

Theoretical and Practical Aspects of the U.S. Diplomacy Before and After the Collapse of the Soviet Union

Tea CHUMBURIDZE*

Abstract

The article aims to research and analyze some key points of the U.S. diplomacy within the theoretical and practical framework. Based on Henry Kissinger's thorough analysis of the 20th century world diplomacy in the book - *Diplomacy*, the study underlines a significant position of the U.S. in international relations.

The exceptionalism that America has given itself throughout its existence has given rise to contradictory attitudes towards foreign policy. On the one hand, America lives up to its own values as it cultivates democracy at home and thereby serves as a beacon for the rest of humanity. And another attitude is expressed in the fact that American values force the country to engage in global crusades.

Keywords: Diplomacy, foreign policy, U.S.

* Assoc. Prof. Dr., School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, Georgia. E-mail: tchumburidze@ibsu.edu.ge

Introduction

According to some law of nature, every century evolves a country that has the strength, desire and intellectual and moral aspiration to shape the entire international system according to its values. In the 17th century, under the leadership of Cardinal Richelieu, France established a new approach to international relations, which was based on the nation-state and was primarily motivated by national interests. In the 18th century, Great Britain created the concept of the balance of power, which dominated European diplomacy for the next two hundred years. In the 19th century, Metternich's Austria revived the European consensus, and Bismarck's Germany dismantled it, turning European diplomacy into a cold-blooded game of force politics.

In the 20th century, no other country had such a strong and at the same time non-uniform influence on international relations as the United States. No other society had so forcefully asserted that it is inadmissible to interfere in the domestic affairs of other states and demanded that its values be universally accepted. No other nation had been so pragmatic in the day-to-day conduct of diplomacy, or so ideological in the exercise of its historical or moral beliefs.

The exceptionalism that America has given itself throughout its existence has given rise to two contradictory attitudes towards foreign policy. The first is that America lives up to its own values as it cultivates democracy at home and thereby serves as a beacon for the rest of humanity.

The second one is expressed in the fact that American values force the country to engage in global crusades. On the one hand, imbued with nostalgia for an impeccable past, and on the other hand, inflamed by the desire for a happy future, the American mindset often oscillated between isolationism and obligations, although at the end of World War II the reality of interdependence took its toll.

Both approaches - of America as beacon and America as crusader - presuppose a global international order based on democracy, free trade, and international law as the norm. As such a system has never existed, the appeal to it in other nations leaves the impression of Americans being utopian, and sometimes mimetic. Regardless, the skepticism of foreigners never dampened the idealism of Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, or Reagan, or any other American president of the 20th century. Rather, it convinced Americans that history could be changed and that if the world really wanted peace, it had to accept America's moral principles (Zobnδγγρο, 2021).

Some Important Aspects of the U.S. Foreign Policy

Daalder and Lindsay analyze American foreign policy of the 20th century. During that period, American presidents were trying to prevent any country in the world from dominating the center of strategic power in Europe and Asia. To that end, the country had to be involved in two world wars (WWI - 1914-1948; WWII - 1939-1945) and after the end of the WWII, the Cold War started, that was a diplomatic confrontation between the two opposing powers - The U.S. and the Soviet Union; throughout the Cold War, the primary mission of the U.S. was to prevent the spread of communist ideology in the world. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the primary goal of American foreign policy was achieved (Daalder & Lindsay, 2003).

Post-WWII was significant for the U.S. foreign policy in terms of the establishment and creation of a peaceful, united, democratic Europe for the first time in history. The European Union was created (officially founded in 1993) that is nowadays a supranational political and economic union of 27 member states that are located primarily in Europe. The EU has often been described as a *sui generis* political entity (without

precedent or comparison) combining the characteristics of both a federation and a confederation. Containing 5.8 per cent of the world population in 2020, the EU generated a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of around US\$17.1 trillion in 2021.

The creation of The North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949 was crucial in terms of initiating a collective defense alliance that would serve as the main security institution in Europe. Also called the North Atlantic Alliance, it is an intergovernmental military alliance between 30 member states – 28 European and two North American. Established after the end of the World War II, the organization implemented the North Atlantic Treaty, signed in Washington, D.C., on 4 April 1949. NATO is a collective security system: its independent member states agree to defend each other against attacks by third parties. During the Cold War, NATO operated as a check on the perceived threat posed by the Soviet Union. The alliance remained in place after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and has been involved in military operations in the Balkans, the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa.

According to Daalder and Lindsay, the success of American policy can be defined by the combination of America's unrivaled power in world affairs and the extensive and growing globalization of world politics (Farrell & Newman, 2022).

Farrell and Newman are professors of international affairs and have provided extensive research about what they call “weaponized interdependence,” leveraging global networks for strategic advantage. According to their analysis, for many years, people thought that a world of global economic networks and interdependence - countries intimately connected via supply chains and finances - made war obsolete. That is part of the reason Russia's invasion of Ukraine was so shocking. But the international economy itself has turned into a battlefield.

Henry Kissinger provides a thorough analysis of the world diplomacy in the 20th century. According to the author, throughout the history, Russia has always been a different compared to other countries. It joined the European scene late, long after France and Great Britain emerged as superpowers. Besides, it has never touched the principles of traditional European diplomacy. Russia, which borders three different worlds - Europe, Asia and the Muslim world, and has a representative population of all three worlds, was never a nation-state, in the European sense. Compared to any European country, Russia was an empire out of all proportion, constantly shifting borders as its rulers continually annexed surrounding territories (Kissinger, 1995).

The need for conquest and the issue of security collided in the minds of Russian leaders. Analysts often explain Russian expansionism in terms of its security needs. However, Russian writers much more often justify it with messianic aspirations. Russia has rarely shown any sense of moderation when pushed, and when stopped, it turns violent. Throughout its existence, Russia is always looking for a chance.

Post-communist Russia has reached unprecedented limits in its history. As Europe, it will have to direct much of its energy to define its identity.

Back in 1994, Kissinger was asking the questions: “What will Russia do, will it try to return to the usual rhythm and restore the lost empire? Or will it shift its center of gravity to the east and become a more active participant in Asian diplomacy? With what methods and principles will it respond to the problems arising at its borders? Russia will always be important to the world order and also a source of potential threat to it” (Kissinger, 2021, p. 20).

It would be also be interesting to consider and evaluate how did the ideas of American intellectuals, such as Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama influenced the actual American diplomacy after the collapse of Soviet Union in terms of setting a corresponding policy of relations with Russia.

For example, Huntington thought that the United States should minimize the clash of civilizations by accepting the need to coexist, and especially to avoid cross-civilizational interventions (Huntington, 2003).

On the other hand, Francis Fukuyama argued that with the defeat of fascism and communism, liberal democracy and free market economics had no more serious ideological rivals. Therefore, international conflict would diminish as more countries became democracies and shared the democratic values growing out of American and Western European political culture (Fukuyama, 1992).

Huntington cautioned that the “wave” of democracy could be reversed, as it had been before. The Clash of Civilizations described a panoply of political cultures. Huntington observed that in Russia one could already see the beginnings of a nationalist reaction to efforts, spearheaded by the United States, to promote Western-style liberal democracy. About ten years later after the Clash of Civilizations was released, Vladimir Putin’s regime introduced the concept of “sovereign democracy,” defined as a distinctly Russian form of democracy, free from Western interference.

America’s overall foreign policy strategy confirmed Russia’s impression that the United States gave little weight to Russian interests. Post-communist Russia was the most important target of President Clinton’s effort to promote American-style democracy and entrepreneurial capitalism as the means to satisfy “universal yearnings” and establish “universal norms” (Haley, 2006, pp. 72-80.). The George W. Bush Administration was guided by “hegemonic stability theory,” according to which the key to world order was the ability and willingness of a single dominant state to enforce the rules of the international system. It described its foreign policy as a “distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests.” If the US could not get the international community to sanction its promotion of

freedom or fight against terrorism, it would “not hesitate to act alone.” (The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (Executive Office of the President of the United States, 2002).

The “Russian Doctrine,” formulated by a nationalist group with links to Russian Orthodox circles, celebrated Russia’s “civilizational independence” and accused the United States of causing instability in world politics by prioritizing “American values” over international law. ([Http://www.rusdoctrina.ru/](http://www.rusdoctrina.ru/). Using translate.google.com, select “Theses of the RD” and scroll down to section IV, paragraph 7) Putin defined Russian identity in terms of a unique type of civilization, based not on Russian ethnicity but on a Russian culture that has operated within a multi-ethnic environment for a thousand year.

One may state, that there exists a fundamental conflict between Western and Russian civilization, which has been reflected in Samuel Huntington’s theory of Clash of Civilization, however, what Samuel Huntington did not anticipate is that Russia did not align itself with other Orthodox states in terms of civilizational-religious identity but quite the contrary, it (Russia) started aggressive expansionist wars against its Orthodox neighbors – Georgia and Ukraine, while established strategic alliances with Muslim countries such as Iran and Syria.

This issue is very actual nowadays, taking into consideration, the conventional war in Ukraine that has unleashed a swift and staggering economic conflict, led by the United States and its allies against Russia. And that war is being waged with new weapons, forged in the post-Cold War age of global networks.

According to Farrell and Newman, when we speak about global networks, there is just one superpower - the U.S. “Many global networks have centralized economic chokepoints, and the United States is able to seize these, turning them into tools of coercion. No other country can match this ability. America can now redeploy global networks to entangle

and suffocate oligarchs, banks and even entire countries, as Russia has painfully discovered" (Farrell & Newman, 2022, pp. 1-2).

Sanctions have been imposed on Russian oligarchs and on some Russian goods as well. Main Russian banks have been denied access to dollar clearing, the beating heart of the global financial system. They have been turned away from the SWIFT messaging network, which allows money to be transferred across borders.

This so-called "economic war" was responded by Russia in terms of threatening to disrupt the global economy, cutting off gas flows to Western Europe and banning the exports of key raw materials. But the economic tools that it can use against the West are far less effective than the tools that can be used against it. If Russia stops selling gas, neon or fertilizer, there will be global shortages, and dire consequences for poor countries and poor people as food prices increase significantly. Still, the countries that Russia is targeting will be able to weather the transition and will eventually find sources (Farrell & Newman, 2022).

It is not surprising that many countries try to resemble or duplicate the U.S. ability to weaponize global networks. As Farrell and Newman assume, it will be very difficult for Russia or even China to build their own alternative global networks unless the U.S. overreaches (Farrell & Newman, 2022).

Russia now has its own SWIFT alternative, but it really only works within Russia's borders. China's CIPS payment system is only slightly more successful. In terms of scale, CIPS handles approximately 11,000 transactions a day, almost exclusively in mainland China and Hong Kong, while SWIFT processes around 42 million across the world.

"The barrier isn't just that the payment networks of Russia and China are three or four decades behind. Others also fear how they would abuse these networks if they controlled them. The United States has its problems, but it at least provides some legal protections to businesses and countries

that have fallen afoul of its harsh measures" (Farrell & Newman, 2022, pp. 1-2).

The article briefly discusses some key points of the book *The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War*, written by Nicholas Mulder, who works on European and international history from the nineteenth century to the present. His research focuses on political, economic, and intellectual history, with particular attention to the era of the world wars between 1914 and 1945. His first book, *The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War*, appeared in January 2022 with Yale University Press. It is a history of the interwar origins of economic sanctions, showing how they reconfigured international affairs by enabling distant coercion against civilian societies in peacetime. Based on wartime blockade practices, the instrument of sanctions offered a novel way to prevent war. It became embedded in the League of Nations and national state policy, and spurred new economic interventions, as well as anti-liberal bids for autarky. The book argues that sanctions were a potent but unstable and unpredictable political tool, one whose importance to the international crisis of the 1930s and 1940s is much greater than usually assumed (University, 2022).

As Mulder points out, the more powerful sanctions are, the greater the danger that they will lead to an unpredictable response. According to the author, fears of sanctions helped propel Nazi Germany's territorial ambitions (Mulder, 2022).

More recently, when Iran was feeling badly squeezed by sanctions, it was accused of attacking shipping through the Straits of Hormuz, a key chokepoint in the global energy economy. The closer Mr. Putin's regime comes to collapse, the more likely that it will lash out.

Researchers assume that, this assumption doesn't necessarily mean that the United States and its allies should stop using their control of global economic

networks as a weapon. This is one of the few means they can responsibly use against a nuclear power in an unprovoked war. But their measures should be just harsh enough to reach specific goals: to protect Ukrainian independence and to limit, to the greatest extent possible, Russia's aggressive gains.

The minimum to reassure other countries and avoid escalation is to emphasize that the measures are not intended to provoke regime change in Russia. America may also need to adjust and recalibrate sanctions to contain economic fallout and unexpected consequences for allies (Farrell & Newman, 2022).

Similar adjustments should aim to prevent wide-scale human suffering in Russia and elsewhere. Negative economic restrictions have to be balanced by positive economic aid to countries at risk of hunger. The United States should also explicitly lay out the circumstances under which the executive branch will apply such economic measures, the range of permissible goals that they can accomplish, the review procedures that will ensure they are proportionate and the circumstances under which they will be withdrawn.

These commitments will help minimize the very real risk that future economic conflict will turn violent. Once many thought that an interdependent world economy prevented war. It would be bitter indeed if it provoked war instead (Daalder & Lindsay, 2003).

Conclusion

America - a country with an idealistic tradition - cannot base its policy on the balance of power as the only criterion for a new world order. But it must learn that balance is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving its historical goals and that lofty goals cannot be achieved through rhetoric or posturing. The emerging international system is far more complex than anything American diplomacy has ever touched. Foreign policy should be pursued by a political system that focuses on current events and creates long-term incentives. The will of the voters should be expressed by its

leaders, who are used to receiving information in a visual form. All this makes emotions and the mood of the moment more important at a time when it is necessary to understand priorities and analyze opportunities.

But history does not forgive failure due to the enormity of the task. What America must master is the transition from an era in which it thought it could do anything to an era in which it can achieve more than any other society, but only if it learns the limits of its capabilities. For most of its history, America has not known a foreign threat to its existence. When such a threat finally emerged during the Cold War, it was brutally defeated. Therefore, the American experience has given rise to the belief that it, the only worldly nation, is invincible and can win by the example of its generosity and good deeds.

World leadership is a natural consequence of America's strength and values, but that does not mean that America connects with other nations out of kindness, or that it has an unlimited capacity to bend its will to others simply by cutting off its favor.

As we move toward a third world order in the post-eighteenth century, the study of American idealism is vital, perhaps more than ever, but its role in the new world order will be to instill faith to help America make difficult choices in this imperfect world. Traditional American idealism must be combined with a reasonable understanding of contemporary realities to create a practical definition of America's interests. In the past, American foreign policy efforts were fueled by a utopian vision of a kind of end point beyond which the world's natural harmony would restore itself (Kissinger, 1995).

From now on, the prospect of such a final result no longer exists. The faith required to govern the emerging world order is more abstract: a vision of a future that cannot be demonstrated while it is in the making, and a judgment on the interplay of hopes and possibilities that are by their very nature speculative.

Achieving the Wilsonian goals of America's past - peace, stability, progress, and human freedom—requires a journey that has no end. "Traveler, there are

no roads, roads are made by walking," says a Spanish proverb (Kissinger, 1995).

References

Daalder, I. H., & Lindsay, J. M. (2003). *The Globalization of Politics: American Foreign Policy for a New Century*.

Brookings, 1-12

Farrell, H., & Newman, A. (2022). *The U.S. Is the Only Sanctions Superpower. It Must Use That Power Wisely*. *New York Times*.

York Times.

Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: The Free Press.

Haley, P. E. (2006). *Strategies of Dominance: The Misdirection of U.S. Foreign Policy*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

Huntington, S. (2003). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Kissinger, H. (1995). *Diplomacy*. U.S.: Simon & Schuster.

Kissinger, H., & კისინჯერი, ჰ. (2021; copyright 1994).

დიპლომატია. ინგლისურიდან თარგმნა გიორგი ზადრიძემ:

გამომცემლობა ინტელექტი; Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Mulder, N. (2022). *The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War*. US: Yale University Press.

University, C. (2022, November 16). The College of Arts and Science. NY, Department of History.

Washington, DC: Executive Office of the President of the United States, (2002), Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf>