
ARTICLE

PROGRESSIVISM IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY: PAST AND PRESENT

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Abstract

The article examines the impact of progressivism on contemporary U.S. foreign policy. American progressivism, which is said to have its roots in the British settlement house movement and the Fabian Society in Britain in the late 19th century, was a political philosophy and reform movement that developed against the consequences of modernism such as business corruption, environmental pollution, and the growth of capital at the expense of society's interest. Strongly affiliated with expansionism and interventionism, it was also influential in foreign policy during the period between 1890 and 1910. Theodore Roosevelt's Big Stick Diplomacy, William Taft's Dollar Diplomacy, and Woodrow Wilson's Moral Diplomacy prominently reflected this liberal internationalist trend. In this study, we investigate the foreign policy understanding of today's progressives, analyzing the bills, resolutions, and joint/concurrent resolutions sponsored by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren who represent the progressive wing in the Democratic Party. We argue that modern progressivism differs from its origins in that it prioritizes international cooperation, the non-intervention principle, and refraining from the use of force. Among the article's important findings are that progressives do not seek hegemonic supremacy, that they advocate a normative understanding of foreign policy that prioritizes values over interests, and that they distance themselves from a pro-interventionist political philosophy. On the other hand, they do not strongly question American leadership at the dawn of the 21st century.

Keywords

Progressivism, American foreign policy, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren

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Introduction

At the beginning of the 20th century, U.S. foreign policy came under the influence of the progressive view which defined itself by features such as multilateralism, international cooperation, and peaceful settlement of disputes, yet in reality represented aggressive expansionism and military interventionism. As a matter of fact, this reformist movement – if we can call it such – whose historical roots are not universally agreed upon, and the related political philosophy and applied practices focused mainly on domestic issues such as labor exploitation, corruption, and environmental pollution caused by newly found industries rather than foreign policy. The definition of the “Progressive Era” generally refers to

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the decades between the 1890s and 1910s, although the period does not have distinct starting and ending dates. The movement became a political party in the interwar period with the support of labor unions and socialists, and remained in American politics until the end of the 1940s. In the post-Cold War period, albeit with a low profile, progressivism constituted an important part of the American left – or, at least of the social democrat tendency.

By the beginning of the 21st century, progressive thought existed as a strong opposition to the moderate wing of the Democratic Party. Focused mainly on income inequality, health care reform, and environmental justice in domestic politics, in foreign policy, progressives defended multilateralism, cooperation with international institutions, and peaceful solutions for armed conflicts by refraining from the use of force. Although the studies to date have been valuable in terms of contributing to the literature, there have not been many studies comparing the historical origins of progressivism with the present day. Addressing this point makes this research particularly original and useful. The current study examines today’s foreign policy understanding of the progressive thought in the U.S., starting from the historical roots and the foreign policy paradigm of the early 20th century. Our research questions include what problems modern progressives prioritize compared to those at the beginning of the 20th century, how they intend to solve these problems, what their main strategies are for U.S. foreign policy, and what, if any, their core values are in politics. After revealing the approaches

to the historical roots of progressivism in the literature in the first part, in the second part, we turn to the foreign policy in the 1901-1921 period. In the last section, we examine the bills, resolutions, joint resolutions, and acts that have been submitted to the Senate and the House of Representatives by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren, the Democratic Party's most known progressive politicians, and try to establish which foreign policy issues were prioritized, how modern progressives approach contemporary problems in international relations, and what solutions they offer.

The research for this paper relies on the analysis of the laws that progressive legislators have sponsored or co-sponsored. For this purpose, the relevant legislation was accessed in official primary sources, such as the online U.S. Congress database. When selecting the relevant laws, the criteria of foreign policy and the period 2019-2021 were applied. Alongside bills, resolutions, concurrent resolutions, and joint resolutions were also analyzed in order to ascertain as accurately as possible the foreign policy views of U.S. progressives.

While searching for these documents, we chose "sponsored legislation" and "cosponsored legislation" under the title of "sponsorship", and the 116th and 117th Congress covering 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 respectively to keep the research up-to-date. As for "bill type," we considered bills, resolutions, concurrent resolutions, and joint resolutions brought before the Senate and the House. Regarding "subject – policy", we set the "international affairs" option. Since all three senators have prepared a large number of foreign policy laws as sponsors and cosponsors, only three bills or resolutions by each person were examined.

The Roots of American Progressivism

The question of where and how the roots of progressivism appeared is not an uncomplicated issue for researchers of U.S. foreign policy. According to Stokes, the widening gap between wealthy and indigent people in the then newly founded cities at the beginning of the 1890s prompted some social fragments in middle-class Americans, which we call "progressives," to explore the British settlement house movement. Stokes writes that the leaders of the British settlement house movement were dedicated to the task of making Christianity more relevant to the solution of social problems, and therefore, Americans who were interested in the settlements also found themselves being introduced to intellectuals who were developing a liberal theology such as Samuel Barnett, the founder of Toynbee Hall.¹ American progressives with historical and cultural ties to Britain were also similarly influenced by the British Fabian Society which was founded in

London in 1884 as a discussion group and consequently gave strong support to the progressive movement in London. The ties between British Fabians and American progressives become most clearly visible of the correspondence of American academics like Richard Fay and Edward Ross.

Thelen, on the other hand, in his research conducted in the late 1960s, traced the roots of progressivism to the 1880s, without drawing a connection to the UK but by referring to the same period, and claimed that the beginning of the movement dates back to the Gilded Age. His approach indicates that the origins of progressivism could be found in the class and status conflicts of the late 19th century which formed the driving forces that made men become reformers.² Accordingly, dozens of groups and individuals in the 1880s envisioned some change that would improve society, such as civil service reform, scientific agriculture, enforcement of vice laws, nonpartisan local elections, and tax reform.

The basic ideas of progressivism have also been closely associated in the literature with land ownership and land use. Examining the subject in terms of zoning studies, Claeys claimed that the main features of progressive political theory consist of freedom and individual expression in the use of land; the concept of property; freedom of rein to express communal visions of community, security, and aesthetics; and implementation of majority-driven community visions by local planning experts.³ The work and scholarship of conventional land use scholars depend particularly on Haar and Wolf's tenets of progressive jurisprudence; however, in Claeys's assessment these tenets are highly open to discussion since they do not stand on their own, but make perfect sense as applications of what was formerly known as progressive political theory. Admittedly, the interaction between progressivism and land ownership and use is a subject that requires further research.

Substantially, progressivism is a phenomenon more deserving of attention in the context of dissatisfaction with the established social and political order in the U.S. at the end of the 19th century. In their remarkable study, Van Patten and Davidson assert that, at the turn of the century, there was an examination of all aspects of society and a call for democratic renewal and reinvigoration. The late 19th and early 20th centuries

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reflected an intellectual ferment in the United States shaped by the emergence of new religions and the role of women in society as can be seen in the example of Mary Baker Eddy who founded the Christian Science Church and Aimee Semple McPherson who established the Foursquare Church. As for the fields of philosophy of education, epistemology, journalism, and ethics, John Dewey reflected the soul searching and demand for change in educational institutions. Progressivism has also been studied in the context of the transformation of economic production models. From this perspective, Halpin and Williams put forward that the intellectual development of American progressivism has its roots in the difficult transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy in the 19th and 20th centuries. Progressivism emerged as a necessary response to the shifting nature of American life, with scientific progress leading to further innovation in industrial technology as cities grew. On the other hand, the monopolization of key industries like steel, textiles, and railroads threatened laborers and consumers alike.

Towards the end of the 1890s, progressivism also showed its effect on foreign policy. Lang claims that the U.S. leap onto the world stage with its victories in the Spanish-American War coincided with the rise of progressivism.⁴ However, contrary to popular belief, it is claimed that at the dawn of the 19th century, progressives were not really opposed to imperialist policies. Between 1898 and 1917, American progressives developed an imperial attitude, joining others in defining commercial expansion overseas as essential to the normal functioning of the economy. They believed that new markets had to be secured and maintained if economic depression, social strife, and class warfare were to be averted. Although similar widespread judgments have remained dominant in public opinion in different fields, each of them is open to question, as is the case with imperialism. Leonard made a strong argument against these judgments by analyzing some of these fields. The progressives, according to the canonical narrative, advocated for labor, opposed the “survival of the fittest” doctrine, and were critical of war and imperialism, yet, according to Leonard, this was not the real situation. First, progressives, in fact, defended a radically restricted vision of who among the poor and dispossessed deserved uplift, a vision that eugenically sorted the poor into “worthy” and “unworthy” categories. A similar situation applies to the “survival of the fittest” doctrine. No eugenicist opposed the natural selection doctrine, so, progressives who endorsed eugenic policies necessarily defended it as well. As for war and imperialism, progressives such as Theodore Roosevelt were proponents rather than opponents of military adventurism. Many progressives condemned World War I not for its senseless destruction of human life, but for its destruction “of the better class of person.”⁵

In terms of internationalism, it can be said that progressives believed that the U.S. needed to collaborate with other countries to solve international issues. This led to the establishment of the League of Nations with the U.S. participation. On the diplomatic side, progressives advocated focusing on diplomacy rather than military force to resolve international conflicts leading to the U.S. participation in international agreements and treaties. In terms of human rights and international law, progressivism advocated that human rights and justice are universal values, and that the U.S. should react to human rights violations in other countries. Some progressives called for the U.S. to take a more active role in advocating for human rights on the international stage.

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Beyond all these discussions, arguments, and claims, as an interlude conclusion, it may not be completely correct to suggest that progressivism is purely a middle-class radical revisionist movement. As Stone put forth, progressive leadership in the U.S. at the beginning of the 20th century, certainly included middle-class reformers and professionals, but it also included businesspeople. To complicate the matter further, many of the middle-class reformers – together with many of the businesspeople – would often rail against Wall Street, the monopolies, and the trusts. Yet, it was entirely possible for both reformers and businessmen (people?) to collaborate in the same political party; for example, one of the progressives' leaders was George W. Perkins, J.P. Morgan's partner, representing the very essence of Wall Street. In brief, in the early 1900s, the progressives, or at least, the leading personalities of this community, were comprised of complex and composite interest groups representing different sociocultural and economic castes.

Progressive U.S. Foreign Policy in the Historical Context

Many progressives, including President Theodore Roosevelt, saw no conflict between imperialism and reform at home, accepting both as forms of uplift, reform, and improvement. Such progressives saw an opportunity to further the progressive agenda around the world in these new colonies; however, after the violence of the Philippine-American War, other progressives became increasingly vocal about their opposition to U.S. foreign intervention and imperialism.⁶

Roosevelt's big stick diplomacy, William Howard Taft's dollar diplomacy, and Woodrow Wilson's moral diplomacy were significant policies that represented the planning and execution of the period's foreign policy understanding. The grand strategy put into practice in the Mexican Revolution and the invasions of Haiti and the Dominican Republic were essentially the prelude to the interventionism that would span almost the entire 20th century. Hence, it can be claimed that at the beginning of the 1900s the traces of the Monroe Doctrine's isolationism were long gone, and the relations of the U.S. with other nations were far from being anti-interventionist.

On 2 September 1901, Roosevelt made a speech where he used the words "speak softly and carry a big stick." The phrase, which gave rise to the aphorism "big stick policy," was frequently used by the press to refer particularly to his foreign policy in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to Tilchin, Roosevelt's big stick diplomacy was founded in five central principles. The first was the possession of a formidable military capability; the second, to act justly toward other nations; the third, never to bluff; the fourth, to strike only if prepared to strike hard; and the fifth, to allow an honorable adversary to save face in defeat.⁷ As Leuchtenburg clearly noted back in the early 1950s, Roosevelt's accession to the presidency brought the new imperialist movement to full power; thus, in all of his foreign ventures, namely in the Dominican Republic, Panama, the Far East, and in building a greater U.S. fleet, Roosevelt had the support of the majority of the progressives.⁸ The basic idea of the big stick policy and a big navy was not limited to the Executive Office, but was also sincerely embraced by all cabinet members. Secretary of the Navy, and later U.S. Attorney General, Charles Joseph Bonaparte shared with a great many progressives Roosevelt's enthusiasm for a big navy, a viewpoint of inestimable advantage for a Secretary of the Navy.

Roosevelt's policies found resonance in different instruments, though not by direct use of force and military interventionism. The most important of these instruments was the U.S. dollar, originally printed by a less famous body of the U.S. government, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing of the Department of the Treasury. As Rosenberg sums up, it was the American international lending and financial advising in the early 20th century – and more specifically, the practice that President Taft called "dollar diplomacy."⁹ Taft surrounded himself with like-minded corporate lawyers and bankers, and businessmen who were their clients, and the objective of his foreign policy became concentrated on assisting American businessmen in the protection and expansion of investment and trade, especially in Latin America and the Far East.¹⁰ This policy involved cooperation

among three groups – each with a specific mission – in the country: private bankers would extend loans to risky foreign governments; financial experts, formally or informally connected to the loan process, would assume tasks of fiscal reorganization and administrative management in the borrowing country; and government officials would orchestrate such private sector involvement.

Another political instrument of the period was the Open Door policy carried into effect based on Secretary of State John Hay's international trade. Proposed to keep China open to trade with all countries on an equal basis – and being more of a realist political strategy than of a liberal economic approach – the Open Door policy was an attempt to construct a sphere of influence in Eastern Asia, particularly in China. As discussed by Irwin, this policy was given priority both for commercial and diplomatic reasons, so that China would not be dominated by any one power.¹¹ The economic rise of China created challenges for the U.S. policy in Asia and elsewhere, and rules-based institutions provided a way of embedding China in a system that serves the long-run interests of the U.S. What is interesting is that nearly the exact same policy route would be tracked by Roosevelt's foreign policy team led by Elihu Root between 1905 and 1909. Some claim that Root's involvement in the Open Door policy began in the first instance with the Boxer Rebellion when he was secretary of war in McKinley's administration, and that he gained further insight into the policy followed by Hay while acting as counsel for J.P. Morgan during the negotiations of the latter with China over the Canton-Hankow railway concession, before being appointed secretary of state by Roosevelt.

Dedicated to the promotion of human rights and democratic government in international relations, Wilson's way of thinking in foreign affairs reflected more of a rules-based and moral-oriented policy in the Progressive Era's autumn. Addressing business leaders in Mobile, Alabama, on 27 October 1913, he said that interest did not tie nations together, but, instead, it sometimes separated them. Emphasizing the development of constitutional liberty in the world, and human rights together with national integrity and opportunity as against material interests, Wilson stated that, sympathy and understanding

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unite them [the world's nations]" and that "[i]t is a spiritual union which [the U.S.] seeks."¹² In line with this worldview shaped by political ethics, Wilson opposed loans by U.S. banks to China under conditions that would in short order endanger the sovereignty of that country, as bankers moved in to reclaim politically the credits they had extended.¹³ Wilson's address to Congress on 2 April 1917, laying out America's war aims, formed a foundational statement of progressivism in foreign policy.¹⁴ However, his discourse which seemed to move away from expansionism was not reflected in foreign policy practice. The occupation of the Dominican Republic, and the interventions in Haiti, Cuba, Panama, and Honduras showed that he was close not to a so-called progressive peace policy, but rather to expansionism that had been ongoing since the beginning of the period. Along the same line, the Wilson administration rejected the legitimacy of the Huerta government in Mexico demanding re-election which later led to Huerta's flight from the country. Wilson's famous "Fourteen Points" declaration, which he announced after World War I, included controversial topics such as self-determination, and similarly reflected a good intention in discourse. Yet, the declaration did not succeed apart from paving the way for interventionism that would extend into the Cold War and beyond.

Progressive U.S. Foreign Policy Today

Especially after the Trump administration's "America First" nostalgia based on a fanciful pre-World War I logic, various interpretations have been put forth regarding the content, objectives, principles, and nature of the new progressive foreign policy that the U.S. should follow. Before examining the approaches of the progressive lawmakers as seen in the U.S. legislation, it may be useful to take a brief look at such evaluations in the literature. First, as Jackson argues prophylactically, progressivism is not a monolithic movement, but, on the contrary, it is intellectually diverse. For theories of security, comparing progressives and liberal internationalists, Jackson asserts that there appear some significant continuities and considerable divergences between at least two different factions: liberal internationalism prioritizes military superiority, while progressive internationalism prioritizes military sufficiency. The first emphasizes alliances, while the second defends democratic alliances. What is essential for liberal internationalism is international institutions, while the significant factor for the progressives is the reformation of international institutions. Finally, liberal internationalists stress economic interdependence, while the progressives stress mutual threat reduction.¹⁵ As set out here, different factions of the movement – if we can call it a definitive and particular "movement," of course – have different priorities and perceptions.

On the other hand, Ettinger, referring to Waltz's research and the leftist movements of the 20th century claims that it is possible to derive five broad propositions that can inform a leftist or progressive U.S. foreign policy. Based on the rejection of any conceptual distinction between foreign and domestic policy, the first principle is the theoretical underpinning of a left-wing foreign policy worldview. Following from this, with a much more practical orientation, the second principle affirms that the existing liberal international order is deeply flawed but worth preserving. The third principle is anti-authoritarianism. Accordingly, there is a long history of Marxist thought rejecting the authoritarianism of state tyranny and capital. The fourth principle refers to the opposition to militarism, the handmaiden of imperialism. Finally, economic justice and the pursuit of social democracy as the foundation for global economic relations constitute the last principle.¹⁶ Within the scope of a progressive foreign policy strategy, it seems that the U.S. government will not adopt a single behavioral model regarding international problems while assigning different priorities to the policy under the influence of different paradigms.

Sponsored and Cosponsored Foreign Policy Legislation by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Popularly known by her initials AOC, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has been serving as the representative for New York's 14th Congressional District since 2019 as a member of the Democratic Party. Pushing Democratic leadership to consider policies such as gun control, Medicare for All, and a Green New Deal focused on addressing climate change, she is part of a tightknit group of liberal – and an informal group of progressive – House freshmen known in social media as “The Squad.” The latter includes Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, the representative for Michigan, and Ilhan Omar, the representative for Minnesota, Ayanna Soyini Pressley, the representative for Massachusetts, all of whom belong to the Democratic Party.¹⁷

Not necessarily in cooperation with the members of the Squad, Ocasio-Cortez has sponsored and cosponsored 53 resolutions, concurrent resolutions, joint resolutions, and bills on foreign policy between 2019 and 2021. All of these laws show traces of a new progressive paradigm that, in one way or another, diverges from a previous so-called traditional foreign policy based on the use of hard power, military strength, coercive diplomacy, sanctions regime, and, to some extent, American exceptionalism as a pattern of behavior. “The Concurrent Resolution 83 on Iran, directing the President pursuant to section 5(c) of the War Powers Resolution to terminate the use of U.S. Armed Forces

to engage in hostilities in or against Iran,” clearly supported the people of Iraq, Iran, and other countries throughout the Middle East who demand an end to government corruption and violations of basic human rights.¹⁸ According to the resolution, “over the past eight months [as of 1 August 2020], in response to rising tensions with Iran, the United States has introduced over 15,000 additional forces into the Middle East”; however, “the American people and members of the United States Armed Forces deserve a credible explanation regarding such use of military force.” The language used in the resolution represents a departure from the infamous “Axis of Evil” discourse that has been used since the Bush administration, and directly advocates that the Iranian people’s search for democracy should be supported. Ocasio-Cortez, together with other sponsors and co-sponsors, explicitly rejects the realistic approach to foreign policy in general – and to Iran in particular – based on the use of force or threat of use of force. Moreover, the resolution, which emphasizes the concern about the military power increase in the Middle East in 2020, also has a moral understanding that advocates accountability and transparency to the public, reflecting a progressive tendency towards foreign policy issues.

The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act is also representative of the normative approaches of Ocasio-Cortez and other progressive legislators, this time embodied in international human rights law. The act argues that “[i]n the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China, the Government of the People’s Republic of China has, since 2017, arbitrarily detained as many as 1.8 million Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and members of other Muslim minority groups in a system of extrajudicial mass internment camps.”¹⁹ Asserting that “China has subjected detainees to forced labor, torture, political indoctrination, and other severe human rights abuses,” the act states, “it is the policy of the United States to prohibit the import of all goods, wares, articles, or merchandise mined, produced, or manufactured, wholly or in part, by forced labor from the People’s Republic of China and particularly any such goods, wares, articles, or merchandise produced in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China.” In terms of presenting a sanctions regime which seems to rely as a policy upon the Global Magnitsky Act, this law expresses the intention of a relatively harsher political behavior than the Iranian Resolution mentioned above.

Another resolution by Ocasio-Cortez that recommends complying with international law written in a liberal tone was prepared in 2019, conveying the opinion of the House of Representatives on the ratification of the United

Nations Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. Emphasizing that “the United States is one of the world’s wealthiest countries,” Resolution 666 highlights that “every American has the right to just working conditions, quality healthcare, an excellent education, healthy food, and safe housing”; however, “according to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, 40 million people in the United States live in poverty and the country ranked 35th out of 37 in terms of poverty and inequality, and 36th in terms of access to water and sanitation.”²⁰ Therefore, Resolution 666 stresses that “the United States must ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which guarantees the basic rights of the peoples to reach an adequate standard of living – together with other rights such as the right to social security, right to free education, and right to participation in cultural life.” Considering the isolationist, non-interventionist, and protectionist policy which manifested itself with the withdrawal of the U.S. from significant international agreements such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the Paris Climate Agreement, and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action during the Trump administration, it can be said that Resolution 666 marks a considerable crossroads in progressive foreign policy strategy. On the other hand, although the Biden administration has begun to return to international agreements, for now, this effort seems far from the radical view represented by the Squad. That said, Resolution 666 can be considered important since it strongly refers to the normative approach in international relations based on the progressive moral sentiment shaped by the embrative policy ethics within the Democratic Party.

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Sponsored and Cosponsored Foreign Policy Legislation by Bernie Sanders

Serving as a U.S. senator from Vermont since 2007, Bernie Sanders is the longest-serving independent in U.S. congressional history. Affiliated with the Vermont Progressive Party, he co-founded the Congressional Progressive

Caucus, a group of mostly liberal Democrats, and was a major candidate for the Democratic Presidential nomination in 2016 and 2020. In international affairs, he is known for his support for reducing military spending, diplomacy, and international cooperation.

In the “No War Against Iran Act (A Bill to Prohibit the Use of Funds for Military Force against Iran, and for Other Purposes),” Sanders and other sponsors clearly emphasized that “the U.S. does not have a legal instrument that would make it legal to use of force against Iran.” Referring to the Authorization for Use of Military Force, the law adopted after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the act states, “Nothing in the Authorization for Use of Military Force – or any other provision of law enacted before the date of the enactment of this Act may be construed to provide authorization for the use of military force against Iran.”²¹ The sponsors of the act also attempted to deprive the administration of financial resources for a military intervention against Iran. The act implemented this limitation with the provision that “no Federal funds may be obligated or expended for any use of military force in or against Iran unless Congress has declared war; or enacted specific statutory authorization for such use of military force.”

Sanders, with other progressive-leaning Democrats, has also succeeded in passing a similar law on the hostilities in the Republic of Yemen through Congress as a joint resolution. Under the title of “Joint Resolution to Direct the Removal of United States Armed Forces from Hostilities in the Republic of Yemen That Have Not Been Authorized by Congress,” it was announced that “Congress has not declared war with respect to, or provided a specific statutory authorization for, the conflict between military forces led by Saudi Arabia, including forces from the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Senegal, and Sudan against the Houthis, also known as Ansar Allah, in the Republic of Yemen; yet, since March 2015, members of the United States Armed Forces have been introduced into hostilities between the Saudi-led coalition and the Houthis, including providing to the Saudi-led coalition aerial targeting assistance, intelligence sharing, and mid-flight aerial refueling.”²² The lawmakers asserted that “Section 5(c) of the War Powers Resolution states that ‘at any time that the United States Armed Forces are engaged in hostilities outside the territory of the United States, its possessions and territories without a declaration of war or specific statutory authorization, such forces shall be removed by the President if the Congress so directs.’ Hereby, the Congress directs the President to remove the U.S. Armed Forces from hostilities in or affecting the Republic of Yemen.” In this joint resolution, Sanders and other sponsors criticized the presidential war powers

by applying constitutional law, deeming it necessary to have a declaration of war or a specific authorization in order to proceed with any military intervention.

The global COVID-19 pandemic which dominated 2020 was an important indicator of progressives' liberal attitudes towards cooperation with international organizations. The law titled "A Bill to Support Efforts by International Financial Institutions to Provide a Robust Global Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic," which saw no further action in legislation after being referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations in the Senate encourages the U.S. to re-engage with international organizations. According to the bill sponsored by Sanders and others, "The Secretary of the Treasury shall instruct the United States Executive Director of each international financial institution to use the voice and vote of the United States at that institution to seek to ensure adequate fiscal space for world economies in response to the global coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic."²³ The bill introduced a series of legal measures including seeking to ensure adequate fiscal

space for world economies in response to the global coronavirus disease; the suspension of all debt service payments to the institution; the relaxation of fiscal targets for any government operating a program supported by the institution, or seeking financing from the institution, in response to the pandemic; and, the requirement of approval of all Special Drawing Rights allocation transfers from

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wealthier member countries to countries that are emerging markets or developing countries. After the Trump administration's decision to withdraw from UNESCO in 2017 and from the Human Rights Council and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in 2018, and the threat to leave WHO in 2020, the bill clearly amounted to a move towards an alinement policy. While the progressives are not as strong in the legislature as the so-called moderates represented by President Biden, it is clear that they prioritize a more liberal and multilateralist tendency on their foreign policy agenda.

Sponsored and Cosponsored Foreign Policy Legislation by Elizabeth Warren

A former law professor who is currently the senior senator from Massachusetts and was a candidate in the 2020 Democratic Party Presidential primaries, Elizabeth Warren is known by the public for her expertise in bankruptcy law,

advocating stringent banking regulations, and taking a strong anti-monopoly stand. Considered one of the 20 most influential progressives in America, Warren's foreign policy agenda has been largely shaped by liberal arguments such as accusations against China of human rights violations, calling climate change "an existential threat," and opposition to many of the counterterrorism practices in the decade that followed the September 11 terrorist attacks.

The bill prepared on Korea reflects Warren's ethical considerations in her political preferences. The legal regulation "A Bill to Prevent an Unconstitutional War with North Korea" declares that the Constitution, in Article I, Section 8, grants Congress "the sole power to declare war; and, the constitutional powers of the President as Commander-in-Chief exercised only pursuant to a declaration of war, specific statutory authorization, or a national emergency."²⁴ Stressing that "28,500 American soldiers and over 100,000 American civilians live in North Korea," the bill clearly states "no Federal funds may be obligated or expended for any use of military force in or against North Korea." Warren and the bill's other lawmakers courageously sought to prevent the Executive Office from attempting to start a military conflict, regardless of whether it was authorized or unauthorized. Moreover, according to their assessment, "It is the sense of Congress that a conflict on the Korean peninsula would have catastrophic consequences for the American people, for members of the United States Armed Forces stationed in the region, for United States interests, for United States allies the Republic of Korea and Japan; therefore, the President, in coordination with United States allies, should explore and pursue every feasible opportunity to engage in talks with the Government of North Korea on concrete steps to reduce tensions and improve communication, and to reinvigorate high-level negotiations aimed at achieving a diplomatic agreement." Although the bill appears to be primarily concerned with U.S. interests, it is important that it guides the president to refrain from the use of force and presents dialogue as a policy option. Supporting the concepts of communication, negotiation, and diplomatic agreement emphasized in the bill, together with the phrase to "pursue every feasible opportunity," stand as evidence that progressive priority favors the peaceful resolution of conflicts, breaking away from the harsh rhetoric and hard power exercises of Republican governments of the post-September 11 era.

Among international issues, Warren and other progressives are particularly sensitive about global warming and climate change. Warren was the cosponsor of the "International Climate Accountability Act" of 2019. Stressing that parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change reached a

landmark agreement to combat climate change and to accelerate and intensify the actions and investments needed for a sustainable low carbon future, the purpose of the 2019 was to prohibit the use of funds to advance the withdrawal of the U.S. from the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015. In order to prevent any administration from withdrawing from the agreement, the act states that “no funds are authorized to be appropriated, obligated, or expended to take any action to advance the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement.”²⁵ The lawmakers, including Warren, added a plan to the act for the U.S. to meet its nationally determined contribution under the Paris Climate Agreement, limiting the Executive Office to a specific time to enforce the law. Thereafter, “Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall develop and submit to the appropriate congressional committees and make available to the public a plan for the United States to meet its nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement.” The law robustly challenged the policies of the Trump administration which was generally supported by sectors with high carbon footprints such as the oil and weapons industries. In this manner, Warren and the other sponsors clearly demonstrated the extent to which they essentially differ from the Republicans and even from the moderate Democrats in the legislative body of government.

Among international issues, Warren and other progressives are particularly sensitive about global warming and climate change.

One of the latest bills introduced by Warren and other sponsors in 2021 was the “Bill to Establish the China Censorship Monitor and Action Group, and for Other Purposes.” The bill stated that “the President shall establish an interagency task force, which shall be known as the ‘China Censorship Monitor and Action Group’.”²⁶ The bill proposed that “[t]he Task Force shall oversee the development and execution of an integrated Federal Government strategy to monitor and address the impacts of efforts directed, or directly supported, by the Government of the People’s Republic of China to censor or intimidate, in the United States or in any of its possessions or territories, any United States person, including United States companies that conduct business in the People’s Republic of China, which are exercising their right to freedom of speech.” According to the bill, “The Task Force shall submit an annual report to the appropriate congressional committees that describes the strategic objectives and policies, the activities, and the results of the activities.” Additionally, “The report shall assess major trends,

patterns, and methods of the Government of the People's Republic of China's efforts to direct or directly support censorship and intimidation of United States persons, including United States companies that conduct business in the People's Republic of China." The agency and its reporting mechanism mentioned in the bill do not seem to be instruments with the power to create a high deterrent legal pressure on China for its censorship crimes. The authorities and responsibilities of the institution are far from being concrete, and the purpose is not clear enough to make any predictions about how functional it may be. Warren and the other sponsors could be criticized for drafting such a vague and ineffective legal text so as to avoid a high-profile challenge towards China. Nevertheless, this approach is understandable given the progressives' traditional cooperative and multilateralist foreign policy philosophy. After all, lawmakers affiliated with progressivism have always avoided using belligerent language, at the risk of being accused of passivism. In this sense, one cannot expect Warren to be an exception.

Conclusion

Having discussed the strategies upon which the progressive foreign policy tradition was built at the beginning of the 20th century, the article has revealed the problems and solutions to those problems offered by U.S. progressives. The movement, which is claimed to have its roots in the British settlement house movement and the relations between American intellectuals and the British Fabian Society, led to a search for reform structured by social and political instruments such as civil service reform, scientific agriculture, enforcement of vice laws, nonpartisan local elections, and tax reform. On the other hand, U.S. progressives developed an expansionist and interventionist attitude, and did not pursue a pacifist path in foreign policy that was completely independent of the imperialist approach. Theodore Roosevelt's big stick diplomacy, William Howard Taft's dollar diplomacy, and Woodrow Wilson's moral diplomacy far from defended anti-interventionism and non-interference. Although the modern progressives were very close to winning in the 2020 presidential elections, they did not succeed in seizing power. However, the laws, bills, and resolutions prepared by the Democratic Party's progressive lawmakers offer important clues about how they view the world at large and what foreign policy line they would follow if they held a majority in legislation or in the Executive Office.

The article presented foreign policy approaches by examining three bills, resolutions, and joint/concurrent resolutions prepared by each of the three most important progressive lawmakers in the U.S. legislature. In Concurrent

Resolution 83, signed by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the use of force against Iran was opposed. In Joint Resolution 7, prepared by Bernie Sanders, the U.S. Armed Forces was called to withdraw from being a party to the conflicts in Yemen. In a similar vein, the International Climate Accountability Act of 2019, prepared by Elizabeth Warren, recommended the establishment of mechanisms that will prevent the U.S. from leaving the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. The article showed that today's progressives, unlike their early 20th-century counterparts, do not seek hegemonic supremacy, or, at least, they stay away from such discourse. Progressives today advocate a normative understanding of foreign policy that prioritizes values over interests, and they are distant to a pro-interventionist political philosophy, even if they do not strongly question American leadership at the dawn of the 21st century.

Overall, these findings challenge conventional narratives surrounding progressive foreign policy, emphasizing the importance of ethical considerations and strategic restraint in navigating the complexities of the international arena and providing insights into the evolving landscape of progressive foreign policy. By prioritizing values, promoting diplomatic solutions, and advocating for strategic restraint, progressives offer a distinct perspective on addressing global challenges. Understanding these nuances is essential for fostering informed discourse and crafting effective strategies that prioritize peace, justice, and international cooperation.

Endnotes

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