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THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN THE POST-COLD WAR WORLD: A GLOBAL LEADER OR HEGEMON?

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Abstract

The authors of this paper deal with the role of the USA in the post-Cold War world and their position from the standpoint of relevant indicators and theoretical considerations. This work also refers to path that the United States took from isolationism to the world domination and considers justification of the position of the USA in the period after the Cold War from the point of hegemonic stability theories, while at the end indicates the diversity of understanding of contemporary thinkers regarding the position of the United States as the hegemon or rather "just" a global leader. This paper does not prejudge the final definition of the position of the USA in international relations, but aims to launch discussions on the necessity and justification of the existence of such vision on a global scale.

Key words: international relations; Cold War; United States; NATO; Europe

INTRODUCTION

With the end of the Cold War in 1989, the United States of America remained the only global power. The disintegration of the Warsaw Treaty and the Soviet Union's gradual loss of territory, led the considerations about future role of NATO, but also about needs of its future existence. Moreover, Kant's "perpetual peace" seemed achievable, because a great force was no longer necessary to follow other in security contest and the return to the institutions of the international community and cooperation within it seemed like a good

opportunity for achieving the prosperity of all countries and the establishment of permanent peace. The Cold War, the term that was generally accepted and used for over fifty years, marked a period of competition between two great powers and two blocks in the period after the Second World War. Although there was no major armed conflict as a consequence of the "balance of power" or more properly "balance of fear", like any war this one had at least two sides, and therefore the winners and losers. The very fact that defeated side accepted and recognized the result of the war gave a winner the right to exploit the success, while the defeated sought to consolidate, avoiding confrontation in any field until eventual recovery. The US, along with their allies, quickly dispelled eventual hope that lasting peace can come after the Cold War by exploitation of victory in two key areas: (1) although there were promises that in the post-Cold War period NATO will not be engage beyond the borders of the Member States, very quickly this limit was excluded. In 1991 at the NATO summit in Rome, the "new strategic concept" which promotes a doctrine that allows the Union to engage beyond the borders of its member states was adopted; also, (2) open access for the admission of new Member States, which resulted in the expansion of NATO in the East already in 1999 with the official reception of the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Poland in the Alliance. Fulfillment of part of conditions for membership in NATO in specific cases was either formal, precisely because the exploitation of success after victory in the Cold War.

Although the above-described developments of the situation fit to NATO and to its members that have recognized their own interests will be fulfill by the membership in the Alliance, the fact that the US had a major role is not in question. Minimum of common interests is reflected in the need of European partners to have on their side dominant force capable to enable military presence in the region, which they alone could not have been able to provide, but also as a guarantor of deterrence from the Russian Federation, which expresses the desire for returning influence in the rest of Europe that is still not part of NATO and which present their sphere of influence. The possibility of returning under the influence of the Russian Federation in the countries of the former Warsaw Pact is still treated as a danger, and in this sense the existence of dominant power (the United States) is welcomed. For the US the existence of NATO is necessary for providing legitimacy of their military presence in Europe, and also to gain approval for theirs expansionists and interventionist military moves. Although the United States remained the only global power after the end of the Cold War, the prospects for lasting eternal peace do not exist. The rise of China, the Russian Federation, Japan, mutual rivalry and conflict of interest in the Asia-Pacific region, are reason enough for the local presence of US military forces. In Europe, there is still a fear of France and the United Kingdom from the domination of Germany and its possible aggressive behavior in absences of dominant force. The fear of large build-up of forces inevitably imposes the need of their mutual competition, where every force is trying to extend their power and become the strongest among them. Achieving this goal is desirable, but it presents only a transitional stage towards the final goal, which is to remain the only great power, or a hegemon. This paper deals with the role of the US in the post-Cold War world and their position from the standpoint of relevant indicators and theoretical considerations. In the first continent, the work refers to the way which led US from isolationism to world domination. In the second part examines the justification of the position of the US in the aftermath of the Cold War from the perspective of the theory of hegemonic stability, while the third part points the diversity of understanding of

contemporary thinkers regarding the position of the US as the hegemon or "just" as the global leader. This paper does not prejudge the final definition of the position of the US in international relations, but aims to launch discussions on the necessity and justification of the existence of vision of such dominance on the global scale.

THE UNITED STATES: FROM ISOLATION TO WORLD DOMINATION

The US are dominant force in four decisive domains of global power: the military - unattainable possibility of reaching different areas of the world; economical - the main driver of global growth, although in some aspects Japan and Germany compete (none of them have other attributes of global forces); technological - leadership in key areas of innovations; and cultural - (...) have attractiveness without competition, (...), which together give the US political force like no other country. The combination of these four attributes makes the US a global force. (Brzezinski 1999). Historically, the US access to the global scene coincides with the period of presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the United States. A significant part of T. Roosevelt attitudes were based on the teachings of Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840 - 1914), US Navy officer and scholar. He prompted the necessity of American dominance in the world based on the development of maritime power. Mahan vividly described his attitude: "I am imperialist, simply because I am not isolationist." (Russel 2006).

Theodore Roosevelt was the first president who "emphasized the duty of America to extend the influence in the whole world, which will be set up in accordance with its national interests." (Kissinger 2008). The culmination of Roosevelt's views followed the First World War and the United States moved towards achieving the leading position on the international scene. However, after the First World War, although there were no essential differences between the understanding of isolationists and internationalists, isolationists attitudes overcome and the United States have not ratified the Treaty of League of Nations. It is important to note that under the internationalists in the US believed that they were in favor of membership in the League of Nations, and not the advocate of regular and active participation in international politics. After this event, it was expected that the US will turn to their own development, without deeper involvement in international relations. The (self) isolation was not complete given that the US had an active role in matters of a financial nature, of which perhaps the most important was the issue of payment of war reparations. No less significant has been the participation of the US in defining the general principles of the peaceful settlement of disputes in the international arena, as well as active participation in the regulation of relations among the great powers. As one of the examples, and possible turning point that confirmed future dominance of the US, was "The Washington conference" during which the major powers the US, Great Britain and Japan defined rules and constraints in the development of navies. The Washington conference was held in the US capital from 11th December 1921 till 6th February 1922. where parties reached "an agreement about keeping and building battleships and aircraft carriers," which recognized the primacy of the United States. By defining the "rules", the US confirmed a new "role of the dominant forces in the Pacific, which they share with Japan. Since then, the role of the Great Britain in this area was given "secondary importance" (Kissinger 1999).

Accordingly, Mahan's understanding of the US foreign policy orientation towards the Pacific, with its dominant role, can be discerned between the two world wars.

Leaving the concept of isolationism is linked to the presidential mandate of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the period before the beginning and during the Second World War. Despite resistance of isolationists, F. Roosevelt announced the participation of the US in world affairs. During the performance on the duty of the President of the United States, he relied on his experience as the Under-Secretary in US Navy using this experience to vigilantly publish his foreign policy positions. Caution was reflected in the ambiguity of form of attitudes, but precise enough to fulfill his commitment of America's active approach and the presence in international politics (Rofe 2008). Defining national interests that were represented by F. Roosevelt were supported in the teachings of Mahan.

The mere fact that during the Under-Secretary-duty in the US Navy he achieved a strong communication with Mahan, affected his views in terms of foreign policy that was later created and represented. Franklin Roosevelt launched the debate that opposed the division of the American fleet in the Pacific and the Atlantic, and in this process he sought help from T. Roosevelt and A. Mahan. He thought their critical thinking will be useful in achieving this objective (Rofe 2008) A certain turning point in gaining support for his views Roosevelt represented in Chicago on the 5th October 1937, the "Quarantine Speech", where for the first he warned of the danger US could face and when he for the first time proposed measures to reduce or eliminate these hazards. In addition to Mahan's role in preventing the division of the fleet, the contribution of the understanding of the policies mentioned the President of the US describes Simon J. Rofe: "Mahan strategy has made the connection between the navy and empire, and Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt understood this." (Rofe 2008). In addition to the undoubted influence of Mahan's learning, Nikolas Spykman was one of the scientists whose concept substantial effect on the future role of the US in the international arena. Dilemma "to influence on the world or to stay on the sideline", "Spykman expresses with the question: "should we protect our interests by defense on our side of the ocean, or to actively participate in countries across the ocean?" He stresses the need that "USA must understand once and for all that the constellation of power in Europe and in Asia have significance for them both in time of the war and in time of the peace" (Vukovic 2007).

Spykman highlights the importance of the geographic factor in international politics, and his thesis on "the conflict nature- essence of international politics". The strategic priority for United States is to prevent the unification of Eurasia into the enemy force, which can be achieved by exercising the role of the US as a "world balancer" with the primary aim of securing the global primacy of the United States. "Balancing" means the military and diplomatic activity on the edges of Eurasia, creating regional balances of power, security arrangements and military-political focus on Rimleda zone. All mentioned objectives imply widespread overseas presence, then stronger cohesion of the two Americas and the ability to conduct wars with integrated performance of all forms of power. (Vukovic 2007).

The announcement of the new world order with the active role of the United States already appeared during the Second World War. According to Paul Kennedy, "havoc created in Hiroshima and the fall of Berlin in the hands of the Red Army not only symbolized the end of another war, but also marked the beginning of a new world order." (Kenedi 2003). The world was moving towards the bipolar era, although the enormous

economic power of the US after the Second World War comparing to the former world powers, indicated that conditions for the global dominance of the US were created. Such developments of situation no longer allow US to return to isolationism, especially as old forces and power were descent and new ones begin to rise. What was left for scholars to via relevant theories define the future position of the US in the world - a global leader or hegemon?

THE THEORY OF HEGEMONIC STABILITY

The Cold War ended with the victory of "the world of the sea" over the "world of land", i.e. The United States of America. According to Mahan's and Spykman's beliefs, political and economic power based on favorable maritime position prevailed and thereby justify their teachings which were by then widely accepted and encouraged. As it was already explained in the introduction, the defeated side retreated, trying to consolidate by avoiding confrontation in any field until eventual recovery, while the winner objectively came to the position that there is no worthy opponent – and it become a global power. Consequently, the US came in the position to exploit success, or there were in a position to regulate international relations in accordance to their interests. Models and justification of such ambitions did not lack, and the settings were contained in the "Theory of hegemonic stability", which, according to rule, finds supporters located in countries that are up to this role, but also to those who enjoyed by their favor. (Kilibarda 2008).

According to Carles Kegli, hegemon is a single, extremely powerful state who has overwhelming influence on the global system. The theory of hegemonic stability present set of theories that claim that the establishment of the hegemony of global domination by a large force is necessary condition for making global order in commercial transactions and international military security. The theory assumes that stable world order requires a dominant world leader who would punish aggressors who threaten the status quo and to also to prevent explosive competition between long rivalries competing forces to escalate into a major systematic war. (Kegli 2004).

Charles Kindleberger laid the foundations of the Theory of hegemonic stability in his work considering causes and consequences of the Great Depression from 1929 (UK Essays, 2015). His considerations suggest that international system of trade and finance, in order to function, must be based on hegemony. Large and powerful countries are attributed the ability to stabilize the world economy, since only they possess such capabilities. From this point of view, but also from the fact that the interests of the hegemon in the world's largest economy are the biggest, derived necessity of their acceptance to take also the largest responsibilities and consequently by being on the leading position. Robert Keohane upgraded theory of hegemonic stability, primarily from the economic standpoint (UK Essays 2015). He believes that the domination of one country benefits to other regimes - smaller countries, in establishing a relatively precise and acceptable economic system. Any decline in the hegemonic system would endanger the stability of the economic system of the countries that emerged from the accepted hierarchical organization. According to Keohane , in order for one country to get in the position to become hegemon, it has to achieve control of raw materials, sources of capital, to control the market, as well as to have an advantage over the competition in the production of goods of high value. Also, it

must have the capability of creating and enforcing international rules, and unquestionably to be dominant in the economic, technological and military terms.

The theory of hegemonic stability was also supplemented by Robert Gilpin, who claimed that liberal economy of the hegemon is a basic requirement for the establishment of the international economy. In addition, it is implies that the hegemon is the center of the international order and the economy, who according to it's abilities and needs, creates and maintains international order that provides public goods aimed to improve and maintain stability. Such interpretations could be applicable in the circumstances of a unipolar world and the existence of a single hegemonic within it (UK Essays 2015).

This theory implies the existence of one dominant state and hierarchical organization within the international community, which is criticized and challenges. Neither one of the previously mentioned thinkers did not question the need of the existence of hegemon on the global stage. Moreover, its existence is considered to be necessary and desirable. Although interpretations described above imply the existence of only one dominant force as the role of hegemon, the Cold War has shown that it is possible co-existence of the two hegemons in their own areas of influence possible, whereby they are able to mutually exhaust and destabilize, until the final survival of only one of them. The position in which US found at the end of the Cold War precisely correspond to the conditions described in the Theory of hegemonic stability. The US is recognized as a country invited to ensure international peace and stability by provision of the common good and restraining opponents.

MODERN UNDERSTANDING OF THE POSITION OF THE UNITED STATES: A GLOBAL LEADER OR HEGEMON?

Although the US remained the only global power after the end of the Cold War, the prospects for eternal peace do not exist. The principle of the existence of the world without armed conflict was rejected in the works of many authors, and liberal conception of the world has not claimed the preponderance compared to a realistic approach. The high degree of contradictions among the modern states is partly sidelined, although not completely rejected, while at the same time the high degree of interdependence was emphasized. Similarly to Mahan's commitment for a presence in the international framework in order to realize national interests, the majority of American contemporary theorists said that the US presence in the world is the vital strategic interest for the future of this country. The reasons given by the US theorists against US isolationism are reduced to dependence on trade and contacts with the world in general and therefore cannot allow the international environment to be created spontaneously or under the influence of some other upcoming power or coalition.

Also, the eventual withdrawal into isolation would cause instability in the world and in the long run would jeopardize American interests. Last, in the case a new dominant forces – hegemon appear, the US would have to be further engaged to preserve the global balance, but with a much stronger capacity, greater material and human losses. From the above it follows inevitably that the constant and moderate presence in different regions of the world and addressing global issues is far more cost-effective and safer option than isolationism. Also, one of the fundamental geostrategic interests of the US is prevention of emergence of planetary "player" who would be able to challenge their leadership. This is

one of the things Spykman predicted with assertion that one of the main guidelines to the future operation of the US foreign policy will be resisting the creation of the Eurasian hegemon.

One of the scholars who advocate the active US approach to foreign policy is Joseph Nye. Nye developed a bit different way of understanding international relations, combining the traditional categories of security forces, power and balance of power with the new, changed understanding based on the principle of so-called soft power (Nye 2004). However, he is claiming that geo-economics has not fully replaced geopolitics and military forces still play a relevant role, even among the great powers, and that the US military presence is very desirable in certain parts of the world. Nye notes that "most of the countries in East Asia welcome the presence of US troops as a policy of insurance against volatile neighbors. As it is described by the Ministry of Defense, one of the missions of US troops abroad is to "shape the environment". (Nye 2004). Therefore Nye do not criticize the US presence on the global level and active approach to foreign policy, but arguments in favor of considering other means to fulfill the American national interest.

Stressing the so-called soft power, he does not reject entirely the classical values of geopolitics, military and economic power. In his criticism of the definition of the position of the United States after the Cold War, Nye challenged its role as hegemon. Although some analysts compare the current role of the US with the rise and fall of Great Britain Empire, Nye indicates significant differences in favor of his thesis. Unlike the United States, Great Britain never had domination as the United States has today. Despite the opinion that we are witnessing "the American empire", the facts show that the US has no colonies, which create maneuver space that Britain never had. Also, one cannot ignore the geographical factor that provides United States adequate protection since they are surrounded by oceans and countries that do not pose a threat. Unlike the British Empire, the United States rely largely on its own armed forces, which in conditions of increasing nationalism does not represent a serious obstacle for entry into the armed conflict. (Diplomatija 2015).

Despite of different definitions of hegemony and its placing in relation to imperialism, Nye asserts that the United States is clear evidence that the hegemon does not need to have formally empire. If the hegemony is considered to be the ability to impose the rules of the international system, it remains unclear exactly how much impact the hegemon must achieve on the other forces. Considering the economic point of view which equated hegemon with the control of most of the resources of power, Nye puts into question the example of the British Empire from the XIX century, which in spite of the naval domination, was not leading to GDP and military spending (Diplomatija, 2015). Furthermore, in the period after the Second World War, the USSR rivaled in the military power more than four decades, while the US were economically dominant. This balance of power is limited maneuver space among each other, whereby the US was the dominant mainly in North and South America and Western Europe, which accounted less than half of the world. The territory of China, India, Indonesia and the countries of the Warsaw Pact remained outside their positive impact. Nye concludes that the position of the United States can rather be called "half-hegemony", and in relation to the disproportion of indicators share in the world economy, where USA in share global GDP in accounts for about 25%, "primacy" would be probably the most accurate description of the current position of the USA in international relations. (Diplomatija 2015). One of the most eminent American

geopolitician and geostrategic Zbigniew Brzezinski gave the US foreign policy performance analysis conducted on the basis of hypotheses about the consequences of the potential withdrawal of US geo-strategic core regions of Europe, the Far East and the Persian Gulf.

According to Brzezinski, withdrawing the US from these regions would lead to a restart of the arms race and making security arrangements with Russia in Europe, the Far East, with a very probable war on the Korean peninsula, and to the domination of Iran in the Persian Gulf. The above scenario would lead to major political crisis and severe political instability in all regions. Therefore a possible US defensive strategy brought into question the loyalty of the most important US military and political allies - the European Union, the main energy supplier (Gulf countries), and would be brought into question relations with Japan as the most important US ally in the Far East. (Brzezinski 2004). Brzezinski does not question the need for global dominance of the United States and suggests that their global leadership is essential. In addition to Brzezinski, one of the giants of American geopolitical thought Colin Gray discusses the implications of a possible return to the US (neo) isolationism. Gray also believes that the key reasons the US residue in world affairs and especially have active presence on the territory of the Eurasian security reasons and arrangements. He estimates that the US withdrawal from international politics would led to a convergence of challenges and threats to US interests "closer to its borders" and that American (neo) isolationism would led to the loss of the leading position in NATO. US withdrawal would lead to a distortion of the current role and unity in NATO. In the European region it would, almost certainly, lead to a return to the historical understanding of the balance of power among the major countries of the Old Continent, Germany, V. Britain and France (Gray 1988). Due to this, the global US leadership is necessary for the protection of national interests.

The modern views of US foreign policy presence and performance, and in a contrary of the isolationism, are represented by researchers from the famous RAND Corporation, who point out that the US will remain present on the international scene, mainly due to the necessity of safeguarding its own economy, as well as the political and security reasons. The part of the book "*Sources of Conflict in the 21st Century: Regional Futures and US strategy*" under the heading "*Overview of the future security environment*" researchers from RAND institution argue that the US will remain "engaged as a key player on the global stage in the early years of the XXI century" (Khallized et al. 1998) and that the US armed forces will play a key role in a wide range of obligations and events, starting from the role in the collective defense to the implementation of different types of aid operations. Similarly as Brzezinski and Gray, RAND's researchers estimate that the eventual implications of US withdrawal from international policy would be significant. According to this view, the withdrawal would inevitably lead to the spread of instability and conflict, and the weakening of former allies and strengthening former adversaries. Also, in the same part, there is one interesting argument, according to which the dragging "within the US military establishment would be dramatically reduced with the reduction of the budget". (Gray 1988). Modern understanding of the position of the US in the aftermath of the Cold War that were previously considered bring to prejudice the use of the term "hegemon", probably because of the negative historical legacy, or attachment to imperialist expeditions in the past and the consequences that left. In the contrary, domination, global leadership and primacy are terms that seek to define the necessity of the leading role of the

US in the contemporary world, which is considered crucial for the realization of national interests and the preservation of the current system at the global level.

From the standpoint of the US Strategy of the national security, the preservation of peace and international relations based on law are priorities that cannot be achieved without the leading role of the United States. With the reference to the terms "lead (lead / leader / leadership)" 94 times in the text, it clearly points to the vision of their role in the XXI century on a global level. (Foreign Affairs 2015).

CONCLUSION

The United States are dominant force in four decisive domains of global power: military, economical, technological and cultural. Although the dominance in these segments individually significantly reduced from the 70's of the last century, it still gives the US political force that no other country has. The combination of these four attributes makes the US a global force. Although after the Second World War occurred the period of the conflict of the two different concepts and visions of world politics, the period of Cold War, the influence of USA on the west and USSR on the eastern hemisphere, justified the theory that it is possible to have the two dominant forces - hegemons, as they are called by some thinkers. The very nature of the hegemon to remain the only dominant force inevitably led to mutual competition in all spheres of social development, and hence exhaustion, until the final victory and survival of one of them. Events such are the unification of Germany and the disintegration of the Soviet Union marked the end of the Cold War and the victory of the United States. The policy of internationalism prevailed over the policy of isolationism and also justified and allowed the United States dominance on the global level which have not have ever reached before. In the historical period from just before World War II until the end of the Cold War, the outstanding Western thinkers had undivided opinion about the need for USA dominance on a global scale. While some describe the dominance of the US as hegemony and compared it with the British Empire, others carefully avoid using that term, precisely because of the historical legacy the famous Empire had. Using terms such as "global leadership", "primacy", "half-hegemon", "key player", "domination" and other contemporary thinkers in any segment do not allow the possibility of the existence of any other dominant forces to counter the United States. What's more, hypothetical consideration and immediately negates any possibility of (self-) isolation of the United States in the aftermath of the Cold War with an adequate statement of reasons for the necessity of US dominance at the global level.

Although the dominant role of the US on the global level is undisputed whatever the terminology defining such roles, the time ahead will show whether the latest geopolitical developments, the growing role of the Eastern Hemisphere and Eurasian integration, will mark the end of a period of complete domination by one power and eventual (re) start of the epoch of the global distribution of power and influence.

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