



POLI 142A: United States Foreign Policy

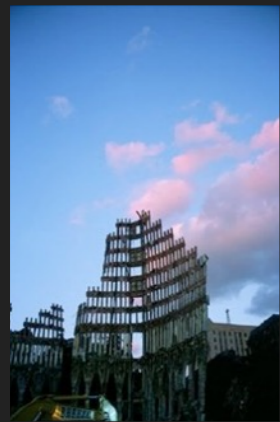


An Uncertain Identity

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Who are We?

- America's identity was formed in relation to tasks and threats that have gradually disappeared
 - The frontier: can no longer "go West"
 - Foreign threats:
 - European entanglements
 - Autocracy --> Fascism --> Communism --> Terrorism (not important geo-strategically)

Who will we Become?

- America's identity can still be formed in opposition (terrorists, China, proliferators)
- But perhaps it is better to think in terms of what we can champion than what we should oppose
 - The United States is the archetype of freedom:
 - Democracy
 - Free markets
 - International institutions

Who will we Become?, II

- Interestingly, these factors are also progenitors of prosperity and domestic and global peace.
 - Democracies tend to cooperate
 - Free markets create profit rather than conflict
 - IOs deal with increasing need for public goods
- Risk is that system will become self-defeating
- Leadership is better than hegemony
- Peace/prosperity are self-reinforcing

What are the Threats?

- China:
 - China is growing faster than the U.S.
 - Is this a threat?
 - Depends on what China does with power
 - At the same time that China is growing more powerful, it is also growing closer to the U.S.
- Russia:
 - Growing away from the U.S.
 - Growing weaker (resource exporter, arctic)

Power Transition

- The traditional threat to the hegemon is challenge from a rising power
 - Historically, these usually result in great wars
 - Reallocation of territory/influence
 - Commitment problems in bargaining
 - Exception: UK/US transition (why?)
 - The US had similar policy objectives
 - US did not want UK territorial holdings

Chinese Power Transition

- If any country is going to replace the US as hegemon in this century, it will be China
 - Territorial issues may be resolved
 - Territory less important as China grows rich
 - China is geographically distant from the US
 - Minerals could be a problem (cheap oil)
 - Compatibility of policy objectives more mixed.
 - China could want the same things as the US
 - Depends on how much we give China today

Counter argument: Contain China

- Traditional solution to threat is war or deterrence
 - A preemptive war with China is unthinkable
 - Huge casualties (U.S. lacks the will for this)
 - Indeterminate result (look at Iraq)
- Containment was the solution in Cold War
 - Our efforts (again) cannot be very robust
 - China will not be contained (will not work)
 - Alienate the Chinese, ensure future war

Strange Confluence of History

- Grand strategy determined by two factors
 - Military strategies unlikely to work
 - U.S. public lacks will for major war in Asia
 - Anything short of major war will fail
 - New military technologies not in our favor
 - Again, alienate the Chinese
 - Engagement unusually likely to succeed
 - Never before has a society had so great a likelihood of altering interests of competitor
 - Rich (capitalist) China prefers the status quo

Russia and the Arctic

- War with Russia over the Arctic more likely
 - Russia is becoming “oil sheikdom”
 - Abandons other forms of industrial production
 - Political apparatus can control oil wealth
 - End of democracy is “just over the horizon”
- Russia must control arctic oil in order to survive
 - Other nations (Canada, Denmark, Norway) seek to oppose Russian objectives
 - We should too.