

AMERICA'S UNILATERALISM: The Case of American Attack Toward Iraq in 2003

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ABSTRACT

Using the American Studies theory, the American Unilateralism can be analyzed using interdisciplinary approach. Historical data and background are explored to reveal the political and cultural reasons of America's political attitude towards other countries that tends to be Unilateralist. Post cold war era, America, using its mask of Manifest Destiny, tends to act as the police of the world. It considered itself as the "world's peace maker". This fact has made America tends to be more brave in applying its Unilateralism in its foreign policy.

INTRODUCTION

In these days, many people viewed that the American Foreign policy tends to be unilateralist, especially in the action toward Islamic Country. This American Unilateralism creates pros and contras opinion among many other nations and also The United Nations.

We can take the example of the latest issue of American attack toward Iraq. We can see that America tends to "going it alone" or moved unilaterally without listening to other countries and United Nation's opinion. America has created its own motifs in attacking Iraq such as the issue of terrorism, the existence of chemical weapons

and mass destructive weapons in Iraq. Indonesian and perhaps other foreign media had written that it is obvious that the main reason of United States attacks toward Iraq was based on one reason, occupying the oil resources in Iraq. As we know that America is an Industrial country that very much depends on the oil reserve.

America is known as the Police of The World. With its “manifest destiny” America always feels that does not matter to take action toward other countries since it is already pre-destined that America can maintain the World Peace. America can use various reasons in its action toward other countries. Yet, ironically, since the end of the Cold War era, America feels that there should be other enemy to replace the Communist Power that had already been destroyed. As we know that America needs an enemy in order to keep exists and popular in the global movement. President George W Bush in front of the Joint session of Congress (September 2001) delivered a speech :

... On September the eleventh, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country...Al Qaeda is to terror as what the mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money – its goal is remaking the world – and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere...Our war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global world has been found, stopped and defeated...and we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us or you are with he terrorists. From this day forward, any nations that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the US as a hostile regime.... This is not, however, just America’s fight. And what is at stake is not just America’s freedom. This is the world’s fight. This is civilization’s fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom. The civilized world is rallying to America’s side. They under-stand that, if this terror goes unpunished, their own cities may be next. Terror unanswered cannot only bring down buildings – it can threaten the stability

of the legitimate governments. And you know what? We're not going to allow it. (Heffnerr, 2002:522-526)

This study will relate the America's Unilateralism with the historical background and also the cultural values in the American society. I will also use one literary work, in this case is a film titled "mission impossible" which will support the description of America as the Super Power Country.

AMERICA'S UNILATERALISM

America's Unilateralism has to do with the motives and methods of American behavior in the world, but any discussion of it has begun with a discussion of the structure of the international system.

Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld gave the classic formulation of unilateralism when he said regarding Afghanistan –but it applies equally to the war on terror and to the other conflict the "the mission determines the coalition". This means that we take our friends where we find them but only in order to help us accomplish our mission. The mission comes first and we define the mission. We have to be guided by our own independent judgment, both about our own interests and about an investigation. Coalitions are not made by super-powers going begging hut in hand, they are made by asserting a position and inviting others to join. What pragmatic realists fail to understand is that unilateralism is the high road to multilateralism. (<http://wass.stanford.edu/us.american-empire.12703.html>)

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND AMERICAN UNILATERALISM

While the UN has sought endorsement by the United Nations Security Council for an assault on Iraq, we remain apprehensive that the policy of unilateralism pursued by by the Bush administration

will trump the will of the international community. We are concerned and fearful that a pre-emptive war against Iraq is not only a violation of the UN charter, to which the US is a signatory, but will prove detrimental to America's Security interests in the long range.

We are alarmed with the aggressively unilateral designs of the American administration, of which a war against Iraq is a defining moment. A new doctrine of American Unilateralism, dedicated to the creation of American military and economic domination on a global scale, is ominously resulting in the alienation of our traditional allies. This policy of the United States potentially undermines the goodwill and cooperation necessary for the successful pursuit of International pursuits and destruction of terrorists' networks.

Moreover the waging of pre-emptive war, in violation of the UN charter, will set dangerous precedents that will encourage other state actors to initiate pre-emptive wars for interests of their own. American action against Iraq, especially undertaken without international sanction will bring more violence to an already dangerous international scene.

Various wavering rationales have been proffered by the administration in defense of a war against Iraq. Among them has been the need to depose Saddam Hussein, the dismantling of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and the creation of democratic regime in Iraq as a spring-board to seeding democracy in the Middle East region. Despite the manifest rationales, we are concerned that the prevailing interests of the Bush administration are the establishment of military and economic hegemony over the region inclusive of Iraqi oil resources. We see new Pan Americana enforced by American military might in accordance with the doctrines that will not tolerate any loci of power other than our own. Again, we are fearful of American Unilateralism which will further inflame our enemies while eliciting resentment among our allies.

Post War Iraq

There has been little deliberation and less debate about a post-war Iraq. An American occupation of Iraq either directly or through an Iraqi proxy government will urge monumental economic burden at a time when the American Economy is experiencing deep stress.

We recognize that Iraq is an ethnically divided country held together through centralized, autocratic power. We are fearful that a post Saddam Hussein Iraq will be characterized by intergroup violence and score settling among the Kurdish, Sunni, and Shiites populations, which will render Iraq dangerous to govern, if not ungovernable. Refugee flight will likely be a source of further violence and instability in the region.

While we are opposed the war, we recognize that America's "going it alone" especially in a post war reconstruction phase is one of the strongest arguments against an assault on Iraq.

Ethnic culture's regard for human life and its commitment to mutually fulfilling relations among nations inspires us to oppose war and seek solutions to the current crisis through international cooperation. We recognize that in an age of terrorism security cannot be achieved through a policy of Unilateralism and the brute display of military force. Peace and stability will only be attained through the democratic states working cooperatively, through international arrangements and adherence to international norms. We call on the US to take the leadership in this initiative through moral example and diplomacy.

We join with numerous religions and secular organizations and millions of Americans and individuals throughout the world, in opposition to war against Iraq. We call upon the American administration to support, increase and intensified UN inspections to be continued indefinitely. Recognizing the dangers posed by the Iraqi regime, supported by the threat, of force and validated by the international community.

American Ethnical Union
Board of Director
National Leaders Council
(http://www.bsec.org/news/aeu_031703.html)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The emergence of a US global role after World War Two dramatically changed the foreign-policy elite's attitude toward rapid sociopolitical change in the third world. Although U.S officials in the first part of the twentieth century supported the concept of self determination and opposed the perpetuation of colonialism, in the second half of the century they looked with suspicion on populist third world movements and ideologies. By the late 1940s containing the perceived Uni Soviet threat and ensuring the security of pro-western Middle Eastern regimes was higher on the US foreign policy agenda than coming to terms with third world nationalism. True, some officials in the Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy administration advocated an alliance between the United States and local nationalist's forces to contain Soviet expansionism, but they were a minority. (Gerges, 1999: 39-40)

When we make historical generalization about American actions abroad (and the values which underlie those actions), we risk distorting history and committing occasional errors of interpretation. But what is gained by generalization is the ability to differentiate the common and perpetual from the infrequent and ephemeral. To contend that American Foreign Policy has been patterned since 1945 suggests neither a historical determinism that denies the possibility of policy change nor an interpretation that sees policy as necessarily paralyzed by the fetters of the past. American foreign policy has shown a capacity for adaptation to changing conditions and, on accession, for experimental innovation in pursuit of established objectives. Containment of the Soviet Union for example, has been one of the most enduring themes in postwar American foreign policy.

The President's ability to change foreign policy is constrained by powerful circumstances that promote constancy and inhibit change. Further reinforcing continuity is the preference of presidents to make their policy initiatives conform to prevailing American opinion and their tendency to value consistency for its own sake. "A consistent and dependable national course must have a base broader than the particular beliefs of those who from time to time hold office.

THE FOREIGN POLICY MAKING

In matters of pertaining to the conduct of foreign affairs, the American democracy – indeed, all democracies – constituted a "decidedly inferior" form of government. It is perfectly appropriate to the needs of American domestic politics, would prove disastrously inappropriate to the demands imposed by international politics.

The paradoxical dilemma of American democracy was summarized by a group of American textbook writers in the late 1960's:

... the more civilized and non-violent a democratic nation becomes in its international institutions and behavior, the more peaceful and frank the outlook and conduct of its people, the more it may find it difficult, as a nation, to survive and prosper in the semi anarchy of international affairs, in which secrecy, suspicion and violence always lurk in the background.

ANALYSIS

As I stated in the theoretical approach, this study belongs to American Studies which uses the interdisciplinary approach. The use of such an approach is a very typical feature of American Studies work. In conducting the Research in American Unilateralism in the case of its attack toward Iraq, I relate the American history, politic and cultural background.

Historical approach is used to see the underlying the reasons underlying the events in questions. History offered the raw material for prophecy, but not easy conclusion. The future is not just the past run through again in different costumes. (1984:2). Historical data and background are explored to reveal the political and cultural reasons of America's political attitude towards other countries that tends to be Unilateralist. This means that history does not only tell what happened in the past but also tells us how and why it happened.

As we know that post cold war era, the political constellation has undergone a significant change. The political and security relationship is no longer in the frame of endorsement to either east (Uni Soviet) or west (United States). The whole world knows that America, using its mask of Manifest Destiny, tends to act as the police of the world. It considered itself as the "world's peace maker". This fact has made America tends to be more brave in applying its Unilateralism in its foreign policy. American Unilateralism has been explicitly conducted at the era of Bill Clinton. (Nahak, 2002:2).

In fact the years of Clinton Presidency have seen the United States drift toward unilateralism and undermining of International system (Smith, 1992:2)

As I stated in the historical back-ground above, the emergence of a US global role after World War Two dramatically changed the foreign-policy elite's attitude toward rapid sociopolitical change in the third world. Although U.S officials in the first part of the twentieth century supported the concept of self determination and opposed the perpetuation of colonialism, in the second half of the century they looked with suspicion on populist third world movements and ideologies. By the late 1940s containing the perceived Uni Soviet threat and ensuring the security of pro-western Middle Eastern regimes was higher on the US foreign policy agenda than coming to terms with third world nationalism. True, some officials in the Truman,

Eisenhower and Kennedy administration advocated an alliance between the United States and local nationalist's forces to contain Soviet expansionism, but they were a minority. (Gerges, 1999:39-40)

Based on this fact, we can see the political reason on the the change that happened post Cold War era that America tends to change its "enemy" from the Communist toward Islamic country. This "enemy" exists everywhere included in Asia and Middle East area. America tends to act unilaterally in these areas using its mask of destroying "terrorism. But people believe that there is a different motive behind it that is to control over the oil reservation in those countries. In the case of America's attack toward Iraq in the era of Bush Presidency, people predict that America has a complete knowledge that Iraq has the second biggest oil reservation in the world that is still kept at the bottom of the earth and has not been explored yet. (REPUBLIKA, 14 October 2002)

For the Cultural Background, in the book *American Values* by Ralph Gabriel, we can see the background of the American people way of thinking post cold war era it says:

Social and ethical thought in America is acquiring, in my opinion, a depth and sophistication far beyond that of the generous and humanitarian people. The United Funds or Community chests in our cities large and small have no real counterpart anywhere else in the world. The development of our social sciences has made our work of relief and rehabilitation vastly more intelligent than that of the agencies supported by the alms of seventy five years ago. Yet we of the latter half of the twentieth century have long since given up that illusion of the eighteenth century Enlightenment that human nature can be perfected. We hold fast, however to our ideals of humane civilization. And, in spite of the occasional frightening manifestation of barbarism in our midst, we do a fair job in maintaining a decent society in which men and women can live constructive and useful lives. Yet we are quite prepared to loose, if we have to, the frightfulness

of the ultimate weapon of our adversary. The Cold War has caused us to live in the midst of a paradox from which we can see no escape. One wonders what the effect of this paradox on our people will be if it continues half a century.

The strains of the cold war have brought into the open many of the fundamental facts of life. I will mention a few. All are recognized by those among us who take time to think. The management of a highly complex industrial society requires a strong government. To counter effectively the aggression and maneuvers of our powerful totalitarian enemy requires not only a string government but one capable of acting with split-second timing...There are two more ideas in which the exigencies of the cold war have brought us a sharpened perception of the problems associated with our democratic way of life. The first is education and the second is race relations. (Gabriel, 1974:100-103).

McDowell (1948) explained in his book *American Studies* that there is "the tendency of men to live predominantly in one of the three tenses, past, present or future, and to forget the other two. So in this paper, I relate the past events of American background of unilateralism which is the post war point of view which change from "red scare" to "middle-east scare". The present is the attack of America toward Iraq and the condition of Iraq in the post war era as written in the political approach. The Future is the impact of American unilateralism toward the "world peace"

The other characteristics are concerned with the focus objects that start from a micro to macro things or from a narrow to a broad object. The attack toward Iraq was considered a micro thing because the attack is only toward a single country. Yet the impact is predicted to be wider. If America does not stop its unilateral action towards Islamic countries or countries which are possessing oil reservation, it is no doubt that there will appear a serious threat toward the world peace

CONCLUSION

Using the American Studies theory, I can analyze the American Unilateralism using interdisciplinary approach. Historical data and background are explored to reveal the political and cultural reasons of America's political attitude towards other countries that tends to be Unilateralist. Post cold war era, America, using its mask of Manifest Destiny, tends to act as the police of the world. It considered itself as the "world's peace maker". This fact has made America tends to be more brave in applying its Unilateralism in its foreign policy. American Unilateralism has been explicitly conducted at the era of Bill Clinton. The political reason is on the change that happened post Cold War era that America tends to change its "enemy" from the Communist toward Islamic country. This "enemy" exists everywhere included in Asia and Middle East area. America tends to act unilaterally in these areas using its mask of destroying "terrorism. But people believe that there is a different motive behind it that is to control over the oil reservation in those countries. For the cultural background, there are two more ideas in which the exigencies of the cold war have brought us a sharpened perception of the problems associated with our democratic way of life. The first is education and the second is race relations. The second characteristics of American Studies are concerned with the concept of time, i.e. past, present and future. I relate the past events of American background of unilateralism which is the post war point of view which change from "red scare" to "middle-east scare". The present is the attack of America toward Iraq and the condition of Iraq in the post war era as written in the political approach. The Future is the impact of American unilateralism toward the "world peace"

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