AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AT THE CROSSROADS - BETWEEN IDEALISM AND REALISM, INFORMAL AND FORMAL EMPIRE, UNILATERALISM AND MULTILATERALISM

ABSTRACT

This article compares and contrasts current U.S. “war on terrorism” and proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons (NBC’s) with the general U.S. foreign policy during the Cold-War and post-Cold War eras. The focus is primarily on a growing dilemma – “informal” or “formal” American empire – that rises from unprecedented asymmetry in military power between the United States and its closest followers. Also, this article analyzes the role of non-material elements of power (so-called soft power) and reviews recent views regarding the “unilateralism-multilateralism dichotomy” in American foreign policy. The author demonstrates that the “war on terrorism” and proliferation of NBC’s weapons show that U.S. status as the only super-power is not simply a matter of resource availability and relative power. Military muscle is an essential requirement, but it does not itself secure that position. This is especially true for the status of an empire – either “informal” or “formal.”

Introduction

In 1913, Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, and Walter Page, the American ambassador to London, had this talk:

“Suppose you have to intervene, what then?” asked Grey.
“Make ’em vote and live by their decisions,” replied the American.
“But suppose they will not so live?”
“We’ll go in and make ’em vote again.”
“And keep this up for 200 years?” asked Grey.
“Yes,” replied the ambassador. “The United States... can continue to shoot men for that little space ’till they learn to vote and to rule themselves”

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Since this conversation onwards, not much changed in American foreign policy in terms of the Wilsonian concept of “making the world safe for democracy.” Although the post-Cold War period brought casualties for U.S. citizens – in a military barracks in Dahran in Saudi Arabia (1996) or in two U.S. embassies in East Africa (Kenya and Tanzania) in 1998 – these terrorist acts had no decisive impact on American conduct of foreign affairs. However, the September 11, 2001, marked the beginning of a new era of American foreign policy, expressed through the country’s growing tendency towards global “hegemony, primacy, or empire”. After the September 11, 2001, a number of scholars have suggested different preferences for American foreign policy for coming the “age of terror”.4

This article purports to, on the basis of recently presented views in the literature, compare and contrast the current U.S. “war on terrorism” and threat from proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC’s) weapons with the general U.S. foreign policy during the Cold-War and post-Cold War periods. I focus primarily on debates dealing with concepts of power applied to these periods and I proceed in three stages. The first section briefly considers dominant paradigms used to explain the Cold-War and post-Cold War international relations. The second section considers shortcomings in applied foreign policies for American national interests, and the main changes that happen in American foreign policy in the “age of terror.” The third section explains a growing dilemma – “informal” or “formal” American empire – inextricably tied to an unprecedented asymmetry in military and economic power between a leading world state and others. The United States, today, controls a greater share of world power than any other country since 1648 – the year of emergence of the nation-state system. Finally, based on the recent U.S. foreign policy views, I analyze the unilateralism-multilateralism dichotomy.

Understanding the Anarchy

During the Cold War, both Classical Realism and Neo-Realism (or Structural Realism) were the dominant paradigms used to explain international relations – and, for better or for worse, realpolitik worked well. For Morgenthau5 and other Classical Realists, the crucial variable in international politics was a state’s “hunger for power.” For Waltz6 and other Neo-Realists, the crucial independent variable in world politics is the distribution of power, namely, whether it is unipolar, bipolar, or

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3 Jarvis, Robert, The Compulsive Empire, Foreign Policy, July/August, 2003, p. 83.
4 I adopt this label suggested by John Lewis Gaddis who writes that the post-Cold War era began with the collapse of one structure, the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, and ended with the collapse of another, the World Trade Center’s twin towers on September 11, 2001. (Lewis, Gaddis John, ”And Now This, Lessons from the Old Era for the New One”, pp. 3-21, in: The Age of Terror (ed. by Talbot, Strobe and Nayan Chanda), Yale Center for the Study of Globalization, Basic Books, 2002, p. 3).
multipolar. The end goal is to achieve security under an anarchic international system which means the absence of global authority. Waltz asserts that only states, not alliances, may be poles. Schweller (1998, 17) argues that a pole “must have greater than half the military capability of the most powerful state in the system.” However, in theory, a pole may be counterbalanced by an alliance of non-polar states. Thus, as Owen puts it: “U.S. primacy presents two puzzles: the endurance of unipolarity and the endurance of the imbalance of power.”

On the other hand, there has been belief that a fundamental change in the nature of world politics can be brought about through efforts to change prevailing culture, norms, and ideas. According to Institutionalism (See the most common concepts in Table 1), material (that is military and economic power), institutional, and cultural elements, need all to be considered simultaneously in assessing an anarchical society’s propensity for war and in designing strategies to promote change. This is a debate of compelling intellectual and practical importance since, as Snyder correctly argues, it “lays bare the most fundamental assumptions about the nature of world politics that underpin real policy choices about the deployment of the vast military, economic, and moral resources of the United States and other wealthy democracies.” Snyder contends that assessing the future of the international system needs to be thought about foreign policy in terms of mutual feedbacks among material, institutional, and cultural elements. Yet, he acknowledges that changing the ideas, norms, and culture of an anarchical system is not a sufficient condition for the transformation of the system. Basically, Snyder disagrees with the constructivist concept that “anarchy is what states make of it.”

Table 1. The most common typologies of international systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Types of Anarchies</th>
<th>Scholars</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Unipolar, Bipolar, Multipolar</td>
<td>Waltz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas, Culture, Identity</td>
<td>Hobbesian, Lockean, Kantian</td>
<td>Wendt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Institutions</td>
<td>Democratic, Authoritarian</td>
<td>Russett</td>
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According to Wendt and Friedhem, Idealists (if this is understood in a social, non-utopian sense) believe that the base of world politics is a shared knowledge structure and that material forces are significant insofar as this structure gives them meaning. Wendt and Friedheim believe that this debate (material versus non-material forces) is often muddled by two misunderstandings:

First, it is not about relative explanatory power of ‘power of interests’ versus ‘ideas’ but about whether material forces can explain international politics stripped off social (and thus ideational) content. Idealists are not saying that states do not act on the basis of power and interests but rather that this is contingent on the social structure in which states are embedded. In a conflictual system power interests matter, but what makes a system conflictual is an underlying nature of common knowledge...

Second, and relatedly, this debate is also not about how much conflict exists in the system. Material forces may cause cooperation and shared knowledge, conflict. Neo-Realists have confused matters by treating conflictual systems as realist worlds.

Yet, Wendt’s notion of security is plausible. Thus, the very term “national security,” invented during World War II, always implied that both threats and vulnerabilities lay outside the country. National security had been considered separately from “homeland” security. However, in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the concept of “homeland security” has become synonymous with national security. Security, therefore, has a new meaning – due to the government’s new perception of it after the 9/11 terrorist event – a fight against transnational terrorism and proliferation of NBC’s weapons.


12 Wendt and Friedheim use the following comparison in support for their argument: “The threat posed to the United States by five hundred British nuclear weapons is less than that posed by five North Korean ones, because the British are friends and the North Koreans are not, and amity and enmity are social, not material, relations. In that sense, it is “ideas all the way down.” Ibidem, p. 691.

13 Ibidem, p. 691.

14 I do not use the WMD (weapons for mass destruction) label for all three kinds of unconventional weaponry since it obscures the important differences between chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. For instance, as Dunn, Lavoy and Sagan observe, “biological weapons are perceived as more risky to use for tactical advantage than chemical weaponry, less valuable than nuclear weaponry as a political symbol or bargaining chip, but potentially attractive as a strategic deterrent for countries lacking a nuclear arsenal.” Dunn, Lewis, Peter Lavoy, and Scott Sagan, “Conclusions: Planning the Unthinkable”, in: Planning the Unthinkable: How New Powers Will Use Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Weapons, ed. by Lavoy, Peter R., Scott D. Sagan, and James J. Wirtz, Cornell Paperbacks, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2002, p. 239). In addition, use of the WMD label, according to these authors, could encourage potential proliferators to acquire the more easily and cheaply developed weaponry – chemical and biological weapons – in the belief that they can deter even the strategist nuclear or conventional military power.
In the realm of “ideas,” political liberalism has played a significant role as well. However, it must not be conflated with democracy – “the rule of the majority”.\textsuperscript{15} Political liberalism seeks to “uphold individual autonomy and prescribes a particular set of domestic institutions as means to that end”.\textsuperscript{16} The transnational character of this ideology, derived from the Wilsonian advocacy to promote democracy worldwide, may be the reason why no coalition is formed to counterbalance U.S. power:

How liberal a state is affects both how it responds to U.S. power and policy and how the United States treats it. Liberal elites of the world tend to perceive a relatively broad coincidence of interest between their country and other liberal countries. They tend to interpret the United States as benign and devote few state resources to counterbalancing it. In turn, the liberals who govern the United States tend to treat other liberal countries relatively benignly. But anti-liberal elites tend to perceive a more malign United States and devote more state resources to counterbalancing; the United States, meanwhile, tends to treat less benignly countries governed by such elites and their favored institutions.\textsuperscript{17}

And, the effect of political institutions (authoritarian versus democratic regimes) on an anarchic world system cannot be neglected. Russett and Oneal argue that democratic and authoritarian anarchies behave differently – democracies are more willing to seek a peaceful settlement of a conflict or dispute.\textsuperscript{18} According to Ikenberry, democracy may stabilize and institutionalize the unipolar distribution of power.\textsuperscript{19}

Obviously, the contemporary international system is shaped by the interaction of elements of all three kinds (See Table 1), not simply by one of them and not simply by adding their separate effects.\textsuperscript{20} Neither a one-sided dimensional, voluntarist view of behavior in anarchy (suggested by Wendt) nor a pure structuralism of Neo-Realism, (as defined by Waltz) can produce the kinds of outcomes that serious foreign-policy makers want. The U.S. foreign policy experience from the various eras, presented in this article, seems to prove this assumption.

\textit{What Went Wrong?}

\textsuperscript{15} Owen, John M., Transnational Liberalism and U.S. Primacy, op. cit., p. 120.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{20} Snyder, Jack, Anarchy and Culture, op. cit., p. 37.
The end of the Cold War created a crisis of meaning of international politics. The collapse of Communism and the demise of the Cold War deprived world politics of an “organizing script and a defining drama”.  

Many new threats suddenly appeared – planetary environment, the rise of religious fundamentalism, regional and the ethnic conflict, State-sponsored terrorism, and proliferation of NBC’s weapons. In the absence of hierarchy among these international problems, none could become a leading security issue. Since the old rules of international politics no longer applied, the U.S. foreign policy establishment found it very difficult to handle a “system out of control”.

An additional source of initial disorientation in American foreign policy was the writings of some influential American intellectuals – Edward Lutwak and Samuel Huntington. For Lutwak, who replaced the old geopolitics concept by “geo-economics,” the main threat is an economic one, and it comes from a “capital-rich and technologically superior Japan” and, to a lesser extent, from a determined, subsidizing Europe. For Huntington, this is a “clash of civilizations.” So, not surprisingly, the U.S. foreign policy during the 1990s became a subject of scrutinized analyses of political science scholarship.

John Lewis Gaddis, for instance, has made a good analysis of “what went wrong” in American foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. His analysis identifies these six shortcomings, each of them progressively causing the next:

1. **Unilateralism** (by contrast, during the Cold War era, the U.S. had managed to avoid this outcome after the victory in World War II);

2. **Neglect to cultivate the great power relationships** (in contrast to the success of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in creating a situation in which China and the Former Soviet Union feared one another more than they feared Americans, American relations with Russia and China in the post-Cold War era seriously deteriorated);

3. **Preference for justice at the expense of order** (although the United States had never entirely neglected this goal during the Cold War, it pursued justice by working with the powerful to get them to improve their treatment of the powerless – a promotion of human rights from the inside out rather than from the outside);

4. **Inconsistency of how the United States pursued regional justice** (for instance, seeking justice for the Chechens or the Tibetans, or the Kosovo Albanians – applying...
universal principles on a less than universal basis is not free of the charge of hypocrisy);27,28

5. Tendency to regard a “free-market” economic system as a model to be applied worldwide; and

6. Emphasizing the advantages and neglecting the dangers of globalization.

Undoubtedly, in order to deal more effectively with a new kind of threat – terrorism – some old policy styles used during the Cold War needed to be invoked again. First of all, it was necessary to have a clear strategic vision. Lewis Gaddis put it in this way:

This means avoiding the illusion that one can pursue particular policies in particular places without their interacting with one another. It means remembering that actions have consequences: that every action there will be a reaction, the nature of which won’t always be predictable. It means accepting the fact that there’s not always a linear relationship between input and output: that vast efforts can produce minimal results in some situation, and that minimal efforts can produce vast consequences in other. It means thinking about the implications of such asymmetries for the relationship between ends and means.29

That strategic vision was re-born in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, – a sequential, multi-stage war on terror and the proliferation of NBC’s weapons. Just, as was the case in the Cold War era, a new coalition (albeit, still informal) emerged overnight – including the United States, the European Union, Russia, China, Japan, and such unexpected allies as, for instance, Pakistan and Uzbekistan. However, maintaining this coalition on a long run is not easy task. As Lewis Gaddis acknowledges, the United States, if the goal is to maintain this alliance, has to see its allies more in terms of shared interests and less in terms of shared values. Given the importance of maintaining broad international support, the United States is, according to Stephen Walt,30 likely to subordinate other

27 Anthony Lake (1994), the former U.S. National Security Adviser, was quoted (Tuathail, Gearoid, Critical Geopolitics, The Politics of Writing Global Space, op. cit., p. 187) saying: “When I wake up every morning and look at the headlines and the stories and the images on television of these conflicts, I want to work to end every conflict... But neither we nor the international community have the resources nor the mandate to do so. So we have to make distinctions.”

28 As Posen Barry writes: “All the governments whose help is required, whether they are democratic or not, must deal with their own publics. Therefore, the United States must find ways to explain to their people why cooperation against these terrorists is in their interest. The United States clearly cannot afford to make every state in the world prosperous and happy. It cannot afford to end every conflict in favor of any ally that the United States needs. Sometimes the United States will want to help of both parties to a regional conflict, and cannot reward one party at the expense of another.” (Posen, Barry R., The Struggle against Terrorism, Grand Strategy, Strategy, and Tactics, International Security, 26(3), 2001/02, p. 51).

29 Lewis, Gaddis John, “And Now This, Lessons from the Old Era foe the New One”, op. cit., p. 17.

foreign policy goals to the broader task of keeping its alliance intact. In the “short-to-medium term,” Walt advocates for the following adjustments:

1. "The United States must continue its efforts to support Pervez Musharraf and its regime in Pakistan;
2. The United States needs help from a number of states and groups with poor human rights record; for example, Uzbekistan;
3. The crisis has also provided an ideal opportunity to improve relations with Russia; and,
4. The crisis behooves the United States to keep relations with other major powers tranquil; for instance, China."31

In Walt’s opinion, the main objectives of a revised American foreign policy should be managing the coalition, controlling the proliferation of NBC’s weapons, rebuilding relations with the Arab and Islamic world, and fixing failed nation states. Indeed, much of this is going on in contemporary American foreign policy. The Bush Administration has supported the Pakistani Government, declared that it would decrease the American military presence in Kosovo and Bosnia, and so forth. In regard to the latest developments, the Administration participates in the nation-building of Afghanistan32 and plays a leading role in rebuilding of the Iraqi government.

Between Informal and Formal Empire

Niall Ferguson (at the end of the Clinton Administration) has identified a list of factors that may constrain American imperial prospects:

The reasons this (i.e. a more “imperial” American foreign policy towards rouge states) will not happen are three-fold: an ideological embarrassment about being seen to wield imperial power; an exaggerated notion of what Russia and China would do in response; and a pusillanimous fear of military casualties (emphasis added). Perhaps that is the greatest disappointment facing the world in the twenty-first century: that the leaders of the one state with the economic resources to make the world a better place lack the guts to do it.33

Ferguson’s argument was that the United States not only could afford to play a more assertive global role; it could not afford not to. In respect to this, he has pointed out several important components:

31 Ibidem, p. 65.
32 As Walt observes: “Nation building, it seems, is not such a bad idea after all. The United States is partly responsible for Afghanistan’s current condition. The U.S. failure to rebuild Afghanistan after the 1989 Soviet withdrawal led to the progressive radicalization of Afghan society and the ultimate triumph of the Taliban.” (Ibidem, p. 69).
33 Ferguson, Niall, “Clashing Civilizations or Mad Mullahs: the United States between Informal and Formal Empire”, op. cit., p. 141.
1. "The U.S. ceased to be invulnerable long before September 11.
2. The means of destruction have never been cheaper.
3. The global inequality gap has risen significantly, and, with it, dissatisfaction among the losers.
4. The United States is incapable of coping with the challenge of global disorder without strong U.S. leadership,
5. Even after big defense cuts, the United States is still the world’s only superpower, with an unrivalled financial and military-technological capability,
6. The U.S. needs to do more to impose order on rogue states, and,
7. America can afford formal empire”.34

Furguson’s call on Realism is clear and reasonable. However, his criticism of super-national institutions, such as the United Nations, is one-dimensional. There is no doubt that the U.N. humanitarian interventions conducted between 1992 and 1999 were not, with one exception (East Timor), successful (Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Haiti, Cambodia, and Albania). However, this is only one part of the story. The fact is that the United States, under an umbrella of super-national organizations, may more effectively have used a number of policy tools,35 including highly developed U.S. military potentials. For instance, in regard to the recent war in Iraq, on December 12, 2002, the U.S. defense and other officials held a secret meeting in Rome with a team from the United Nations World Food Program – more than three months before the bombs fell in Iraq. When the U.S. had first signaled a determination to change Iraq’s regime, U.S. agencies chose, reluctantly, to deal with the U.S. military planners. The result was that the World Food Program (WFP), while striving to maintain neutrality, played a crucial role in the U.S. “war on Iraq” (Spring 2003) by helping to avert civil unrest due to hunger. Also, the WEP had managed to avert a winter famine in Afghanistan after the U.S. dislodged the Taliban in 2001, allowing the U.S. military to be engaged on other more important tasks.36

However, reliance only on the possession of military and other material resources, regularly, is not sufficient to provide the status of a “formal empire;”

34 Ibidem.
35 Walt writes: “The United States should rely more heavily on multilateral institutions, even if this policy reduces its freedom of action in the short term. Institutions are useful not because they are powerful restraints of state behavior, but because they diffuse responsibility for international intervention and thus reduce the risk of an anti-American backlash. U.S. critics of the UN and other multilateral institutions have mistakenly focused on the restrictions that these institutions might impose, and they have ignored how these institutions make it easier for the United States to achieve its goals without provoking unnecessary foreign resentment.” (Walt, Stephen M., Beyond bin Laden, Reshaping U.S. Foreign Policy, op. cit., p. 76).
that status requires some other non-material elements. Among them, as Ferguson points out, is the readiness to shed blood for it.\textsuperscript{37} In Paul Kennedy's words, the problem is "the unwillingness of the American democracy to accept high or even moderate military casualties, year after year, decade after decade".\textsuperscript{38} Although this "unwillingness" per se is not detrimental for the United States' leadership in the international community – or an American-dominated world – it may be an obstacle to achieve the status of a formal empire.

Nevertheless, this is a logical consequence of the modernization process. Margaret Levi argues that an increase in both variables – democratization and industrialization – pushes governments to invest more in convincing their populations of the importance of the war and in winning their consent to fight. We can easily see this in the current war on Iraq in which the Bush administration has publicly made a tremendous effort to explain newly defined security strategy, that is, the necessity of a pre-emptive military action. Despite the facts that recently conducted coalition war against Saddam was quick with a low-casualty level (See Table 3), the Gulf War II remains to be seen in America as a bi-partisan issue. While the Republican support for both wars was consistent – around 94 percent – the Democratic support dropped from 81 percent (in 1991) to 50 percent.\textsuperscript{39}

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table 2. A comparative view of the Gulf Wars</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gulf War I, 1991</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Troops deployed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casualties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
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<td>Cost</td>
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* To hostile fire; ** At least; *** 84 of these to hostile fire.

Although some analysts have attributed the American reluctance to build an empire to the problem of "imperial overstretching" in the sense of its cost, the more important problem of creating an American empire is "imperial understreaching".\textsuperscript{40} Nye uses this term to describe the unwillingness of both the

\textsuperscript{37} Ferguson, Niall, "Clashing Civilizations or Mad Mullahs: the United States between Informal and Formal Empire", op. cit.


\textsuperscript{40} Nye, Joseph S., Jr., U.S. Power and Strategy after Iraq, Foreign Affairs, July/August, 2003, p. 71.
public and the Congress to invest seriously in the instruments of nation building and governance, as opposed to military forces. Thus, to the United States’ Foreign State Department and the Agency for International Development belong only one percent of the Federal budget. On the other hand, a 16-percent share of the Federal budget belongs to the U.S. military. Apparently, the “empire” issue may depend, as Nye correctly identifies it, on the prevailing view within the coalition of Neo-Wilsonians and Jacksonians: “The former will espouse a prolonged U.S. presence to produce democracy in the Middle East, whereas the latter, who tend to eschew ‘nation building,’ have designed a military that is better suited to kick down the door, beat up a dictator, and go home than to stay for the harder work of building a democratic polity.”

Besides maintaining high military power, Kennedy stresses the need of the United States’ continued economic growth, both in absolute terms and relative to others in order to maintain its military supremacy. Currently, the Pentagon budget is equal to the combined military budgets of the next 12 to 15 countries. The United States accounts for 40 to 45 percent of all defense spending in the world. (The United States’ military budget of $300 billion per year is larger than that of the European Union’s member states combined spending – $170 billion annually. These figures refer to the situation before the Gulf War II.) Although the United States is in favor of spreading of a free-market economy, which should bring all its benefits to humankind in general, this long-term process toward a so-called “borderless world” could decrease its relative position. Such an attitude cannot, as Kennedy asserts, “be shared by strategists studying national and international power; for them, it is precisely the relative distribution of strength and influence that is at the core of understanding world politics and the whole dynamic of ‘the rise and fall of the Great Powers’ over the centuries”. (See Table 3). Finally, in the realm of diplomacy, as Kennedy foresees, even Americans hostile to the very notion of the sharing of global power and of the U.S. becoming a ‘normal’ country may sooner or later have to accept that as unavoidable. That foreign policy after the September 11, 2001 – a shift from unilateralal to multilateral efforts in international affairs but not in essential military affairs – confirms some of these assumptions.

Table 3. World leaders and challengers as identified by long-cycle theorists

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<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Challenger</th>
</tr>
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41 Ibidem.
43 Ferguson, Niall, Power, Foreign Policy, op. cit., p. 18.
1609-1713  Netherlands  France
1714-1815  Great Britain  France
1816-1945  Great Britain  Germany
1946-1990  United States  Soviet Union
1991 -    United States  ?

Source: Shultz and Weingast 2003, op. cit., p. 4.

Apparently, tremendous economic power alone does not provide a status of empire, or, sometimes, even a status of a dominant Great Power. For instance, the emergence of the Eastern military powers (Russia, Prussia, and Austria), during the 1770s, occurred despite the economic power of Great Britain or France. As a result, the so-called “Pentarchy” of Russia, Prussia, Austria, Britain, and France come into existence. (Others, like Shultz and Weingast, have seen Great Britan as a leader of the 18th and 19th centuries, primarily on the basis of a specific form of economic power – financial power, that is, the capability to go more easily into public debt, when necessary, to fund the wars against challengers.) In fact, as Scott cites Karl-Georg Faber, the concept of great power – like the associated emergence of the “Pentarchy” – belongs to the second half of the eighteenth century and not, as is often still argued, to the Napoleonic era. Yet, the French still relied on economic power, as the duc de Choiseul, the French foreign minister in 1760, wrote:

Colonies, commerce, and maritime power which accrue from them will decide the balance of power upon the Continent. Austria, Russia, and the King of Prussia are only

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45 Although anarchy is indeed a useful assumption, especially for explaining relations among great powers, institutions in security affairs are considerably broader than alliances, concerts, and collective security organizations that are normally taken to define the set. David V. Lake offers a more complete accounting that includes such increasingly hierarchic security institutions as: spheres of influence, protectorates, informal empires, and empires. (Lake, David A., Beyond Anarchy, The Importance of Security Institutions, op. cit., p. 132).

46 For Lake informal empire is a hierarchic security institution through which dominant states control substantial areas of policy in subordinated polities – even some typically regarded as purely domestic – but subordinates continue to interact with third parties on the basis of sovereignty (for, instance, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe under the Brezhnev Doctrine). In the case of an empire, dominant states formally control subordinates that retain no independent international “personality,” and therefore no right to enter international agreements in their own name. (Ibidem, p. 133).


second class powers, like all other who can make war only when they are subsidized by the commercial powers, which are France, England, Spain and Holland.\footnote{Ibidem, p. 10.}

The European experience from this period illustrates the importance of the other, non-economic aspects of power,\footnote{Joseph Nye has also written that the United States defining its power too heavily in military terms, may neglect investment in other instruments – so-called soft power. This power, Nye points out, is becoming increasingly important in a global information age, but "soft" power is fragile, and can be destroyed by excessive unilateralism and arrogance. (Nye, Joseph B., Seven Tests: Between Concert and Unilateralism. National Interest, 66, Winter, 2001/02, p. 12).} such as, in first place, political leadership. It played a crucial role in the reshaping of Europe and of establishing its new division (during the age of the Enlightenment), as “eastern” and “western,” instead of previous division as “southern” and “northern,” that existed at least since the Renaissance. Thus, the equation (1) to roughly estimate a state’s capacity to wage war\footnote{Ray, Cline S., World Power Trends and U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1980s, Boulder, Colo, Westview Press, 1980, p. 13.}:

\[
P_p = (C + E + M) \times (S + W),
\]

in which

\begin{align*}
P_p &= \text{Perceived power}, \\
C &= \text{Critical mass; population and territory}, \\
E &= \text{Economic capability}, \\
M &= \text{Military capability}, \\
S &= \text{Strategic purpose, and} \\
W &= \text{Willingness to pursue national strategy},
\end{align*}

is a sound reminder of how important the material and non-material elements are. From the equation (1) follows that the national power is a product – not a sum – of its components. For example, if the intangibles of strategic purpose and national will equal zero, the overall national power will be zero – no matter how large the sum of more tangible economic and military capabilities. In the current war on Iraq, the Bush Administration has clearly demonstrated the elements “S” and “W” from the above equation. These elements are also preconditions for the status of an empire – either informal or formal.

Finally, there has been a well-known belief that American anti-imperialist restraint is becoming harder to sustain as the “disorder in poor countries have grown more threatening”\footnote{Mallaby, Sebastian, The Reluctant Imperialist: Failed States, and the Case for American Empire, Foreign Affairs, 81(March/April), 2002, p. 2.} After all, empires are not always planned:

The original American colonies began as the unintended by-product of British religious strife. The British political class was not sure it wanted to rule India, but commercial interests dragged it in there anyway. The United States, today, will be an even
Mallaby, however, has a full concern about the difficulties to achieve this goal: The fear that empire is infeasible and the imperial challenge is the State's choice between unilateralism and multilateralism. Neither option, Mallaby has argued, provides an appropriate response to failed states but, instead, making alliances and partners will be the better way to go. (This was also recently re-emphasized by Henry Kissinger whose central claim is that the United States must strive to preserve the core alliances it has created and directed during the Cold War era.55) Although the United States, thanks primarily to the high level of power asymmetry in the world, will continue to be the leader in the international community, the New World Order will have to be a negotiated one.

However, this may be in disagreement with traditional American thinking in terms of alliance politics. The Americans, as Skidelsky puts it, "want to be uninvolved or masters of the situation," and the European notion of the balance of power, according to the author, has never had much resonance in the United States. Yet, the old concept of balance of power is still the best guide to the conduct of foreign policy, he writes, and adds that the foreign policy in the new era should distinguish between allies and partners: "Allies are for temporary objectives; partners are for the long haul."56 Finally, the unprecedented asymmetry of power in the contemporary world, Skidelsky concludes, should enhance a partnership.

Between Unilateralism and Multilateralism

The dichotomy of unilateralism-multilateralism is a result of developments in the 20th century. The terms "unilateral" and "multilateral" refer to positions in a discourse lodged in foreign policy deliberations during the last century, when "two or more countries were vying for dominance."57 After the foundation of the United Nations in 1945, Nation States in the international system have been seen as acting either under the rubric of unilateralism – with its connotation of atavism, disorder and decline – or under the rubric of multilateralism, with its contrary sense of progressive development. Since the Cold War ended competition between States for dominance, some scholars assert that the unilateral-multilateral dichotomy has

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54 Ibidem.
lost its previous importance.\textsuperscript{58} Some believe that the United States, as the only remaining super-power, should adopt unilateralism.\textsuperscript{59}

Although multilateralists and unilateralists tend to dismiss each other’s views with no little derision, as Nye observes, the U.S. foreign policy would be wiser to take a more dispassionate, analytical view. In reality, both unilateralism and multilateralism can successfully serve the American national interest. Therefore, there is no need for making a choice between unilateralism and multilateralism \textit{a priori} but the need for some general guidelines to determine when unilateralism makes work and when it does not work. Fortunately, Nye has offered some guidelines:

1. "We [Americans] should not rule out unilateral action in cases that involve vital survival interests, though, when possible, we should seek international support for such action;"

2. We should be cautious about multilateral arrangements that interfere with our ability to produce stable peace in volatile regions;

3. Unilateral tactics sometimes help lead others to compromises that advance multilateral interests;

4. We should reject multilateral institutions that are recipes for inaction, that cater disproportionately to the self-interest of others, or that are contrary to our values;

5. Multilateralism is essential on intrinsically cooperative issues that cannot be managed by the United States without the help of other countries (for example, the problem of climate change, the proliferation of weapons for mass destruction, or transnational terrorism);

6. Multilateralism should be sought as a means to get others to share the burden and bug into the idea of providing public goods.

7. In choosing between multilateralism and unilateralism tactics, we must consider the effects of the decision on our soft (or attractive) power".\textsuperscript{60}

Nye’s ‘seven points’ are, in general, in favor of multilateralism, but not all multilateralism. Both, the Cold War era and the recent “age of terror” (after the September 11, 2001) have illustrated the necessity of unilaterally conducted actions. Thus, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, American President Kennedy considered the unilateral use of force. Simultaneously, Kennedy still sought the legitimacy of international opinion expressed in multilateral organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States.\textsuperscript{61} Similarly, in the Spring 2003 conducted “War on Iraq” the Bush Administration initially had to act

\textsuperscript{58} Ibidem, p. 38.


\textsuperscript{61} Ibidem.
unilaterally (or at least bilaterally along with the British). The growing support that came later from a number of States (nearly fifty) provided both help and added *legitimacy* to the Bush doctrine. The Bush-Blair persistence on the coercive course of action against Iraq, and, a subsequent growing support for it from abroad, also confirms the power of conviction: “Faith cannot move mountains. But it can move people.”

One can say that the U.S. conduct of the Iraq crisis, starting from November 2002 through the U.N. Security Council, followed very well the Habermas consent-oriented communication. According to Habermas, communicative action can take two forms – “consent-oriented” and “success-oriented.” The former refers to an agreement or mutual understanding about something in the world, in order to identify the basis on which parties can proceed to action. This approach does not exclude the use of traditional elements of diplomacy such as logic, gamesmanship, or subtle deployment of power.

By contrast, the latter, a “success-oriented” communication refers to arguments that have the purpose to influence others to adopt ends that the party making the arguments wishes to attain. This approach entails also “more coercive interventions in the physical world, designed to induce others to pursue or promote – or at least to forgo impeding – those ends.” In line with these assumptions, one can argue that the result of voting in the U.N. Security Council (15 to 0) on November 8, 2002, was the most important act for the recent U.S. foreign policy. The Resolution represented a strong expression of consent between all the countries in the Council that Iraq did not comply with the previous U.N. resolutions.

Some critics of recent American foreign policy are more cautious in terms of America’s increased unilateralism. Mary Kaldour, for instance, argues that the Bush strategy of “spectacle war,” such as – apparently – the war on Iraq, is caught in an earlier Cold War paradigm primarily aimed at influencing American public opinion and that it fails to take into account two important changes in the contemporary politics: the nature of sovereignty and the role of military. Nye also reminds us on the limitations of American unilateralism, highlighting the “paradox of primacy” of the United States:

The paradox of American power is that world politics is changing in a way that makes it impossible for the strongest world power since Rome to achieve some of its most crucial international goals alone. The United States lacks both the international and the domestic capacity to resolve conflicts that are internal to other societies and to monitor and

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64 Ibidem, p. 44.
65 Ibidem, p. 44.
control transnational developments that threaten Americans at home. ... By de-valuing soft power and institutions, the new unilateralist coalition of Jacksonians and neo-Wilsonians is depriving Washington of some of its most important instruments for the implementation of the new security strategy.67

Nye defines soft power as the ability to attract and persuade rather than to coerce. Hard power, on the other hand, is the ability to coerce and grows out of a country’s military and economic might. These two types of power may sometimes conflict, but they can also reinforce each other. And, this is exactly the point where the “unilateralism-multilateralism dichotomy” lies.

Which course of action should be adopted, however, is not possible to determine on the basis of some established set of rules. It may vary depending on the finesse, skill and political intuition of leadership. Nonetheless, Schuller and Grant (2003, 45) assert that American power may manage itself best when it strategically modulates between (1) unilateralism in seeking the success of goals defined primarily within the American political system; and (2) multilateralism in seeking mutual understanding among the broader international political system.68

Spreading democracy and liberalism worldwide has always been a U.S. goal but “having so much power makes this aim more realistic one”.69

Concluding Remarks

A brief analysis of some recent insights in American foreign policy has demonstrated that there is no one theoretical concept to be guide for policy-makers. Rather, in order to maintain American primacy and to successfully manage an anarchical world under a unipolar structure, scholars and policy-makers have to base their analyses and decisions upon a number of approaches. The “war on terror” and proliferation of NBC’s weapons has shown that the U.S. status of only super-power in the world is not simply a matter of resource availability and relative power.

Military muscle is an essential requirement, but it does not itself secure that position, which possesses an ideological and qualitative dimension conferred by the conceptual sophistication of a country’s leadership. This was most clearly appreciated by the late Andrew Lossky, as cited by Scott:

This quality of greatness had little to do with manpower, resources or the other quantifiable elements of strength. To put it crudely, it consisted in the ability of statesman to count beyond three. Any statesman who is mentally deranged can count up to three; my country, my country’s enemy, and the enemy of my country’s enemy, which is my ally. On this basis, it is quite possible to carry on an adequate foreign policy but it will always have

69 Jarvis, Robert, The Compulsive Empire, Foreign Policy, July/August, 2003, p. 84.
an air of simplistic provincialism about it. A statesman who can count to four will always be able to count beyond four; he will perceive an infinity of possible variations in the degree of hostility or alliance as well as the possibility of limited alliance with one's enemy or of the limited hostility with one's ally. His mind's eye will also be able to take at a glance the entire diplomatic chess-board in all its complexity. Such a statesman will have inestimable advantage over his provincial-minded opposite numbers.70

While Lossky's undervaluing of the importance of material elements may be questioned, his approach is illuminating. From the perspective of recent American foreign policy, Lossky's observation is a striking one. In the recent "war on terror," targets such as the Al Quida and the Taliban were incubated in the U.S.' proxy war against the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s. And, not for the first time, U.S. foreign policy followed an "old adage of eastern realpolitik": the enemy of my enemy is my friend. And now, in America's new war against old allies of convenience, the U.S. was, as Talbot and Chanda point out, in the market for new ones – "anyone who was prepared to sign up to counter-terrorism as an overarching imperative."71

The emphasis of this paper on the non-material factors (ideas, norms, and institutions; democracy; and culture) of power and the corresponding theoretical concepts such Institutionalism, Neo-Liberalism, and Constructivism do not mean my advocacy to discard either Classical or Structural Realism. Despite the fact that many Americans who think seriously about foreign policy issues tend to dislike Realism72 Realism – mainly because it is in disagreement with their basic values – it is an indispensable approach. At the end of the day, the material superiority of the United States influences, to a large extent, its foreign-policy conduct between unilateralism and multilateralism.

**Literature**


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72 Mearsheimer lists four reasons why American elites, as well as American public, tend to regard realism with hostility: (1) Realism is a pessimistic theory, (2) realism treat war as an inevitable, (3) Realism does not distinguishes between 'good' states and 'bad states,' and (4) America has a rich history of thumbing its nose at realism. (Mearsheimer, John, *The False Promise of International Institutions*, *International Security*, 19(3), 1994/5, p. 48).


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AMERIČKA SPOLJNA POLITIKA NA RASKRŠĆU - IZMEĐU IDEALIZMA I REALIZMA, NEFORMALNE I FORMALNE IMPERIJE, UNILATERALIZMA I MULTILATERALIZMA

REZIME

Ovaj rad analizira i sučeljava aktuelna iskustva Sjedinjenih Američkih Država (SAD) u ratu protiv terorizma i proliferacije nuklearnog, hemijskog i biološkog oružja (NHB) sa opštim principima spoljne politike ove zemlje iz perioda hladnog rata i tokom devedesetih godina.

Težište analize je usmereno prema sve prisutnijoj dilemi, pre svega u novjoj publicistici i naučnoj literaturi (naročito na Zapadu), o tome da li postajemo svedoci rasta formalne ili neformalne Američke imperije. Pitanje je utoliko značajnije sa obzirom na bezprimernu asimetričnost postojećih vojnih efektiva u svetu – pre svega između jedine preostale supersile (Sjedinjenih Država) i njenih najbližih pratilaca. Sa obzirom na ovu tendenciju u savremenim međunarodnim odnosima, značajan deo analize, opet na primeru SAD, razmatra i ulogu nematerijalnih atributa u ukupnoj moći zemlje. Konačno, takozvana dihotomija spoljne politike SAD, oličena najčešće kao sukob između unilateralizma i multilateralizma, sagledana je u svetlu pitanja koliko ovi, prividno suprotstavljeni vidovi vođenja diplomacije, doprinose ostvarenju spoljopolitičkih ciljeva Sjedinjenih Država.

S obzirom na prvu dilemu, autor pokazuje da SAD prema onome što ova država čini (korišćenjem raznovrsnih i raspoloživih instrumenata moći) u obuzdavanju rastećeg terorizma i proliferacije NHB borbenih sredstava, zaslužuje da bude tretirana kao imperija. Međutim, za postizanje ovog statusa, kako autor pokazuje, nisu dovoljno samo materijalni (vojni i ekonomski) izvori moći, već i opšta rešenost celog društva i svih elemenata državne vlasti. Ti uslovi su se stekli posle tragičnih terorističkih napada (11. septembra 2001. godine) na tlu Amerike. Tako se nesumnjiva materijalna premoć SAD otelotvoriла i u novim, a pre toga samo u obrisima nagoveštavanim, poljima aktivnosti američke diplomacije. Konačno, struktura moći, odnosno njena raspodela na globalnom nivou, čini se da presudno utiče na izbor između unilateralizma i multilateralizma. Autor zagovara stav da, ukoliko se kao ishod nekog međunarodnog procesa gleda moć SAD, navedena dihotomija, u stvari, postaje privid. I unilateralni i multilateralni karakter američke spoljne politike su podjednako važni u ostvarivanju njenih strateških ciljeva. Pri tome, izrazito
unilaterálni karakter diplomatije Amerike u vojnoj sferi dolazi kao prirodna posledica njenog vojnog preimućstva, zaključuje autor.