

THE KEY FACTORS OF THE US STRATEGIC CULTURE

Darko Glišić*

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This paper, which deals with the identification and analysis of determinants that guide and direct strategic decisions, behaviour and actions of the United States in order to protect fundamental values and national interests, will seek to identify those constants in the US strategic thinking and actions in foreign and security policy resulting in the national strategic culture. Therefore, it is important to study the approach of the US elite and the entire society to the Armed Forces, as well as the effort to define when and how the US military power is used in foreign policy. Using the results of the analysis of the influence of the geographical position, historical experience of the US nation, its resources and wealth, as well as the political culture and tradition, the synthesis of the key characteristics of the US strategic culture will be carried out in order to fully understand the behaviour and foreign policy actions of this important, maybe the most important actor of international relations.

Key words: United States, national identity, strategic culture, strategy

Introductory considerations

Despite the frequent warnings of many analysts about the increasingly visible and final signs of an irreversible decline in the total US power and influence in the world, and increasingly loud announcements about the disappearance of the unipolar moment and the emergence of “a much-needed and long-awaited” multipolar world, the (central) reality of international relations and modern world still seems to be represented by the fact that the United States remains the most powerful state in the international system, whose foreign policy decisions and

* Serbian Armed Forces General Staff. e-mail: darkoglicic@yahoo.co.uk

actions have profound and far-reaching consequences for national, regional and global security, as well as political and economic stability and prosperity of the world as a whole. States and individuals do not have to deal with the US, but its behaviour and actions on the global political scene, in a direct or indirect way, to a greater or lesser extent affect the lives of almost all of us. Hence, as a logical conclusion, there is an extremely rational and purposeful need, and it can be said the obligation of each state to constantly and carefully monitor, assess and anticipate the priorities and main directions of current and future strategic behaviour (actions) of the US in the field of foreign affairs and national security policy, both nationally and internationally.

The strategy of a state¹, after all, like any other strategy, regardless of whether it is general, special or individual, “represents an organized and noncontradictory idea of what is desirable”. It also represents “a certain picture of reality, that is, a kind of mental map of the world” of its founders.² At the core of strategy is a tripartite paradigm of set objectives and ways and means to achieve them, as well as the idea of how to “control opponents from the strategic environment”. “Noncontradictory ideas of the desirable” essentially boil down to the choice and selection of the most appropriate ways to engage available national potential and resources to accomplish set objectives, where a harmonious relationship between objectives and resources is “the neuralgic core of any strategic idea”.³

It is important to note that apart from a mere, mostly empty theory, there is almost no practical sense in “studying strategy and/or thinking strategically” if the course of events is predetermined and unchanging, and therefore “there is no possibility or room for individuals or groups to make rational choices”. Strategic thinking, and also actions, exists when there are real possibilities of choice, i.e. only when it is possible to make rational choices. Opportunities, one or several of them, may or may not be used, but they have to objectively exist. Finally, Clausewitz himself, one of the greatest and most original strategists of all times, defined strategy as “the kingdom of choices”.⁴

¹ For the purpose of this paper, the definition of state strategy by Mitar Kovač will be used, which is given in the book “Strategic Defence Planning”, where it is defined as “a general and integral programme position for preserving and achieving the highest national (state) values and interests by engaging spiritual and material potential of state for its protection and successful development, through the accomplishment of defined goals in peace and at war”. Kovač points out that state strategy in a practical sense represents “a general idea of real and/or virtual direction of political, economic and military power of state in order to protect and achieve the highest national (state) interests through the implementation of special and individual strategies”. For broader consideration of the conceptual and content definition of strategy, see: Kovač M., Stojković D., *Strategijsko planiranje odbrane*, VIZ, Beograd, 2009, pp. 178, 188, 201-204, 225-226.

² Dragan R. Simić, *Svetska Politika*, Čigoja štampa, Beograd, 2009, p. 182.

³ Stanislav Stojanović, Zoran Jeftić, “Savremeni svet i strategijska misao”, pp. 118, 120; Dragan R. Simić, gen. quote, p. 182.

⁴ Dragan R. Simić, gen. quote, p. 183.

However, political and military history is full of examples that in the context of the same or similar real possibilities (rational) actors almost as a rule behave differently. In addition, from many examples it can be concluded that the choice of model (manner) of behaviour - actions of state in a given situation is limited to a number that is always less than the total number of (possible) available models of behaviour.⁵ Therefore, the logical question arises: what hinders, that is, directs strategic actors to make certain decisions or to behave in a certain way? The reasons for some strategic decision and subsequent strategic behaviour are often numerous and varied. Most decisions, including strategic ones, made by the most important state representatives are the result of a compromise between several different, often conflicting interests of different ministries, agencies, influential groups and individuals, in conditions of limited resources, tensions, incomplete information and assessments.

However, strategic culture, i.e. established cultural patterns of society that the decision maker (an individual or a small group) belongs to and whose content (identity, history, beliefs, values, ...) he has a lasting, unbreakable bond with, has an important impact on the choice of some decisions and strategic behaviour of state. Strategic culture is a part of political and overall culture of a society, whose influence is predominantly manifested in the field of foreign, especially security policy of a particular state/society.

Although strategic culture as a concept became an integral part of the language of international relations science and strategic studies only in 1977, when the US political scientist Jack Snyder used it in his research on the Soviet (and US) nuclear strategy, studying and recognizing the importance of cultural influence in understanding strategic reality is not a new phenomenon. On the contrary, its influence on strategic thinking and behaviour was widely recognized in ancient times through Sophocles' tragedies (*Antigone*, *Ajax*), Thucydides' immortal History of the Peloponnesian War, Chanakya's theoretical system of international relations contained in the famous *Arthashastra* and Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*.⁶

The interest in the study of the influence of culture grew rapidly after World War I, with the emergence of research papers on specific ways of waging war that are characteristic of individual (nation) states, where the book *British Way in Warfare* by Basil Liddell Hart from 1932 stands out.⁷ During World War II and the Cold War,

⁵ Stojan Slaveski, "Makedonska strateška kultura i internacionalni izbor: Integracija ili izolacija", *Bezbednost zapadnog Balkana*, 4(14), 2009, p. 40.

⁶ Rasheed U. Zaman, "Strategic Culture: a "cultural" understanding of war", *Comparative Strategy*, 28(4) 2009, pp. 68-71.

⁷ In addition to the mentioned ones, other books on the topic of the US, Soviet, British, Chinese and other national methods of warfare have been written. Rasheed U. Zaman, *gen. quote*, p. 71.

popular studies of cultures, national characteristics and characters of states such as Japan, Germany, China and USSR were particularly well-known, as well as cultural studies of certain regions (e.g. Scandinavia) and security organizations (NATO), all for a thorough review of key aspects of their security policies and an explanation of the previous and anticipation of the future strategic decisions and actions.

In the transition to the new millennium, issues related to the emergence and growing role of transnational supranational (the European Union) and substate actors (terrorist and radical extremist organizations with global influence) in international relations, intensifying conflicts within and between civilizations, re-strengthening Russia's role, China's growing influence in international politics, characteristics and sustainability of the uni(multi)polar world order, have led to the increased interest of researchers and wider academic and professional public in the issue of strategic culture.

The founder of the term and concept of strategic culture, Jack Snyder, defines strategic culture as "the total sum of ideals, conditioned emotional responses and patterns of usual behaviour that members of a national strategic community have adopted through learning or imitation, and which they have in common when it comes to strategy". Thirty years later, Carrie Longhurst gives a broader definition of strategic culture as "a set of beliefs and attitudes about the use of force, and practice related to the use of force within a group that develop over time through a single extended historical process". Longhurst also states that strategic culture is shaped and created during "formative periods", and that it is a changing and dynamic, but time-consuming phenomenon that strives to survive the era in which it emerged.⁸

Every behaviour (action), to a greater or lesser extent, is culture-shaped behaviour. No individual, group, institution, or even society, can function out of or isolated from cultural context (pattern) that they are a part of and surrounded by. Therefore, strategic actors (decision-makers) cannot consider challenges, risks and threats to their state (social community) and assess possible responses to them in "a cultural gap". These actors not only behave strategically under the influence of the (strategic) culture of their nation; they are also the holders of that culture, who consciously or unconsciously try to shape their environment in accordance with the adopted cultural patterns, as far as circumstances allow that.⁹

However, this does not imply the dominance of culture over strategic behaviour, nor the incompatibility or primacy of "culturalism" with/over realism. On the contrary, a significant degree of rationality is characteristic of the vast majority of elites and security

⁸ The term "formative period" focuses on historical episodes of a social community in periods of deep crises, and is said to begin "when political elites (states/nations) accept that the use of power is nothing, but the continuation of politics by other means". Quotes and definitions taken from: Asle Toje, "Strateška kultura kao analitički alat", *Bezbednost zapadnog Balkana*, 4(14) 2009, pp. 3-5.

⁹ Colin S.Gray, *Modern Strategy*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999, pp. 129, 141.

communities because they all behave logically and pragmatically. Nevertheless, different types of elites and security community have different value systems, ideas about themselves and the world around them and their own different ways of behaving and acting to protect and achieve their national interests and goals. Still, in the real world, these interests and goals are carried out and achieved in the way and to the extent that the internal and external environment allows them to do so.¹⁰

It is important to emphasize that states and societies do not choose their strategic culture on the basis of chance, desire or fashion; strategic culture actually chooses them. It is a combination of strategic needs of some society and culture that seems most appropriate and effective to meet those needs, that is, "adapted to the character and context of such a society". Strategic culture has long and thoroughly been adopted and accepted and cannot be quickly and simply rejected by willpower or proclamation. It provides "a picture of reality" and is a guide to behaviour and actions of a society or its parts in a given situation, regardless of whether "culture-shaped" action is appropriate and/or practically feasible in the given circumstances or not.¹¹

Strategic culture is very stable and resilient even in the case when state (society) is in great problems, even existential ones. A society or state does not lose its cultural identity so easily, even when some of its prominent representatives would consciously like to replace their strategic culture with someone else's, more suitable for these adversities. From the practice of several states (e.g. USSR, Nazi Germany, ..) it can be seen that certain elements of strategic culture that are (completely) non-functional and extremely inappropriate for strategic actions of state in solving some problems, even in the case of an imminent threat to state, cannot be easily and quickly replaced. These problematic elements can be identified, but it is difficult to implement effective and thorough corrective action.

Different nations (societies) and their security communities will, even when pressed by a huge burden of troubles and problems of identical character, in different, inherent way, evaluate the possible options for their further actions and their consequences. The greater the pressure on decision-makers (whether an individual or organization) is, and the shorter is the time to make a decision, the probability is greater that their strategic decision will be primarily based on what they know in "the depths of their soul" and "instinctively" feel, that is, on the main foundations of their culture.¹² However, this does not mean that strategic culture is static and unchanging. It can evolve, gradually adapt, or even radically change over time, as new experiences are collectively adopted, absorbed and transmitted through cultural patterns of a society.¹³

¹⁰ Colin S.Gray, *Out of the wilderness: Prime time for strategic culture*, 2006, pp. 12-13.

¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 17-18.

¹² Colin S.Gray, *Modern Strategy*, pp. 143, 146-148.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 131. For consideration of types and ways of changing strategic culture, see: Stojan Slaveski, "Makedonska strateška kultura i internacionalni izbor: Integracija ili izolacija", 2009, pp. 41-42.

Strategic culture, just like strategy and culture in general, has been the subject of energetic debate since its emergence, characterized by great and deep disagreements among prominent scholars in this field, not only about its conceptual and content definition, but, above all, about (key) factors and elements that crucially influence strategic thinking and direct and define strategic behaviour and actions of states in terms of foreign and security policy, which we call the factors of strategic culture. By the term factors of strategic culture we mean those factors, actors and circumstances that motivate, shape, limit, condition and define decisions, behaviour and actions of state in terms of foreign and security policy, in order to promote, implement and protect its values and interests.

Factors identified by different authors as the key ones influencing strategic culture are numerous, so in some papers some factors of strategic culture are classified into different groups of sources: *physical* (geography, climate, natural resources, generational change and technology); *political* (historical experience, political system, beliefs of elite, military organization); and *socio-cultural* (myths, symbols and written monuments)¹⁴. In accordance with the limitations imposed by this type of paper, the focus will be on the analysis of the impact of the factors of strategic culture on the US strategic thinking and actions in the field of national security, which (according to the author of this paper) are among the most important such as geographical position, historical experience of nation, resources and wealth of state, political culture and tradition and organizational culture of the Armed Forces.

Geographical position

Since ancient times, many philosophers, theorists and statesmen have attached great importance to geographical area and a dominant, almost crucial role in the emergence and development of human communities, their political and social structures and all social processes including international relations. Having in mind the fact that states, as the main subjects of international relations, cannot emerge or exist in any other form than as territorial societies,¹⁵ it is understandable that a special place in the study of foreign policy behaviour and actions of state is given to the impact of geographical position and natural features.

Geographical factors, according to the teachings of geographical materialists and determinists, are not only important parameters of foreign and security policy of

¹⁴ Jeffrey S. Lantis, Darryl Howlett, *Strategic Culture*, cited according to: John Baylis, James J. Wirtz, Colin S. Gray, *Strategy in the Contemporary World*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2016, pp. 88-90.

¹⁵ Vojin Dimitrijević, Radomir Stojanović, *Međunarodni odnosi*, Službeni list SRJ, Beograd, 1996, p. 171.

some country, but also crucially affect national characteristics, character of social institutions, wealth, strategic culture and the overall development and progress of a society. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the first serious, systematic papers appeared in science, which considered the influence of spatial factors on political and security interests and strategy of states. The papers of the US Admiral Alfred Mahan and British geographer Halford Mackinder drew special attention to the importance and influence of the sea, i.e. the Eurasian land mass – “the world island” on total international relations and eternal struggle between “thalassocracy” - liberal and democratic “sea forces” and the so-called tellurocracy - conservative and autocratic land forces.

Historically, few countries in the world can be said to have used their geographical position to build into strategic culture of a nation characteristic features of both thalassocratic and tellurocratic forces, as is the case with the United States. Although it can be said for the US today that, due to its characteristic geographical position, it is the greatest naval power with global interests and presence, however, it has not always been so. Almost from the very beginning of the first European settlements, especially the English colonists on the North American continent, from the beginning of the 17th century until the young US state came to the Pacific Ocean's coasts and purchase of Alaska from Russia, the US was characterized by continental geography and aspiration for further expansion - expansion to the west and south of the continent as the primary means of ensuring its long-term survival and prosperity.

A series of successful acquisitions of large territories (Louisiana in 1803, Gadsden in 1853), the annexation of Texas in 1845, the annexation of a great number of territories in wars with domicile population (tribes), Spain and Mexico (the eastern and western Florida and southwestern parts of the current federal state Louisiana in 1819, vast territories in the western United States in 1848) and negotiations with Great Britain (“Oregon Territories” in the northwest of the state in 1846), in less than a century, from the initial thirteen colonies located on the eastern coast, the vast and compact American state has been established. With strong industrial and technological development and constant population growth, vast territories and difficulties of life on the extreme borders of “civilization”, which have once represented a great obstacle and disadvantage for successful development and security of newly formed colonies, have become a great advantage and almost inexhaustible material and (geo)political resource of the first category.

Thus formed the American state, with its specific geographical position between three oceans - Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic, has long been physically separated from the rest of the world, primarily from great powers that could seriously, long-term and directly threaten its security and survival.¹⁶ Despite real

¹⁶ John L.Gaddis, *Surprise, Strategy and American experience*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 2004, p. 7.

challenges imposed during the period of expansion within the US continent¹⁷, the relative absence of external threats has contributed to the development of beliefs among the US political elites and citizens that almost absolute national security has become an unwritten rule and standard. In addition, this characteristic, on the other hand, has contributed to the development and consolidation of the policy of isolationism and unilateralism as constants in the strategic thinking and foreign policy of this country.

The beginnings of the US political *isolationism* are mostly related to political ideas expressed in the farewell address to the nation of the first US president George Washington and the political heritage of John Quincy Adams, which was embodied in the famous Monroe Doctrine.¹⁸ Despite the fact that the United States has always been closely involved in international trade and wide open to mass influx of migrants from all over the world, the US political elites have been very cautious and reluctant to involve the country into long-term problem-solving out of the continent, especially conflicts between European monarchies.¹⁹ These clear aspirations were further strengthened by a very rare, almost unique capability of the US nation and society to “isolate national political life from the violent outside world” and thus prevent “the conflict between personal and traditional, historical” ties. The US political elite has always believed that the US security should not and must not “depend on the good will of others”. Fearing “unpredictable events in the future”, traps and limitations of potential alliances, the US politicians have always preferred their freedom of action, which has contributed to the emergence and nurturing of a long tradition of political unilateralism.²⁰

Unilateralism in the US foreign policy meant often resorting to the inviolable right to initiate preemptive military actions in order to prevent direct threats to security and national interest that could come from hostile or “renegade” states from the Western Hemisphere.²¹ The foundations and framework of the concept of preemptive use of military force, which is basically related to the idea of self-preservation of state, expressed through its inherent, “natural” right to self-defence, were laid by the US

¹⁷ The problematic initial settlement of thirteen colonies and the risk of living on their porous and unsecured borders, the struggle for independence, the problems of exercising denied rights at sea, ... See more in: John L. Gaddis, *gen. quote*, pp. 8-10.

¹⁸ The Monroe Doctrine was developed in 1823, and its author was John Quincy Adams. At its core, it represented a clearly stated policy of opposing further colonization of the Western Hemisphere (North and South America) by European powers. It points out that further efforts of European powers to take control of any “independent” state in North and South America will be viewed as “a manifestation of hostility directed against the United States”. See further in: John L. Gaddis, *gen. quote*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁹ According to the founder of the nation and the first US president, George Washington, in his farewell speech, “the right and essential independence requires a complete separation from all kinds of European interests and European policy”, taken from: John L. Gaddis, *gen. quote*, pp. 22-26.

²⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 9, 22-26.

²¹ *Ibid*, pp. 16-22.

Secretary of State Daniel Webster in 1842. In response to the well-known case of the British invasion of the US territory and the destruction of the US steamer *Caroline*, Webster pointed out that preemptive self-defence is allowed and justified only in cases when the state is faced with “an immediate, irresistible need that leaves no room for choice of means or time to think”.²²

Considering that Webster’s framework of “necessity” is too narrow, the US lawyer Elihu Root²³ in 1914, in accordance with the US tradition and the need to provide unhindered freedom of actions of the United States, included the element of strategic assessment in the definition of the inviolable right to self-defence, claiming that “the right of every sovereign state is to (timely) protect itself by preventing the occurrence of those conditions and situations in which it will be too late for the state to protect itself”²⁴. Although, unlike Webster’s interpretation, Root’s views did not become an integral part of customary international law, they have left an extremely significant mark on the US understanding of the right to self-defence.

The recourse to this “inviolable” right required the US to establish and maintain its status of inviolable (regional) hegemon, which would, by its economic and military power, effectively prevent the emergence and, under equal conditions, further coexistence of any other great power in this part of the world. According to these views, hegemony has enabled the United States to prevent the establishment of an international structure based on the balance of power, which was necessarily accompanied by risks and dangers of lasting rivalry, conflict and violent, revolutionary policies and European-type movements. Such views further confirm the equally strong, persistent and deep conviction of the US political strategists and thinkers that the US real and long-term sustainable security can only be provided by expanding, not reducing, its field of foreign policy responsibility and actions.²⁵

However, the revolution in traffic and transport, the increasing and deeper integration of the US economy into global economy and the need for the access to foreign markets and strategic resources that are vital to further economic prosperity, and thus the country’s stability and security, have contributed to the carefully nurtured tradition of isolationism to gradually give way to increasingly pronounced internationalism.²⁶ Almost at the same time, in the middle of the twentieth century, in the light of new, serious threats to national and global security, the desire for unilateral action in carrying out the goals and priorities of the US foreign and national

²² Colin S.Gray, The implications of preemptive and preventive war doctrines: A reconsideration, 2007, p. 9, <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pdffiles/PUB789.pdf>, accessed on December 11, 2017.

²³ Elihu Root was the Secretary of State and Secretary of War in the administration of President Theodore Roosevelt.

²⁴ Colin S. Gray, (2007), *The implications of preemptive and preventive war doctrines: A reconsideration*, pp. 9-10.

²⁵ John L.Gaddis, *Suprise, strategy and American experience*, pp. 16-17, 26.

²⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 39-42.

security policy was consciously pushed to the background and replaced by a new approach - multilateralism.²⁷

Despite the great area of its territory, due to its isolation by large waters, surrounded by weak neighbours who have never been able to seriously threaten its security, as well as great distance from the main scenes of conflict of other great powers, the US geographical position has the characteristics of a large, but isolated island. Due to this, the US, in the spirit of the tradition of Great Britain, for most of its history has enjoyed the luxury of its choice of whether, at what time, to what extent and on whose side to engage in ongoing or emerging military conflicts between great and/or regional forces.²⁸

This became most visible after the end of the so-called tellurocratic phase of the US development, that is, rounding off the territory and the establishment of the final borders of the US on the North American continent. The expected and obvious way out of this phase led the US to further expansion by the World Sea, strong strengthening and presence of its naval power on the main sea routes and much stronger establishment of its new thalassocratic identity, which will enable its global domination only a few decades later. This capability to voluntarily escalate and de-escalate in times of great crisis and large-scale conflicts²⁹, especially during and after World War II, greatly influenced the direction of the major US foreign and security policy, as well as the characteristics of national strategic culture, particularly in terms of the political culture of the national elite and the organizational culture of the US Armed Forces.

The national historical experience

Historical experience has a very important role in the establishment and development of states, as well as their strategic cultural identities. According to the French historian Ernest Renan, different misconceptions of history are an unavoidable part of the existence of every nation. When it comes to international relations, it can be concluded that there is no objective historical truth; national historical memories primarily reflect the collective "experiences of nations that are closely involved in the fabric of nation states".³⁰ When considering the impact of history on the establishment and evolution of strategic culture, those segments of national history that can be treated as crucial historical experiences of a nation are of special importance.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Colin S. Gray, (2006), *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?*, p. 40, <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/download.cfm?q=650>, accessed on March 10, 2018.

²⁹ Russell A. Moore, *Strategic Culture - How It Affects Strategic "Outputs"*, 1998, p. 21, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a525913.pdf>, accessed on March 14, 2018.

³⁰ Asle Toje, "Strateška kultura kao analitički alat", p. 11.

The uniqueness of the US historical experience has had a decisive influence on the establishment of national strategic culture, as well as its strategic decisions and calculations. Above all, the founders of the young US state and nation wanted the so-called New World, represented by the US, to be the complete opposite to the intrigues, clan, feudal and religious conflicts of "the Old World" that "adorned" the European monarchies. Insisting on individual and religious freedoms, greater federal rights, strong and unquestioning civilian control of the Armed Forces, as well as strong suspicion of any unnecessary central government involvement in political and economic life are specific features of the US nation that, despite sobering experiences of civil war, have survived to this day.

The US history is largely the result of the influence of its geography, which has essentially shaped and directed the course and main contents of its history. Although the US geographical area is extremely large,³¹ thousands of years before the arrival of the first European, especially the English colonists - new Americans, it was mostly inhabited by many domicile, indigenous people. The strong pressure of the colonists, who came to the east coast of the US in increasing waves, imposed the need for further expansion of the first thirteen colonies³² and colonization of new territories for settlement. In the expansion of the first colonies to the West and the coasts of the Pacific Ocean, the new Americans and their young state soon entered into armed conflicts, less with the interests of the British Crown³³, and much more often with the indigenous tribes and nations on their western and southeastern borders. The constant threat of outposts and the main lines of communication of the US colonists by "Indian" tribes and the American-Indian wars³⁴ waged *to permanently eliminate the existential threat to the national survival and progress* left a significant mark on the US strategic culture.³⁵

³¹ With the land area of 9.525 million square kilometres, the United States is the fourth largest country in the world (the second largest in the Western Hemisphere).

³² The establishment of a community of thirteen British colonies began in 1607, when the first settlements were established along the east coast (of the Atlantic Ocean) in the Jamestown settlement of Virginia, and ended with the colonization of Georgia in 1732. These colonies would be the foundation for the establishment of the United States as an independent state in 1776.

³³ This claim refers to the period of the so-called American Revolution and the establishment of an independent state from 1775 to 1783 and the war with the British Empire in the period from 1812 to 1814.

³⁴ This term refers to a series of wars fought on the US soil in the period from the first English colonies in Virginia in 1607 until 1890, when the US federal government announced that the US border was closed and secured.

³⁵ Colin S. Gray, *British and American Strategic Culture*, 2007, p. 19, https://www.google.rs/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=6&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwjYsYHmnY7YAhVQ5aQKH2_BFkQFghVMAU&url=https%3A%2F%2Fusu.instructure.com%2Fcourses%2F418268%2Ffiles%2F62479657%2Fdownload%3Fverifier%3Dwngjz38tWje14ivh2AelDmbFIM59zTkTQNhhliM%26wrap%3D1&usg=AOvVaw3lWbi9TOaMBLdnVvWH3qop, accessed on November 27, 2017.

The attitude of the young US state and its citizens towards natives - their new and future compatriots, was mainly based on a policy of force that was increasingly brutal and growing in favour of the new Americans, as well as a clear *desire for complete domination or physical elimination* of indigenous "Indian" tribes in territories that represented the suitable ground or provided access for further settlement. In this relationship, there was no room for anything else than a strong, unquestionable aspiration to achieve the ultimate strategic political goal – *an unconditional victory and the establishment of complete and brutal hegemony, that is, permanent neutralization/ destruction of any real or hypothetical threat* to the safety of colonists and travellers. Therefore, one should not be surprised that in the strategic approach and the very being of the US and its nation in the field of national security, *there has never been room for policies and strategies involving waging wars with limited goals*, or any serious thought of making the US happy with *anything less than a complete victory and unconditional surrender of its enemies*.³⁶

The difficulties in overcoming physical obstacles during the territorial expansion to the west of the continent and almost three centuries of the anxiety of the US colonists on porous and unsecured internal borders have strongly influenced the Americans to adopt and *strive for simple, fast and sustainable solutions* to their accumulated problems *and pragmatic life values*.³⁷ Finally, the rapid success in eliminating many, not only physical and security, but also political boundaries in establishing a modern American state, has contributed to the establishment and consolidation of two extremely important and unique characteristics of the US nation: *optimism* as national philosophy and *a sense of self-excellence* as a key, definite factor of national identity that largely defined the fate of the US nation.

Today, it is almost impossible to find a state whose citizens and political elites show *less knowledge or less interest in historical issues* when solving new problems or defining strategic choices than the United States. This significant feature of the US strategic culture is not a product of mere coincidence; it is deeply rooted in the tissue and collective identity of the nation. Namely, in a young state, strategically oriented towards the future, whose foundations are based on "the ideology of desire, hope and commitment to constant and comprehensive human progress"³⁸, its citizens and elites have never been fascinated by "the good old days" but, on the contrary, they were always looking to the future, ready to embrace new opportunities that were available to them. After all, history, especially the one that referred to constant armed conflicts and intrigue in the so-called policy of power, which "adorned" and painted everyday life of the state of their European

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Russell A. Moore, *Strategic Culture - How It Affects Strategic "Outputs"*, 1998, p. 18.

³⁸ Colin S. Gray, *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?*, 2006, p. 32.

ancestors with dark colours, was not the value that was supposed to be included in the foundations of "the New World", but something that the US citizens wanted and managed to escape.³⁹

Although the Americans are often inclined to remember and mark certain important and bright moments from their history, this type of interest is neither deeply and systematically rooted, nor widespread. For the vast majority of the US citizens, including political elites, history has no significant impact on the mainstream of the state and nation, firmly believing that the US is in many ways a unique and unrepeatable formation that, historically, has never existed anywhere before. Confirmation of this widespread belief is the historical experience of the first Americans – colonists, who were daily forced on the borders of the new state to find new, practical solutions to their many new problems that have not been seen before. Nevertheless, the situation in which the education and interest of many members of the US political and military elite is not necessarily based on the most important, strategic lessons in history, which are the only available source of knowledge that can be used to prepare individuals and nations for unpredictable future challenges, had and can have great negative strategic consequences for the US.⁴⁰

The state resources and wealth

For many researchers, state power occupies a central place, both in theory and practice, not only in foreign and security policy, but also in overall social relations, including those that take place in the international environment. For representatives of the realistic paradigm of international relations, the acquisition, preservation, increase, projection and use of power is the main way to ensure the survival of state and nation and a means to fulfill, promote and protect its national interests and values in anarchic and hostile external environment. In accordance with this understanding, states do not differ in terms of their foreign policy goals, but only in terms of their power and capability to achieve them.

The power that state has defines its position in the international system, and distribution of total power in system defines its structure and shapes the way in which its individual elements - states influence each other. Consequently, the level of power and capability of state narrows or widens the choice of its decisions and possible alternatives, limits or encourages some foreign policy behaviour and actions and contributes to defining goals, priorities and strategies of its foreign policy. The stronger and richer a country is, it is more inclined to play a much more active role in

³⁹ Russell A. Moore, *gen. quote*, p. 18.

⁴⁰ Colin S. Gray, *British and American Strategic Culture*, p. 22; Russell A. Moore, *gen. quote*, p. 20.

the international system and to control or even create the reality of international relations in accordance with its needs, national interests and values by projecting and abundantly using its power in relations with other states, as well as other interstate and non-state actors.

For further consideration of the key factors of the US strategic culture, it is particularly important to consider the ways in which great possession (or non-possession) of material and human resources, as a source of power and wealth of state, affects the establishment of its strategic culture and strategic behaviour and actions. Although capabilities (wealth) of state do not necessarily define its behaviour, they limit it, especially when it (state) does not have them. Medium and small states that do not have necessary resources, cannot or are not ready to independently maintain required defence capacities and capabilities for the sake of ensuring their security, mostly seek collective arrangements.⁴¹ The other ones, which insist on remaining "independent and self-sufficient", in a potential conflict with a stronger opponent, invest all their hopes and efforts in strategies aimed at its continuous and long-lasting exhaustion until a final victory. On the other hand, an abundance of human and material resources has enabled powerful and rich states to have the luxury of not making any calculations when considering national security issues. Their wealth, it seems, gives them complete freedom of strategic action in shaping their strategic reality.

Almost since its establishment, the US has been a very large and extremely resource-rich country, so its strategic culture, sooner or later, has inevitably had to reflect such reality. Nevertheless, the territorial vastness and great wealth it enjoys has not been given, it has been created by the determination of the US state, the strength and brutality of its weapons and the diligence and initiative of its citizens. Although the new Americans were represented by optimism, determination, pragmatism and initiative, as well as the unwavering focus on the future, their number was very small in the initial period of the state's establishment, in relation to its vast territory and growing demands of the economy and population. Having in mind the fact that at the beginning of the 19th century the greatest number of engineers and skilled labour force was in Europe, the Americans were forced to develop and then rely greatly on machines and other technical, technological and organizational solutions to optimally compensate for this shortcoming.⁴²

Over time, this "dependence" and systemic focus of the nation on finding and practically using the latest scientific, technical and technological solutions

⁴¹ Asle Toje, *gen. quote*, p. 13.

⁴² Colin S. Gray, *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?*, 2006, pp. 35-36; Colin S. Gray, *British and American Strategic Culture*, 2007, p. 20; Russell A. Moore, *gen. quote*, p. 18.

has permeated all segments of the US social life and has become not only its trademark, but also a significant comparative advantage of the United States over other countries, which has greatly contributed to the secure position of the US as a military, economic and technological power of the highest order. This has become particularly evident not only in the amazing pioneering and advanced technical solutions that have overcome many hitherto insurmountable natural barriers and the efficiently connected distant US coasts, but also in the incredible achievements and progress in logistics, the use of various machines and sophisticated military technology, all in order to reduce their losses in personnel to minimum and accomplish rapid and complete domination on the battlefield and a decisive victory over the US enemies.

The United States, as a very large and extremely rich country, waged several minor or major, classic or "unconventional" wars in the past two centuries, both on its and foreign territory, in the way expected of a rich state and society abundant with human, especially material resources – in rich style. Poor states are doomed to wage their wars in a moderate and frugal manner; they have no other real choice, but to try to defeat their rich enemies by war cunning, perseverance and inventiveness.⁴³ However, this does not apply to the United States. The well-known US political scientist Samuel Huntington stated perhaps this most clearly, saying: "The United States is a great country and we should wage wars in such a (great) way. One of our greatest advantages is our mass, ... Greatness, not intelligence is our advantage and we should use it ... If we have to intervene (militarily) we would have to do it with overwhelming force."⁴⁴

These Huntington's observations perhaps best reflect the impact of the US wealth in resources and technology on the national strategic culture. Historically, since the time of the American Civil War, the United States has not only been able to mobilize the entire society and huge economic capacities of the state in order to wage war and create a well-equipped and supplied armed force, but it has always done so, as a rule. As the largest and richest (post)industrial country in the world, a country of high technology and great economy, the US has waged and imposed this type of war, based on great mass and mobility, enormous firepower, by reliance on the latest technological solutions and abundant logistical support, which no other state can objectively match. The greater the task and demand of this type of conventional war (whether regional or global) is, the more ready the US society is to carry it out and fulfill.⁴⁵

⁴³ Colin S. Gray, *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?*, 2006, p. 38; Colin S. Gray, *British and American Strategic Culture*, 2007, p. 20.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 21.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 20, 23-24.

However, superiority in wealth and material resources also carries a number of serious problems. The quantity of military power can often take precedence over the quality of its use in order to achieve set goals. An abundance in material wealth often results in excessive and unfounded self-confidence and reduces the overriding need for inventiveness and creativity, which is crucial in every conflict.⁴⁶ In the case of the United States, these problems were particularly emphasized in the unconventional and asymmetric wars that this country waged in the second half of the twentieth and the first decade of the twenty-first century on the battlefields in Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

Political culture and tradition

Rarely any country, except the US, can be said to have several different (foreign) political traditions. In his notable book on the tradition of the US foreign policy throughout its history, the US researcher and publicist Walter Russell Mead argues that the US foreign policy behaviour and actions in the international environment are a reflection of the four fundamentally opposed (foreign) political traditions of the US political elite that change and repeat cyclically. According to these claims, the so-called Jeffersonians follow the philosophical and political legacy of one of the founders of the US nation, Thomas Jefferson and advocate isolationist and non-interventionist foreign and security policy as the cheapest and least dangerous method of defending the US lifestyle and democracy. Contrary to them, followers of the tradition of President Andrew Jackson, although more inclined to isolationism, advocate energetic, offensive, often unilateral foreign policy action to ensure the security and economic well-being of the US citizens and protect the US national interests, honour and prestige. President Woodrow Wilson's tradition represents "an idealistic" view of the world in which the US and its foreign policy play a messianic role in spreading and protecting democracy, capitalism and its values, as well as human rights and freedoms, often by power of its arms. The heirs of "the US realism", the political philosophy of Alexander Hamilton, the founder and first finance minister of the US, view the world as a large market, and the role of the US foreign policy primarily in promoting and protecting the US economic interest and entrepreneurship through free international trade and global market integration in which the United States should have and retain a key place.⁴⁷

Although there are claims by some Chinese authors that the US strategic culture is characterized by marked inconsistency, i.e. slight and frequent oscillation of

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 20.

⁴⁷ See more in: Walter R. Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it changed the world*, Routledge, New York, 2002; Henry W. Brands, "The Four Schoolmasters", *The National Interest*, 2002, pp. 143-148.

presidential administrations in Washington between liberalism and realism, which consequently lead to the lack of long-term strategic vision,⁴⁸ analysing the US foreign and security policy in the period from the end of World War II to date, it is possible to agree with the statements of Henry Kissinger, who in his book *Diplomacy* explains that the foundations of the US foreign policy in the previous three generations were the principles of Woodrow Wilson's political idealism. Wilson's political tradition advocates the thesis that peace is the normal state of humanity, and war is the product of evil people, and that war as a means of politics is justified only if perpetrators of evil are prevented and defeated in their dishonourable intentions.⁴⁹

The narrative of the US strategic culture indicates that the US is reluctant to use military force in international relations when its goal is to restore the disturbed balance of power or to discipline challengers - revisionist states. This characteristic, as Colin Gray claims, comes precisely from the tradition of Woodrow Wilson's liberal idealism, which is deeply rooted in the fabric of the US political and strategic culture. The Americans do not think in geopolitical patterns; they are reluctant to sacrifice their loved ones for the sake of balance of power ... even in cases when the US security depends on maintaining or re-establishing such a kind of balance of power...⁵⁰

The Americans believe that war is the result of a wrong policy or a lack of policy, and not, as Clausewitz claims, its continuation by other means. Accordingly, they are traditionally reluctant to wage the so-called political wars that have limited goals. Instead, the US wages wars as a kind of crusade for the highest values⁵¹, in order to fundamentally change and improve the world we live in, in accordance with its socio-political, economic and cultural pattern.

However, despite the prevailing view that, due to the US self-imposed role as a world policeman and its messianic mission to save and improve the world, the US political elite and professional public openly advocate and favour the frequent use of the US military force in international relations, the reality is that the US society has become increasingly sensitive to the losses of its soldiers and is reluctant to support decisions by Congress and the US Supreme Commander on the use of Armed Forces in potentially risky military operations in distant countries, where the US national interests are not clearly and visibly compromised.

Although the claims that the United States avoid situations that can lead to their greater losses in armed conflicts have become more frequent lately, they are (according to the author of this paper) completely unfounded. Unlike the European

⁴⁸ Andrew Scobell, *China and Strategic Culture*, 2002, p. 19, https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2002/ssi_scobell.pdf, accessed on March 15, 2018.

⁴⁹ Russell A. Moore, *gen. quote*, p. 19.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

allies, the US citizens are much more willing to make sacrifices in personnel and material wealth if they are convinced that the national vital interests are threatened and that the US is determined and does everything in its power to protect and/or prevail in conflict with an enemy.⁵²

The fact is, however, that the US Armed Forces have, over time, perfected a method of warfare in which very low or no losses among its forces are expected. In the post-Cold War conflicts, the US military commanders conducted operations in such a way that one of the greatest restrictions was avoiding losses among their personnel, thus the protection of forces was given the highest level of priority, even at the cost of negative political consequences for the mission's success. Having in mind the experiences of the US military engagement in the world over the past three or four decades, which has been accompanied by the massive use of firepower, state-of-the-art combat systems based on sophisticated technology, various types of platforms and lethal weapons, which allow actions out of the range of enemy weapons, as well as the fact that during this period the US Armed Forces have faced a much weaker enemy, it can be concluded that over time the Americans have become accustomed to very low rates of losses in their Armed Forces.⁵³

Due to the enormous technological superiority of the US Armed Forces and the influence of popular culture, especially film industry, the Americans live in the belief that the US soldiers do not usually die in war, but that such a role is intended for an enemy and casual passers-by, who have found themselves in the wrong place, at the wrong time. Therefore, the military is expected, or even required, to win a quick, decisive victory over any enemy, with almost no shedding of the US blood. This type of belief has at least two important consequences for the conduct of the US security policy. On the one hand, it greatly affects the US capability to credibly deter a potential enemy, who is militarily capable and/or determined to achieve its intentions at all costs, and, on the other hand, bears a degree of risk of losing the US public support if the US military operations conducted abroad will not go smoothly, with success and speed that the nation expects.⁵⁴

The other feature of the US political culture is the absence of strategic thinking and actions in national security affairs. Although the Americans talk and write a lot about strategy and the need for strategic actions of the state in international relations, they do not seem to understand the main postulates of strategic approach in fulfilling goals and priorities of national policy and security strategy, and even less, implement them in practice.⁵⁵ As it has already been stated, the Americans are

⁵² Colin S. Gray, *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?*, 2006, p. 48.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Colin S. Gray, *British and American Strategic Culture*, 2007, p. 25.

⁵⁵ Colin S. Gray, *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?*, 2006, p. 31.

particularly inclined to view war and peace as two fundamentally different and separate conditions in international relations.

Forgetting Clausewitz's famous dictum that war is waged solely to accomplish political goals, the Americans generally wage war as a kind of autonomous and independent political activity, leaving questions of its consequences and future political arrangements for later, when the time comes. Throughout its recent history, the US and its Armed Forces have often waged wars with the aim of winning a military victory, without paying the necessary attention to the consequences of their military operations on the type and character of the upcoming peace. Therefore, many successes of the US Armed Forces achieved on the battlefield have rarely led to the fulfillment of the desired final state and the final political victory of the United States at "the green table".⁵⁶

There are many reasons for this development of the US strategic and political culture. Firstly, there is a widespread belief among political elites and the US citizens that "the forces of good", whose banner is proudly carried by the US, always convincingly triumphs over "the forces of evil" in the end, and the only thing that brings a slight dilemma in such a case among the Americans is the issue of the speed and choice of the way to win. Secondly, the deep-rooted tradition of the (overly) strong reliance of the US and its Armed Forces on great economic, technological, material and human resources that the US has at its disposal in relation to potential adversaries breeds excessive and unfounded self-confidence and does not provide the necessary incentive for the development of strategic thinking and approach aimed at winning a final victory over an enemy in a way that outflanks it politically, militarily and strategically, and not by completely destroying its Armed Forces and devastating vital facilities of its infrastructure.

Thirdly, the belief of the majority of the US political elite, professional and lay public that the US can achieve everything, even what seems unattainable, if the entire nation is sincerely and seriously committed to it, leads to setting unrealistic goals that exceed objective possibilities of even the most powerful state in the world. Finally, the system of clear distinction of power and the specific tradition of civilian control of the Armed Forces and civil-military relations in the US prevents serious, real and genuine dialogue between soldiers and decision-makers when setting national goals and priorities on almost equal bases. This often results in the absence of the necessary link between political goals, ways and means to achieve them (e.g. the use of the armed force) and the situation that the US Armed Forces are issued with goals and tasks that they independently, in the absence of coordinated and from the highest levels of the US political power strategically directed use of all other elements of national power, will never be able to fulfill.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 30-31.

⁵⁷ Russell A. Moore, *gen. quote*, p. 24; Colin S.Gray, *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?*, 2006, pp. 31-32.

The conviction⁵⁸ of the US excellence, deeply rooted in the US political culture, is based on the sincere conviction of the US political and academic elite about the United States as a special and unique nation with a special mission and vocation to lead the rest of the world.⁵⁹ Accordingly, the US is considered to be a bastion of democracy, freedom, justice and equality, and “the brightest example of man’s ability to live in peace and harmony with his compatriots”.⁶⁰ As such, the United States is exempt from “the law of history”, i.e. the phase of rise, stagnation and inevitable final decline, through which, without exception, other great empires and nations have previously passed.

A strong belief in one’s excellence greatly contributes to establishing and nurturing many perceptions that most Americans cultivate about themselves and the rest of the world. Sincerely believing in the US benevolence and its intentions towards other states, which are deprived of any desire to gain material or other benefits, ardent supporters of the US excellence and vocation have set themselves an extremely ambitious and noble goal - to help all other countries faithfully follow the example of “the chosen nation”.⁶¹ In addition, they are fully convinced that the US is a divine creation, a unique state that has “a special mission” to make the world a better place for life. Accordingly, the values, beliefs and ideas that it nurtures and advocates are not only greatly different from all others, but also (the only) correct ones. This type of ideology and a kind of moral arrogance has its roots in the US historical experience, i.e. the process of the establishment and development of the US and its nation, which was accompanied by many successes and exceptional achievements.⁶²

However, such beliefs and perceptions of one’s own country seem to have deprived political elites and the vast majority of the US citizens of their capability to truly understand and accept different values, priorities, beliefs, habits and views of other states and nations. This type of political and cultural indifference and indolence towards other states and nations leads to the strengthening of the culture of ethnocentrism, which, among other problems, inevitably causes another serious shortcoming in developing and implementing the US national security

⁵⁸ *Beliefs* are a set of assumptions that their holder firmly believes to be true, although their truthfulness and accuracy has not been proven in practice.

⁵⁹ Trevor B. McCrisken, *Exceptionalism*, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/exceptionalism>, accessed on November 20, 2017.

⁶⁰ Brent Scowcroft, *Speech at the Oxonian Society*, http://fora.tv/2006/05/15/General_Brent_Scowcroft, accessed on October 29, 2007.

⁶¹ Trevor B. McCrisken, *gen. quote*.

⁶² Russell A. Moore, *gen. quote*, pp. 20-21; Colin S. Gray, *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?*, 2006, p. 34; Colin S. Gray, *British and American Strategic Culture*, 2007, p. 20.

strategy - making a mirror image.⁶³ The lack of political and cultural empathy for others has often resulted in the inability and/or unwillingness of the US and its political and military elites to fully understand enemy, its real goals, motives and intentions, which has had a detrimental effect on the final outcome of military conflicts in which, over the past few decades, the US and its Armed Forces have taken an active part.

Analysing the US political history, from its development until today, it can be said that the two currents of the US excellence have had a rather great influence on the development and implementation of its foreign and security policy. The first current of this political tradition advocates that the United States should lead the world solely by developing, improving and protecting the unique and unrepeatable features of the US society, as "a glittering city on top of a hill",⁶⁴ which is the best, perfect example from which others will learn or follow it. The US should do so by refraining as much as possible from interfering in internal affairs and sovereign rights of others, "in search of monsters to be destroyed"⁶⁵, in order to avoid the risk of causing harm or injustice to other states and nations and undermining fundamental principles and values which the US nation stands for and defends.

On the other hand, advocates of the so-called missionary current, which developed at the beginning of the 20th century and has been actively encouraged to this day, argue for a much more active role of the US in international and internal affairs of other countries, but not to subjugate them to their will, but to help them, like the United States, become free and prosperous democracies. With the strengthening of the influence of followers of the so-called theory of democratic peace, according to which states with democratic (and republican) political order are not prone to mutual wars, this current had a proportionally much greater impact on the mainstream of the US foreign and security policy. In that sense, strong and open encouragement of various "democratic movements" and insistence of the US on the need to expand and protect democratic institutions of government, human rights and freedoms around the world, aims to make the world a much safer and more secure place for the US and its citizens.⁶⁶

⁶³ Russell A. Moore, *gen. quote*, p. 21.

⁶⁴ In his book "A Model of Christian Charity" from 1630, John Winthrop says: "We must count on becoming a (shining) city on top of a hill, and that the eyes of all people in the world will be on us". Taken from: Trevor B. McCrisken, *gen. quote*.

⁶⁵ Addressing the nation on July 4, 1821, the US Secretary of State John Quincy Adams said: "The US... does not go beyond its borders, in search of monsters that have to be destroyed. It is a benevolent supporter of freedom and independence for all people". Otherwise, "it will become the world dictator, and then it will no longer be the master of its soul". Taken from: John L. Gaddis, *Surprise, Strategy and American experience*, p. 29 and Trevor B. McCrisken, *gen. quote*.

⁶⁶ Trevor B. McCrisken, *gen. quote*.

Although the US strategic thinking, from its beginning to modern times, has gone through various, shorter or longer phases of foreign policy isolationism, unilateralism and internationalism, it has always basically relied on and related to the unique values of the US nation, which have made the US in the eyes of its citizens and political elite a better and fairer place to live, the most successful model of the organization of state and society and a role model for all other countries.⁶⁷ This became obvious with the end of World War I, and gained its real momentum and expression with the rise of the United States to the status of the world superpower.

Although advocating and spreading “the US values” of freedom and democracy, from the time of President Wilson, through Roosevelt, Truman, to Reagan and George W. Bush Senior, has been a part of the US foreign policy strategy, the support and an important tool in the ideological struggle against the Axis powers, and then the Soviet “evil empire”, this segment was overshadowed by political, military and economic instruments of protection and accomplishment of the US vital national interests in the so-called cold conflict. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the self-destruction of the Soviet Union, the policy of expanding the institutions of liberal democracy, market economy and protection of human rights and freedoms in the world that played an important role in the Clinton administrations’ efforts to fill gaps in the influence of the former great US military and ideological rival, has been less and less a goal in itself, and more and more a means of shaping the world order according to the wishes and vision of the US.⁶⁸

Optimism, firmly related to the pragmatism brought by Protestant immigrants from Europe, is deeply rooted in the US cultural identity. It has contributed to the formation and preservation of a strong and widespread belief, especially among the makers and executors of national policy, that every problem represents a temporary “disturbance of the established balance”. Accordingly, each problem has its solution, which can be found within a limited short period of time if all necessary human and material resources of country are timely mobilized and put into operation, supported by strong and true faith in a positive outcome.⁶⁹

Traditionally, for a great number of Americans, the optimal solution to almost all painful and difficult problems in the world is the coordinated and determined engagement of all available national resources, material and human ones, and their

⁶⁷ Strobe Talbot, *Unilateralism: Anatomy of a Foreign Policy Disaster*, International Herald Tribune, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2007/02/21diplomacy-talbott>, accessed on March 16, 2008.

⁶⁸ Darko Glišić, Master’s Thesis: “The US strategic thinking at the beginning of the 21st century: A comparative analysis of the US National Security Strategies by President George W. Bush and Barack Obama”, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, 2015, pp. 141-142.

⁶⁹ Henry A. Kissinger, Speech at The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences - Current International Trends and World Peace, <http://www.henryakissinger.com/speeches/042807.html>, accessed on January 26, 2008; Henry A. Kissinger, Speech in Washington D.C. - Does the West Still Exist? America and Europe Moving Towards 2020, <http://www.henryakissinger.com/speeches/022307.html>, accessed on January 26, 2008.

direction towards one goal. A firm belief that the US can achieve anything if it is truly committed to something, pragmatic political culture and a penchant for finding optimal and sustainable solution, often based on a strong belief in the latest technical and technological advances, often results in the situation that the US political elite sets almost unattainable goals for the US and its Armed Forces, trying to achieve what had been unthinkable and unattainable until then. After all, the US history itself is a kind of example of triumph and incredible achievements in overcoming hitherto insurmountable (physical) obstacles.⁷⁰

The US political elites, just like the American citizens, have always cherished and highly appreciated the ethics of pragmatism. The Americans do not like to have unresolved issues. However, finding solutions that require patience and perseverance has never been the US strength. The US public, elites, policymakers and decision-makers are, as a rule, very impatient and are in favour of quick, clear and visible solutions that can produce almost immediate results. The Americans love a security policy that is unambiguous, clear and safe.⁷¹

The US is a society in which ideology plays a very important role and which makes a clear distinction between a state of war and peace. The Americans have always considered war as an unwanted, temporary condition and evil that is resorted to in order to decisively and as quickly as possible prevent even greater evil. If something goes wrong in this process, the first expected response of elites, and also of nation itself, is simple - invest more money and hire more people. The greatest temptation for the determination and perseverance of the US society, however, comes with the fatigue of resources, when human losses and costs begin to exceed the strategic value of solving an issue. In such a situation, both the US nation and politicians show a tendency to seek a way out of the scene long before the curtain finally falls.⁷²

The organizational culture of the Armed Forces

The strategic culture of any nation, including the United States, cannot be viewed separately from the organizational culture of key (public) national institutions which it is closely related to. Although well aware that the issues of defining the main directions of the US strategic actions in the field of national security, as well as formulating and implementing defined strategic goals and priorities occupy several different state institutions, for the purpose of this paper, the focus will be on the role and specific impact of the US military organization in this process. In addition to the

⁷⁰ Colin S. Gray, *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?*, 2006, p. 33; Colin S. Gray, *British and American Strategic Culture*, 2007, p. 22.

⁷¹ Russell A. Moore, *gen. quote*, pp. 22-23.

⁷² Darko Glišić, *gen. quote*, p. 90.

fact that the organizational culture of the US Armed Forces is necessarily directed and partially conditioned by military needs and requirements of future, expected or potential armed conflict, it largely reflects the national strategic culture and the result of the specific US method of warfare.

It would be rather unfounded and bold to claim that every nation develops and nurtures a special and different method of warfare that is compatible with its strategic and political culture. However, it can be said for sure that the US Armed Forces cherish a unique organizational culture, beliefs, inclinations and habits. Although a fairly long list of its constituent elements can be made on the basis of available literature dealing with the history, content and specifics of the US method of warfare, their deeper analysis can highlight certain characteristics that (in the opinion of the author of this paper) are among the most important ones and in their combination make the US method of warfare different from others. The method of warfare that is characteristic of the US and its Armed Forces includes:

- favouring "classic", direct high-intensity conflicts that have a symmetrical and conventional character, with clearly defined goals and enemies;
- the mass use of firepower and combat and non-combat systems based on the use of the most modern (military) technologies;
- preparation and conduct of large-scale operations with great force movements and strong presence of elements of national and military logistics in area of operation and
- a very high degree of offensiveness in conducting combat operations in order to win a final and complete victory in the shortest possible time.⁷³

Very few armies in the world can be said to have equally developed capabilities, capacities and necessary combat experience in planning and waging conventional (symmetrical) wars, on the one hand, and long-lasting, the so-called low-intensity asymmetric conflicts, on the other hand. The US Armed Forces is no exception, although in a smaller part of professional literature from the end of the last and the first decade of the 21st century, some US authors emphasize the US long history and rich experience in conflicts with guerrilla warriors, in which the US soldiers quickly adapted to the enemy and its tactics, and occasionally achieved significant successes on the battlefield.⁷⁴

One of the main causes of this phenomenon is the reluctance and/or inability to accept and/or gain (one's own) experiences and lessons learned from this type of conflict as the essential content of military doctrine, whose basis the US Armed Forces would use to develop necessary combat capabilities in the future. To make matters worse, the US Armed Forces, either institutionally or through its

⁷³ Colin S. Gray, (2006), *gen. quote*, pp. 37-47; Colin S. Gray, (2007), *gen. quote*, pp. 21-25.

⁷⁴ Colin S. Gray, (2006), *gen. quote*, pp. 32, 42.

organizational culture, have never been kind and approving of the so-called asymmetric wars, as well as those who pointed to the need to develop special capabilities and capacities to conduct operations against rebel and guerrilla forces.⁷⁵

On the contrary, the US approach to warfare has always been largely based on developing the capacities, knowledge and skills necessary for “a real war”, i.e. a conventional high-intensity conflict with a clearly defined symmetrical enemy. Institutionally, the US military organization owes its successes to “a combat-proven” approach based on the doctrine of overcoming enemy through the mass use of fire and capture of strategically important facilities (key terrains) achieved by accumulating effects of a series of tactical victories won by careful advancement on the broad battlefield.⁷⁶ In this type of war, regardless of whether it is a conflict of local, regional or global proportions, or in which the use of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons is possible, the US objectively has no serious challenger and rival. Moreover, as long as the scope of the so-called classic, symmetrical conventional conflicts is greater and more demanding, the US, as a society and its Armed Forces are more willing to successfully wage them in order to achieve the ultimate goal.⁷⁷

However, when the scale of engaged, especially combat forces, is smaller, the rules of engagement and use of force are more restrictive, and the duration of (non-combat) operations is greater, the US Armed Forces, as well as the US state institutions in the field of defence and security as a whole are on “unknown territory”. Although in doctrinal documents asymmetric wars, i.e. low-intensity conflicts, have been recognized as a challenge to stability and national interests of the US since the 1960s, the highest military circles and institutions of the Ministry of Defence were of the opinion that this type of conflict is a smaller, lighter version of “real war” and that it does not require a completely different doctrine, training and approach to war. Numerous “expert” opinions and assessments have indicated that strongly supported, well-equipped and trained “regular” forces will always be able to cope with this “unpleasant” type of challenge and threat, and that rebel, guerrilla forces of enemy have no chance of success in such a conflict.⁷⁸

Such opinions and attitudes are more the result of the influence of the US strategic culture and “systemic” inclinations and long-established commitments and priorities of its military organization than the experiences and lessons from recent US military history. The truthfulness of this is confirmed by the fact that over time, the

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Lord Carnes, “American Strategic Culture”, *Comparative Strategy: An International Journal* 5, No. 3, 1985, p. 279, cited according to: Moore, Russell A., *gen. quote*, p. 23.

⁷⁷ Colin S. Gray, (2007), *gen. quote*, p. 23.

⁷⁸ Colin S. Gray, (2006), *gen. quote*, pp. 42-43; Colin S. Gray, (2007), *gen. quote*, p. 23.

US military organizational culture has institutionally suppressed, or consciously ignored, rather painful and bitter experiences from many years of the US military engagement in Vietnam⁷⁹, and forgotten, difficult to learn, lessons from fighting persistent and “invisible” enemy in the dense forests and river valleys of this Asian country began to “rediscover” it only with the complete destabilization of security situation and escalation of armed rebellion after the US military intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In this type of “small”, limited wars, without clear divisions and borders, where enemy is hidden among civilian population, the key advantages of the US military power - offensiveness, mass, technology and firepower are not crucial to the final outcome of war. The war that inflicts great human losses, and requires caution, restraint and restriction of freedom of action, minimal use of force and long-term commitment and patience has never been a strong characteristic of the US military or the US society as a whole. This characteristic of the US strategic culture is worrying, having in mind the role that the US has in the international system, and nonlinear and increasingly asymmetric, unconventional character of contemporary, and very certainly, future armed conflicts.

It is important to emphasize that the highest political and military leadership of the US has periodically provided stronger support to efforts to focus on the use of lightly equipped, highly competent and fast-moving special units in the US military operations with a rather asymmetric character, as a means of providing optimal and adequate response, in accordance with specifics of particular operational environment.⁸⁰ Although the doctrinal documents of the US Armed Forces recognized the place and role of special forces a long time ago, as a special and very important component in joint US military operations, which is given those tasks whose execution finds the use of “classic” regular forces inefficient and inadequate, on the basis of the analysis of the US military engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq, it can be concluded that the use of special units as the holder and main exponent of the US military power, after all, as many times before, was not the first choice of the Administration. It becomes so only when possibilities of achieving defined goals are previously exhausted by the strong presence and offensive and aggressive use of classic conventional forces with the mass use of firepower and sophisticated combat systems.

How comfortable and safe the US military organization feels when faced with the challenges of planning, preparing and executing “classic” military operations becomes clear when you look at speed and ease with which the US Armed Forces have redirected themselves from long-term and exhausting counterinsurgency and the so-called stabilization operations from the dusty battlefields of Afghanistan and

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 23.

⁸⁰ Colin S. Gray, (2006), *gen. quote*, p. 43.

Iraq to militarily countering “classic” challenges and threats to the US national interests in the form of the growing military power of Russia, China, North Korea and Iran. It remains to see whether the latest identified lessons, and partly lessons learned from the US asymmetric wars and its few allies in the Middle East from the beginning of the 21st century will be institutionally preserved and nurtured or forgotten and/or ignored.

One of the most characteristic features of the US method of warfare is the mass use of firepower. In the past two and a half centuries, the main postulate of the theory and practice of classic warfare is the so-called holy trinity, i.e. manoeuvre, firepower and surprise - shock, in which a party to a conflict, by the synergy of coordinated effects and the use of all three elements adapted to a specific situation, gains a decisive advantage over the other party. However, in the practice of the US approach to warfare, the key and predominant element of the trinity and the dominant way of achieving defined military goals of war and launching “a lethal” strike against enemy is the massive use of firepower. This approach, in which the efficiency, precision and destructiveness of firepower is considered the key (and guarantor) of the success of the US military engagement, contributes to strong spreading and strengthening of attitudes and beliefs within the US military organization that preparation and conduct of an armed conflict essentially boils down to the skill of adequate and timely choice of objects of action, and an enemy is viewed exclusively as a target to be destroyed by fire.⁸¹

Although this type of the US systemic commitment to the use of firepower and unwavering faith in its strength and decisive influence on the final outcome of war is somewhat understandable and justified in the so-called classic, conventional conflicts with symmetrical opponents, operational approaches and solutions based on the frequent use of robust, and often disproportionate fire support in the so-called non-traditional, non-linear armed conflicts – “the fourth generation” wars, are counterproductive and doomed in advance. In this type of conflict, which is fought around and “between people”, in order to win their “hearts and minds”, where an enemy avoids a direct and open conflict and hides among civilian population, fire has to be used selectively and in an emergency if one would like to achieve any positive outcome.⁸²

However, objective analyses of the recent US military engagement during conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq indicate that the US military commanders on the ground and CIA executives, eager to eliminate important and “time-sensitive objects of action” or reduce their possible casualties, have too often resorted to the use of deadly force - air bombs and various missiles of great destructive power. The price of the traditional US inclination and fascination with firepower, in addition to one or

⁸¹ Colin S. Gray, (2006), *gen. quote*, p. 37; Colin S. Gray, (2007), *gen. quote*, p. 24.

⁸² Colin S. Gray, (2006), *gen. quote*, pp. 37-38.

two “high-ranking commanders” or a handful of rebels, was usually paid by dozens of killed and wounded civilians, who, instead of being viewed as the centre of gravity (in these types of operations they are objectively so), have fallen into the category of collateral damage.⁸³

Despite the growing awareness among members of the US Armed Forces that, in increasingly complex and challenging conditions of modern armed conflicts, this feature of the US military culture, with the exception of a series of minor victories at tactical or sub-tactical level, inevitably leads to the US strategic defeat, as well as occasional honest and strong attempts by the US military machinery to adapt its method of warfare to radically changed requirements of modern operational environment, however, did not lead to great structural changes. On the contrary, these characteristics of the typical US method of warfare have found their place in “the new and revolutionary” US post-Cold War doctrine of rapid domination over enemy - Shock and Awe, which is based on the mass use of precision fire, superior technology and demonstration of superior military force for complete mental and cognitive paralysis of an opponent and his decision-making system, as well as breaking his will to continue to fight.

Organizational culture, just like strategic culture, cannot be changed overnight and at the request of those who cherish such culture, even when it is greatly dysfunctional and unadapted to the current needs nowadays, because, after all, it can neither develop overnight, nor maintain over time, without having previously, in practice, proven its strength and value. And the traditional US method of warfare, in the amalgam combination of firepower with advanced aviation technology, has shown all its effectiveness and reached “the apogee of success” in traditional state-centric armed conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, from the end of last and in the first decade of this century. Indeed, the US method of warfare has found its best manifestation and “an ideal instrument” in the ubiquitous and abundant use of air firepower. According to Colin Gray, an excellent theorist of strategy and strategic culture and a connoisseur of the US method of warfare, air (fire)power fulfills and encompasses all the desired features of the US method of warfare. It is aggressive and provides a constant initiative; conveys the horrors of war destruction to the ground and enemy forces; represents the product of sophisticated technology and a final form of a manoeuvrable approach to warfare; enables winning a decisive victory and reaching high pace and speed in its implementation; ... and puts very few US soldiers at risk of losing their lives. For the modern US, air (fire)power represents what naval power used to be for imperial Great Britain and land power for ancient Rome.⁸⁴

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Colin S. Gray, (2007), *gen. quote*, p. 24.

As “the first, last and only global superpower”,⁸⁵ it is immanent in the United States to behave and act in all spheres of social life, especially on the international stage, in accordance with its size, strength, ambitions and influence. The US, its society and its Armed Forces, therefore, follow a similar pattern when waging wars – according to a maximalist style, both in scope and intensity, as well as ultimate goals, which no other country can follow or respond to effectively. Traditionally, the United States starts war only after thorough and long preparation and political (and media) mobilization of the entire society. What follows are rapid and massive movements of units and huge amounts of military and other accompanying equipment across two oceans to remote parts of the battlefield.⁸⁶

The life and actions of the US Armed Forces, both in peace and war, essentially reflect the way in which the US society functions and lives. As it has already been said, the US history is an example of the almost unique ability and commitment of a society to quickly and efficiently overcome great space and numerous obstacles that stand in the way. Due to its geography (and historical experience), the US, and consequently its Armed Forces, have over time developed incredible capabilities to provide timely, robust and efficient logistic support to its expeditionary forces in all spatial, temporal and combat conditions. Having this type of capability is considered to be a condition of all conditions if the US would like to take part in wars that have been waged far from its shores for more than a century, in order to protect and promote its national interests. In this segment of armed struggle, the US Armed Forces are, without a doubt, unrivalled in the world, far ahead of all their allies, competitors and challengers.⁸⁷

However, it can be said that the US, in recent history, has often waged wars in which this virtue and capability turned into vice, where the US military engagement in crisis regions of the world seemed more like a huge economic and logistic endeavour than strategic and political one. In order to logistically support the conduct of combat operations and non-combat activities in the US method of warfare, protect many US military bases and facilities, military equipment and huge quantities of various types of war and general purpose materials and provide “main” conditions necessary to maintain the required high level of the morale of the US soldiers in a dangerous environment of “a foreign” country, the US Armed Forces traditionally maintain a very strong logistic presence in an area of operation.⁸⁸

Although this feature of the US method of warfare provides necessary independence and long-term sustainability of the US military expeditionary forces in “traditional” armed conflicts far away from the US coasts, the strong US

⁸⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, “The lonely Superpower”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 2, 1999, p. 36.

⁸⁶ Colin S. Gray, (2006), *gen. quote*, pp. 38-39.

⁸⁷ Colin S. Gray, (2007), *gen. quote*, p. 23; Colin S. Gray, (2006), *gen. quote*, p. 45.

⁸⁸ Colin S. Gray, (2006), *gen. quote*, p. 46.

logistic presence in the so-called non-traditional, non-linear asymmetric conflicts produces at least three very negative consequences for the accomplishment of the US military and political goals in a crisis-stricken country (and/or region). Firstly, the need to perform the tasks of securing and maintaining a great number of various military facilities, combat and non-combat equipment, war material, providing various services that the US soldiers are “accustomed” to and which are “understood as a standard”, distracts a great number of soldiers from the so-called field duties, so that often their number includes at least two thirds of the total number of the US military contingent. Secondly, a small and often insufficient number of troops available to perform combat tasks forces the US military commanders in a very difficult and dangerous battle with an easily mobile, cunning and adaptable enemy to rely on sophisticated technology and the powerful use of firepower to a much greater extent than it is necessary, justified and appropriate to such conflicts and threats. Finally, the almost complete self-sustainability and isolation of the US Armed Forces behind barbed wire and high-walled military bases that remind us of independent mini cities-states, separates the US troops from local population, whose support and cooperation is always the centre of gravity in this type of war and as a final result, it strengthens the opposing party’s arguments about the US as an occupying power and rapidly and safely distances the United States and its Armed Forces from reaching strategically desired end state.⁸⁹

From the time of the American Civil War until the beginning and after the end of the Cold War, the US Armed Forces attached great, key importance to *offensive method of warfare*. The reason for that certainly lies in strong influences of the geographical position, historical experience and specifics of the US political and military organizational culture. Due to its specific geographical position, sovereign decisions and the beliefs of its political elite, the US was in a kind of self-imposed geopolitical leeway until the beginning of World War II, (self)isolated from major political events and actions of other great powers out of the Western Hemisphere. Accordingly, on several occasions in the last century, it subsequently became involved in wars that were already largely underway. This resulted in the need to transfer a great number of people and war material across the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean and, by quickly launching offensive operations to take the initiative, led to the liberation and return of territories on the European and Asian continent previously occupied by enemy.⁹⁰

In addition, the US citizens, traditionally wary and reserved when it comes to sending their sons to wars far beyond the American continent, have expected the US military engagement to be the result of the utter military necessity, aimed at achieving truly important, long-term goals in vital national interest and ended with an unequivocal and as soon as possible victory of good over growing evil and injustice

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 46-47.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 40.

and the establishment of a better and lasting state of peace and stability. Such beliefs and demands of the US society and political elites have also imposed the need to conduct decisive large-scale offensive operations, with a high pace and a degree of material destruction. A strong desire to win is firmly woven into the very foundations of the US strategic culture. Consequently, nothing less is expected of the US Armed Forces than a victory, and an aggressive and offensive approach to war is not only a way to achieve this goal, but also “a means of protection” from any unwanted impasse.⁹¹

A lot of examples from the history of the US warfare, from the struggle for the US independence, through the Civil War, to the conflict in the Middle East on the turn of two centuries, have confirmed the effectiveness and advantages of the US offensive method of warfare based on high mobility, superior firepower, the capability of a rapid transfer of combat operations on an enemy’s territory and the effective control of “global goods”. During this period, owing to the implementation of modern technology, large industrial and production capacities and the enormous economic power of the state, from war to war, the capabilities of the US Armed Forces to conduct offensive operations and inflict losses on personnel, weapons and critical infrastructure to the US enemies improved almost exponentially.⁹² The United States knew how to use this capability and cultural inclination abundantly and successfully, especially during World War II, the war in Vietnam and both Gulf Wars with Iraq.

It is difficult to counter the strength of historical arguments and change something that has operated successfully in the past. However, the outcomes are quite different when variables of the present and the future are included in “the successful” formula of the US traditional (conventional) method of warfare. Contemporary, and certainly future armed conflicts according to its features, are increasingly moving away from “classic” wars that marked the interstate conflicts of the past two centuries, and are increasingly taking on a non-linear, asymmetric and unconventional character. Prolonged conflicts with “an irregular” enemy pose a major challenge to the US offensive method of warfare. The aggressive offensive combat activities of the US expeditionary forces, supported by strong fire support, against an enemy whose identity and permanent address are largely unknown, too often lead to collateral threats to the lives and property of civil population, and consequently create a widening gap between increasingly indignant locals and their (US) “liberators”. The losses inflicted by this approach on a very tenacious, resilient and adaptable enemy are, as a rule, always much smaller than the seemingly irreparable damage inflicted on the US overall political efforts, as well as a stain on its military reputation that is slowly fading.⁹³

⁹¹ Colin S. Gray, (2007), *gen. quote*, pp. 23-24; Colin S. Gray, (2006), *gen. quote*, p. 41.

⁹² Colin S. Gray, (2006), *gen. quote*, pp. 41-42.

⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 42.

Conclusion

The concept of strategic culture does not represent a new phenomenon in social sciences; reflections on the influences of culture on the (strategic) behaviour of people and social communities have appeared since ancient times. Although modern and increasingly present, the concept of strategic culture is often challenged, both in terms of concept and content definition of strategic culture, and the manner and scope of its real impact on strategic decisions and behaviour of state. Strategic culture, as a constant and ubiquitous factor, always has the potential to influence strategic decisions, and consequently state behaviour, which is carried out in different situations and circumstances to a greater or lesser extent.

It should be emphasized that the elements of strategic culture of a state (society) will certainly exert their influence in the process of making strategic decisions and subsequent actions of a state, but it will never be expressed in a mechanistic, ultimately decisive way. Strategic culture is most often, or maybe always, just one of many factors that influence strategic decisions and behaviour of state. Therefore, it is difficult to unambiguously and enough precisely separate and define the real scope and strength of the influence of the so-called cultural factors on strategic decisions from the scope and strength of the influence of some other factors.

Strategic action is not always a consequence of the crucial influence of culture. Culture gives us a value framework for considering the world around us, and numerous, mostly unwritten and unspoken assumptions and "truths" that largely serve as a basis for our judgement and action. However, in practice, these "truths" are often neglected, and behaviour is often based on opportunism, contrary to one's beliefs or broader socially accepted values. Finally, people, and thus decision-makers, behave differently not only because their cultures are different, but because the circumstances in which they find themselves and their actions differ.⁹⁴ Strategic culture is neither "the golden key" to unraveling many strategic secrets, nor is it "a miracle elixir" that will turn losers into winners on the battlefield. The excessive simplification, superficial, selective and uncritical view of strategic culture of some countries leads to the establishment and preservation of strong stereotypes and prejudices that are very dangerous because they can have very serious strategic implications.

Regardless of all difficulties and problems that accompany the concept of strategic culture, the need for its understanding and practical use seems to be necessary in order to better understand ourselves, others and the world around us. Many lessons in military history, including recent experiences of the US Armed Forces and its allies in the wars in the Middle East, have shown that policies and strategies that do not respect the importance of history, tradition and values of others carry a high risk of failure. The good knowledge of one's own and strategic culture of one's neighbours, allies and opponents, however, is not in itself a guarantee of

⁹⁴ Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy*, pp. 28, 130; Colin S. Gray, (2006), *gen. quote*, pp. 13, 16-21, 24.

victory - success in a potential conflict (war) because there are many different factors that can define its end result. However, a better and more thorough understanding of (strategic) culture is a requirement and need that can be ignored, but only to one's own detriment.⁹⁵

By careful and thorough analysis of the influences of the key factors of the US strategic culture certain constants and regularities in the US strategic thinking and actions in the field of foreign and security policy that marked not only the beginning of the 21st century, but almost the entire last century, can be emphasized. They are primarily reflected in:

- the strong, deep and persistent conviction of the US political elites that the US real and long-term security and prosperity can only be provided by expanding, not reducing, the sphere of its foreign policy responsibility and actions;

- the clear and constant efforts of the US political establishment to form and maintain the US foreign policy position as an inviolable regional and global (military) hegemon;

- insisting on the unfettered freedom of its foreign policy actions and retaining “the sovereign right” of the US unilateral, offensive military action in international disputes and in the event of a threat to its national interests;

- clearly stated intentions for decisive, proactive and preventive (military) actions in countering potential threats to the US national security and interests at their source, far from its coasts, and before they fully materialize;

- aspirations of decision-makers, political and military elites to find and implement simple and quick solutions to complex problems from the external environment;

- complete absence of policies and strategies that imply planning and waging wars with limited political goals;

- the firm and undivided belief of the entire nation in the exceptionality and “omnipotence” of the US, which consequently contributes to the development and preservation of the tendency of the US political elites to set unrealistic, idealistic and maximalist goals before the nation and its foreign and security policy;

- strongly favouring a special type of warfare that involves short, direct and decisive conflicts between the US and the other warring party, of high intensity and large scale, with a pronounced conventional and offensive character, mass use of firepower and modern technical and technological solutions and strong logistic support.

The US strategic behaviour and actions in the field of foreign policy and security are essentially conditioned by the urgent need of the US to preserve and improve its political, economic and particularly military power and influence in the international system and the fulfilment and protection of the national vital interests. However, it is

⁹⁵ Rasheed U. Zaman, *gen. quote*, pp. 83-84.

necessary to emphasize that in defining and implementing foreign and national security policy goals, the United States, although the most powerful and influential country in the international system, does not have as much room for manoeuvre and freedom in choosing its way and scope of action on the world stage as it seems to many people. The reasons for this, however, do not lie solely and mainly in the specifics and influences of the US strategic culture.

The US foreign policy engagement is primarily defined by its national interests in the field of security and economy, which are global and largely interdependent with the interests of other countries. The US security and the protection of its interests are closely linked to stability in vital regions of the world, the unhindered use of global public goods and the security of its key allies. The regional and global stability and the provision of open and free maritime communications, airspace and space is the basis for international trade and the secure flow of goods, information, raw materials and energy sources and the key prerequisite for survival and continuation of economic globalization that the US economic growth and progress depend on.

Therefore, the United States will continue to be forced to maintain its strong military presence in Europe, the Middle East and East Asia (including permanent presence of its warships in the world's most important seas, oceans and strategic straits) and continue to provide security guarantees to many of its allies, which imposes the need to continue pursuing the US proactive, expansionist and offensive foreign and security policy in the coming decades. All other options are either not realistic or would have potentially far-reaching severe consequences, both for the United States and the world as a whole.⁹⁶

A fairer and more even distribution of the burden (costs and responsibilities) of maintaining the stability and security of the existing international order is also not a likely and realistic option for the US in the near future. There are fewer and fewer willing and militarily capable US allies and partners. Differences in national priorities and interests between the United States and available capable states (e.g. members of the so-called *BRICS* club) are getting increasingly great and present over time, making it impossible to reach a broader consensus on key issues, and ultimately generate effective collective action by the wider international community. Accordingly, it can be expected that the current format of the US actions in the field of foreign and security policy, represented by occasional independent actions, a narrower or wider coalition of "the willing", composed of the most loyal European, Asian and Gulf allies, in which the US would be politically and militarily the most dominant partner, will continue in the future, and be much more a rule than an exception.

The widening gap, both within the legislature and between the White House and Capitol Hill, and the deep and growing polarization of the US nation has resulted in the inability to reach a broader social consensus on how to deal with most key

⁹⁶ See more in: Darko Glišić, *gen. quote*, pp. 149-153.

national issues and it increasingly affects the US actions in the field of foreign policy and national security.

The absence of a single, clearly expressed threat to the national security and specifics of the US political and electoral system makes it difficult or even impossible to maintain the long-term focus and commitment of the nation and political elites on a national project. Hence, the US actions at international level are increasingly taking the form of reactive activity, whose key feature is mostly represented by tactical responses to daily course of events in the regions of the vital US interest, and the main impetus for action is much more current events and power dynamics at internal level than long-term national strategic goals and commitments.⁹⁷

It seems that all of this does not worry much the US political elite and the majority of the professional public because they are firmly convinced that the forces of good, proudly, decisively and courageously led by the US, always find the right way out of difficulties and, in the end, triumph over the dark forces of evil. After all, if it is for any consolation to the Americans, *God* himself, as Otto von Bismarck, one of the greatest European statesmen of his time, convincingly claims, has special providence for fools, drunks and the United States.⁹⁸

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Кључни чиниоци стратешке културе Сједињених Америчких Држава

Стратешко спољно-безбедносно деловање САД је у основи условљено потребом очувања и унапређења сопствене политичке, економске, а посебно војне моћи и утицаја на међународни систем и заштите виталних националних интереса.

Стратешка култура САД се првенствено огледа у следећем: снажно и упорно уверење америчких политичких елита да се стварна и дугорочна безбедност и просперитет САД могу обезбедити искључиво ширењем, а ни на који начин умањивањем њене сфере спољнополитичког утицаја; јасни и стални напори америчке политичке елите да успостави и одржи спољнополитичку позицију САД као неоспорног регионалног и глобалног (војног) хегемона; инсистирање на неограниченој слободи деловања и задржавање сувереног права на једнострану, офанзивну војну акцију САД у међународним споровима и у случају угрожавања њених националних интереса; јасно изражене намере да се одлучно, проактивно и превентивно (војно) делује у сузбијању потенцијалних претњи националној безбедности и интересима САД, далеко од њених обала, а пре него што се у потпуности материјализују; тежње доносилаца одлука, политичких и војних елита да пронађу и спроведу једноставна и брза решења за сложене проблеме у спољном окружењу; скоро потпуно одсуство мера и стратегија које обухватају планирање и вођење ратова са ограниченим политичким циљевима; чврсто и неподељено уверење читавог народа у изузетност и „свемоћ” државе, што заузврат доприноси развоју и очувању тежње политичких елита САД да постављају нереалне и максималистичке циљеве пред нацију и њену спољну политику.

Кључне речи: *Сједињене Америчке Државе, национални идентитет, стратешка култура, стратегија*