



Policies and Positions of America during the Cold War

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Abstract

The United States' entry into the Second World War and its unequivocal triumph marked the commencement of a new era in American history. The nation assumed a superpower status with the USSR. The United States emerged as the preeminent power in the democratic and capitalism realms. Throughout the Cold War, the United States efficiently disseminated its ideology, political model, and value system while contending with the Soviet Union for worldwide influence. Various internal causes, both objective and subjective, shaped the foreign policy of the USA throughout the Cold War.

Key words: The foreign policy, US, the cold war

Introduction

The characteristics of U.S. foreign policy throughout the bipolar system are aptly encapsulated in the words of Henry Kissinger, who stated:

[. . .] *In each century, a nation appears with the capability, determination, and intellectual and ethical drive to influence the global landscape. [. . .] In the twentieth century, no nation has impacted international affairs as forcefully and ambivalently as the United States. No culture*



has more resolutely maintained the unacceptability of interference in the internal matters of other nations, nor has any more fervently claimed that its ideals are universally relevant. No nation has exhibited greater pragmatism in its daily diplomatic operations or more ideological fervor in the pursuit of its historical moral principles. (Kissinger, 2002).

The abandonment of the nineteenth-century doctrine of isolationism, established by the fifth American president James Monroe, and the U.S. entry into the war against the Axis powers following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, undeniably served as a catalyst for the reinforcement of global Pax Americana during the Cold War era (Michalek, 1993). This was undoubtedly the gravest challenge to American power, resources, capabilities, and the resolve to engage worldwide that the U.S. has ever encountered. In the subsequent decades, the USA emerged as a worldwide power, with the primary objective during the era of bipolar conflict being the defeat of the competing and expansion superpower, the USSR. After over 40 years, this objective was completely realized, allowing America to advance hegemonic aims in international policy (U.S. Role, 2020). The United States derived its influence from the vigorous expansion of its economic and military capabilities, as well as from the conviction that the USA—according to Andrzej Mania—is a proponent of principles it ought to advocate. stance) for the benefit of the free globe (Mania, 2019). Consequently, with the onset of the final decade of the 20th century, the USA attained the status of a hyperpower and transitioned into a new phase of unipolarity (Oezel, 2015), so commencing the unilateral era (Krauthammer, 2002), during which the USA acquired the role of an isolated superpower. (Huntington, 1999).

This study aims to conduct a comprehensive examination of the primary domestic factors of



U.S. foreign policy under the bipolar system. The study examines the principal internal, objective, and subjective factors that shaped U.S. foreign policy under the bipolar system, impacting the foreign policy of successive American administrations from Harry Truman to Ronald Reagan's two terms. The author seeks to address the topic of which significant intra-American factors enabled the United States to emerge as the sole superpower by the conclusion of the 20th century. The theoretical frameworks of several U.S. administrations are examined, together with the specific acts undertaken by these administrations, as evidenced in American foreign policy throughout the Cold War. The study employs historical analysis, content analysis, and the comparative approach as its research methodologies. **Determinants of foreign policy — theoretical aspects**

Analyzing the United States' foreign policy under the bipolar system necessitates the presentation of key concepts associated with this topic, including foreign policy and its determinants and indicators. The theory of international relations posits that foreign policy, which concurrently serves as the internal policy of the state, mirrors national interests, *raison d'état*, and the interests of domestic social groups (Khara, 2018). There are interconnections between domestic and foreign policy. Consequently, foreign policy serves as a fundamental, though particular, component of a state's policy (Horowitz, 1977). The execution of foreign policy relies on two categories of factors: the responses of a polyarchic international environment and the capabilities of the respective state. According to prominent Polish scholars in international relations, particularly Teresa Łoś-Nowak, foreign policy is characterized as a



“dynamic process of formulating and implementing national interests within a polyarchal and polycentric international context (Łoś-Nowak, 2000).” As stated by Erhard Cziomer:

[. . .] *Foreign policy is the procedure of developing and executing a nation's interests in respect to other governments and entities within the international system. (Cziomer,2001)*

Conversely, Ryszard Zięba articulated that

[. . .] *Foreign policy is a deliberate and strategic endeavor of the state aimed toward the international milieu. (Zieba,2004)*

Roman Kuźniar underscored that

The state's foreign policy should be perceived as a systematic and proactive endeavor aimed at fulfilling its essential interests, manifested in the construction of its external environment by establishing and promoting advantageous relations while mitigating and eliminating adverse conditions). (Kuz-niar,2001).

It is difficult to contest Jacek Ziemowit Pietras's assertion that the enduring emblems of foreign policy have been a diplomat who persuasively articulated his views and a general who prepared the military to compel concessions (Ziemowit-Pietraś, 1997).

The primary objective determinants of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War

Following the Second World War, the United States and the USSR established a new international system characterized as bipolar (Ball, 1998). In the new order, these two superpowers efficiently disseminated (imposed) socio-political and economic ideologies within their own zones of control, while competing on the international stage and in global arenas. Various internal and external American conditions facilitated the USA's ascension to the



leadership of the democratic, capitalist globe. An examination of the objective intra-American conditions should concentrate on the natural factors that facilitated the USA's emergence as a superpower. The territorial expanse of the United States (9,373,000 km²) was significant, positioning the USA as the fourth largest country.

The world's countries ranked by territorial extent, following the USSR, Canada, and the People's Republic of China (PRC) (Michalek, 2004), along with the advantageous geopolitical positioning of the USA—divided from Asia by the Pacific Ocean and from Europe by the Atlantic Ocean, while sharing borders with only two nations (Canada to the north and Mexico to the south). For multiple centuries, this condition predisposed the United States to be one of the nations least vulnerable to external assaults globally (German, 2002).

The changing demographic composition of American society was equally significant (Michalek, 2004). A comparison of data from the interwar and post-war periods reveals a significant growth in the U.S. population, termed the demographic revolution. By the conclusion of the 1940s, the demographic potential of the USA constituted merely 7% of the global population (Zyblikiewicz, 2004); yet, during the latter half of that decade, there was a notable surge in the birth rate referred to as the American Baby Boom. The continuous increase in the American population enabled the USA to be rated fourth among the most populous countries globally throughout the Cold War, following the PRC, India, and the USSR (Cole, 1968).

In this regard, it is important to note that migration movements significantly influenced the evolution of the demographic structure of American society. From 1940 to 1980, 11 million immigrants arrived in the United States, primarily from Central and Eastern Europe, Cuba,



Mexico, and Canada (Growth, 2020).Crucially, following the Second World War, the USA assumed a preeminent role in the economic sphere. This situation enabled the United States To implement an efficacious worldwide policy, to reinforce hegemony within its sphere of influence, and to competently engage in the weapons race with the USSR (Kiwerska, 1999). Following the conclusion of the Second World War, the United States ascended as an economic powerhouse, poised to initiate development into third-country markets (Higgs, 1994). The USA's steadily growing economic dominance enabled it to assume the role previously held by the United Kingdom and France, two European colonial powers, before to the Second World War (Pastusiak, 2005). The economic Pax Americana, established in the initial years post-Second World War, was effectively sustained in the subsequent decades. The United States assumed the role of a worldwide creditor and primary lender (Bógdoł-Brzezińska, 2001). In the latter half of the 1940s, the United Kingdom, China, and France were identified as vital economic partners of the USA, reflecting the concept of the "four policemen"; nevertheless, these forecasts proved to be premature. The United States rendered its European allies dependent through the implementation of the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the formation of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) (Lafeber, 1967). Additionally, the United States emerged as the guarantor of the currency system's stability for numerous nations, a development evident during the Bretton Woods Conference (July 1-22, 1944), where it was determined that the U.S. dollar, convertible into gold at a rate of USD 35 per ounce, would serve as the foundation for foreign exchange rate calculations (Gaddis, 1997).



During the latter half of the 1940s, American banks possessed almost 70% of all gold holdings in Western nations.

The main determinants of US foreign policy during the Cold War of a subjective nature

The configuration of the United States' foreign policy during the bipolar order was profoundly affected by domestic subjective conditions. The factors that allowed the USA to sustain its superpower status during the Cold War included the perception of the shifting international landscape, the adaptation of foreign policy to evolving circumstances, the impact of ideology and religion, political consciousness, and the influence of charismatic leaders. These elements continued to exert their effect following the U.S. triumph in the Cold War struggle.

In assessing the aforementioned drivers, it is crucial to highlight that throughout the Cold War, a primary determinant of U.S. foreign policy was the formulation of foreign policy strategies. The significance of this was heightened by the fact that American foreign policy, nearly from the inception of the state constitution, was marked by a conundrum regarding which approach would yield greater advantages for the United States: isolationism or involvement? Kiwerska, 19952 During the rivalry with the USSR, the decision to engage and protect the Western world from the spread of communism appeared unequivocal.

During the bipolar order, a social agreement existed in the United States concerning the objectives and primary direction of foreign policy. Proponents of diverse political alternatives concentrated primarily on two foundational objectives: to resist and discourage the USSR (Mania, 2019). Significant reassessment in this matter occurred only in the latter half of the 1960s. The rationale for the alterations should be found in the political and psychological



foundations of the Vietnam War, the post-Vietnam syndrome, the transformations occurring within the American establishment due, in part, to the Watergate scandal, the CIA and FBI controversies, and the rising calls for moral rejuvenation in political affairs. Consequently, during the early 1970s, many perspectives on the execution of American foreign policy emerged. They were marked by caution and skepticism toward the USA's military commitments abroad, while simultaneously emphasizing competition with the USSR, alongside the potential for collaboration in some domains.

The United States, emerging from World War II as the preeminent military, political, and economic power, underwent a significant transformation in its foreign policy.

.Concerns regarding a resurgence of isolationist policies reminiscent of the mid-1940s proved to be incorrect. Following the Second World War, prominent figures such George Marshall, Averell Harriman, Dean Acheson, James Forrestal, John Foster Dulles, George Kennan, and Dean Rusk endeavored to enhance the worldwide engagement of the United States (Zyblikiewicz, 2004). The dissolution of cooperation within the Great Coalition during World War II and competition with the USSR necessitated the formulation of a new, global U.S. strategy, termed the containment doctrine, which directed American foreign policy from 1947 to 1952. George F. Kennan, the architect and then counselor of the U.S. embassy in Moscow, aimed for the USA and Western European nations to establish a robust barrier against the proliferation of communist doctrine globally, so compelling the socialist bloc to yield political concessions. The theory stipulated that the USA would engage in situations where there was a potential for communist success. The containment concept aimed to establish a global balance



of power among superpowers. The United States intended to concentrate on Western Europe as the most probable theater of conflict. The primary tools for actualizing the concept included the Marshall Plan, the Truman concept, the emergence of West Germany and NATO, along with the establishment of several military alliances (McCauley, 2008). The execution of the containment doctrine signified a clear shift from the principles of isolationism, indicating an increased global engagement by the United States.

In 1952, Republican nominee Dwight Eisenhower won the U.S. presidential election, marking the first victory for his party in twenty years, as he garnered widespread public support by critiquing the containment strategy as excessively lenient. John Foster Dulles, the newly appointed Secretary of State and author of the liberation ideology, executed its principles. The concept was predicated on the assumption that the United States, as a superpower, should spearhead the emancipation of the globe from communist ideology. Dulles advocated for the establishment of a robust alliance of Western democracies to counter the expansion of the USSR (LaFaber, 1967). Any issue along the East-West axis might be addressed by the USA employing all available measures, teetering on the edge of war. Per the tenets of the liberation theory, conversations with the USSR over détente were likely to succeed only following the fortification of Western Europe. The priority and foundation of the U.S. was preserving robust connections with Germany and Western Europe.

In 1954, the principles of the liberation concept were revised as a component of the rollback doctrine, aimed at countering Soviet influence in Eastern Europe. It was presumed that communism ought to be extended to the peripheries of the USSR. In 1957, both notions



disintegrated, attributable to the Suez Crisis of 1956, the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, the USSR's launch of the inaugural Sputnik into space in October 1957, the demise of Joseph Stalin in 1953, and the concomitant strategy of détente in US-USSR relations (Malendowski, 1994).

John F. Kennedy, the Democratic Party nominee and successor to President Dwight Eisenhower, characterized his political agenda as the "New Frontier," alluding to the legacy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Zyblikiewicz, 2004). He asserted the intention to enhance the stature and influence of the USA in the global arena (Kissinger, 2002). The objective of his administration, akin to that of his predecessors, was the eradication of communism, however the strategies employed for this purpose were intended to be peaceful in character (Pastusiak, 2005).

In the aftermath of the April 1961 Bay of Pigs event and the ensuing Cuban quarantine, the United States acknowledged the notion of the balance of power in international relations. In 1961, John F. Kennedy aimed to gain the support of anti-American nations, referred to as the Third World, by proposing the "Alliance for Progress," an initiative focused on economic and social development in Latin America. Kennedy also founded the "Peace Corps," an organization designed to train local personnel and deploy volunteers to impoverished nations. These measures were intended to prevent the USSR's infiltration in the so-called Third World (Bartlett, 1997).

Significantly, President Lyndon Johnson, Kennedy's successor, mostly maintained his predecessor's political approach towards the Eastern Bloc (Brzeziński, 1966). Both Kennedy's and Johnson's tactics were marked by dualism—a propensity to pursue peace with



Moscow while simultaneously implementing a strategy of force and containment against the USSR (Bankowicz, 2004). The Johnson Doctrine, proclaimed on May 2, 1965, designated the United States as the world's enforcer. It signified that the United States will not permit communists to attain power in any nation within the Western Hemisphere (Dobrzycki, 2000). The United States possessed the authority to interfere whenever its interests were jeopardized. The foreign policy of the Lyndon Johnson administration was predominantly influenced by the persistent issue of American engagement in the Vietnam War, the repercussions of which were experienced in the United States across various domains in the subsequent decades.

The unresolved issue of U.S. engagement in Southeast Asia emerged as the primary task for the subsequent Richard Nixon administration. The concept of "Vietnamization," implemented by Henry Kissinger and Melvin Baird, which involved peace negotiations and the substitution of American soldiers with South Vietnamese forces, emerged as a central component of the Nixon doctrine proclaimed on Guam on July 25, 1969. The United States was to maintain its status as a global power, with its nuclear capabilities, navy, and air forces ensuring the security of Japan and Southeast Asia, but land defense was to be the responsibility of the regional nations (Kiwerska,1999). 6 The United States should engage only when its national interests are directly threatened, relinquishing its position as a global enforcer. The belief in the boundlessness of American might has been supplanted by the recognition of its constraints. In dealings with the USSR, pragmatism prevailed against American messianism. The administrations of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford acknowledged the ineffectiveness of pursuing politics from a position of strength un the changing international landscape. Proposals



to supplant the era of confrontation with one of negotiations, emphasizing partnership, disarmament, and peaceful cohabitation, have gained prominence.

Conclusions

The Second World War represented the most significant challenge to the United States' might, resources, and resolve to act globally, necessitating a departure from the isolationist doctrine established by the fifth American president, James Monroe. Following the Second World War, the United States ascended as a superpower, capable of expansion and the imposition of its political and economic policies globally. The United States has achieved supremacy in four principal domains: political, economic, military, and cultural. Several intra-American factors, such as a strategic geopolitical position, substantial territorial and demographic size, swift advancements in science and technology—including military developments and the space arms race—along with a consensus among political elites regarding foreign policy, and the persistent threat posed by the USSR and the potential proliferation of communist ideology, facilitated the United States' effective competition with the other superpower in a bipolar system.

Consequently, the Cold War influenced the foreign policy of the United States, affected societal views, reinforced patriotic ideals, elevated civil religion, and more widely, established a new world order. The USA unequivocally triumphed over the vast superpower of the USSR, and by the onset of the final decade of the 20th century, it stood as the sole superpower and an indomitable hegemon capable of worldwide control. The dissolution of the USSR and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc signified the disappearance of the adversary that had influenced American foreign policy for numerous decades, while its essence persisted. The U.S. triumph in



the Cold War rivalry did not signify an unqualified victory. The emerging international order at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries presented numerous difficulties and threats to American political decision-makers. Initially, new rival powers have developed, with China becoming the most competitive, particularly in the economic domain. On September 11, 2001, the overt and foreseeable adversary, the USSR, was supplanted by an elusive and entirely unpredictable foe—Islamic terrorism and jihadism, which perceive the USA and its ongoing neo-colonization of the world as the epitome of malevolence.

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