

American Foreign Policy in the Twenty-first Century

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American global strategy and the "war on terrorism" / Hall Gardner. - Aldershot : Ashgate, c2005. - viii, 231 p. - ISBN 0-7546-4512-6

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, there has been no dearth of studies focusing on American foreign policy, and it is in this context that Gardner's text has to be received. On the first page of the book, the author presents the reader with the core of his argument: the world is witnessing a "new global disorder" and "the roots of the present crisis to a large extent lie in the general failure of US diplomacy to establish new and more concerted norms for international action". This blunt statement sets the framework within which the author aims to achieve the main objective of the book: that of developing an "irenic

global strategy to put an end to the war on terrorism and deal with the new threats through concerted and multilateral engagement". It is therefore more than just the war on terrorism that the author intends to examine: the analysis in fact spans from a scrutiny of the origins of the neo-conservative ideology, to an examination of different types of terrorism, to a study of a number of conflicts and geostrategic and political hotspots around the globe. Gardner examines the relationships between the US and a number of regions and problem states and concludes by prescribing strategies for correcting the international disequilibrium. According to the author, US global strategy is replete with double standards and inconsistencies which must be overcome in order to triumph over terror and maintain a stable international system.

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The structure of the book reflects the author's ambitious goal: after an initial reflection on the 9/11 attacks and on the US reaction, with particular reference to the concept of pre-emptive war, Gardner traces the historical and ideological background of American interventionism, and the roots of neo-conservatism.

He then proceeds to study the concept of terrorism itself, which he separates into four types: anti-state terrorism, state-sponsored terrorism, totalitarian terrorism and street terrorism. Following this analysis, the book focuses on US global strategy: the subsequent chapters highlight US views on nuclear proliferation in terms of containment and engagement with "outposts of tyranny" and "rogue states" such as North Korea, Iran, and Pakistan. Developing nations like Pakistan have used strategic leveraging to gain concessions and security guarantees from the US while knowingly sponsoring terrorist organisations, and this, according to Gardner, shows how the US is guilty of double standards in its strategic partnerships. This will in turn encourage other nations to use strategic leveraging against the US by exploiting issues such as oil supplies, nuclear technology or geopolitical position, thus lessening the credibility of US foreign policy.

The book then focuses on the global ramifications of US military intervention, arguing that overstretch is limiting the prospects for success. The author argues that the neo-conservative lack of willingness to engage in constructive methods of diplomacy has made military engagement necessary when more

effective means could have been used. A wide array of issues is examined: from NATO and EU enlargement to relations with China and conflicts in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Turkey, Iran, the Middle East and central Asia. Attention is also given to US relations with Zimbabwe, Cuba and Colombia.

In the final part of the book the author notes the major differences between the European and American approach to foreign policy, and argues that a clash of democratic civilisations – contrary to Huntington's prescription – will become almost inevitable if NATO, the EU, and the UN cannot harmonise their priorities. In the concluding chapter, finally, Gardner attempts to give a number of policy recommendations geared toward overcoming the past Cold War disequilibrium. Central to his view are the "restructuring" of the relationship between the US and the EU, seen as crucial in creating an effective global strategy, as well as of relations with Russia and China, which might in time be brought into a larger US-EU confederation "involving power sharing arrangements and regional security accords".

This is indeed an ambitious text: it aims not only to study the war on terrorism and US relations with rogue states, but also to give an overview of the historical background of American foreign policy and to analyse US global foreign and security policy. Almost inevitably, however, the huge array and the complexity of the issues addressed by the author make the text incomplete and at times superficial. When, in the space of a few pages, one chapter addresses issues like

the war in Iraq, relations with the EU, China, Russia, Belarus, the Balkans, Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the question of a "pan-Islamic strategy", the conflict in the Middle East, and the emergence of new regional actors and potential political economic blocs, it cannot come as a surprise if the analysis tends to skim the surface

and the conclusions appear to be less than convincing. Nevertheless, the book will provide an interesting and thought-provoking read for those who – armed with a solid previous knowledge of American foreign policy – want to engage in an all-encompassing overview of the crucial security issues facing the world today.