

# REALISM VERSUS REALITY

## The United States' Foreign Policy – the liberal controversy of realism –

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At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, America has the opportunity and the responsibility to influence the new global configuration, for at least two reasons: firstly, considering its status as the sole superpower remaining after the Cold War, it induces a shaping of the historical process; secondly, its structure and substance seem to be a successful option for what tomorrow's world tends to become. Although American values may be universally valid, it is not necessary that they be universally and completely applicable to all times and all places. In addition, there exists the concerning possibility that the liberalism promoted by the United States may become irrelevant for many trends that affect and eventually transform global order. This country now finds itself in a world for which it has not been trained enough through its historical experience, a world of international relations which, according to Raymond Aron, still holds on to many characteristics that the United States have attempted to avoid<sup>1</sup>.

The US relations with the world have been particularly and decisively influenced by the most characteristic phenomenon on the American political scene, that is the lag between the political ideal and the political reality. This lag is present under a shape "that is not valid for any of the other great states of the world."<sup>2</sup>

America's mode of action on the world scene unavoidably bears the influences of the above mentioned lag, since, *ab initio*, "the idea of state as an entity that has the authority to legitimise is still unknown to American thought and consequently, the European concept of *raison d'Etat* is still regarded as the complete and untrustworthy opposite of the American tradition which implies liberalism, constitutionalism, and natural rights."<sup>3</sup> In foreign policy equations, such a moral element is inserted, and, according to it, the foreign policy objectives must reflect not only

the national security interests and the economic interests of certain key national groups, but also the values and principles that define American identity.

The development of a global strategy that may extend into the unforeseeable future will have to detach itself from the debate on an abstract topic, the predominance of values over interests, of idealism (seen as an expression of liberalism) over realism. According to Henry Kissinger, the challenge of the American foreign policy is given by the unification of the two tendencies, taking into consideration both the traditions of exceptionalism that have helped define American democracy as well as the specific conditions these traditions apply under.

The bringing together of these two world visions is a bold attempt in the case of the American foreign policy. Firstly, the actions undertaken by the United States overseas must face a domestic exigency: they should be in accordance with the moral and political values which form the bedrock of the American nation<sup>4</sup>, values that render its liberal and progressive essence. But at the time when the founding principles were stated, the project of a liberal foreign policy was irrelevant for the European practices since it was derived from the concept of *raison d'Etat*. Therefore, the principles of the American foreign policy have easily become subject to international relations theoreticians who have tried to prove their lack of conformity to the various paradigms of the international system. Last century has especially been the witness of a theoretical confrontation between the two dominant worldviews, realism and liberalism, a confrontation mainly fuelled by the interpretations provided for the different foreign, political actions of the United States. Not even at present has the dispute been concluded, but transferred onto the co-ordinates valid at the beginning of this century, and the American

foreign policy continues to provide the common framework for analysis.

An important turning point for the American foreign policy is 9/11 that has accelerated the formation of a common position, easy to attain at wartime. At the same time, it has shown that exercising a type of soft power in the world (consistently recommended by the supporters of realism) does not guarantee the United States' keeping a safe distance from the new threats.

The *National Security Strategy* document, dated September 2002, revealed the United States' predilection for adopting an attitude that Kissinger has deemed necessary not only in order to share the psychological burden of leadership, but also in order to shape an international order that would be compatible with freedom and democracy. Once the implementation of the new strategy has begun after 9/11, but especially once that war in Iraq has broken out, the way in which America has chosen to act on the international scene has drawn the attention (and even more so the discontent) of the international community.

In accordance with the foreign policy analysis put forth by F.S. Northedge<sup>5</sup>, the actions of the United States must first and foremost prove that the policy to be implemented is based on a realistic assessment of the global situation. Secondly, they must make clear whether the aforementioned policy is in conformity with the international trend or whether it tries to speculate a temporary and/or accidental coincidence. The results of these undertakings will show whether the American foreign policy at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century represents a liberal 'American perspective' on the world or whether we are dealing with a traditional approach to international relations, from the point of view of a 'diluted realism'<sup>6</sup>.

At least until 9/11, international affairs were dominated by the belief that the end of the Cold War had determined the transformation of this domain from a competitive arena into one of cooperation. Thus the idea that war and conflict are inevitable in an anarchic world became obsolete. The disappearance of USSR caused the concept of power balance to lose relevance on a global stage. In this context, the theoreticians of the new realism (for example Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer) have been searching for a replacement for the balance of power in the shape of a more encompassing concept. The subsequent

conceptualizations also had a predictive value as far as the US foreign policy was concerned.

S. Walt argues that once power has been thrown off balance towards the end of the last century, the United States have had to adopt a behaviour that would favour the maintaining of this status quo. In this sense, it is important for the American foreign policy to maintain a restrained international behaviour and to acquire international legitimacy by promoting values, which are perceived as just by the international community<sup>7</sup>. Such an attitude is favoured by at least two interrelated elements: firstly, the high status attained by the United States in the military, economic, technological and cultural field; and secondly, although tensions do exist, the major European and Asian powers have approved American intervention in the world. The two above-mentioned elements are intertwined in the balance of the threat theory, a substitute for the balance of power theory. States do not necessarily react relating themselves to the most powerful state, but to the state that may turn out to be the most powerful. The United States have become at the beginning of this century the most powerful state by far but they are not yet a significant threat for the other great powers. However the increasing of the American offensive powers will cause the other states to attempt to balance it. The balance of threat together with the collective goods theory explain the absence of an anti-American reaction after the Cold War. In conclusion, the United States have to diminish their offensive capabilities in order to keep the world outside the balance and, at the same time, must not turn the export of democracy into the core of their foreign policy. The author eventually admits that such a policy of conscious self-restraint (an intermediate position between isolationism and crusade-like involvement) is not an American virtue.

Although in the new post Cold War context, the United States have had a relatively prudent behaviour, the 9/11 attacks could not be prevented. The threat no longer came from a state or a coalition but from a war tactics caused by severe economic, social and political imbalances. No longer was American power threatened but culture and lifestyle. Terrorism is a disruption of the political code and rules of war. In M. Walzer's<sup>8</sup> opinion it is a method taught by tyrants to soldiers, by soldiers to modern revolutionaries (and now taken over by Islamic

fundamentalists) and it turns out to be a threat that no country can be expected to live with. Can such a threat be contained?

A short time after the official release of the NSS document in the context of the new Iraqi crisis, the two exponential representatives of the new American realism, S. Walt and J. Mearsheimer have signed a protest-article as a reaction to the new American foreign policy. The article appeared in *Foreign Policy* and was entitled 'An Unnecessary War'. Their opinion was that the incipient war was gratuitous since Saddam Hussein was a power-thirsty tyrant that could be deterred using classic strategies of dissuasion and containment<sup>9</sup>. However, are such strategies still productive in a war against terrorism?

Even during the aforementioned conflict, R. Aron underlined the fact that containment can represent a belittling of the will comparable to the diminishing process that the United States are guilty of and that led to the breaking out of the Second World War. The fact that the United States got involved in the First World War in the name of a grand but vague Wilsonian ideology only contours the image of America as a salvation-nation. As a result of their global scale involvement, the Americans will come to notice that the world system they had just deeply anchored themselves in presents the same, if not worse, flaws as the international European system that they had rejected and refused for more than a century. In Aron's opinion, the withdrawal caused by the Americans' becoming aware of this fact was a major mistake. The United States have sinned not by their will for power but by not being aware of the role destiny had attributed to them and thus they historically bear the responsibility for triggering the next world conflict<sup>10</sup>.

Once part of the inter-state system dominated by relations foreign to American political principles, the United States will exhibit on the one hand the vanity to rule, characteristic of a great power and on the other hand, the refusal to preserve the rank it has obtained. In Aron's opinion, the interpretation of the containment doctrine as a must after 1947 has turned out to be unreasonable. Containing communism was a strategy with a relatively well-defined purpose that was not mistaken for security or even power. This containment became the United States' effective conduct in the first twenty-five years

after the Second World War. It faced the criticism first coming from the thinkers pertaining to the international relations realist trend (for example Morgenthau, Lippmann) on the basis of the traditional European philosophical principles. Surrendering the priority of their national interest in order to defend liberalism seemed to be a global project the United States did not have enough resources for.

As previously mentioned, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, S. Walt was trying to set a line of conduct for the United States, meant to avoid a reaction on the part of other states. However the 9/11 attacks were not initiated by another state. A short time before, Kissinger, a historian by definition, associated four types of power relation systems to a world of states. And with the exception of one all had been encountered along European history.<sup>11</sup> Taking into account his diplomatic expertise, he suggested a differentiating behaviour for the United States, according to the specificity of each system taken as such. But not even this kind of conduct could have prevented the 9/11 attacks. The exclusively realist approach to international relations at the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century becomes irrelevant. Kissinger's undertaking leaves unanswered at least three questions regarding international order: Is there any connection between the different international systems and the political regimes in the area? Can we find common interaction patterns among states from different systems? What kind of conduct must the liberal democracies adopt towards countries pertaining to the other systems? Kissinger classifies states according to the power relations holding among them and this classification can provide at a certain moment useful rules for the diplomatic conduct. From the point of view of an international relations theory, the premises for realism (the state as main actor and the state of anarchy in international relations) remain unchanged.

Realism comes back into focus at the beginning of the current century, due to the sudden destruction of the idea of the end of history and in spite of the fact that it has found itself in a certain state of decline during the last decades of the past century, as a result of the emergence of other parallel international relations trends. The reality of the past years has proven that so far it is premature to generalise the 'end of

history' theory, at least as far as international relations are concerned. Furthermore, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there have appeared theories, which claim that realism will provide the best explanations for the international policies of the next century. Subsequently, John Mearsheimer tries to convince his readers that offensive realism (which will be dealt with further on) 'is a rich theory that considerably elucidates the international system functioning.'<sup>12</sup>

Even if liberal democracy remains the only viable form of political organization, it is not necessary that it be accepted rapidly and unconditionally everywhere. Adverse reactions to the conquering regime's proselytism have strengthened at the beginning of this century the belief that anarchy remains the main ordering principle of international order, just as realism had predicted more than half a century before.

A reactionary and critical tendency, realism is shaped at the beginning of this century through the rejection of idealism as a means of approaching international relations. This idealism was materialized in the League of Nations and the formal prohibition of war. Classical realism is based on a series of arguments that do not suggest any preoccupation with a normative political theory in international relations. Thus, the state is the main actor on the global scene, its behaviour being dictated by its own interest, and the interest of each actor is the maintaining of a global anarchic security by means of the balance of power.<sup>13</sup> For the partisans of the realist paradigm, world affairs are predestined to violence and any attempt to order and legalize them is counter-productive.

The centrality of the state, essential for realism, has been questioned by the emergence of non-state actors. The failures of the American policy in Vietnam have led to severe both moral and analytical criticism of this power policy. Realism has met the latest challenges by trying to professionalize the international relations theory by turning it into an autonomous discipline and by seeking its own laws and research methods. Neorealism, mainly associated with Kenneth Waltz, imprints a scientific mark on the theory of international affairs. Moreover, the Walzian model will put forth the hegemony of realism as *the* theory in international relations. The core that organizes this model is international anarchy, which changes from a descriptive element into an ordering and explicative principle in the field of

international relations. The respective domain gains its independence and its fundamental principle is the maintaining of the balance of power, a principle without correspondent in domestic policy. The states' foreign policy fuels this mechanism that in turn determines the external conduct of states. According to Waltz's theory, the international system functions in the same way as the market system and the government of states becomes *insignificant*. Therefore, the passing from the classical realism to neorealism 'represents the permanent closing of international affairs before the foreign policy variable.'<sup>14</sup>

The success of the Walzian theory, closely related to the success of modern analytical theories of realism is due to its simplicity. The first stated tenant refers to the anarchic character of international relations, which excludes moral judgements and analogies between people and states as far as autonomy is concerned. This autonomy isolates them from any external morality and political interference. In an analysis of the binomial realism – international relations Stefano Guzzini, considers realist theorizing as a failed attempt to transfer the principles of the international European society to the new context of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>15</sup>. The transformation of realism in an empirical science has led to the loss of its specific perspective on politics as a practical ability. Waltz sets aside one of the major purposes of realism that is the connection between the historical practice and the world vision, of politics and research. For the Walzian theory, international violence is not a human phenomenon, but a social one that has to be explained through its specific anarchic environment. Waltz deduces the necessity of theorizing realism from the qualitative difference between domestic and international politics, a difference caused by the leap from international sovereignty to international anarchy. The theory fails because international anarchy does not decide on conflict or co-operation<sup>16</sup>, and this failure was sealed by the end of the Cold War.

Although it may remain the main trend of analysis for international relations, realism begins to approach liberal theories. On the one hand, John Mearsheimer, a representative of the 'offensive' realist trend, continues the line of Walzian argumentation and ignores the domestic policy of states. On the other hand, Stephen Walt,

considered to be a 'defensive' realist, replaces the balance of power theory with that of the balance of threat and introduces certain nuances in the material descriptions of power<sup>17</sup>. James Mayall, an international relations professor at Cambridge University, pleads for the re-thinking of realism outside the power policy principle. In his opinion, the international relations framework has been designed without reference to progressive ideas and it is precisely these progressive ideas that form the basis of democratic policies, the democratic countries' policy being equivalent to the competition between alternative perspectives with regards to the future<sup>18</sup>. Designing alternative perspectives within the realm of international relations calls for a thorough reference to political theory, especially to the liberal one.

Of course, this panoramic presentation does not exhaust all theories relevant for the international relations field. However, it goes to prove that the American foreign policy is forced to act out in a scenario of international affairs determined by two major co-ordinates: on the one hand, the optimistic liberal vision, and on the other the pessimistic realist vision. According to the first vision, the states are the main actors of international politics, their internal features vary and the consequent results deeply affect the conduct of states and the power calculation play a modest part in explaining the respective conducts. The scepticism of the second vision also stems from three main elements. The states are the main actors of world policy. But attention must be focused on the great powers, their conduct being influenced by the external environment and not by their internal characteristics. The states' rationale is dominated by the calculation referring to power, which leads to their continual competition.

Relevant for the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Paul Hirst's prognosis may be a starting point for the analysis of the predictive valences of realism. From the perspective of a 'modified realism', the author claims that the change in the liberalism-economic context will make the states act like in the past. However, on the medium term 'a world that lives in the international system on the basis of the integrating liberalism created after 1945 and still dominated by the Great Powers, the United States coming first, in unison with the international institutions that they finance and via these institutions, this world is the most likely to

be the international system of the first half of the century.'<sup>19</sup>

It is interesting that realism does not yet find an appropriate theory that could, paradoxically enough, reflect reality. *Offensive realism*, that, as its author John Mearsheimer underlines, is a realist theory of international politics which contests the optimism prevailing the relations between the great powers and anticipates the future on the basis of two important tenants: the great powers are looking to maximize the part of the global power that is duly theirs and the multipolar systems, that exhibit hegemonic potential, manifest a special predisposition for war<sup>20</sup>. Offensive realism is a theory with descriptive but mainly prescriptive valences and it focuses on China's ability to balance the global world power in the long run. A year from its appearance, the 9/11 attacks took place and they could not be accounted for within Mearsheimer's theoretical framework. Even the American author admits that offensive realism simplifies reality and it is an 'undetermined theory'<sup>21</sup> because it does not take into consideration individuals, domestic politics, ideology etc. And it is precisely these combinations with loose variables that have gained importance in the post 9/11 world. Subsequently asked about the relevance of his theory, Mearsheimer stated that realism does not have much to say as far as terrorism is concerned because it does not deal with transnational actors, but the realist logic of states' conduct will have an important impact on the fight against terrorism<sup>22</sup>.

Therefore, I have tried to show, up to this point, how realism, a mode of thinking resuscitated at the beginning of the new century meets the provocation of being inadequate to reality by turning itself into an a-historical and a-moral theory. It is useless to analyse the start of the century international American undertakings from the perspective of the balance of power (or more refined of the balance of threat) in a world whose reality refuses to be balanced. History provides and will provide further lessons but will not offer viable solutions. It teaches you not to repeat other people's mistakes, but not how to avoid mistakes. And in the realm of international relations, political theory can offer proper solutions but not by accepting its concepts unconditionally. The "state of nature", an ideal construction meant to explain people associating into political communities, cannot become an

ordering principle for international relations. The evolution of realism as a causal theory has been a great disappointment, but the lessons history can offer remain an indispensable element for the understanding of world policy.

Trying to find answers to Northedge's questions regarding the viability of a foreign policy, I have discovered that realism is not ready for predictions referring to the next half century. The war against terrorism goes beyond the logic of the Cold War. But is liberalism ready to offer a viable world project? The United States have engaged in a global world against terrorism, in the name of certain liberal values and they are rather frequently accused of imperial realism. In this sense, even during the Cold War, R. Aron noted that the traditional crusade spirit is degrading itself into a realism as the one aforementioned. Accepting the collaboration with authoritarian states makes the imperial dimension of the American foreign policy become stronger than the ideological one. The idea resurfaces at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, at the same time as the American actions following 9/11. The controversies caused by the American involvement in Iraq are the most edifying example. Was Mearsheimer right when he claimed that although the rhetoric of the United States' policy is liberal, the basis is *Realpolitik*?<sup>23</sup>

The historical failure of the interwar liberal theory has given rise to the reaction of realist thinkers, a reaction built mainly around the critique addressed to the foreign American interwar policy. The theses of realism claimed that morality cannot triumph in international relations and the only ethical conduct for a state is the rational one based on its own interest. 'National interest' becomes a central thesis for realist thinking, but in the case of America, the nature of this duty has been very confusing. National interest asserts itself as an objective reality and still it wants to have a moral status. However a morality centered on the idea of nation is unacceptable for most Americans. Consequently, 'American national interest is often defined in terms of values and democratic institutions.'<sup>24</sup>

Realist critique has stated that the idealist dream of a warless world is not a viable course of action in nations' politics and realist authors (H. Morgenthau, G. Kennan, E. Carr) have revealed the divergence in point of national interests and

competitive impulses within the international system. However, there exist a few elements of internationalist liberal thought that are worth re-examining. The first derives from the existence of certain substantial moral norms that the citizens of a majority of nations have established by consensus. The second is the fact that nations take care of their reputation, being unwilling to be labelled as 'immoral' by the international system. The third is the fact that public opinion sometimes forces statesmen to follow international moral norms. And the fourth is that the system of the state has certain characteristics pertaining to the international community<sup>25</sup>.

The transformations that occurred during the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the globalization processes have determined the increase of the interdependence in the international arena and have brought back on scene the role of morals in foreign policy decision-making. At the same time there appeared elements of an international community as well as a significant amount of international moral norms that have transcultural roots and that have been officially assimilated by the most important world governments. The liberal belief in the possibility that foreign policy be influenced by moral factors is again under scrutiny. R. McElroy suggests a case study that would prove the relevance of moral norms in foreign policy decision-making. The American author analyses four foreign policy decisions made by America in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in order to show that there are cases in which the means of individual conscience, domestic policies and pressures exerted on the international reputation have led to the making of some significant foreign policy decisions in the vein of international morals. The decision to assist the USSR with food supplies in 1921, R. Nixon's decision to radically change US position with respect to the chemical and biological war in 1969, the American decision to negotiate a treaty regarding the pass-over of the Panama Canal and the surrounding area to the Republic of Panama are practical examples of the international moral norms being interpreted as specific behavioural recommendations. On the other hand, the Dresda bombing during the Second World War goes to show how power and security interests can act in favour of the breaking of international norms.

When a state's military and economic security is really endangered by the observance of an

international moral norm, the existence of such a norm will not determine its observance. McElroy notes that in such a situation the policy of a state reaches the 'pole of necessity'. In the other, more frequent, cases when the state's military and economic security is not compromised, the policy finds itself at the 'pole of options'. The American author concludes that 'in those numerous cases that involve an international moral norm and that are closer to the pole of options, conscience, domestic policy, and pressures exerted on the international reputation may give rise to a norm-observing conduct.'<sup>26</sup>

Choosing entails the appearance of favourable occasions for morality to guide the important decisions made in foreign policy, in significant ways. This validity can be extended to any type of international norm. I have chosen the above-mentioned example in order to extrapolate to the current American foreign policy. The attack on Iraq in accordance with the doctrine presented in The National Security Strategy has caused violent reactions regarding the United States' failure to observe the international moral, but especially judicial, norms. The failure of the American undertaking would probably determine the refreshment of the realist critique just as it happened after 1945. But we have analyzed the usefulness of realism at present; it provides lessons in history that have to be taken into consideration so as not to repeat past mistakes. The American foreign policy has reached once more the pole of necessity, but the events of 9/11 contour solely the aspect that McElroy was referring to: security.

Consequently, the strategy 'Iraq next' has imposed itself in American political debates. It is a strategy supported by foreign policy principles gathered under the title of 'hard-power wilsonianism', which justifies the United States' unilateral self-defensive action. This type of wilsonianism focuses on democracy and the universal connection between self-governing and human dignity. It is considered an inspirational doctrine meant to mobilize the American nation by means of an exceptionalist idea and it is not a prudent choice but a good approach at wartime.<sup>27</sup>

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the necessity derives from the absence of a political project on a global scale. Far from pleading for a global governing project, the project in question should extrapolate the concept of society to a global extent.

When putting into practice the principles of the social contract in the terms of international relations, one should not stop at the initial hypothetical premise – the state of nature. Thinking of international relations in terms of a balance keeps international political theory far from any progressive project. Waltz himself predicted that 'the balance of power can exist only because some countries consciously turn it into their political objective or because of the quasi-autonomous reactions of some states in response to other states' attempts to dominate them.'<sup>28</sup> As I have shown throughout the study, the United States do not normally accept this perspective on international relations. When they come to the pole of options, it is expected that the United States will induce a progressive shaping of the historical process because, as McElroy noticed, 'the constitutional structure of the USA approximates the type of liberal-republican society as foreseen by Kant and the internationalists.'<sup>29</sup>

Of course the existence of a global vision derived from progressive and liberal ideas, relevant for the present is considered a chimera more or less. However, liberalism has the ability to provide premises for a political theory applicable to international relations.

Such a political theory is presented in John Rawls' paper *The Law of Peoples with The Idea of Public Reason Revised*<sup>30</sup>. The American author discusses international relations hypothetically and a-historically. Construed along the lines of political liberalism, Rawls' theory is based on two grounds. Firstly, the great disasters in the history of mankind spring from political injustice. And, secondly, once the most acute forms of political injustice are eliminated and replaced by just or at least decent social policies and fundamentally fair institutions are established, then these disasters will eventually disappear. Rawls uses in his theory one of the transformation principles of the international relations field – the analogy with domestic societies. Peace among democracies derives from the internal structure of democratic societies that are not tempted to go to war if not to defend themselves or to intervene in the case of profoundly unjust societies in order to defend human rights. And the interest of the study in the foreign policy principles of a liberal people is given by the dominant trait that these principles

must exhibit: they must be reasonable from a decent liberal point of view.

J. Rawls puts forth a new type of stability, different from the one ensured by the balance of powers: "stability for the right reasons"\*. It can be attained solely if the peoples follow a process similar to the domestic one, that is they pursue reasonable interests. Thus, the idea of liberal and democratic peace gains shape. It is a peace sustained by two pillars (that the American author builds in a way adverse to realism): social and political institutions can be changed by people, and societies dominated by the gentle mores of the commercial spirit tend to form peaceful citizens. Employing the Aronian concept of 'satisfied nations' (referring to Western nations) as well as the finality inferred by the French philosopher, Rawls reaches the conclusion that democratic peace is not compatible with current democracies. Peace by satisfaction will last only if it will become common to all societies.

The Rawlsian theory proves its validity through its non-ideal aspects, which analyze the way in which liberal societies must treat outlaw states. At the beginning of the chapter we have analyzed H. Kissinger's historical and regional classification of states based on the relations of power holding among them. J. Rawls puts forth a theory that classifies states from the *point of view* of their political ability to tolerate and live together with other states that do not fully share the same values. Although it is based on the Western principles of liberalism and democracy, the Rawlsian theory is not exclusive. There may exist differently structured societies that could still exhibit a coherent domestic and international conduct. American foreign policy has abandoned lately the prejudice of imposing a sole viable model and the National Security Strategy document reflects this exact aspect.

The "genus proximus" of the American national security document and of the Rawlsian theory is given by ways to handle those societies that do not adhere to reasonable international principles or are too burdened by unfavourable conditions that do not allow for individuals' potential to develop. As the latest Gulf conflict has proven, the means of approaching outlaw

states are the most controversial because they are intrinsically connected to the concept of sovereignty. At the same time Rawls warns of the danger of the inadequate exploitation of the changes within the concepts of revision, self-defense, intervention and self-determination. The above-mentioned principles depend less on the normativity existing at a certain moment and more on wisdom and predictions. Thus it is the duty of statesmen to convince the public of the importance of these principles. The analysis of the American foreign policy from the perspective of the past and the present proves that the fundamental nature of rejecting any kind of authoritarianism is a regulating element decisive as far as foreign policy decisions are concerned.

More than in the case of any other people, one can say that American statesmen pay great heed to the morality of their actions and the citizens are extremely sensitive to the deviations of foreign policy from traditional values. Therefore, the American society is situated in the proximity of the Rawlsian liberal society, a society within which international relations are based on reasonable principles and actions. And the analysis of the National Security Strategy document shows that, once the pole of necessity has been overcome, American foreign policy has greater chances to become an essentially liberal foreign policy.

Traditionally speaking, the *United States'* actions on the world scene are shaped as a liberal controversy of realism. R. Aron, a theoretician of realist international relations, reached the conclusion that 'American diplomacy has been successful in Europe not because of the containment of communism, but because it favoured human liberties and economic progress.'<sup>31</sup>

The great traumas of humanity, fascism and communism were successful in the last century because the extent and the depth of human consciousness were limited and superficial at the time. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, terrorism seeks again to 'reunite the resentments in order to build a block of the ones excluded from modernization'<sup>32</sup>. The antidote for this allergic phenomenon does not, under any circumstances, emerge from the realist paradigm.



## NOTES :

- <sup>1</sup> Aron, Raymond, *Republique imperiale. Les Etats-Unis dans le monde 1945-1972*, Calmann-Levy, Paris, p. 27.
- <sup>2</sup> Huntington, Samuel, *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981 translated by Mihail Radu Solcan, *Viața politică americană*, Editura Humanitas, București, 1994, p. 13.
- <sup>3</sup> Idem, p. 56.
- <sup>4</sup> Huntington, Samuel, stated that the Americans form a "political nation" due to the fact that American identity is not organic in nature and is not the outcome of a process of historical evolution involving common ancestors, common experiences, a common ethnic basis, a common culture or religion. The political ideas of freedom, equality, fundamental rights, an authority derived from the consentment of the governed have constituted the basis of nation identity in the case of America
- <sup>5</sup> Northedge, F.S., 'The Nature of Foreign Policy', in *The Foreign Policies of Powers*, The Free Press, New York, 1975, p. 37-39.
- <sup>6</sup> In this sense, in the document *National Security Strategy*, President G.W. Bush uses the expression 'a balance of power that favors human freedom' by correlating principles and values with power to dilute the effects of American hegemony (J.L. GADDIS, 'A Grand Strategy of Transformation', *Foreign Policy*, nov./dec. 2002)
- <sup>7</sup> Walt, Stephen, 'Keeping the World <<Off-Balance>>: Self-Restraint and U.S. Foreign Policy', <http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu>.
- <sup>8</sup> Waltzer, Michael, *Just and Unjust Wars. A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, Basic Books, New York, 1977, p.85.
- <sup>9</sup> Mearsheimer, John & Walt, Stephan, "An Unnecessary War", <http://www.foreignpolicy.com>
- <sup>10</sup> Aron, Raymond, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
- <sup>11</sup> Kissinger, Henry, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy? Toward a Diplomacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2001, translated by Andreea Năstase *Are America nevoie de o politică externă? Către diplomația secolului XXI*, Editura Incitatus, 2002, p. 14-15.
- <sup>12</sup> Mearsheimer, John, "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics", [www.NORTON@co.20001](http://www.NORTON@co.20001) *Tragedia politicii de forță*, translated by Andreea Nastase, Editura ANTET XX PRESS, Bucuresti, 2003, p.13.
- <sup>13</sup> Brown, Chris, "International Theory and the Ethics of Redistribution", Southampton University, <http://www.bsis.be>
- <sup>14</sup> Idem.
- <sup>15</sup> Guzzini, Stefano, *Realism și relații internaționale*, traducere de Diana Istrățescu, Institutul European, Iași, 2000, p. 349.
- <sup>16</sup> Idem, p. 351
- <sup>17</sup> Motoc, Iulia, *Teoria relațiilor internaționale: sursele filosofiei morale și a dreptului*, Editura Paideia, București, 2001, p. 134-135.
- <sup>18</sup> Mayall, James, *World Politics*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2000, translated by Andreea Năstase *Politica mondială. Evoluția și limitele ei*, Editura Antet, București, 2002, p. 110.
- <sup>19</sup> Hirst, Paul, *War and Power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2001, translated by Nicolae Nastase, *Război și putere în secolul 21*, Editura Antet, 2003, p. 126.
- <sup>20</sup> Mearsheimer, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
- <sup>21</sup> Idem, p. 13.
- <sup>22</sup> Kreisler, Harry, "Through the Realist Lens", *conversation with John Mearsheimer*, 8 aprilie 2002, [www.globetrotter.berkeley.edu](http://www.globetrotter.berkeley.edu)
- <sup>23</sup> Kreisler, *op. cit.*
- <sup>24</sup> McElroy, Robert, *Morality and American Foreign Policy (The Role of Ethics in International Affairs)* Princeton Univ. Press, 1992, translated by Costică Brădățan, *Moralitatea în politica externă americană. Rolul eticii în relațiile internaționale*, Editura Paideia, București, 1998, p. 40.
- <sup>25</sup> Idem, p. 41.
- <sup>26</sup> Idem, p. 218.
- <sup>27</sup> Its alternative, the strategy 'Al-Qaeda first', sees the war against terrorism as a problem to be dealt with by strengthening the international legislation and pleading for tolerance, non-intervention and reaction to security issues. The deriving foreign policy, named 'soft-power wilsonianism' is not considered a good policy at wartime but being applicable as a peace-building perspective. (Eisenhower, David, "Editor as Column", in *Orbis. A journal of World Affairs*, vol. 47, nr. 1, 2003)

<sup>28</sup> Waltz, Kenneth, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, Columbia University Press, 1954, *Omul, statul și războiul*, traducere de Mihaela Sadonschi, Institutul European Iași, 2001, p. 211.

<sup>29</sup> McElroy, Robert, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>30</sup> Rawls, John, *The Idea of Public Reason Revised*, Harvard Univ. Press, 1999

\* "Stability for the right reasons describes a situation in which, over the course of time, citizens acquire a sense of justice that inclines them not only to accept but to act upon the principles of justice." Rawls, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>31</sup> Aron, Raymond, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

<sup>32</sup> See the speech delivered by Dominique de Villepin, the French foreign affairs minister on January 17, 2004 at the *Euro-Mediterranean Forum "Science, Development, Peace"*, published in the magazine 22, nr. 726, 3-9 February 2004.