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Foundations and Schools of Governing Politics

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Abstract

The importance of this research lies in the intellectual foundations and schools of American foreign policy. It is necessary to analyze the political behavior of any state in terms of its intellectual structure. Political action does not arise from an intellectual vacuum, regardless of whether it is internal or external, its features are only shaped according to intellectual data, means that the political behavior of any state is, in reality, a reflection of the content of its intellectual structure. It seeks to translate this knowledge into reality within the framework of its dealings with others. The process of formulating American foreign policy relies primarily on official and unofficial institutions. This study necessitated that we approach the subject according to both the intellectual foundations and schools of thought that drive American foreign policy.

Keywords: Foundations, Schools, Governing Politics.

Introduction

The importance of researching the intellectual foundations and schools of American foreign policy lies in the fact that American foreign policy is not governed by principles, constants, strategies or tactics, but rather it is multiple and diverse in all its dimensions according to the party to which the policy is related in the global arena. It is necessary to analyze the political behavior of any country with the components of its intellectual structure, as political action does not come from an intellectual vacuum, as this action, regardless of whether it is internal or external, is only shaped according to intellectual data, meaning that the political behavior of any country is in reality nothing but a reflection of the content of its intellectual structure, as it seeks to translate it on the ground in the framework of its dealings with others, and that the process of making American foreign policy depends primarily on official and unofficial institutions.

The problem of researching the intellectual foundations and schools of American foreign policy lies in the role and influence of these foundations and schools within each institution, their weight in shaping American foreign policy, the influential parties or individuals within these institutions, and their role in directing and planning American foreign policy. Although the United States is a state of institutions, it is subject to the visions, ideas, and policies of influential individuals within official and unofficial institutions.

The research on the intellectual foundations and schools of American foreign policy is based on the premise that the intellectual foundations and schools of American foreign policy play a role in shaping foreign policy, working in an integrated manner to achieve the goals of American foreign policy.

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We will approach the topic using descriptive and analytical approaches, analyzing the role of intellectual foundations and schools in shaping American foreign policy.

First Requirement: The Intellectual Foundations and Schools of American Foreign Policy

The constants of American foreign policy can be named, regardless of who runs it. Whether Republican or Democrat, these are constants based on bipartisan agreement, and they relate to defense and economic strategies. However, at the same time, there are ideological differences between the two parties. Democrats appear progressive and are more sympathetic to Israel, while Republicans are less sympathetic to Israel. This is evident in Arab Americans' tendency to vote Republican in the elections. Research into the intellectual foundations of American foreign policy must examine the debate between idealism and realism in any foreign policy, and between the planning and implementation of this policy and the intellectual premises that policymakers hold and are aware of. The leader plays an important role in maintaining the continuity of the regime and contributing to shaping its vision. Based on these beliefs, the variables of the internal and external environment, the nature of responses, and the formulation of policy alternatives are evaluated to achieve goals. American intellectual foundations, with their beliefs and principles, contain a set of proposals and issues related to the United States, which it presents to itself and to the outside world. It includes that the United States of America has a common social ideal and political doctrine, and that this doctrine expresses a set of American principles for foreign and domestic policy, and that the intellectual foundations contain an ideology, and this ideology is not only a tool for evaluating reality and the future, but it is also the determining factor for the type of role that the state plays in the international political system and its vision of the nature of this system (1), and the contributions of ideology are diverse in the process of making foreign political decisions, the most important of which are (2):

1. Assisting in formulating the intellectual or mental framework for the external reality for decision-makers.
2. Providing decision-makers with a vision of the future and identifying long-term goals and the means to achieve them.
3. Assisting in presenting trade-off options based on the nature of the external situation and international variables, and then presenting the option consistent with the content of this ideology.

The role of ideology, regardless of the nature of its components, is to describe and outline the way in which politics proceeds in the field of foreign policy. Ideology creates approaches that serve national interests because ideology indicates the aims and objectives sought by the state (3). The record of American foreign policy celebrates many ideological indications that expressed the truth of the hypothesis that foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy. On the one hand, supporters of American parties often return to the guidance of many values of American doctrine when facing many issues to support their points of view, in addition to the multiplicity of values of American doctrine sufficient to provide strong support for any American foreign policy.

American presidents were initially local politicians who embarked on their journey to achieve their political status through domestic achievements and continued on the same path in their foreign policy (4). The following facts can be observed in American foreign policy (5):

1. Foreign policy is formulated and implemented by the executive branch and the presidency itself.
2. The existence of reliance on, or fear of, the concentration of power within the executive branch and the barriers to external involvement, which constituted a traditional barrier to American foreign policy.
3. The diversity of tools for implementing American foreign policy, ranging from diplomacy and foreign aid to military means, through international organizations such as the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund, and slogans of democracy and human rights.
4. The political doctrines of the United States of America have diversified in response to and interaction with changes in the domestic and international environment and the requirements for achieving higher political goals.

The intellectual duality in American foreign policy has provided pluralism and dynamism in its options, meaning that there are two intellectual tributaries represented by the Democratic Party with its liberal orientation and the Republican Party with its conservative orientation. In the field of foreign policy specifically, the Democratic Party believes in the necessity of the United States of America's connection to the world and the importance of it playing a leading and active role in the international arena (6).

The United States of America seeks to create a balance between realism and idealism in its foreign policy in order to create realistic peace. Since its inception, the United States of America has not missed the opportunity to declare that it is a country that loves peace and hates war and that it believes in freedom and continuing to perform its message to all people. Therefore, preserving the American ideal was and still is an important goal of American foreign policy, in addition to relying on pragmatic thought (interest) as a basis in its internal and external orientations, as well as on the schools to which each president belongs. The following is an explanation of these ideas and schools.

First: Intellectual Foundations

1. American Idealist Thought

This thought is based on idealist concepts, believing in cooperation and the non-use of physical force. It believes that moral force is the most stable means by which security and stability can be achieved. The tool for achieving security is ethics and increased cooperation to create a united international community that rejects the use of force against any political community (7).

The idealist movement is concerned with international law and international organizations with the aim of eliminating conflicts, establishing a better global order, serving the goals of peace, and supporting and developing international understanding. It proceeds from the primacy of ethics in international relations between individuals, whether within the framework of national society or the international framework. The idealist believes that it is the individual's duty to submit to the laws and rules established to serve the group. The degree of harmony of interests also serves to establish a natural harmony between the higher interests of the individual and the higher interests of the group. When an individual works for self-interest, he works for the benefit of the group, and when he supports the interest of the group, he supports his own interest (8). Idealists address international issues through three basic criteria (9):

A. Ethics.

B. Optimism.

C. International or global trend.

Accordingly, from the perspective of idealist theory, addressing international crises is achieved through the following frameworks (10):

A. International institutions such as the League of Nations and the United Nations, which replace the vocabulary of the balance of power system and anarchy in realist theory.

B. The tools for maintaining international peace and security are the legal and political tools of international judiciary, arbitration, mediation, and negotiation.

C. Another tool for stabilizing international peace and security is disarmament, given that the arms race constitutes a serious threat to global peace and security.

Idealists are optimistic and believe that history is moving forward in an upward, linear direction, which has led to an interest in new issues and the adoption of different foreign policies. However, it did not achieve the goals, and the upward trend stopped. Democracies did not take root, as they claimed. On the contrary, they faced a structural crisis at the level of the Western world, theoretically, objectively, and procedurally. They also saw that authoritarianism in China was destined to fail, but it rose rapidly and succeeded beyond expectations. They also preached globalism, but it veered toward more nationalism and isolationism. All of this cast doubt on the credibility of the upward trend of the ideal vision adopted by the democrats (11).

2. Realistic American Thought

Realism is an objective approach to reality as it is. This is from a visionary perspective. In practical terms, realism means embarking on decision-making with a less extreme approach to change, avoiding conflict with reality. It attempts to circumvent reality, address it, and adapt to its circumstances in a way that does not negatively impact the self. It does not target its entirety with direct change, and it does not adhere to a rigid vision of change in terms of the goals and outcomes sought to be achieved, or in terms of the means and methods for achieving these goals (12).

Among its most prominent thinkers are Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski. Kissinger's vision of American foreign policy was based on a combination of violence and the threat of violence on the one hand, and diplomacy on the other, whereby diplomacy gains realistic credibility. Among his most important strategic ideas are (13):

A. For peace to exist, there must be a negotiated settlement that leaves everyone in a state of balance.

B. The victorious power must not crush or annihilate the defeated, but must grant them a measure of power and an outlet for an honorable peace.

C. The best guarantee of peace is balance.

As for Brzezinski, he emphasizes creating stability and preserving peace. This means that the United States, which has reached the summit, must curb the geopolitical dynamics of the aspiring power, because in doing so, it preserves its authority and unilateralism. This also means preserving America's own interests, should they exist, and preventing the actions of other competing parties, because any movement or growth in its foreign political activity in any region of the world will be at the expense of the influence of the United States.

The idea of the realist school was founded on a set of assumptions, including that the state is the main actor controlling international relations and that it is characterized, from the point of view of (Kenneth Waltz), by chaos, which imposes on states the necessity of self-reliance in obtaining the factors of their strength to achieve their security, and states in their quest to achieve their security employ all the material sources of their latent and actual strength, especially military ones, which are considered, from the point of view of realists, the most important dimension of the state's strength, and the importance of the remaining elements of strength comes in proportion to their contribution to supporting the state's military strength (14).

3. American Pragmatic Thought

American pragmatism, with its materialistic and utilitarian philosophical foundations, is one of the most important components of the value system of American society and the American system alike. This has been reflected in the nature of American global foreign policy since the latter emerged from its isolation after World War II, and before that at the regional level in accordance with the "Monroe Doctrine" during the United States' political isolation. This was embodied through the hegemonic projects adopted by this policy and the imperialist dimensions it carried in accordance with the model of the modern American empire. Pragmatism as a school of thought was not born of a specific era or a specific environment. Rather, European thought in its various shades was a forerunner of this matter, which in turn goes back to Greek thought and the philosophy of the Middle Ages, then the Renaissance of "Niccolò Machiavelli" and others, which was followed by the philosophy of the experimental school of "John Locke" and others, passing through the utilitarian school of "Bentham," "Hume," and "Stuart Mill." However, what is constant in this framework is the extent of the influence of pragmatic philosophy on American life as a whole and in its various fields, starting with Socially, politically and economically, with all its expansionist aspirations and its tendencies towards external hegemony, it contributed with its unique data to building the foundations of an entire state, system and society, and the matter became more important with the transformation of this state into the superpower that leads the world and the international system (15).

Pragmatism, as a political school, like other political schools in the field of political science, focuses on the issue of benefit in a positive way on human behavior in general, and in all fields, whether material, intellectual, or value-based, reaching the field of American foreign policy, and not from a materialistic standpoint only, as some of those who strip pragmatism of any moral value-based cover see it (16).

The American pragmatist philosophy has become a project ready for global marketing, expressing the image of the United States abroad and before the world on the one hand, and one of the means and mechanisms employed by contemporary American foreign policy to achieve its national interests and its monopoly on global leadership, in accordance with the United States' real data and capabilities that contributed to building its imperial project on the other hand. This is what the Bush Jr. administration transformed into something resembling a doctrine within the framework of its strategy aimed at achieving absolute hegemony over the world under the umbrella of the global war on terrorism. Despite the cautious retreat that the Obama administration subsequently adopted by refraining from intervening in many strategic regions such as Syria and Ukraine, despite this administration's assertions that isolationism is not an American option at this stage, it is clear that this American position is nothing but a reflection of the internal and external circumstances that the United States is experiencing, and it is an

approach closer to a subtle tactic without stripping the essence of American foreign policy of the pragmatic doctrine (17).

Pragmatism, with its principles, foundations, and premises, is considered one of the most influential philosophical doctrines in contemporary American foreign policy. This is embodied in one of the most important political theories, circulated and adopted by successive American administrations and American foreign decision-making circles, which is the realist theory. Realism is nothing but an embodiment and reflection of the pragmatic doctrine in American foreign policy, and the origins of the first are nothing but a reflection of the intellectual premises of the second. Power and national interest go back, from the intellectual origins of American pragmatic philosophy, which was expressed by the intellectual theses of both Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington (*The End of History* and *The Clash of Civilizations*) in the post-Cold War era, which expressed in their essence and indisputably the extent of the influence of the pragmatic doctrine on American foreign policy in particular, and on American political thought and the social nature of American life in general, and permanently on the presence of the enemy (the “pragmatics”) (non-democratic regimes, terrorism, etc.), which is something that does not. It does not only go back to that moment, but it goes back to past decades, starting with Jefferson and his foreign policy based on the principle of colonialism for freedom, to Wilson and his efforts to replace the “balance of power” with a “community of power,” to two post-World War II examples who were determined to change the world through liberating it and even using force if necessary, passing through Roosevelt’s realism, which contributed to determining the parameters of the global system for the post-World War II era of the decline of traditional empires in front of the modern major powers (18), to adopting policies ranging between idealism and realism in the Cold War era to get rid of the enemy (the Soviet Union), and after the Cold War, following different policies in order to protect and achieve its goals in an international system whose features were not defined.

Finally, it can be said that American foreign policy is based primarily on pragmatism, which is closely linked to the utilitarian materialist philosophy based on maximizing interests, gains, and benefits, despite the controversy between the position of “values” and “interests” in American foreign policy. Pragmatism is also one of the basic pillars of the American social and cultural structure, and it is something that emphasized the freedom advocated by the Protestant doctrine, which is the basic nucleus that contributed to building the immigrant society for several centuries. In light of these data, the nature of American foreign policy was determined in its pragmatic dimension, even if the official discourse of this policy did not explicitly adopt this matter. However, the reality of practice and the practical application of American foreign policy indicates beyond doubt its absolute belief in the pragmatic doctrine.

Second: The Schools of Thought Driving American Foreign Policy

The foreign policy of any country is driven by a specific approach that represents the general framework governing its movement. The United States of America has based its foreign policy on this idea since its independence from Britain in 1776, regardless of whether the ruling party is Democratic or Republican. These schools have a strong presence in the American presidency and in the sovereign ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense. They play a prominent role in leading American foreign policy by defining its behavior and methods in conducting foreign affairs to achieve American goals and interests. Every American president follows a foreign policy based on one of these American political schools of thought. These schools are (19):

1. The Hamiltonian School (utilitarianism): One of its most prominent thinkers is (Alexander Hamilton) (20) * This school is based on the necessity for the United States of America to adopt a realistic policy in its international relations, i.e. it believes in military and political power in developing the interests of the United States of America abroad, and it finds that the basic task of the American government is to encourage the prosperity of the American project at home and abroad by encouraging integration into the global economy, and it finds that the alliance between the government and owners of large commercial businesses is the key to internal stability and effective work abroad.

He emphasizes that trade is the primary driver of American foreign relations and that the United States must be an empire busy securing its commercial interests and the interests of its major corporations, which will be the backbone of its economy and, consequently, the backbone of American societal well-being. Securing these interests requires military power. He emphasizes two things:

A. That the federal government work side by side and in full coordination with major American corporations.

B. That it contribute to building an economic system in which these corporations operate with great ease.

He believes that the United States must not allow any country to threaten its interests, and if threatened, it must resort to forming an alliance to confront that country, either peacefully or by military means, if necessary. Hamilton envisioned that when commercial interests are intertwined, the world becomes less willing to go to war (21).

2. The Jeffersonian School (Isolationism):

Its most prominent thinker was the third American president, Thomas Jefferson (1801-1809), a key figure in the development of the Republican Party. This school believes in American uniqueness and capabilities and emphasizes the necessity of the United States adopting an isolationist foreign policy that reduces American ties, commitments, and interventions in global affairs to ease its burdens. It views the mission of American foreign policy as protecting the American homeland.

It explains that the United States' role is not to impose democracy on other peoples or pursue the interests of its corporations, as imposing democracy would embroil it in problems that might threaten its national security.

The Jeffersonians sanctify the individual and fear the corruption of institutions, especially commercial institutions. It is better to master democracy at home without taking risks in foreign relations. They also placed domestic interests far above international interests (22).

3- The Jacksonian School (Harsh or Hawkish): Its most prominent thinker was the seventh American President, Andrew Jackson (1829-1837). It believed in the interconnectedness of domestic and foreign policies and the necessity of prioritizing both in order to achieve prosperity for the American people. It also believed in the use of military force to achieve American interests and goals in any region of the world (23). It also believed in the use of military force to achieve American interests and goals anywhere in the world. It viewed the world exclusively from the perspective of American interests, and it represented the antithesis of the Jeffersonian School and its call for isolation from the world. Despite their shared interest in foreign affairs,

the Jeffersonian School questioned the orientations of its Hamiltonian counterpart, viewing it as connected to financial and business circles.

4. The Wilsonian School (Idealism):

Its basic ideas go back to the twenty-eighth American president, Drury Wilson (1913-1921). It believes in the necessity of an active American foreign policy that seeks to spread and consolidate democratic principles in the world, defend human rights, and cooperate with the international community by activating the role of international institutions. It believes that the United States of America has a moral obligation to spread American values throughout the world by supporting the idealistic missionary approach that heralds a world of democracy and a peaceful international community. It believes that all countries are equal before international law (24).

Each American president differs from the others in the manner and degree of their adoption of the ideas and principles of each school. Some tend to adopt the principles and ideas of a particular school, while others tend to attempt to combine the ideas and principles of two or more schools in American foreign policy. The political approach of the Barack Obama administration (2009-2017) attempts to combine the ideas and principles of the Jeffersonian school, which calls for reducing American engagement and commitments abroad and focusing on domestic issues, with the ideas of the Wilsonian school, which calls for cooperation within the international community to achieve security and stability. The United States can exert influence in the world through a policy of cooperation with the international community, focusing on certain international issues such as combating terrorism and the dangers and challenges of global warming.

As for the Donald Trump administration (2017-2021), since taking power, its political approach has been based on the Jacksonian school, which focuses on making the United States the world leader without concern for complete hegemony by raising the slogan “America First” and giving priority to interests rather than values. It is based on avoiding long-term direct confrontations that may lead to human losses. From there, we saw American pressure on the Gulf states to pay money in exchange for American protection, as well as American pressure on NATO to increase its contribution to defense budgets, impose tariffs on China, and reach understandings with Russia, as well as the American withdrawal from many international agreements, including NAFTA, the Paris Climate Agreement, the nuclear agreement with Iran, UNESCO, and the Human Rights Council. This shows that the Trump administration is based on leadership, not hegemony. American foreign policy is often in a state of conflict and opposition between two pairs of contradictory ideas: the first is the idea of isolation versus intervention, and the second is the idea of principles versus realism and interest (25).

As for US President Joe Biden, he is from the Democratic Party, and the Democratic Party, with its various left-wing and right-wing tendencies, adopts the Wilsonian (idealist) school, mixed with the ideas of the realistic Hamiltonian school, as the basis of its ideas in foreign policy. He believes in working within international institutions, international partnerships, and free and open trade between all countries. He calls for spreading American liberal democratic values and adopting American ideals and values as the basis for the strength of the United States of America, and for the United States of America to restore itself as a leader among democratic countries and work to reform and defend global democracies and renew the United States’ commitment to international agreements, including the Paris Agreement, from which former President Donald Trump withdrew, and to return to international organizations and collective work to confront

international problems and give American diplomacy priority in foreign policy tools. He does not use military forces except to defend American interests (26).

Conclusion

US political decision-making attracts widespread interest in the international community. The United States is the most powerful country in the world, exerting control over the Security Council and many global and national financial institutions. It also influences the policies of many strong and weak countries, seeking to dominate the world. Official and unofficial institutions play a significant role in determining and directing US foreign policy, through which American decisions are formulated and made.

The official foreign policy institutions emerged from complex interactions between government agencies, including the presidency, the State Department, the Pentagon, the CIA, Congress, and the National Security Council. Since World War II, the level of congressional interference has generally declined, while the president, his close advisors, and the National Security Council in particular have increased their involvement in foreign policymaking. Research centers play an important and effective role, upon which the United States relies in research and development in the economic, military, technological, and even social fields.

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