

How successful have  
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in the post-cold war...

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



How successful have US geo-strategists been in ensuring that in the post-Cold War era the US faces no peers in shaping the international system? This paper seeks to analyze and discuss how successful have US geo-strategists been in ensuring that in the post-Cold War era the US faces no peers in shaping the international system. President Truman's Secretary of State, James Byrnes, in 1945 was quote to have said " mobilizing the nation for war is a small job compared with the effort to mobilize the world for peace." [1] He was of course referring how the United States shaped the international system both economically and politically by the latter's mobilizing, organizing, institutionalizing, subsidizing , integrating, underwriting, and managing efforts. It was indeed the US after World War II, who led the world in creating a far-flung liberal multilateral order and an alliance system even in the Cold War [2] that continue to exist until today. The period of between 1944 and 1951, could be seen as the time when American leaders engaged in the most intensive institution building the world had ever seen - global, regional, security, economic, and political. [3] One could go back in history and trace the launching of the UN, Bretton Woods, GATT, NATO, and the U. S-Japan alliance by the US as part of shaping the international system. Ikenberry, explained that the US " undertook costly obligations to aid Greece and Turkey and reconstruct Western Europe" and it helped rebuild the economies of Germany and Japan.

United States evidently had a hand " fashioning a world of multilateral rules, institutions, open markets, democratic community, and regional partnerships" [4] given the Atlantic Charter, the UN Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as living proofs of the decision it has

made.[5] The act of America was just described as an extraordinary and unprecedented undertaking by a major state as it may indicate the triumph of American internationalism[6] after earlier post-1919 and inter-war failures. From objective observers, the efforts of American geo-strategists created a new type of international order as there appeared a fusing together of new forms of liberalism, internationalism, and national security. Given the not so long difference in number of years between World War I and World II, one could only appreciate the blessing if not wonder of having a “long peace” given the situations that had put on stress the relationship among great nations especially during the Cold War. The dismantling of the communism in the former USSR may even be taken as living proof of the winning proposition for the adoption of democratic ideals. One could even observe what is happening in the China right now. Although professing to be still a communist country in its political system, its economic system is undeniably of an American origin with the introduction private ownership of goods as one of them. Thus, the act done by America after the war may be taken to have laid the foundation for the greatest world economic boom in history.

One noticeable act that may have started all these post war achievement of the US may have started with Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan and undertake long-term commitments to reconstruct and integrate Japan and Germany, who were its enemies during the war, into the West. This was to be followed by United Nations charter, the Bretton Woods agreements, and the NATO pact. fn1 .

One could only wonder how the people of America which was already then under the democratic system has mobilized its people particularly its Congress to supports such acts of the US, which at the time involved large amount of money. It could only be seen as gift of foresight the US geo-strategists. There are of course certain explanations why has these things happen. Ikenberry, (2005) explained that “ obviously, the growing threat of Soviet Communism was the preeminent factor that motivated and ensured the passage of many of US initiatives. He argued however that the United States could have responded differently to the rise of Soviet power and one example is isolationism.[7] He added that what “ the Cold War threat”, cannot explain is the “ wider agenda of order building and the deeper foundations of liberal internationalism that emerged after World War II.” There is therefore basis to agree on the observation that the UN, the multilateral economic institutions, and even the political vision behind the Atlantic pact could not just be taken to merely respond to. Ikenberry, (2005) however could only admit that the triumph of postwar American liberal internationalism might have triggered the end of the Cold War as it might have generated the domestic support of American to put the majority in support of American policies.

Nevertheless, he emphasized the fact “ the explanation for the liberal internationalist breakthrough of the 1940s is a longer and more interesting story.” Ikenberry[8] forwarded three arguments to support his theory America’s postwar liberal internationalism. First, he stated that at a general level, America’s postwar liberal internationalism reflected the basic 1940s-

era realities of American power and interests. Having emerged from the war as a truly global power, the US could not be denied to have the economic and strategic incentives to ensure that the postwar order was open, stable, and friendly. It had all reasons of doing so since a victor could only be magnanimous.

Second, Ikenberry argued that the specific institutional strategies and internationalist vision reflected distinctive New Deal-era liberal ideas about economics and politics and security. He explained that America approached order building with ideas about social security and national security that did not exist when Woodrow Wilson pursued his liberal ambitions.[9] Third, Ikenberry, argued that a remarkable confluence of ideas and agendas were appropriate to fit into the Roosevelt-Truman postwar project as he found the ideas tended to reinforce each other and thereby make way for many constituencies for an ambitious and sustained liberal internationalist undertaking after the war. It was indeed a synthesis from different groups that support the ideas such as realist geo-strategists, free traders and business internationalists, anti-communist crusaders, and old-style Atlanticists.[10] Given therefore the setting that American has power after war its interest may just be an expected phenomenon.

Ikenberry explained that the U. S. emerged as a global power after World War II with both the chance and motivation to organize its environment in a way that would serve its long term interests. He wanted his readers to understand his point in terms American domestic culture, ideas, or political identity to explain his simple point. He added that greatest power gave it

opportunities give the fact that other states were reduced by the war, it is only expected that the United States had to grow more powerful.

[11] With global power came new global interests. It a less favourable option for the US as that time to secure its interests by isolating itself in the Western Hemisphere or to rely other major state for protection or to uphold an open and stable order. As many others might have done, American opportunities and interests could only have come a part of the normal course of events. Paul Kennedy has described this reality saying: " Given the extraordinarily favourable economic and strategical position which the United States thus occupied, its post-1945 outward thrust could come as no surprise to those familiar with the history of international politics.

With the traditional Great Powers fading away, it steadily moved into a vacuum which their going created; having become number one, it could no longer contain itself within its own shores, or even its own hemisphere. To be sure, the war itself had been the primary cause of this projection outward of American power and influence; because of it, for example, in 1945 it had sixty-nine divisions in Europe, twenty-six in Asia and the Pacific, and none in the continental United States." [12] With the winning the war comes the power over the spoils of the war. Having US division all over the world after the war could only have implied only a moral, economic and military leadership to move things around. One's power is meant to be used since unused power may be taken as an act of irresponsibility. Indeed American may have been really right in its decision for even up to this time, when the American economy has an economic problem, the whole world is affected.

Another evidence is that fact that despite reluctance of some of members of the United nation to pursue the siege in Iraq, the US was able to organize the so called “ coalition of the willing.

’ What a show of power since it is the US who made the UN a great reality, it was also the first to have power to change the rules when it wants to.

Paul Kennedy further said: “ Simply because it was politically committed to the reordering of Japan and Germany (and Austria), it was ‘ over there’; and because it had campaigned via island groups in the Pacific, and into North Africa, Italy, and western Europe, it had forces in those territories also. There were, however, many Americans (especially among the troops) who expected that they would be home within a short period of time, returning U.

S. armed-forces deployments to their pre-1941 position. But while that idea alarmed the likes of Churchill and attracted isolationist Republicans, it provided impossible to turn the clock back.

Like the British after 1815, the Americans in their turn found their informal influence in various lands hardening into something more formal - and more entangling; like the British, too, they found ‘ new frontiers of insecurity’ whenever they wanted to draw the line. The ‘ Pax Americana’ had come of age.”[13]

The above could only mean repeating history as what the British had done. With Americans having found their informal influence in various lands, they had all the chance to strengthening the relationship into something more formal. Hence in many parts of the world, after the war the Americans have their military bases, until the same faded off as the Cold war

came to a halt. Ikenberry[14] thus explained that the war itself had turned America into global power with new internationalist interests that its power now had global reach. Having therefore the opportunities to structure the wider world in a way few states ever do, US had advantage of its strategic position in world affairs.

However, Ikenberry admitted that at the same time, the US confronted new geopolitical worries thus finding it harder for it to simply remain isolated at home. He explained that the fact that this deep American interest in an open, stable, and friendly geopolitical environment was made manifest during the war within academic and post-war planning circles.[15]

Santoro manifested that in planning circles, the question was asked about the minimum size of the world's territory that the U. S. would need to have access to and defend so as to remain a viable and growing great power.[16]

Spykman explained the conclusion that the U. S.

inability to remain isolated within its own region as it would need to be able protects sea lanes and outposts around the wider Eurasian landmass.[17]

Based on these analysis, there is basis to agree with Ikenberry, in arguing that operationally, " this meant - at the very least - forging strategic relationships, building up democratic states, and balancing regional powers so as to ensure that no other major military state dominated or gained hegemony in Asia or Europe." Ikenberry explained that this was a strategic goal the U. S. had which its experts he believed to have embraced and such was fact even before the Soviet Union emerged as a menace for the US. He added that it was America's globally updated version of Britain's centuries-



old grand plan of ensuring that no single great power dominated the European continent.

Lacking in earlier decades to have what the British had, the U. S. did not have the power, opportunity, or security imperative to reach out and organize Asia and Europe in this way. However as Ikenberry[18] saw it, 1940s gave America all the chance to embrace and benefit as from American internationalism. It can therefore be concluded that success of US geo-strategists been in ensuring that in the post-Cold War era the US faces no peers in shaping the international system is influenced by US having been the greatest victor in World War II, the position it had after war either economically and politically and its geographical location as a way of ensuring its strategic position in world affairs.

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<sup>[13]</sup> Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict From 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), p. 359.<sup>[14]</sup> See Ikenberry, 2005<sup>[15]</sup> Ibid<sup>[16]</sup> Carlo Maria Santoro, *Diffidence and Ambition: The Intellectual Sources of U. S. Foreign Policy* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1992), pp.

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