video game junkies, role players in a futuristic scenario, and that they were all well aware of their role in pioneering this kind of technical espionage Hollywood might promote.¹¹⁶¹

The excitement however did not mask the reality of deploying innovative technology into covert operations. When one drone crashed there was disagreement between the CIA and Pentagon over who would pay for it. The CIA did not have money and in the end the USAF paid for the cost of the

1156 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 519.

1157 Ibid., 521.

1158 Ibid.

1159 Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 220.

1160 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 527

1161 Ibid., 532.

drones.¹¹⁶² There was also disagreement as to how reliable the imagery was that was beamed back by the drones, as bearded men in white flowing Arabic robes were suspected of being bin Laden.¹¹⁶³ By autumn 2000, bad weather prevented further drone reconnaissance deployments. With this, Cofer Black began contemplating missions where the drones would also be able to fire upon al Qaeda suspects.¹¹⁶⁴ Specific attention was given in the summer missions on the Tarnak Farm, the last known location of bin Laden. The drones did allow Clarke to improve briefings and Clinton came to believe that this technology was proving to be positive in his counterterrorism capability.¹¹⁶⁵ Much of the early drone technology deployments would be missed by the media as news of other terrorist strikes came to dominate the media headlines in the autumn of 2000.

Remember the Cole.

At the beginning of 2000, US Navy Commander Kirk S. Lippold was not known to many people beyond naval circles; but before the year was out, the fate of his ship and crew would bring him to the attention of the US public. Lippold was the commander of the US Navy's guided missile destroyer, the USS *Cole*, which was attacked by al-Qaeda on 12 October 2000 while refueling at the Port of Aden, Yemen. Lippold would claim in media interviews and in his account of the events that the "war on terror started with us."¹¹⁶⁶ The USS *Cole* had been en route to Bahrain and after a lengthy and high-speed voyage was ordered to pull into the port of Aden, in Yemen, to refuel on 12 October 2000.¹¹⁶⁷ Before the arrival of the *Cole*, twenty-six US Navy ships had used Aden to refuel.¹¹⁶⁸ Ali Soufan, one of the investigating FBI officers after the bombing, claimed that despite the "security agencies" warning against Yemen as a possible location to refuel US Navy ships, the State Department had supported the choice of Aden as refueling port for US ships:

The real reason for the switch [from Djibouti] was that while Yemen had supported Saddam Hussein in the first Gulf War, the Clinton

1162 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 322.

1163 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 535.

1164 Ibid. 534.

1165 Ibid., 536.

1166 Kirk Lippold, *Front Burner: Al Qaeda's attack on the USS Cole*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2012), ix; Lippold, Kirk, Q&A with Kirk Lippold, Q&A, C-Span, June 13, 2012.

1167 Lippold, *Front Burner*, 28.

1168 Ibid., 31.

administration had launched a major diplomatic initiative aiming to bring Yemen into the U.S. orbit. Trusting Yemen with hosting U.S. ships, along with the economic benefits that hosting provides, was part of that effort. The State Department and its country team in Yemen concurred that the security situation in Yemen was acceptable.¹¹⁶⁹

The New York Times reported that one of the small harbour boats that was helping in the refuelling process “with at least two men on board...loaded with explosives” attacked the *Cole*, described as a “well-planned operation.”¹¹⁷⁰ The newspaper speculated that responsibility could lay with any one of “several radical Islamic organisations.”¹¹⁷¹ Lippold’s memoir does not vary concerning the method of the attack but provides a more detailed and personalised account with the conclusion that the attack of this “trash barge” had so severely damaged his ship that it risked sinking.¹¹⁷² The ship was saved, but seventeen US Navy personnel perished. In the aftermath of the attack, Clinton described this as an act of terrorism and condemned the attack as “cowardly and despicable.”¹¹⁷³ He also informed the nation that he had asked the FBI, the State Department and the Defense Department to carry out an investigation. Two days later in a letter to Congress, which as Commander in Chief he was duty bound to report, the president did not make any mention of terrorism and only provided details of how, when, and where the attack took place.¹¹⁷⁴

Bossie has claimed that Clinton failed to respond militarily after the attack on *Cole*.¹¹⁷⁵ The evidence does not support this conclusion as the perpetrator was not known after the attack. A formerly secret, undated and unsigned note within the Clinton Presidential Library archives, titled “Current claims of responsibility for U.S.S. *Cole* attack”, suggests that the administration suspected at least seven different and some overlapping terrorist groups including “Egyptian Islamic Jihad”, “Islamic Army of Aden – Abyani” and Al-

1169 Ali Soufan, *The Black Banners: Inside the hunt for al-Qaeda*, (London: Penguin, 2011), 156.

1170 John F. Burns and Steven Lee Myers, “The warship explosion: The Overview; Blast kills sailors on U.S. ship in Yemen,” *The New York Times*, October 13, 2000, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/10/13/world/the-warship-explosion-the-overview-blast-kills-sailors-on-us-ship-in-yemen.html>.

1171 Ibid.

1172 Lippold, *Front Burner*, 59.

1173 “President Clinton remarks on the U.S.S. *Cole* bombing”. Filmed C-Span today broadcast, Rose Garden, White House, Washington D.C. (October 12, 2000) *You Tube video*, 3:35, November 11, 2015 <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4559577/president-clintons-statement-uss-cole-bombing>.

1174 William J. Clinton: “Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Deployment of United States Forces in Response to the Attack on the U.S.S. *Cole*,” October 14, 2000. *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=118>.

1175 Bossie, *Intelligence failure*, 195.

Qaeda in Jordan and Afghanistan.¹¹⁷⁶ In his memoirs, Clinton has claimed that he continued to push the Pentagon and CIA to find the answers and develop a response plan. The Pentagon, he claimed, was resistant to putting in special forces into Afghanistan without improved intelligence and recommended large-scale bombing campaigns. Clark also suggested that the president in the remaining months was occupied with trying to formulate a settlement on Israel / Palestine peace and without evidence a strike against al Qaeda would jeopardise the relationship between the US and the Arab community.¹¹⁷⁷ George W. Bush, one of the presidential candidates locked in a battle for the presidency with Al Gore, after the attack stated: “Let's hope we can gather enough intelligence to figure out who did the act and take the necessary action... There must be a consequence.”¹¹⁷⁸ Clinton decided not to respond militarily as there was uncertainty on the identity of the perpetrator. The ‘9/11’ Commission stated that President Clinton told them that either the CIA or the FBI “had to be sure enough that they would be willing to stand up in public and say that he [bin Laden] did this.”¹¹⁷⁹ On 25 November 2000, the Commission reported, Berger and Clarke informed Clinton “although they had not reached a final conclusion, they believed the investigations would soon conclude that the attack had been carried out by a large cell whose senior members belonged to al Qaeda”.¹¹⁸⁰ Second, plans were brought together to help and fund the Northern Alliance to “conquer Afghanistan or challenge Taliban control of Kabul”.¹¹⁸¹ At a 20 December 2000 National Security cabinet meeting this plan was not supported because there remained doubts over Masood and the strategy of pursuing entanglements in Afghanistan.¹¹⁸² On 21 December, the CIA still had no definitive idea on the perpetrator of the Aden attack and only offered a “preliminary judgement”.¹¹⁸³

The election of George W. Bush as the president did not stop Clinton from continuing to explore options right to the end of his term in office.¹¹⁸⁴ Tenet has suggested that he was not aware that they were waiting “for the magic

1176 “Declassified documents concerning Terrorism,” National Security Council, Transnational Threats Office, and Richard Clarke, *Clinton Digital Library*, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/47981>.

1177 Clark, *Against all enemies*, 224.

1178 Burns and Myers, “The warship explosion.”

1179 *The 9/11 Commission report*, 193.

1180 *Ibid.*, 194.

1181 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 540.

1182 *Ibid.*, 541.

1183 *The 9/11 Commission report*, 195.

1184 *Ibid.*

words” from the CIA or the FBI before they could respond.¹¹⁸⁵ Coll has suggested that “Clarke could not persuade.... Cohen... or Shelton to take an offensive strike against al Qaeda seriously.¹¹⁸⁶ On 29 December 2000, a month before Clinton left office, the CIA sent Clarke a memo that suggested a “multifaceted strategy” was needed to deal with the Taliban that included offering military assistance to the Northern Alliance, arming Uzbeks to fight the Taliban and supporting the anti-Taliban forces.¹¹⁸⁷ Many of the points from that CIA memo would be included in a briefing that Clarke would provide for Condoleezza Rice, the incoming National Security Advisor in the Bush administration.¹¹⁸⁸ As a postscript on the attack on the USS Cole, a report published in January 2001 found significant shortcomings in how the Navy and Pentagon had sent intelligence information to Lippold.¹¹⁸⁹ The Senate Armed Services accepted that despite these shortcomings, no blame should be ascribed to the Lippold and the crew for this attack.¹¹⁹⁰ Senator John Warner, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, was not in agreement with this conclusion and stated that Lippold should be personally held accountable. Lippold accepts that he was partly responsible and argues in mitigation that there was a lapse in the Navy’s internal processes. Refueling ships are expected to submit a “force protection plan” ahead of a refuelling stop in a foreign port. On this occasion, the Cole had not received any information about the situation at the port or on the security situation regarding the threat level and an incomplete plan appears to have been approved by Central Command, without review.¹¹⁹¹ Lippold accepts that in hindsight he should have requested further information from both the US attaché and Central Command given the heightened threat level following the Embassy bombings, which was set at Bravo, the second highest level.¹¹⁹² Lippold would also claim in his 2012 book that “many in the government thought that the President [Clinton] did nothing.”¹¹⁹³

1185 Ibid., 196.

1186 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 538.

1187 *The 9/11 Commission report*, 197.

1188 Richard Clarke, “Memorandum for Condoleezza Rice” National Security Council, Washington D.C. January 25, 2001, *The National Security Archive*, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB147/clarke%20memo.pdf>

1189 Steven Lee Myers, “Pentagon finds ongoing lapses in Gulf Security,” *The New York Times*, January 2, 2001. <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/02/world/pentagon-finds-ongoing-lapses-in-gulf-security.html> .

1190 Ibid.

1191 Lippold, *Front Burner*, 31- 32.

1192 Ibid., 37.

1193 Ibid., 299.

In a final twist of irony over Clinton's attention to bin Laden, on 10 September 2001, ex-president Clinton, now a private citizen would tell his Australian audience:

I nearly got him. And I could have killed him, but I would have to destroy a little town called Kandahar in Afghanistan and kill 300 innocent women and children, and then I would have been no better than him. And so, I just didn't do it.¹¹⁹⁴

Understanding the Danger

Media coverage of terrorism was episodic rather than consistent. This led to public understanding being shaped by a narrative of retaliation to an attack as opposed to the persistent and patient challenge posed by diplomacy. Across the US media the sensationalist reporting of scandals such as Lewinsky and impeachment kept other news at bay and contributed to doubts over the veracity of official sources, fuelled further by the controversy over evidence such as that presented by the CIA in support of Clinton's Embassy attack retaliation.¹¹⁹⁵ Research presented by Matthew Storin, a past editor of the *Boston Globe*, to the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University in 2002, suggests significant differences in the terrorism coverage by the two leading newspapers in the US, *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.¹¹⁹⁶ Storin reviewed approximately 2300 articles, starting with reporting on the World Trade Center bombing in February 26, 1993 through to September 10, 2001. Storin noted there was difference in emphasis in the period of 2000-1 in that the *New York Times*:

During 2000, seemed to lose sight of terrorism as a priority, though it covered extensively the attack on the U.S.S. Cole in October of that year. Then the newspaper's focus returned in 2001 with some probing work on bin Laden and Afghanistan that was ultimately part of a Pulitzer Prize winning effort.¹¹⁹⁷

1194 News, Bill Clinton's lost tape: I could have killed Osama bin Laden, *NBC News*, August 1, 2014, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/bill-clintons-lost-tape-i-could-have-killed-osama-bin-n170111>.

1195 Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 379.

1196 Matthew V. Storin, "While America Slept: Coverage of Terrorism from 1993 to September 11, 2001" Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, January 1, 2002 1-43, *Harvard Kennedy School*, https://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/2002_07_storin.pdf?x78124.

1197 *Ibid.*, 2.

Storin found that the *Washington Post* gave greater prominence to the threat of terrorism. Storin's analysis highlights that whilst the Post carried reports of attacks being predicted by Janet Reno and Richard Clarke, in the *Times* there were claims from what were described as "former State department counterterrorism officials" who downplayed the threat. Storin concludes that the controversy of the 2000 presidential election and then the advent of a new administration with different priorities, terrorism was relegated in the media to the point where he claims, "as the 11th of September dawned, there had been no notable public debate in America on any of the issues relating to terrorism."¹¹⁹⁸

The impact of this episodic engagement by the media with terrorism led to an inconsistent calibration of the threat from terrorism from the American public. Thus, a Gallup poll conducted in the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing showed that forty-two per cent of the American public said they were worried about becoming a victim of a terrorist attack. The likelihood of future attacks in the United States was around eight six per cent (fifty per cent saying very likely and thirty-six per cent somewhat likely). By April 2000, the worry about terrorism had dropped to twenty four per cent (with four per cent very worried and twenty per cent worried).¹¹⁹⁹ However, a survey carried out by Pew research in June 2001 discovered: "terrorism ranks as a more serious threat to the United States than China's emergence as a world power or even Saddam Hussein's continued rule in Iraq." The Pew poll found that 64 per cent of Americans believed that "international terrorism" was a "major threat" with a further 27 per cent finding it to be a "minor threat", but only 4% believing it was "no threat".¹²⁰⁰ On 10 July 2001, exactly three months before '9/11,' *The New York Times* was proclaiming (foolishly, in hindsight):

Americans are bedevilled by fantasies about terrorism. They seem to believe that terrorism is the greatest threat to the United States and that it is becoming more widespread and lethal... None of these beliefs are based in fact.¹²⁰¹

¹¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 24.

¹¹⁹⁹ "Terrorist attacks: Public opinion from April 1995 – January 2001," *Gallup*, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/4876/terrorist-attacks-public-opinion-from-april-1995-january-2001.aspx>. See also historical trends from Gallup polling on terrorism, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/4909/terrorism-united-states.aspx>.

¹²⁰⁰ Andrew Kohut, "Fear of Terrorism weighs heavily on public" US Politics and Policy, June 29 2001, *Pew Research Centre*, <http://www.people-press.org/2001/06/29/fear-of-terrorism-weighs-heavily-on-public/>.

¹²⁰¹ Larry C. Johnson, "The declining terrorist threat," *The New York Times*, July 10, 2001, <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/07/10/opinion/the-declining-terrorist-threat.html>.

Conclusions

In the last two years of his presidency, Clinton made a determined effort to track and eliminate bin Laden. Despite the distraction of impeachment proceedings that would not end until the Senate acquitted him in February 1999, the president remained attentive to the challenge of terrorism. Clinton's description of bin Laden as 'Public enemy No 1' was not just an empty rhetorical threat but a determined effort to draw America's attention to the threat posed by bin Laden.

The impeachment process served no purpose other than a political opportunity for the Republican Party to humiliate the president for lapses in his moral judgement. The American public correctly concluded this was a personal matter for the president and not worthy of impeachment. The impact of the impeachment as has been said in the previous chapter did not deflect the president from following through on tackling the threat of bin Laden. The impeachment may have delayed the decision-making process on cruise missile deployment when a shot at bin Laden was possible. Though whether the missiles would have been deployed still is in doubt given the possibility of the collateral harm to members of the UAE royal family alleged to have been at the same hunting camp as bin Laden.

The Taliban continued to be a challenge for the Clinton administration in 1999-2000. The twin-track strategy of carrot and stick did not work. As bin Laden's prestige grew following the East Africa attack, his status meant that getting cooperation about extraditing him became difficult. That does not, however, say that the choice to deploy force was the only solution. Karl Inderfurth, who was assistant secretary of state for South Asian affairs in the Clinton administration, commented to the *Washington Post* in 2001, "Until September 11th, there was certainly not any groundswell of support to mount a major attack on the Taliban. This is just a reality."¹²⁰² Clinton and Albright pressured the Taliban to hand over bin Laden and would continue to try and find non-military solutions. In hindsight, this turned out to be the right decision.

¹²⁰² Gellman, "Broad effort launched after '98 attacks".

President George W. Bush would commit US troops to Afghanistan in 2001, and US troops have remained engaged in Afghanistan in the longest war in US history with over one hundred and eleven thousand total dead with a cost to the US government of seven hundred billion dollars as of 2016.¹²⁰³

The management of the CIA impacted Clinton's counterterrorism legacy. The evidence shows Clinton increased budgets for counterterrorism after 1995 onwards. However, with the lack of data available to create a complete picture of the CIA funding, it is difficult to prove the gap on funding. The minimal increase in 1997-98 the CIA received does show the CIA did not receive the funding to the level Tenet has claimed he needed. Against this is the claim that Tenet did not effectively prioritise the threat from al Qaeda which would impact the funding against the al Qaeda effort. Questions remain as to Tenet's leadership of the CIA in the handling of the bin Laden tracking station. Possessing the charm to motivate and ability to take decisive action, on realising that the bin Laden station was not delivering, there have been questions raised by Scheuer on how open and transparent to his staff he had been on intelligence reliability. Michael Morrell's observation that Scheuer lacked the skill to head up 'Alec Station', also raises question marks as to why it took Tenet nearly eighteen months after becoming CIA Director to replace Scheuer. In those eighteen months, the effort on bin Laden worked at cross purposes between the demands by Scheuer to act and the lack of credibility by the CIA management on the intelligence being generated by the virtual tracking station. The CIA's failure to find a solution to deliver credible intelligence was the major failure of Clinton's counterterrorism effort. The Pentagon exploited this lack of belief in intelligence as a convenient excuse not to contemplate further covert missions into Afghanistan. With the time delay and cost of cruise missiles, the military response to terrorism through cruise missile launches turned out to be a failure. Clarke and Black were therefore right in looking to redefine the mission parameters beyond just targeting bin Laden. The use of drones for surveillance brought in a technological answer to a problem of prompt intelligence and served as a portent of counter-terrorism efforts in the 21st century.

¹²⁰³ What does the US want in Afghanistan? *CNN*, November 1, 2017, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/08/21/asia/afghanistan-war-explainer/index.html>.

The attack on the Cole was unanticipated but appears to have been preventable if the Captain had taken heed of the terror threat in the region. The attack on the Cole was a systemic failure in intelligence communication within the Navy but also a failure on the part of the Captain to take adequate protection against the threat. Unlike an embassy building, a warship is a floating fortress that can be protected. The response by Clinton to the attack was measured and responsible. Without adequate clarity over the perpetrator, the US could face accusations of bombing without reason on unproven allegations. Clinton did everything that a president could do about developing plans right, and up to the day he handed over to formulate a response.

The American public had waxed and waned about the threat of terrorism as polls showed. Led by a fickle media environment that preferred to chase stories of prurient interest rather than provide a meaningful assessment of the threat from terrorism the public was not best served.

Conclusions.

This thesis has explored the events and discourse surrounding the challenge from domestic terrorism and al Qaeda to US National Security during the presidency of Bill Clinton between 1993-2001. The thesis has chosen not to explore Clinton's efforts in securing peace in Northern Ireland, through the Good Friday agreement, as this did not represent a threat to US security. The focus on domestic terrorism and the threat from al Qaeda has enabled this thesis to consider Clinton's counterterrorism strategy against political attacks faced in the aftermath of 9/11. During the Clinton presidency, episodic attacks were inflicted on the American people and US assets. Not all these attacks, but the majority, were inspired or perpetrated by Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden was initially regarded as a shadowy, mysterious Saudi financier rather than a significant threat to US interests and ringleader of a sprawling and expanding terrorist network. As the attacks increased and became more prominent, the administration came to understand more fully the aims and methods of al Qaeda. Bin Laden, its leader, became Clinton's "Public Enemy Number 1."

Eight months after Clinton's handover to George W. Bush as president, the US was rocked by the spectacular, multiple attacks of September 11, 2001, and the finger of responsibility pointed squarely at bin Laden and al Qaeda. Clinton was blamed in some sections of the media and by right wing political commentators for not doing enough to prevent these attacks. This thesis has investigated how the Clinton administration dealt with the challenge of non-state terrorism as it evolved from 1993 onwards and how US domestic and foreign policy stepped up to meet that challenge. Alongside this, the thesis has explored how the Clinton administration supported both domestic and foreign intelligence and law enforcement agencies and how they, in turn, supported the President in meeting his stated aims to capture and bring the terrorists to justice. Consideration has also been given to the domestic political environment and its impact on Clinton's counterterrorism policymaking, particularly concerning the hostility he faced politically from his Republican opponents in Congress following the Republican successes in the 1994 midterm elections. The US media and public reaction to the threat of terrorism in the light of the

administration's rhetorical engagement with the issue and the visibility of counterterrorism measures have also been explored.

The '9/11' attacks marked a major milestone in US foreign policy, as the country pivoted away from conventional wars against hostile countries or ideological counter-insurgencies. The campaign dubbed by President George W. Bush as the 'War on Terror', targeted not only al Qaeda and its associated groups but also the broader threat of 'international terrorism' as a form of opposition to US interests globally. This 'War on Terror' saw the US invest blood and treasure initially in Afghanistan, then Iraq, and elsewhere across Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Further major attacks in the US were avoided, but the capitals of allies in Europe and other parts of the world suffered sporadic bombings and shootings by al Qaeda and its followers. President Obama was less convinced by the term 'War on Terror' and stopped using it in early 2009, before finally calling an end to it in May 2013. Though the terminology would change, however, US troops, technology and resources continued to be deployed against terrorists as the threats developed and improved, particularly with the rise of so-called Islamic State (or ISIS or ISIL) in the wake of the Iraq War and the Syrian Civil War. Eighteen years after '9/11' the United States military is still involved in what *The New York Times* has termed an "endless war" against terrorism.¹²⁰⁴ This thesis has added greater context to the roots of this 'endless war' by investigating the eight years before the '9/11' attacks, to explore the impact of the decisions on counterterrorism made by the two-term Clinton administration. In particular, it has sought to critically address the claims that stem largely from the right in US politics, that it was the negligence over terrorism of Clinton and his administration that led to al Qaeda exploiting vulnerabilities in US security and launching its audacious, coordinated attack against the United States on September 11, 2001.

The thesis began by exploring the legacy of counterterrorism policy left in place by the Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush Administrations from

¹²⁰⁴ Rukmini Callimachi, Helene Cooper, Eric Schmitt, Alan Blinder and Thomas Gibbons-Neff: "'An endless war': Why 4 U.S. Soldiers dies in a remote African Desert," *The New York Times*, February 20, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/02/17/world/africa/niger-ambush-american-soldiers.html>.

1981-1993 before turning its attention to the Clinton presidency. the adoption of the 'war model' for counterterrorism as advocated by George Shultz, Reagan's Secretary of State was viewed within some sections of the political right as necessary for combatting foreign terrorism. This thesis has argued that despite the bellicose rhetoric from Reagan and Shultz about dealing with terrorism by deploying a 'war model', they faced domestic and international opposition in being able to successfully deploy this muscular counterterrorism strategy. Moreover, with the revelation of the Iran Contra affair and the 1988 Pan AM flight bombing over Lockerbie, credibility in the Reagan administration's counterterrorism resolve was undermined.

President Clinton had come to power on the promise of Americans being able to enjoy a peace dividend after the Cold War. His foreign policy became occupied not only by the need to negotiate the fallout from the breakup of the Soviet bloc in the Balkans but increasingly the new threat from non-state actors and their willingness to use violence against Americans and US targets. After he left office and in the wake of '9/11', Clinton's conduct and diligence in facing down the challenge from terrorism, especially Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda, came under scrutiny. Some polarising and invective-filled accounts appeared on public bookshelves accusing the Clinton administration of being negligent over the threat of terrorism and alleging that the attacks of '9/11' were made possible as a result.

The literature on Clinton's counterterrorism management has to date been incomplete. Whilst academic scholars in US foreign policy have touched on this touched the most compelling accounts have been on intelligence management. Intelligence scholars like Naftali and Zegart have found shortcomings, with Naftali, arguing that Clinton would have been more successful if he had enlisted the support of the American public in his fight against bin Laden. Zegart, on the other hand, found systemic, organisational, and structural problems that led to inefficiencies on intelligence management within the CIA. Neither Naftali and Zegart extended the scope of their criticisms to the the leadership of the intelligence agencies, specifically George Tenet and Louis Freeh. The harshest criticism of Clinton has come from conservative politicians, political commentators and journalists who pulled together a highly partisan and critical account of the Clinton years. Some like

David Bossie took to questioning the integrity and credibility of the official Congressional investigation into '9/11' (The National Commission on the Terrorist Attacks on the United States, known as the '9/11' Commission). Despite its bipartisan nature, Bossie accused it of having been unduly influenced by pressure from President Clinton and suggested that it delivered a biased, expurgated account to absolve the former president of the blame. This debate on Clinton's handling of counterterrorism and the road to '9/11' would continue, culminating with a public accusation during a Fox News TV interview in 2006. Questioning Clinton on other matters, Fox News anchor Chris Wallace suddenly asked accusingly: "Why didn't you do more to put bin Laden and al Qaeda out of business when you were President?"

In this thesis, Wallace's question has been considered to provide an academic exploration of President Clinton's record on terrorism. The four main questions that have underpinned this research are as follows:

- First, how did the Clinton administration's perception and understanding of terrorism develop over time?
- Second, what were the essential characteristics of the Clinton administration's counterterrorism policy?
- Third, how effective was the Clinton administration's counterterrorism policy judged against its own stated objectives?
- Fourth, how effectively did the Clinton White House lead, support and interact with other elements of the administration, particularly the FBI, CIA and other intelligence and security agencies, that were charged with implementing its stated goals on counterterrorism?

- **Clinton adapted his counterterrorist responses from defensive counterterrorism to coercive counterterrorism as the threat of al Qaeda became clear.**

Clinton came to office when the challenges of fighting the Cold War had given way to the uncertainties of the post-Cold War world. Terrorism had been an ever-present fixture in Reagan's early years. Linking his primary foreign policy challenge of fighting the Soviet Union and counterterrorism in his

rhetoric and actions offered Reagan a way to conflate, explain and deal with both issues, early in his presidency. Terrorism, which had been rising during the Reagan presidency and diminished during the George H.W. Bush presidency and had not featured as a US National Security concern during Clinton's 1992 election as the number of terrorist incidents had started to fall.¹²⁰⁵ Clinton had to deal with the challenge of terrorism in all its forms - state versus non-state actors, as well as individual versus network. No one cap fits all solution was available to him. As the challenge of bin Laden became clear in his second term, Clinton's counterterrorism approach recognised the problem posed by bin Laden and did not resort to simplistic solutions by arguing for force alone. He followed the harder path of patient diplomacy. This thesis has investigated how the Clinton administration dealt with the challenge of non-state terrorism as it evolved from 1993 onwards and how US foreign policy stepped up to meet that challenge. Alongside this, the thesis has explored how the Clinton administration supported both domestic and foreign intelligence and law enforcement agencies and how they, in turn, supported the President in meeting his stated aims to capture and bring the terrorists to justice. Consideration has also been given to the domestic political environment and its impact on Clinton's counterterrorism policymaking, particularly concerning the hostility he faced politically from his Republican opponents in Congress following the Republican successes in the 1994 midterm elections. The US media and public reaction to the threat of terrorism in the light of the administration's rhetorical engagement with the issue and the visibility of counterterrorism measures have also been explored. However, Clinton did underestimate the obduracy of the Taliban and lack of success by his allies, especially Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in capturing and extraditing bin Laden. This led him to pursue all coercive means of counterterrorism actions, short of deploying the military on the ground.

Clinton's National Security Strategy during his two terms shows the evolution on counterterrorism. In 1994, three counterterrorism aims had been outlined - effective interagency cooperation and communication, improving US intelligence capabilities, and help for other governments in combatting

¹²⁰⁵ Patterns of Global terrorism: 1992, "The year in Review," *Federation of American Scientists*, online at https://fas.org/irp/threat/terror_92/review.html.

terrorism.¹²⁰⁶ Clinton had tried to improve interagency cooperation through presidential orders and both Reno and Lake had tried in his first term, to make this happen. However, the chaos at the CIA and Freeh's personal ambitions to lead the Intelligence community prevented this happening. In his second term, it was apparent from Barbara Grewe's assessments to the 9/11 Commission that the FBI misunderstood the legal processes and did not share intelligence. All throughout his presidency, from his earliest pronouncements on terrorism Clinton comments had been measured and statesmanlike. In 1996, at Sharm el-Sheikh Summit, Clinton had described the benefits of multilateral cooperation in beating terrorism. In Oklahoma City, the president had not gone down the road of vilifying a minority to win cheap political points. Only with the benefit of hindsight is it possible to claim that the administration underestimated the Taliban. Finally, on improving intelligence capability, it was down to the leadership of the intelligence community to bring about change. Woolsey and Deutch both tried and failed. Freeh received increased funding and did not deliver. Tenet, despite his bellicose rhetoric through the lack of management capability did not deliver.

Clinton's engagement with the challenge of terrorism increased as terrorist attacks from a multiplicity of actors intruded into his presidency. Early in his first term, the terrorist incidents at the CIA gates and the World Trade Center did not result in the intelligence services showing a link to a networked terror threat. They were therefore dealt with, as was the case under George H. W. Bush, as a criminal matter for the FBI to investigate and prosecute. Lake's notes show the president had to deal with many urgent foreign policy concerns in Russia, the Balkans, and Somalia. The threat of terrorism had not required the president to deprioritise any of his other foreign policy concerns. The understanding that Bosnia and Somalia would turn out to be identified as source of non state terrorism, is with the benefit of hindsight. It was the events of the 1995-96 that marked the turning point in presidential focus on terrorism. First, the Tokyo subway attack that energised the president to move quickly to deal with the possibility of terrorists getting WMD's. Second, though not discussed in many of the other memoirs of the Clinton presidency, as Benjamin and Simon

1206 "A National Security strategy of Engagement and Enlargement," July 1994, *The National Security Archive*, <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1994.pdf>.

have stated in their accounts, in the aftermath of the Manilla flat fire the magnitude of threat became evident. Whilst the sophistication of the plot caused a great deal of consternation in the Federal Aviation Agency, the intelligence agencies had still not connected all the dots to create a cohesive picture of threat from bin Laden. Thus, counterterrorism policy required the president to first put in place defensive measures to protect American lives and infrastructure before they could move to consider offensive measures. Clinton's landmark PDD 39 did both. With no political majority to carry through legislation the president implemented these actions through a presidential order and then worked with the legislature to bring in the 1996 Anti terrorism Act. Though the legislation turned out to be suboptimal, Clinton achieved some measure of satisfaction that he had anti terrorism legislation on the statute books. Moreover, this allowed for increased funding for counterterrorism to be sent to Congress. Also, by January 1996, the White House had the bin Laden tracking station up and running, which turned out to be serendipitously prescient just as bin Laden ramped up his rhetoric against the US through his 1996 *fatwa*.

In 1997, in the next iteration of the National Security Strategy, coercive counterterrorism came to dominate the administration's policies as the explicit use of force featured as well as the use of legal indictments to prosecute terrorists.¹²⁰⁷ Clinton's counterterrorism effort in his second term was focused and determined on defeating bin Laden, but the intelligence agencies proved to be his Achilles heel. Clinton's counterterrorism strategy had pivoted out of defensive and persuasive efforts of his first term to become determinedly coercive. Four policy responses highlight this shift in strategy. First, realising that the FBI had been shut out by the Saudi's over the Khobar Towers investigation, Clinton deployed the CIA to undertake covert disruptive campaign through Operation Sapphire against Iranian intelligence. Clinton however remained aware of the bigger geopolitical interests of the US. The opportunity to getting dialogue started following the election of Khatami, led to Clinton backing off from responding militarily.¹²⁰⁸ Bossie's political attack that Clinton showed "inaction and poor leadership" over the Khobar Towers is

¹²⁰⁷ "A National Security Strategy for a New Century," October 1998, *The National Security Archive*, <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1998.pdf>.

¹²⁰⁸ Crist, *The Twilight War*, 409.

therefore without merit. Second, Clinton's attention was decisively shifted on to Osama bin Laden who he described as 'Public Enemy Number 1,' in 1998. Though the missile strikes were poorly planned and managed in response to the East African Embassy attacks, it shows a president not lacking resolve, in the midst of personal and political crisis. Third, Clinton had become convinced before he left office that eliminating bin Laden was the only solution to dealing with al Qaeda. Having ensured that the that the legal basis was in place by November 1998, to deliver an indictment against bin Laden he tasked the Department of Defense and CIA to explore covert methods to capture or dispatch bin Laden. Both the Pentagon and the CIA failed. The Pentagon blamed inadequate intelligence for not recommending anything more than long range strikes. The CIA struggled to produce reliable intelligence to convince the White House. Fourth, Clinton tried using both the Saudi's and the Pakistanis to help capture bin Laden. Both of these states did not help the US in capturing bin Laden.

By December 2000, The National Security Strategy demonstrates greater recognition of the complexities of counterterrorism, especially in dealing with networked terror groups like al Qaeda, proves explicitly the journey the administration had taken.¹²⁰⁹ Clinton tried everything short of putting boots on the ground to coerce the Taliban to cooperate in the capture of bin Laden. The Taliban could not in all conscience give up bin Laden. He was too big a draw within the Muslim world and in Afghanistan. As the telex traffic between Kabul, Islamabad, and Washington DC, shows the State Department tried every means short of military action, to pressurise the Taliban. Clinton remained sufficiently wary of committing the US to long drawn out military conflict in Afghanistan, something his successor failed to consider. It was covert operations under Obama that finally ended bin Laden. As a final assessment of Clinton's counterterrorism efforts, the assessment of John McLaughlin is most apposite: "We [the US] just ran out of time to get bin, Laden".¹²¹⁰

- **Clinton's counterterrorism policy viewed the pivot to the 'war model,' as an act of last resort.**

¹²⁰⁹ "A National Security Strategy for a Global Age," December 1999, *The National Security Archive*, <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2001.pdf>

¹²¹⁰ Interview with John McLaughlin, Washington D.C. March 24, 2016.

Clinton adhered to a rules-based approach in counterterrorism. The president's resolve never wavered in tackling this issue and neither does the evidence point to a rushed and hurried response to this extraordinarily complex phenomenon. Unlike Shultz, the Clinton administration steered away from dealing with every terrorist attack in the same way. Clinton's policy instruments were adapted to deal with each threat as the magnitude of the threat became clear.

In his first term Clinton perceived the challenge from terrorism as a task for domestic intelligence, as no evidence had been presented to the contrary. The FBI were therefore tasked with investigating and prosecuting the perpetrators. Yousef, Kansi and McVeigh, had either been named, caught or was close to being caught by the FBI, as Clinton started his second term. The Khobar Towers attack showed that complexities associated with investigating and responding to international terrorism. Clinton responded by using the CIA to undertake covert and disrupt missions against Iran. However, he backed off from considering any further escalation with the election of President Khatami that held out hope for some rapprochement with Iran.

In his second term, the threat from Osama bin Laden was a challenge of a different magnitude. Not until the terrorist attacks on US embassies in East Africa, in 1998, had the CIA been able to convincingly put forward a case of anything more than a radicalized jihadi sitting in Afghanistan hurling insults and threatening dire consequences against the US. The pivot by Clinton to respond with missiles in August 1998, was poorly executed plan, though it marked a change to a decisive shift to coercive counterterrorism. This shift was made possible by three factors. First, his second term counterterrorism effort was driven by Berger, Albright and Clarke. All three were more attuned to the challenge of terrorism than had been the case when Clarke was the lone voice with Lake and Christopher. Second, despite the concerns over the intelligence quality, the bin Laden tracking unit was beginning to produce intelligence, that proved bin Laden was a major threat to US security. Third, though the long-range missile strikes had been embarrassing and futile the president tasked the Pentagon to develop more covert operations to capture bin Laden. Neither the CIA nor the Pentagon could deliver on the administration's plans to interdict

bin Laden. Clinton's approach to a more thoughtful deliberative approach is best evidenced by his response to the attack on *USS Cole*. Without definitive evidence as to the perpetrator, Clinton refrained from sanctioning a response. In the febrile atmosphere post '9/11' this was claimed to be negligent. However, the evidence from post '9/11' counterterrorism actions which have led to the rise of pernicious forms of terrorism from ISIL and the destabilisation of the Middle East and North Africa, leads to the conclusion that the president's actions were measured.

Clinton's counterterrorism approach was measured and proportionate. He believed in a multilateral approach to international terrorism. In Northern Ireland, he had brought the British and Irish government onside. In 1996, at Sharm el-Sheikh Summit, Clinton had described the benefits of multilateral cooperation in challenging terrorism in the Middle East. With al Qaeda, he had reached out to the Taliban, Saudis and Pakistanis to come to a solution. However, when he needed to act tough on terrorism Clinton did not shy away. Clinton remained resolute in dealing with states suspected of harbouring terrorists as he demonstrated with Sudan. He imposed economic sanctions on the Sudanese regime. The claims made by Clinton's critics that this was disproportionate as Sudan was prepared is without merit as the 9/11 Commission has stated. Moreover, this research has confirmed that many of those critics of Clinton's policies on Sudan were either agents of Sudan or had economic interests in Sudan. Also, if force was needed to solve a foreign policy crisis Clinton was prepared to use force as he did in the Balkans and with Saddam Hussein's Iraq. The post '9/11' campaigns by Bush has shown the difficulty in confronting non state terror networks through conventional use of force. Clinton's reluctance to engage in Afghanistan by putting boots on the ground, in light of America's longest war has turned out to be judicious. Clinton's preference to seek small-scale deployments through commando action appears to have been the best choice in deploying force in dealing with bin Laden. President Obama would use small Navy Seal teams, albeit with improved intelligence capability to end bin Laden in 2011.

Finally, Clinton showed great leadership and statesmanship in talking about terrorism. In Oklahoma City, the president had not gone down the road of

vilifying a minority to win cheap political. Republicans, like Rohrabacher and others who rushed to point fingers at Clinton after '9/11' would have accused the president of deflection if he had deployed any stronger measures against Taliban, during the impeachment process. In the febrile atmosphere in the aftermath of '9/11' critics contorted the president's measured stance on counterterrorism into claiming Clinton was negligent to the threat of terrorism. Scholars such as Naftali have also argued that Clinton could have enlisted the support of the American public on bin Laden and threat from al Qaeda. The evidence of the media reaction after Oklahoma City bombing demonstrates the problem of targeting one minority group as possible perpetrators of terrorism. The xenophobia on display after Oklahoma City bombing would have led to pressures on the fabric of community cohesion as has become evident post 9/11, following a decade or more of anti-Muslim rhetoric by politicians in the US.

- **US counterterrorism before '9/11' did not get the support of its traditional allies, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan.**

Seeking answers through diplomacy was not without its challenge in counterterrorism for the Clinton administration. Clinton made every diplomatic effort to enlist the help of the Saudi's and Pakistanis in countering the threat of al Qaeda. The reliance on Saudi Arabian intelligence through Prince Turki's connections with bin Laden suggests that with limited inroads into engaging the Taliban diplomatically, Clinton was forced to reach out to the Saudi's. The Saudis had their own reasons to dislike bin Laden though it has not been possible to prove beyond reasonable doubt whether these were the same as the US. Riyadh had stripped bin Laden of his citizenship in 1994.¹²¹¹ Moreover, Saudi actions after the Khobar Towers bombing does not show an ally that is attuned to US Security needs. Clarke, Benjamin, and Simon all have claimed that in the aftermath of the Khobar Towers attack the Saudi's shut down the investigation into the aftermath of Khobar Towers bombing.¹²¹² Freeh has suggested that Clinton made no effort to pressurise the Saudis to hand over the perpetrators of the Khobar Towers attack. Contrasting the actions of President

¹²¹¹ Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 246.

¹²¹² Clarke, *Against all enemies*, 114-119; Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 300-302.

Clinton with his successor, Freeh would argue that President George W. Bush would move to indict the alleged bombers.¹²¹³ Freeh, however, is being economical in his explanation and finding reasons to fault the Clinton administration. Freeh's fulsome praise for the Bush administration in being able to launch the indictments would be on the same month that Freeh would leave his job at the FBI. He seems to gloss over the reasons that the indictments had to be issued in 2001, as otherwise future prosecutions would not be impossible, as the five-year statute of limitations would have expired.¹²¹⁴ The alleged perpetrator of the Khobar Towers would not face US justice until 2015.¹²¹⁵

The US had been a staunch ally of Pakistan during the Cold War but with the closeness between the ISI (Pakistan Intelligence Services) and the Taliban, the US was limited in what it could achieve. Midway through Clinton's first term the Pakistanis were supportive in action taken to apprehend Yousef and Kansi. From 1995 through to 1997 Pakistan's democratic government had been under pressure from the military and, with Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif both not staying in power, the Pakistan military had put their man General Pervez Musharraf in charge in 1999. As Clinton relates, he had found him to be "noncommittal" on his request to help on bin Laden and as he stated at the '9/11' Commission hearings, he had "promised him the moon" if Musharraf had helped to capture bin Laden.¹²¹⁶ In the final analysis, though cooperation improved after '9/11,' both the Saudis and Pakistanis knew before '9/11,' that they would face opprobrium of the Muslim world had they been party to hand over bin Laden. The same could be said of Sudan. That remains a challenge in dealing with terrorism for all western states as to level of cooperation they can expect from the allies. However, Clinton's efforts show that he was prepared to go as far as necessary to secure the help from allies to help capture bin Laden.

- **The FBI leadership, especially Louis Freeh proved to be dragging anchor on US counterterrorism.**

¹²¹³ Freeh, *My FBI*, 32-34.

¹²¹⁴ Law Center, Khobar Towers indictment returned, *CNN*, June 22, 2001, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/LAW/06/21/khobar.indictments/>.

¹²¹⁵ Associated Press, "Suspect in 1996 Khobar Towers bombing arrested," *New York Post*, August 26, 2015, <https://nypost.com/2015/08/26/suspect-in-1996-khobar-towers-bombing-arrested/>.

¹²¹⁶ Clinton, *My Life*, 903; *The 9/11 Commission report*, 183.

Clinton was unfortunate in choice of FBI Director, Louis Freeh. The evidence appears to confirm that the dysfunctional relationship between the Chief Magistrate of the US and its chief law officer was driven by the moral judgements, Freeh made about Clinton. The lack of relationship turned out to be pivotal in the support that Freeh and sections of the FBI gave to Clinton's counterterrorism efforts. Freeh would continually challenge the administration's counterterrorism effort. From dismissing the president's legislative request for wiretapping of suspected terrorist suspects in the media ahead of the passing of the highly contested anti-terrorism legislation, to not giving the challenge from al Qaeda sufficient priority in his effort at the national level, Freeh's lack of cooperation with the administration seriously undermined the counterterrorism effort. All this despite, Clinton pouring funds and appointing the FBI as lead agency on counterterrorism.

The FBI also failed on interagency cooperation. As the 9/11 Commission found, there were significant challenges on interagency cooperation. This thesis having examined the submissions of Barbara Grewe, has argued the problem is two-fold. First, the interpretation of the law within the FBI and second, interagency rivalry between the FBI and the CIA. Grewe's analysis shows the 'non-linear' process of counterterrorism investigations led to much confusion over suspected terrorist information being passed to the CIA. Because, investigations on suspects would not necessarily move from collecting information to prosecution, confusion over suspects rights meant information was not shared between the FBI and CIA. Grewe found that "there could be multiple plots and overlapping participants and bringing criminal charges against one set of individuals did not end the need for ongoing intelligence".¹²¹⁷ This has led this thesis to two conclusions. First that leadership from the FBI despite the urging of the Attorney General Janet Reno, disregarded the guidance given to overcome the legal jeopardy, the responsibility for which lies with Director Freeh. Second, Freeh's ambitions to lead the Intelligence effort on counterterrorism overshadowed the administration's aims of improving inter agency cooperation.

¹²¹⁷ Barbara A. Grewe, "Legal barriers to information sharing: The erection of a wall between Intelligence and Law enforcement investigation," August 20, 2004, *Federation of American Scientists*, <https://fas.org/irp/eprint/wall.pdf>.

Freeh's conduct before 9/11 was counterproductive on US counterterrorism efforts. Three pieces of evidence that have explored in this thesis that supports this conclusion. First, Freeh as the senior jurist should have made more effort to drive inter agency cooperation by finding a way to work with AG Reno to ensure better intelligence sharing between the CIA and FBI.¹²¹⁸ Second, he mismanaged the process of implementing better information sharing when he had received the funds. Freeh claims he got the budget in 1998 including his request for an extra \$70 million for what he has eponymously named as the "Information Sharing Initiative." Freeh, however, would blame Congress for the delay in implementing this information sharing system. Freeh argues that the prevarication by Congress over deciding on a vendor to deliver the information sharing system would lead to delays in implementing this system. He also claims that he did not have the right people to run these computers.¹²¹⁹ Freeh twice, in 1996 and then again in 1998, had received extra funding and he still claimed that the FBI was underprepared for '9/11.'

Clinton was hamstrung in dealing with the problem of Freeh. The president had already fired William Sessions over ethical improprieties. Clinton, for reasons that had little to do with his presidency, was caught up in the Whitewater allegations and could not move against the chief law officer of the land. Clinton could not risk the political fallout in dispensing with Freeh also. This situation was made more difficult with Clinton's loss of political authority after the November 1994 midterms. Republicans would not have supported the president and claimed presidential overreach if Clinton had moved against Freeh. By the time Clinton was acquitted in 1999 from all charges relating to his impeachment time had run out for the president to deal with Freeh. Clinton deserved better from his chief law officer.

- **The CIA failed the American public on bin Laden. The core of the problem lies in poor leadership, especially from George Tenet.**

In 2007, Amy Zegart and others argued persuasively that the problems of US intelligence, especially the CIA were deep rooted and systemic. She found a

¹²¹⁸ Freeh, *My FBI*, 278-79.

¹²¹⁹ Freeh, *My FBI*, 278-79.

culture resistant to change in accepting technology, innovative ideas, and methods. She pinpointed the causes to a flawed reward structure and structural weaknesses that prevented interagency collaboration. However, she did not feel able to blame any one person for these failures. This research has reached three additional conclusions. First, the CIA leadership under Woolsey turned out to be a disaster as the neither the president nor his spy chief had invested enough time understanding the challenges facing the CIA or how they could work together. Second, John Deutch is credited with putting ‘Alec Station’ into operation. However, his poor understanding of the CIA, led him to appoint Michael Scheuer, who appears not to be able to work within the CIA culture and challenges. Third, George Tenet improved morale but did not grasp the challenge of resolving the problems of intelligence quality, at the bin Laden tracking station, resulting in the loss of opportunity as the Clinton administration was timed out in their pursuit of bin Laden.

Clinton’s relationship with the CIA appears to have been professional but not close. The CIA was challenged on many fronts in 1992 when Clinton came to the presidency. In his dealings with the CIA, Clinton has appeared remote and disconnected and in all of his memoirs he does not have any words of praise for any of his CIA Directors. Also, following the shooting at the gates of Langley, the president’s non-attendance at the memorial service even though minor, where he sent the first lady instead, has been portrayed as showing disinterest in his main foreign policy resource. McLaughlin has counterclaimed in an interview for this thesis that the CIA and White House did get on well and the administration consumed “intelligence like water.” Clinton did not make wise choices in his CIA appointments. The appointment of Jim Woolsey was a rushed affair as he was the last of Clinton’s cabinet announcements and was offered the job after one interview.¹²²⁰ Clinton and Woolsey appear not to have settled on a what the job the president expected his CIA director to perform, in that Woolsey complained in and out of the job that he did not have enough access to the president. This has been seized upon by critics of Clinton as proof positive of Clinton’s disinterest in the CIA. As this thesis has argued, Clinton was prepared to read voraciously and reflect on the information. He did not need

1220 Clinton, *My Life*, 456.

a CIA briefer to read his PDB to him. This was not acceptable to Woolsey and in hindsight perhaps if Clinton had spent a bit longer in agreeing with Woolsey, these misunderstandings could have been avoided. The CIA Director was a bad fit with the Clinton Administration whose view of him soured as is clear in the memoirs of White House, who describe him as “tin eared” and “brittle” and “too combative.”¹²²¹ However, Woolsey did not receive political cover from Clinton over his budget battles with Democrats on the Hill especially, Senator DeConcini on the House Intelligence Committee. Woolsey’s replacement would not be found for a year with the Senate Intelligence committee delaying Clinton’s choice of John Deutch.¹²²²

Clinton’s second choice of Director John Deutch would make an important contribution to Clinton’s counterterrorism ambitions. Deutch’s background in the Pentagon did not endear him to the challenges of reforming the CIA. This is evident in both Garthoff and Coll’s account of his time at the CIA. Clinton mentions him only three times in his memoirs, indicating that the CIA Director and the president were not close. Lake and Deutch appear to have come together to persuade Congress to support the bin Laden tracking station in January 1996. Deutch’s leadership to reform the CIA met with resistance within the CIA and with the exception of bin Laden tracking station coming to life, Deutch’s contribution to Clinton’s counterterrorism would be a footnote in Clinton’s presidential history. Clinton having met resistance from the Senate over Tony Lake would have to accept Tenet. The remoteness between the president and the CIA would also be evident as Clinton did not attend the swearing in of his CIA chief. Tenet, however, would come to define Clinton’s counterterrorism legacy.

George Tenet has been universally described in interviews for this research as a larger than life character who raised the morale at the beleaguered CIA. Tenet’s previous liaison roles between the White House and the CIA meant that he established a cordial relationship right from the start of his time as Acting Director of the CIA from December 1996. Tenet position was ratified by the Senate in July 1997. Tenet’s leadership of the CIA in dealing with al Qaeda raises a number of questions which this thesis has explored and

1221 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 244.

1222 Benjamin and Simon, *Age of Sacred terror*, 240.

concluded that he was found wanting. Based on the limited declassified evidence available on CIA budgets in the period between Tenet coming to Office and the end of the Clinton presidency, the CIA received minimal increases to its counterterrorism budget. The declassified budget figures testify to this. However, there are three issues that speak to Tenet's poor management in leading the CIA to face down the al Qaeda threat. First, as Coll has stated, Tenet did not raise the priority allocated to the threat from al Qaeda in his 1997 estimate. He continued to support the view the WMD's were the biggest threat to US security. Tenet may have done this in an effort to align himself with the White House who he knew well and also knew Clinton was similarly concerned by the threat posed by WMD's. Second, in his handling of Michael Scheuer. Tenet is indecisive. Scheuer has claimed that Tenet was "two faced" in dealing with him and his bin Laden tracking unit. This accusation could possibly be explained away, by the bitterness of a disgruntled Scheuer who was pushed out of his job, getting even with his boss at the time of publication of Tenet's book. But as Michael Morell, Deputy Director of the CIA, and somebody who like Scheuer was an analyst by background, Scheuer did not have the operations capability to lead covert operations.¹²²³ Covert operations to eliminate bin Laden was the preferred strategic route of the White House and as Morell also confirmed by 1997, the CIA had established that bin Laden posed a threat to the US.¹²²⁴ Tenet does not effectively address the challenge in his book, as to why it took him between December 1996 and Autumn 1998 before the new counterterrorism strategy was implemented by Cofer Black. If as Morell claims, Scheuer was a bad fit to lead the task, an effective leader would have grasped the nettle quicker. Vital months were lost, which in retrospect, given McLaughlin's comments that they ran out of time, could have been gained if Tenet had moved quicker to replace Scheuer. Third, Tenet was not prepared to stand by the intelligence that 'Alec Station' was producing. This had catastrophic consequences on Clinton's counterterrorism goals. First the failure of the missile strikes in 1998 to either destroy a WMD factor or kill bin Laden. Second, the Pentagon's refusal to prepare for further covert operations as they fell back on poor intelligence to continue advocating for long range strikes.

¹²²³ Morell, *The Great War of our Time*, 18.

¹²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

Tenet's declaration that 'we are at war' with al Qaeda may appear in retrospect nothing more than empty rhetoric. Repeatedly the intelligence generated by the bin Laden tracking station did not meet the reliability threshold. Though much of the intelligence associated with the missile strikes in August 1998 remains classified, there are conflicting accounts between the '9/11' Commission in 2004 claiming that they had seen no evidence to support the claims that al Shifa was a WMD plant versus the claims made by Berger, Tenet and others at the time of the strike, and repeated by McLaughlin in his interview for this research, in 2016. The president failed in his ambition to eliminate bin Laden as intelligence reliability proved to be a problem for both the CIA covert ops and for Pentagon. Despite the overhaul made in 1999 of the CIA's counterterrorism capability, the CIA felt unable to track bin Laden. This research has concluded that Tenet's poor leadership of intelligence management from the bin Laden tracking station is the primary reason for this failure. The White House strategy to eliminate bin Laden covertly appears in retrospect to have been the right operational decision, putting aside questions of morality. In 2011, when bin Laden was finally eliminated by orders from Obama, CIA Director Leon Panetta would claim it was human intelligence that enabled that CIA to track bin Laden supported by "overhead assets." (drones)¹²²⁵

Finally, the issue of intelligence management cannot be down only to White House and the CIA leadership. This was also a failure of oversight. Congress controls the purse on Intelligence budgets. Congress also has oversight of the effective management of Intelligence. Zegart's claims that US intelligence was crying out for restructuring and attention cannot only be the responsibility of the president and the CIA Director. The responsibility for restructuring intelligence is a shared responsibility with the legislature as there are oversight mechanisms in the Senate and House Intelligence Committees. As was evident from much of the Clinton presidency, the executive could not take efforts to address shortcomings on national security challenges without bipartisan support, and with the Republican Party controlling both House and Senate after 1994 midterms, this was not just a challenge for the executive branch alone. The

¹²²⁵ David Axe, "With drones and satellites, U.S. zeroed in on bin Laden," *Wired.com*. April 3, 2011, <https://www.wired.com/2011/05/with-drones-and-satellites-u-s-zeroed-in-on-bin-laden/>.

later restructuring of the intelligence would only start to address the issues counterterrorism management after the 9/11 Commission had again highlighted the problems but this time with the same political party controlling the presidency and Congress, there was the political will for action.

Closing Remarks

Clinton came to office at a time when the US was said to be entering a period of peace but as this thesis has found forces of terror were fomenting in conflicts around the world. This thesis has argued against the arguments who claim that there was negligence on the part of the Clinton administration in tackling the threat of terrorism. It has instead argued that the White House evolved its counterterrorism strategy from initially putting defensive and infrastructure preservation measures in place to a coercive counterterrorism strategy. This evolutionary approach contrasts with the Reagan administration who tried to implement the 'war model' of counterterrorism in its struggle against terrorism. In contrast, Clinton who had to deal with differing levels of terrorist threat from domestic actors blowing up federal buildings to the sophisticated network threat of al Qaeda that simultaneously attacked two US Embassies and a US warship. Therefore, having put the defensive measures in place and as the threat from al Qaeda came to be understood, by 1997, the president was looking to the intelligence agencies and the Pentagon to develop plans to eliminate bin Laden through small scale covert action. In trying to achieve his aims, the president had a number of factors that impeded his strategic counterterrorism ambitions. This thesis has argued that three of them were critical in impacting the president's ambition on counterterrorism. First, Republican intransigence and political opposition to toughening anti terrorism legislation and the ill judged attempt to impeach him was responsible for weak anti terrorism protection measures against domestic actors. The American people, as the polls continually suggested, did not want this impeachment. More importantly, the impeachment proceedings were a distraction in the months where greater focus on al Qaeda could have had greater success at least against the plotters launching the plan, that resulted in the multiple attacks on '9/11'. Second, the leadership of the intelligence agencies failed the administration. Louis Freeh'

moral outlook on the president's behavior shaped his views and non cooperation with the Clinton White House. Tenet failed in not being able to carry through with being able to be take tough decisions on the leadership of the CIA unit tasked with tracking bin Laden. Compounding these failures was the narrow interpretation of the law on terrorism suspects that prevented inter agency intelligence sharing. For this Freeh as a senior jurist should be held accountable when both the Attorney General Reno and the White House were asking him to improve inter agency intelligence sharing. Third, the Pentagon's refusal to countenance any other action beyond long range strikes, which in the face of unreliable intelligence, was a recipe for inaction.

The presidency of Bill Clinton also coincided with two urgent crises for the CIA – the need for reform and the challenge to deal with the networked terror threat of al Qaeda. Amy Zegart has argued that it was not secret on the beltway that the CIA was crying out for reform after the end of the Cold War, as Clinton came to office in 1992. The threat from al Qaeda came into sharp focus following on from his August 1996 fatwa. President Clinton arrived at the White House in 1992, a novice on foreign policy, surrounded by advisors and Cabinet secretaries with experience of the Cold war, but limited understanding of the threat from terrorism. By the time he left office in 2001, in his handover to President George W. Bush, Clinton had come to view bin Laden as the number one threat to US Security.¹²²⁶

During the eight years of the Clinton presidency, Clinton's was challenged in trying to find effective leaders for his counterterrorism efforts. In appointing Jim Woolsey, this thesis has argued that the president was uninformed and unconnected with the needs of the CIA. In appointing Richard Clarke, Clinton and his National Security Advisor, Tony Lake can be praised for understanding that Terrorism and WMD's needed focus and singular attention from the White House. In appointing John Deutch, the president thought he was bringing in a highly capable man to the helm of the CIA that could grapple with the challenge of reform. The failure of Deutch was as much a result of his lack of understanding of the CIA culture, as Deutch's personal ambition to become Secretary at the Department of Defense. At least Deutch

¹²²⁶ Clinton, *My Life*, 935.

can be credited with Lake of bringing focus to dealing with the threat from bin Laden by launching “Alec Station” in 1996.

When Deutch left at the start of his second term Clinton’s support for his trusted National Security Advisor, Tony Lake, to take the helm of the CIA, shows a president willing to invest political capital into the leadership of the CIA. Republican intransigence put an end to that, and Tenet came to the role by default, as he could command support from both Republicans and Democrats. Tenet’s term in office raised morale at the CIA but did not address the two fundamental problems that faced the CIA – urgent reform and effective counterterrorism management. Whilst Tenet was also challenged by having budget issues, this thesis has concluded that Tenet did not successfully grasp the twin challenges facing the CIA in the mid 1990 ’s – urgent structural reform and effective counterterrorism operations against bin Laden. Though Richard Clarke from the White House tried to drive and focus US counterterrorism, the problems with management of US counterterrorism at the CIA, meant that the CIA failed the American people.

Finally, after ‘9/11’ though Clinton’s Republicans would criticize the president actions, this thesis has not found grounds to support the criticisms. For example, Clinton’s refusal to adopt the ‘war model’ on confronting terrorism would receive sustained criticism from the Republicans. Instead, this thesis has concluded that Clinton was measured in his handling of the challenge from al Qaeda and terrorism in general. Clinton showed restraint in not adopting the incendiary language of the media after Oklahoma City bombing, he did not call for crusade against bin Laden after East African embassy bombing and despite the ill-judged decision to respond with missile, he learnt his lesson from the failure of that mission. President Clinton remained focused on terrorism throughout his second term in office and urged the Pentagon to produce plans that could eventually eliminate bin Laden through small scale covert action. The Pentagon failed to meet the White House expectations. The intelligence infrastructure did not cooperate between the domestic and foreign intelligence despite the legal cover being provided by Attorney General Reno. The CIA mismanaged intelligence leadership at the bin Laden tracking station and it is to the president’s credit that he did not commit to a ground invasion of Afghanistan on unreliable intelligence. America’s ground invasion of Afghanistan failed to

find bin Laden who was holed up in Abbottabad, in Pakistan and it is to Clinton's credit for not adopting the 'war model,' following the provocation of the East African embassy bombings and the attack on USS Cole, that this thesis has argued shows adroit handling of the challenge of terrorism by Clinton.

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