

Effective Grand Strategy of the 21st Century: An American Foreign Policy based on Values or Interests

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ABSTRACT

Since the end of the Cold War, foreign policy analysts have debated about the most appropriate strategy that the United States should follow in terms of its foreign policy. Making clear the concept of effective strategy in foreign policy and international relations, the purpose of this paper is to analyze the concrete strategies that the United States must follow to be successful in its foreign policy, in the context of the new challenges that the international system is facing in the 21st century. More clearly, in this paper will be identified the character of the international policies that the USA should follow in the system of international relations, as well as the most appropriate means to realize them. The research questions that arise for this purpose are: Should the American foreign policy prioritize liberal values and principles or the American national interest? What role should the US play in providing global public goods? Is it necessary for the USA to invest in a restrictive foreign policy strategy, maintaining defiant military primacy in the context of the problems they are facing today? To answer the above question this study is based on secondary sources as bibliographical analysis, journal articles, as well as the most popular theories of international relations, making efforts to ensure objective and accurate information sources. Also, given that international relations forecasting is a really complex issue, the collection of concrete data and their interpretation based on a comparative approach, has served as an important instrument to make the theoretical framework as reliable as possible.

Keywords: International Relations, Foreign Policy, Strategy, USA.

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I. INTRODUCTION

If a country has few power resources, it is less likely to get the desired results, but on the other hand, power has often proved to be harmful when it is entwined with overconfidence and inappropriate foreign policy strategies. Based on this, we must first understand the concept of successful strategy in foreign policy and international relations, which can be defined as the overall vision of a country's national goals and the determination of the most appropriate ways to achieve these goals (Schmidt, 2012, *as cited in* Cox & Stokes, 2012). Such a strategy reflects different views on the character of international policies, specifically the role that the United States should play in the system of international relations, as well as the most suitable means for their realization.

In the context of the 21st century, where there is more and more talk about "raising the rest", I believe that a successful strategy of using power should not be related to the maximization of the power of a single actor of the international system, but with finding the right combination between the sources of this power and sharing it with others. In the century in which we are living, the dominant problem for most states, even for the most powerful states, is related to the fact that there are more and more things outside their control. Under the influence of globalization, world politics is changing in such a way, that makes it impossible to fulfill all international obligations and objectives by a single actor of the system.

Today's world, in which borders are losing their meaning more than ever, it needs international coalitions to address risks and challenges rather than actors acting alone. In this sense, in the current context, power should be considered a very positive game, where it is not necessary to think how to exercise power over others, but to achieve goals by sharing power with others. The problem of American power in the reality of the century the 21st I don't believe it has to do with the fact that it is going down, but with the failure to understand that even the largest and most powerful country on the globe cannot achieve its goals without the help of others. Such a fact requires a deeper understanding of the system of international relations, which goes beyond the classic stories of the rise and fall of great powers.

As we mentioned above, America will likely continue to be the most powerful country of the 21st century, but that does not mean dominance. It is true that Americans have often found themselves debating the objectives of their power. Recently, there has even been a wide debate about whether US foreign policy should prioritize maintaining primacy/superiority in power sources, or promoting values, whether by further perfecting democracy at home, either by practicing liberal interventions abroad. In fact, a dilemma of this nature is derivative of the clash between realist and idealist views, but a successful American narrative, I think, must include both. As is known, realists emphasize the importance of rational and measured analysis to succeed in achieving objectives, advocating for a modest foreign policy within American means. But the problem lies in the fact that modesty is a vague goal, which has been defined in different ways by the supporters of this theory. However, the question is how they should intertwine with each other. As Kissinger (2005) notes;

While realists seek balance and stability, idealists aim for change, but the debate between them is exaggerated. Realists must acknowledge the importance of ideals and values, while idealists must take geopolitical constraints into account.

II. AN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY BASED ON VALUES OR INTERESTS

As for values, they remain a very important part of the foreign policy of the United States, which has given the latter the characteristics of an exceptional country, ready to share them first with the old world, then with the whole world. However, when we talk about this issue, different degrees of attraction to American culture as well as different values of other countries must be taken into consideration. It should be emphasized that the spread of American culture and values is less expensive than active, military interventions abroad. Like it or not, the nature of American political culture is dominated by universal values and the temptation to intervene on the side of "good".

Indeed, American universities and media are likely to remain prominent for a long time to come, but in the meantime, it should not be forgotten that other countries are also developing their capacities in these areas. Attempts to rebuild other nations under the American image will continue to be a repeated ordeal, but therein lies one of the secrets of a successful American strategy for this century. The United States must be prudent and at the same time capable of understanding international and domestic limits, as well as adapting objectives to circumstances.

However, within the context of the issue of values, it should be emphasized that traditional realists are inclined to distinguish between a foreign policy based on them and a foreign policy based on interests. In their view, the promotion of human rights, democracy or specific economic sectors remains a secondary priority, compared to issues that directly affect American interests and security and that require the use of force (Nau, 2002).

These issues, described by traditionalists as "vital," include preventing attacks on the United States, preventing the emergence of hostile regional hegemony in Asia and Europe, deterring hostile powers, and efforts to ensure the survival of American allies (Ellworth *et al.*, 1996).

But this traditional approach seems too narrow in an analytical perspective, which does not run parallel to the American political culture. Indeed, national interests remain a priority if survival is at stake, but a distinction must be made between a particular event and a national threat. In a democracy, the national interest means what the citizens define as such, and if the American public judges that values such as human rights and democracy are so important to their identity and who they are, they will logically be willing to pay a price for their promotion. In such a perspective, I think that, if the American people judge that their interests include certain values and their promotion abroad, then they deserve to be considered part of the national interest.

So on a practical level, the American tradition regarding foreign policy objectives is much broader than a simple division between realism and idealism (O'Connor, 2009).

III. THE ROLE OF THE USA IN PROVIDING GLOBAL PUBLIC GOODS

In my judgment, a successful strategy, even though it should fundamentally continue to have the provision of those we defined above as vital national priorities, should not overlook the provision of global public goods. As Joseph Nye says, at the macro level, the international order must be built as a public good, from which anyone can benefit, but without harming others (Nye, 2002). This means that a country, however small, can benefit from peace in the region it belongs to, from freedom of the seas, open trade, or stability of financial markets at the same time that the United States will continue to secure its benefits. Of course, public goods cannot be unlimited, causing some countries to be excluded, or to benefit partially from them.

While the fact must be taken into consideration, that not everything that can be perceived as global good in the eyes of America, can be considered as such in the eyes of other actors, especially in the conditions of the current international system where the United States is facing the rise and strengthening of some states, but also non-state actors, making it more difficult to coordinate the system.

In such a context, the United States should learn from Great Britain of the nineteenth century, from its traditional balancing role in the conflicts between the states of Europe (Nathanaili, 2007), from the tendency to promote an open international economic system and to guarantee international common goods (Paul *et al.*, 2004). All three lines are relevant to the 21st century American condition. Maintaining regional power balances or reducing local propensities to use force and change borders is considered a public good for many countries, but not necessarily for all.

However, the United States, first through its military presence, aims to shape the environment of important regions of the world, especially in Europe and Asia. Second, promoting an open international economic system is a good thing that would serve not only American economic growth, but other countries as well. Opening markets globally is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for alleviating poverty in poor countries while providing the United States with its own benefits. In addition, in the long run, economic growth is more likely to foster stable democratic societies in other countries, albeit over a considerable time frame. Third, America must continue to show interest in guaranteeing international common good, such as freedom of the seas, or open oceans for all. Today, international global commons include new issues, such as global climate change, conservation of endangered species, or cyberspace problems.

The new dimensions of these goods in this century revolve around the development and maintenance of international regimes based on international law and institutions. Through the latter, it is intended to provide solutions to international problems, trade, nuclear proliferation, peacekeeping, respect for human rights, and many other concerns. The new dimensions of these goods in this century revolve around the development and maintenance of international regimes based on international law and institutions. Through the latter, it is intended to provide solutions to international problems, trade, nuclear proliferation, peacekeeping, respect for human rights, and many other concerns. The new dimensions of these goods in this century revolve around the development and maintenance of international regimes based on international law and institutions. Through the latter, it is intended to provide solutions to international problems, trade, nuclear proliferation, peacekeeping, respect for human rights, and many other concerns.

Also, a successful American narrative must include this century's global public goods and international development. The fact remains that most of the world's poor countries continue to be mired in vicious cycles of disease, poverty and political instability. For these countries, opening markets, strengthening accountable institutions, and discouraging corruption remain very important. It is true that development takes a long time, but the United States must explore the best ways to provide the necessary assistance that will lift them out of poverty. As the dominant power, the United States should continue to act as a mediator for the various conflicts at the global level, especially in the Middle East.

We do not pretend that the position of the mediator is easy, especially given the degree of difficulty that some ethnic or religious conflicts reflect, but there are situations where the United States can bring the parties together, thus increasing the reputation and power of their diplomatic efforts, while at the same time reducing instability at the global level.

IV. COERCIVE STRATEGY: MAINTAINING US MILITARY PRIMACY

In fact, maintaining challenging military primacy has been one of the main objectives of American strategy since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Even, for some scholars, the coercive strategy is a virtue of American power (Sapolsky *et al.*, 2009). US military resources allow the latter to dominate the global commons dominating land, sea, space and air in an unchallenged way. Since the United States spends almost half of the global budget and possesses the most advanced technology, it cannot be claimed that any country will be able to balance their power in the traditional sense. This fact has enabled him an unparalleled power to project force to the four corners of the globe. But a comprehensive counter-insurgency doctrine requires enormous resources indeed.

For example, if we refer to the cost of an American soldier deployed in Afghanistan, we will find that it ranges from 850 thousand to 1.4 million dollars per year (Shaughnessy, 2012). Even if we take it for granted that budget expenditures are covered, the question is whether and for how long the American public and its allies will support such efforts. In short, the United States will likely continue to maintain its military power, but its usefulness and cost-effectiveness will be more limited in some important future contexts.

However, the military power of a state will continue to remain of particular importance, but the question arises whether its exercise is perceived as fair or the opposite, as in the case of the infamous Abu Ghraib prisons in Iraq or Guantanamo. in Cuba.

We must bear in mind that a harsh policy, based on military force, definitely damages the diplomatic power of a state, it can even go further causing the opposite of what it was initiated for. An example for this case would be the war in Iraq, which, instead of decreasing, increased the number of recruits from terrorists, as well as anti-Americanism. In the three years since September 2001, international jihadist groups nearly doubled their membership (WashingtonsBlog, 2013), while it brought together the enemies of America and the division of its friends, leading to the decline of attractiveness and the growth of anti-Americanism around the world.

Maintaining military primacy is really important not only for the United States, but also for its allies, however, this does not mean that the latter should continue to follow the strategy adopted in 2001 and embodied in the Strategy of National Security the following year. In the name of the war against terrorism, the Taliban, Al Qaeda, ISIS and so on, anti-American sentiments have been incited in the world, undermining its image as the heart of democracy¹. The issue here is not whether the United States should use its military power, but as Joseph Nye puts it, how that military power produces hard and soft politics (Nye, 2011). In this author's point of view, war and threat are instruments of a wild policy, while protection and aid are behaviors derived from soft power. Indeed, the balanced combination of them is difficult to manage, but the United States must not give up the power of soft politics, of public diplomacy. In contrast, the words of former US Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld would be confirmed who, arguing for a new agency in early 2008, stated that "the United States is sitting on the sidelines in the global battle of ideas(...) in which we are barely competing against, that is why they are losing" (Nizza, 2008).

However, strategy is one thing, its execution is another. The amount of power of a state cannot be measured through the axiom that it is strong and influential everywhere and whenever, that it can alone solve all the issues of the globe. What America needs in today's world is the growth of economic power, which to some extent seems to be stuck by military power, as well as the avoidance of involvement in the wars of the Asian continent. As President Obama stated in his 2009 speech on Afghanistan, "Our strategy is based on the fact that our strength and influence abroad begins with the steps we take at home, our prosperity provides the foundation of our strength... That's why The commitment of our troops in Afghanistan cannot end" (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2009).

But global leadership does not necessarily require military intervention. On the other hand, we must understand that avoiding wars does not mean ending military aid of various kinds, from countries like Japan and Korea to countries like Pakistan and Yemen.

Regarding the relationship between economic and military power, it has been noticed that Europeans tend to think that economic power is more important than military power. Indeed, in the complex interdependence contest created between post-industrial democracies, economic power is taking on greater importance, while military force is becoming less acceptable. Although military power is irreplaceable in its defense dimension, in the context of relations between the rich democracies of the world, the economic dimension is taking on even greater importance.

In this regard, although the United States will continue to maintain demographic, technological and entrepreneurial advantages, it will have to negotiate more often with other countries on equal status. Moreover, in a context of budget deficits, available means are increasingly reduced, so choices must be made that are closer to realistic estimates of economic resources. Therefore, in addition to internal reforms in order to further strengthen their economy, the United States will have to cooperate even more with international economic institutions in the future.

V. THE AMERICAN APPROACH TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

It should be emphasized that power always depends on the context, and in today's context of international relations, under the effect of terrorism, climate change, pandemics, etc., power has undergone a somewhat more chaotic distribution.

Therefore, in this new context and in response to new threats, military power is part of the solution to the problem since their complete solution necessarily requires cooperation between governments and international institutions. The United States would indeed show prudence if it stimulated a gradual evolution of democracy in a way that accepts subversive realities. Even if we take into account the fact that America represents almost half of defense spending at the world level, that its military is supreme in global commons such as air, sea and space, it is still limited in its ability to control nationalist populations in occupied areas.

¹The strategy approved in 2001 also marked the beginning of a new dimension of war, the war against global terrorism, which is led by the United States, and whose main objective is the elements of the terrorist organization "Al Qaeda", led by Bin Laden. Meanwhile, the following year's National Security Strategy was an overall strategy for national security, to prevent new terrorist attacks on the United States and to minimize the damage of attacks that cannot be prevented. This strategy was essentially an action plan, a detailed list of steps, that President Bush's administration should take to prevent another attack on American soil.

As Richard Haass puts it, even though the United States remains the single most powerful country in the world, it still cannot maintain, much less expand, international peace and its own prosperity (Haass, 2010).

In this light, before making the world safe for democracy, as Wilson proclaimed, it is necessary for America to consider the great diversity and challenges it is facing in the context of this century. Perhaps the greatest danger that this country is facing is the entanglement of terrorism with nuclear materials. Preventing the latter requires at the same time special policies for the fight against terrorism, for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, a better protection against foreign nuclear materials, the establishment of stability in the Middle East, and a greater attention to failed states. Political Islam and the ground it is gaining; I think constitute the second challenge for the United States.

The current fight against extreme Islamic terrorism is not a "clash civilizations", but a genuine civil war within Islam itself. A radical minority is using violence to enforce a simplistic ideological version of Islam on a mainstream that holds very different views. There are more Muslims in Asia than anywhere else, who cannot pretend to be unaffected by the essence of this war in the Middle East, an area that has lagged behind the rest of the world in this era of globalization and democratization.

The development of an open trade with these countries, the economic growth, the development of education, the institutions of civil society, as well as a gradual increase in political participation can be considered as the ways which, in the course of time, would help to strengthen them, and the relations of the West with these countries. Just as important will be the Western policies towards the Middle East, on which depends the possibility to reinforce the narrative of the war against Islam or to create the opposite belief, softening the attitude of Muslims.

The third biggest challenge would be the rise of a hostile hegemony at the regional level, and here I am talking mainly about China, as a potent candidate for the Asian continent, unable to become such at the global level. At this point, caution should be exercised, undertaking a policy that speaks of kindness towards China and that welcomes its emergence as a responsible actor. Meanwhile, as a way to protect against possible hostilities, it should continue to maintain relations close with Japan, India and other Asian countries, which welcome the American presence on this continent.

The fourth major challenge, which the American superpower is facing, has to do with the crises that have affected global access to the Persian Gulf, where almost two-thirds of the world's oil reserves are located. A strategic response to this challenge would require policies that would gradually reduce dependence on oil, while realizing at the same time that the American economy should not be isolated from global energy markets, since such protectionist policies, in addition to being costly, are also counterproductive.

The fifth challenge is related to ecological problems, such as pandemics and adverse climate change. The solution to this challenge would require prudent policies and greater cooperation with international institutions. Finally, the narrative of a successful strategy should focus on the evolution of the world order in the long term, understanding their position and responsibility as the largest and most powerful in the international system, with the capacity to produce public goods or global commons.

As the most powerful country of the 21st century, the United States must promote an open international economy and the same applies to global commons, such as seas, space, etc. Mediate international disputes before they escalate, and further develop international rules and institutions. In the century we live in thanks to globalization and information technology that enables greater global communication, American economic and cultural superiority will become more less dominant than it was at the beginning of this century.

However, this has nothing to do with the much articulated narrative of American decline. The United States is not likely to collapse like ancient Rome or be overtaken by any other country, including China. At least the first half of the 21st century is not likely to be a "post-American world," but the United States needs a strategy through which it can cope with "the rise of others," whether these states or non-state actors.

VI. CONCLUSION

Finally, we conclude that a successful American strategy would require to end the old distinction between realists and liberals, thus paving the way for a new synthesis that we might call liberal realism. Such a strategy would recommend that: The United States should influence, but not control, other parts of the world.

In short, and more succinctly, for success in the 21st century, the United States will first need a strategy that assesses the alliances, institutions, and networks that matter in the context of new age of global information. Success requires partners, which means maintaining old alliances and developing new networks that should include rising powers like China, India and Brazil.

Second, the narrative of a successful strategy must emphasize the importance of integrating military power with the attractiveness of the United States, implying here political values and cultural norms.

It is true that a war against terrorism cannot be won without using America's unrivaled military power, but we must bear in mind that such a war cannot be won without softening the hearts and minds of Muslims either.

Third, the objective of a successful American strategy must contain the main pillars through which a secure system can be created for it and its allies, meaning here a strong economy domestically and internationally, avoiding environmental disasters, as well as the encouragement of liberal democracy and human rights at home and abroad.

All this does not mean that the United States should try to impose American values on the world through force. Democracy promotion can be better achieved through diplomacy than through hard imposition, although this may require more time and patience.

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