

The United States Main Actor Across the Globe

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Abstract

Americans realize that the advancement of democracy is not easy. Their own history is one of fallible people striving for centuries to satisfy the magnificent ideal of democratic principles. In ordinary times, when existing ideas, institutions, and alliances are appropriate to the challenges of the day, It's easier for the U.S. Foreign Policy to manage and sustain the international order, but in the unpredictable disarray of matters, even in the calm postwar quiescence, it becomes dilemma for the U.S. Foreign Policy to harmonize ideals with interests.

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Introduction

It is apparent that permanent idealism forges the character of American foreign policy. But it is only a segment of a dynamic and compound process. It must be regularly kept in equilibrium against cold-blooded strategic duty (Mead, Erwin & Goldstein, 2006).

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has observed that American foreign policy is marked by its fluctuation between undertaken enthusiastic idealism and insular isolationism. This recognizable dichotomy finally conceals the trends that have long directed U.S. foreign policy. The view that the United States is unrivaledly predetermined to spread democracy, free markets, and individual liberty has been a permanent element of America's engagement with the world. Politicians have argued on the strategies by which to promote these goals, or the ability of the United States to impact such change. However, American leaders from all parts of the political spectrum have long agreed that the success of the American project in large part depends on developments in the rest of the world.

Such great rivals as Presidents Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921) and Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909) exchanged opinions of America's interests in the world, strengthened by a belief, that the United States' fate was insolubly associated with the character and behavior of nations across the world. Whilst Wilson held: "we are participants, whether we would or not, in the life of the world... What affects mankind is inevitably our affair..." Roosevelt's idea of America's global role was no less farreaching: "There is such a thing as international morality. I take this position as a American...who endeavors locally to serve the interests of his own country, but who also endeavors to do what he can for justice and decency as regards mankind at large, and who therefore feels obliged to judge all other nations by their conduct on any given occasion".

Consequently, a permanent idealism designs the character of American foreign policy.

Any country that was established on ideals, as the United States was, and that declares them openly and recognizes itself through them, will persistently have to measure the space between where it is and where it should be. Having voiced, for example, that "all men are created equal", the nation is sadly aware that not all Americans are being treated this way. The interval between the reality of life and the hope for a better one is also the foundation of the American Dream. The commitment of America for millions of immigrants was, and still is, not that life is better here, but that it could be (Stevenson, 2010).

Idealism is only part of a vigorous process linked with American foreign policy. It must permanently be balanced against unemotional strategic commitment.

Roosevelt advocated these urgent needs and the compromises that would definitely follow, by warning that "in striving for a lofty ideal we must use practical methods; and if we cannot attain all at one leap, we must advance towards it step by step, reasonably content so long as we do actually make some progress in the right direction (ibid, p. 5). So, in lieu of swerving between isolationism and engagement, America's foreign affairs can better be viewed as a mirroring of the permanent tension between its clashing ideals and interests.

Thus, American diplomacy in the 20th century is broadly the topic of how politicians have sought to find a balance between interests and ideals. Echoing this stability act, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice observed, that: "American foreign policy has always had ... a streak of idealism ... It's not just getting to whatever solution is available, but it's doing that within the context of principles and values. The responsibility, then, of all of us is to take policies that are rooted in those values and make them work on a day-to-day basis so that you're always moving forward toward a

goal... So, it's the connection between those ideals and policy outcomes" (ibid, p. 5).

Framing the administration's attitude 'practical idealism', Rice recognized the difficulty of the challenge that has faced the United States' relationship with the world in the 20th century. At the critical crossroads in the 20th century, the conflict between American interests and ideals became quite obvious. During these times, American foreign policy has revealed both utopian optimism and merciless pragmatism, often concurrently.

Woodrow Wilson's name has been identified with American idealism. His conviction to "make the world safe for democracy" stimulated the American public as a formerly isolationist nation entering the First World War. Wilson was regarded as crusading figure.

In the spring of 1919 during Egypt's revolt against British rule, the Egyptian nationalists were stimulated by "Wilsonian ideals", the rioters were shouting the Wilsonian principles. Egyptian nationalists, calling on Wilson's credo, begged the U.S. Senate to support Egyptian independence. Wilson, however, rebuked their appeals and declared the United States' support for British rule in Egypt.

Wilson's doctrine still proved vital in the spread of democracy in the 20th century. Thus, in the First World War in America's part a hybrid of narrowly determined interests and deep-rooted American principles are seen as its strategy. According political researchers, the United States' experience in World War II would even more obviously illustrate the discord between American values and geopolitical demands.

In July 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt sent his committed advisor, Harry Hopkins to Russia to estimate Stalin's allegiance and feasibility as a strategic partner. Hopkins indicated the ideological dilemma posed by collaborating with the Soviet Union; the visit emphasized "the difference between democracy and dictatorship", he disclosed to Roosevelt. The president responded by transferring one billion dollars in aid to the USSR, the beginning of

what would be a solid flow of American endowment; Contemplating on the outshining of traditional American values by strategic interests, President George W. Bush regretted that America's diplomacy during World War II aimed "to sacrifice freedom for the sake of stability".

Roosevelt's accepting of the Soviet Union did not nevertheless encourage discarding of American ideals. Though FDR had associated the United States with a brutal regime, the president at the same time took advantage to promote democracy and self-determination by establishing an international order congruous with American ideals. FDR was a declared foe of imperialism and attempted to drive out the British and the French from their faraway colonies. At a dinner party with Morocco's ruler during the Casablanca Conference in 1943, Roosevelt offered support for Moroccan independence, while Churchill sat across the table, excited and scary for the fate of Britain's own colonies. Besides, Roosevelt condemned British domination in West Africa and French rule in Indochina as incompatible with the Allies' declared war aims. Roosevelt also yearned to correct the mistakes of the faulty post-World War I settlement.

He formed an idea of an international organization that would effectively guarantee collective security and avoid the likelihood of another global disaster. Though the formation of the United Nations would be up to his successor's undertaking, the organization, primordial composition reflected FDR's perception. As a consequence, during the Second World War, the United States exemplified tactical suitability of the situation in allying with a despotic dictatorship, while perpetuating a broader strategic dedication to the progress of American values.

In the instant make of Harry Truman's improbable rise to the presidency upon FDR's death in 1945, he was compelled to contend with vast challenges.

At first sight, Truman shared few similarities with his predecessor. He did, like Roosevelt before him, draft a policy informed by American diverse

interests and ideals. Truman, obviously more than any other president during the American century, was able to join American ideals and interests. The Marshall Plan, a huge program of relief beset post-war Europe, boosted the continent's collapsing economics, while crushing communist advances. The program's accent on Free enterprise broke down economic barriers in Europe, propelling a rapid recovery and helped lay ground for European integration. The Marshall plan luckily, reconciled the tension between America's strategic repression and deeply rooted values. During the four decades spanning the Cold War, American policymakers seldom experienced such success in harmonizing principles and constructively, and clear-thinking realism prevailed.

The country has attained some successes since the Cold War, which ended in 1990 – e.g., in hindering Saddam Hussein's aggression against Kuwait in the First Persian Gulf War in 1991 (the United States suffered fewer than 150 battlefield fatalities in forty-eight days of fighting) and in preventing Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic's ethnic cleansing of Albanians in 1999. However, J. Martin Rochester argues that the real test of power is not necessarily the capacity to engage in coercion as the capacity to insure others short of the actual use of armed force, either by simply threatening to use force or, offer positive incentives to cooperate (Rochester, 2008).

America today potentially has greater ability to envisage the future of world politics than any other power in history. The United States enjoys massive military, economic, technological, and cultural superiority. America's military has absolute supremacy against all prospective competitors. The strength of the dollar and the size of its economy give the United States determining influence on trade and finance. The information revolution, erupted in Silicon Valley and the country's other high-tech areas, gives U.S. companies, media, and culture unprecedented outreach...

The lucky chance that America has before it also stems from the geopolitical space provided by the Cold War's end. Postwar periods are times of

exceptional chance, normally accompanied by seeking debate and institutional modernization (e.g. the League of Nations after World War I in 1919, and the United Nations after World War II in 1945, all stemmed from audacious and innovative endeavor to outline a new order. According political scientists (Kupchan, 2003) despite the great chance afforded by its dominance, America dissipated the moment.

Post-Cold War International System

The Berlin wall fell on November 9, 1989, epitomizing the end of the Cold War. As Kupchan and others point out – almost twenty years later – through the euphoria after 11/9 - the U.S. ship of state still seemed unanchored. Part of the problem was, that when the Soviet Union disappeared from the world map, "so did the anchor that helped to give American foreign policy its moorings for fifty years. According William Maynes, the United States has lost more than an enemy; it has lost the compass that provided direction for policy (Maynes, 1990).

No coinage appeared to replace "containment" of Soviet-led communism as the basis of American foreign policy. But it was not only the collapse of the Soviet Union that left America without the foreign policy compass. According political scientists, it was the absence of any systemic crisis similar to World War I, or World War II, that might have provided the needed impetus for seeking "institutional innovation" aimed at promoting a new world order; the "geopolitical opening" was there, but not the sense of urgency. Above all, the Cold War era ended rather promptly without a shot being fired. For the first time in memory, and perhaps ever, a fundamental transformation of the international system had occurred without major war as the engine of change.

The world the United States appeared in was odd and, more complex place. Henry Kissinger, indicating as Maynes, remarked that the major challenge fronting the United States in the post-Cold War era was to define a role for itself in a world which

“for the first time in her history...she cannot dominate (in terms of being a superpower, as during the Cold War), but from which she cannot simply withdraw” (Kissinger, 1993) in terms of isolationism, which characterized America’s position through much of its pre-Cold War presence.

Stephen Walt wrote: “The end of the Cold War left the United States in a position of power unseen since the Roman Empire” (Walt, 2002). Timothy Garton Ash observers:” “Not since Rome has a single power enjoyed such superiority” (Garton Ash, 2002). And Joseph Joffe underlined: “Its power is more overwhelming than that of any previous hegemon since the Roman Empire” (Joffe, 2002).

Such reflections are founded on the reality that the United States “is the only Great Power in modern history to establish a clear lead in virtually every important dimension of power” (Walt, 2022). The United States alone accounts for forty percent of global military expenditures, outspending the next dozen or so countries combined, and has troops deployed in over hundred countries. The U.S. economy produces more than twenty-five percent of the planetary product and is about sixty percent larger than its nearest rival; the U.S. imports almost one-fifths of the rest of the world’s exports, making access to the American market, as well as its foreign investment, much-desired. With respect to cultural impact, despite the fact, the United States may be at hazard of dissipating its “soft power”, the top twenty-five highest – grossing films of all time are U.S. production, American consumer products and brand names are omnipresent, together with U.S. sports and media figures. Moreover, not only is English progressively the lingua franca of diplomacy, science, and international business, but the American university system is a compelling instrument of interacting foreign gifted members of community, alluring more than half-million foreign students every day (Walt, 2002).

Conclusion

Many analysts during the last decades have been reflecting, that despite the openings a prospects provided by its dominance, America has been wasting the opportunity; The United States has unequalled prospective to shape what comes next, but it has no grand strategy – menacing that it doesn’t apply diverse forms of power in an effective and efficient way. Instead of outlining a new version of international order and working with partners to make that inspiration reality, America has been fumbling. As Kofi Annan said shortly before leaving the UN Secretary-General’s office in 2006, “More than ever, Americans, like the rest of the humanity, need a functioning global system. Experience has shown, time and again, that the system works poorly when the United States remains aloof but it functions much better when there is farsighted U.S. leadership. That gives American leaders of today and tomorrow a great responsibility”.

To me, today in the year of 2022, the critics of the American detachment are observing the U.S. foreign policymakers taking legal and moral decisions together with partners to outline the bright future for the goodwill peoples in this unpredictably complex geopolitically changing world.

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