

FOREIGN POLICY YESTERDAY-TODAY-TOMORROW

A "Hofrat" was once a close advisor to the emperor; today a "Hofrat" is a high official of the republic. A "Wagen" used to be a ladder wagon pulled by horses; today a "Wagen" can also be a sleek car. In the following, we will show how the same word "foreign policy" has been used and is used for very different contents throughout history, how the goals, means and players of foreign policy have changed.

1. Foreign policy yesterday - pure power politics

For 1000 years foreign policy was power politics. The goal was to increase the power of the state or its ruler. The leitmotif was the "reason of state". According to this, foreign policy was to be guided by the consideration of doing what was good for the state. The means for this were Realpolitik and war. The only actor was the ruler; foreign policy was long regarded as the "domaine réservé" of the head of state.

In this sense, international relations were seen as a struggle for power, as Hans J. Morgenthau argues in his standard work "Politics among Nations - the Struggle for Power and Peace". Similarly, John J. Mearsheimer writes in his 2001 work "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics": "Great Powers are always reaching for opportunities to gain power over their rivals".

A logical consequence of this thinking was that those who went down in history as the "Great" were those who waged wars, conquered countries and thus increased their own power.

2. Foreign policy today - a divided world: power politics and welfare thinking

International relations in recent decades have been characterized by the fact that the foreign policy of some states has continued to be guided by the principle of power politics. After the victory in the Cold War, the USA in particular made a universal claim to power. On the other hand, a "revolution in international relations" took place in Europe, starting with the Council of Europe, founded in 1949. Confrontation was

replaced by cooperation; the promotion of the welfare of citizens became a major goal of foreign policy.

The universal claim to power of the USA

After the collapse of communism, Francis Fukuyama developed his thesis of the "end of history", which came about because democracy and the market economy had established themselves worldwide. But even if this was not the case everywhere, Washington developed a new foreign policy strategy at the time, according to which the USA was the leading nation of the new world order; or had the right to intervene where history still had to be brought to the right end.

In a 1992 "Defense Planning Guidance" it was stated that it is the "political and military mission of the United States to prevent the emergence of a military power anywhere in the world that could challenge the American claim to leadership". Under President Bill Clinton, military interventions were then expanded under the slogans "Liberal Interventionism" and "Humanitarian Intervention". In 2002, a new "National Security Strategy" followed, in which it was laid down that the USA may and can also act militarily alone and preventively.

In principle, the USA claims the right to intervene wherever democracy and human rights need to be defended. There are examples of this in history: Napoleon went to war all over Europe in order to bring the achievements of the French Revolution to other peoples; and shortly afterwards the "Holy Alliance" wanted to establish an international system whose states were built according to an absolutist model.

If American foreign ministers then simultaneously declare that for all other states "the time of spheres of influence is over", this attitude can only lead to more insecurity and more instability in those regions where other countries, such as China or Russia, assert "national interests" on their own initiative. The USA's worldwide claim to power meets with resistance where the interests of others are no longer taken into account, for instance those of China in the South China Sea; or if NATO is extended to Russia's borders. There can also be resistance where allies are treated like vassals who are told where they can obtain their energy from or with whom they can cooperate in the field of high technology.

But in the end, the US justifies its foreign policy by saying that it is always fighting for the good in the world and against evil. The end justifies the means.

The welfare of citizens as an objective of foreign policy

In the latest issue of "International", the cover page lists the issues that are at stake today: environmental disasters, black lives matter, refugees, hunger, corona and other crises. How can it be said that with so much suffering people are experiencing today, promoting the welfare of citizens has become an objective of foreign policy?

And yet, while international relations used to be about one thing and one thing only: power and who is the militarily stronger, today it is also to a very decisive extent about how international cooperation can improve people's living conditions. A myriad of international organisations, which were set up after the Second World War in connection with the United Nations, are concerned with this. All areas of life are covered: Human rights and environment; food and development; health, education and much more. The fact that the success is far from being what was originally hoped for is another matter. But people on all continents expect the international community to make a contribution so that they can lead a better life. In fact, there are statistics that show this: extreme poverty in the world is decreasing; more people have access to electricity or drinking water every day (Max Rosen; Oxford University).

In Europe in particular, the members of the Council of Europe first fundamentally changed the aims and means of their foreign policy. Their diplomacy was no longer shaped by traditional power politics, but by common values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law, which they also made the maxim of their foreign policy actions. The countries of the Council of Europe and the European Union became a zone of peace; wars between member states have become impossible; war is no longer seen as a "continuation of policy", but as a failure of policy.

Globalisation of economy and law

One development that has had a decisive influence on international relations in recent decades is globalisation; in other words, the intensification of worldwide contacts in the fields of economics and finance; technology and communications; global migratory

movements as well as the effects of the information society. In this context, new ideas and new values have spread as rapidly as protest movements, whether in Europe, Africa, South America or Asia. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, those countries that had previously been managed according to a planned economy were also integrated into the world market; and China succeeded in using the dynamics of the new world market for its own rise.

As much as some states continued to base their foreign policy on power politics, as explained above, international law was still being developed. Even if the rules established by the United Nations, which prohibit the use of force, were not always observed, they did provide a yardstick against which the conduct of states could be measured. And all states must accept to be measured by them.

International criminal law has been further developed. An International Criminal Court was established in The Hague; war crimes, crimes against humanity, torture and genocide are punishable. Human rights have taken on a special status in international discussions; numerous conferences strive to further develop environmental protection; and the WTO, the World Trade Organization, is repeatedly the subject of fierce disputes, but at the same time international trade law has become a basis for the globalization of essential areas.

Despite these efforts and developments, however, it must be noted that globalization has developed a strong momentum of its own in a wide variety of areas, which could neither be controlled by politics nor captured by the legal framework. Delocalisation, unemployment and a wider gap between the super-rich and the poor were the result.

3. Foreign policy tomorrow - a multipolar world with numerous players

What can be said about a foreign policy in the future? Probably so much that some developments, crises and conflicts will continue; that on the other hand there will be slumps and abrupt changes. It must be assumed that the basic framework conditions will be maintained, i.e. that there will not be all-destroying pandemics, a Third World War or a nuclear war.

A multipolar world

The People's Republic of China has experienced a dramatic rise over the last decades: China's share of world trade was only 1.2% in 1985; by 2014 it was 12.3%; and in ten years' time, according to many calculations, China's GDP is expected to be greater than that of the USA. Other countries such as India, Indonesia, Brazil and Mexico will also increase their share of the world economy and population. The USA will continue to be the political and military leader and will also be the world's largest spender on research and development, producing the most Nobel Prize winners. But the sole claim to global leadership of the past decades could be called into question in individual areas.

It is not a question of whether the USA should be replaced by China as the leading power; or whether an authoritarian system should take the place of Western democracies worldwide. This question is totally exaggerated and misleading. Rather, the question is whether the USA will continue to be able to assert its interests alone and everywhere in the future, or whether other countries will also be allowed to have their own interests.

It is not about authoritarian states wanting to destroy American democracy either. If you have seen in recent years how in America a democratically elected president has been denied legitimacy from the very beginning of his term in office; how the USA has lost prestige through its excessive military operations at home and worldwide, then there is no need for foreign power to destroy the American system.

A variety of players

If it was once said that foreign policy was reserved for the head of state, we can already see today how a large number of NGOs, multinational corporations, and the old and new media are helping to shape international events. Even individuals, whether famous actors, television philosophers or wealthy philanthropists, can play an essential role in international decision-making.

The protest movements of recent years in all parts of the world have covered a wide range of areas, social problems as well as ethnic ones; the environment and human rights. In some countries, a government has been forced to resign, in others, a

reorientation of policy has been achieved. It has become very clear that protests can mobilise masses and be organised across national borders. New networks are emerging worldwide. But one thing also became clear: with the help of the new media it became much easier to mobilize dissatisfaction and turn it into protests than to build new structures or new decision-making mechanisms.

What will foreign policy and international leadership mean in the future?

What can foreign policy and international leadership look like in the future when there are a multitude of challenges and a myriad of players; when many people are also directly affected by foreign policy decisions? It is no longer primarily about relations between states or their governments, but about directly shaping the fate of people. Relationships between nations that built their strength on military power have become relationships between actors who must be concerned with winning over people.

Whereas in the past there were a few great powers and during the last decades a single leading power with the USA, in the future different countries will be able to claim a leading role in a wide range of areas: some countries will distinguish themselves by offering their citizens a high quality of life; others may excel in the area of human rights or environmental protection, in the school system or as a cultural country. And even those states for which traditional power politics will continue to prevail must strive to act in such a way that they receive support not only from governments but also from their citizens.

It is still an open question whether conflicts will be resolved in the future through cooperation or confrontation. Since the teachings of Thomas Hobbes, according to which "man is a wolf to man", are deeply rooted in the foreign policy thinking of the USA, international relations will probably continue to be seen as a "struggle for survival" there. But the "European model" and the insight that global challenges require common globals and not just national solutions could also prevail. The current pandemic has shown this very clearly. The fact that the multitude of actors means that not only individual interests but also the common good is at stake will be a particular challenge for those who will determine international events in the future.

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