

U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt tests a steam shovel during construction of the Panama Canal in November 1906. Roosevelt had supported earlier efforts by Panamanian rebels to seize control of the future canal zone, declare independence from Colombia, and seek diplomatic recognition by the United States. Congress promptly approved a treaty with the new government that granted the United States "power and authority" over the canal "in perpetuity." Under President Jimmy Carter, the U.S. government agreed in 1977 to turn control of the canal over to Panama in 2000.

Underwood & Underwood, 1906, via the Library of Congress

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THE EXPANSION OF U.S. POWER

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Discuss U.S. policies of economic and territorial expansion in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- 2.2 Explain how major shifts in the global balance of power led to two world wars and the subsequent rise of U.S. primacy on the world stage.
- 2.3 Describe the institutional foundations and ideals representing U.S. foreign policy in the postwar period.
- 2.4 Identify the foreign policy challenges the United States faced immediately after the Cold War.

The central goal of this book is to help readers understand U.S. foreign policy today. This understanding is impossible, however, without reference to the nation's past experience, first as a regional power and then as the predominant world power. This chapter reviews these developments, evaluating their relevance to the current policy process. A single chapter cannot provide an exhaustive survey of U.S. diplomatic history, but it can highlight the pivotal events that shaped the nation's relations with the world beyond its shores.¹

Such a historical perspective reveals the origins and development of the paradox of America's world power. As the United States grew from a regional power to the holder of global primacy, it continued to maintain the political arrangements, along with the social and cultural traditions, that prevailed in a time of diplomatic detachment. Early American leaders advanced claims of moral, political, and social **exceptionalism**, or a widely held sense of superiority. Living up to these values proved difficult, however, as these leaders contradicted their righteous claims. American leaders and citizens built a nation-state that gained power, reaching a level of global prominence that had no competitors in modern history.

This historical review covers two distinct time periods. The first involves the gradual expansion of U.S. territory, wealth, and influence from the nation's founding to the First World War. As we will find, early American leaders charted a course of unilateral action, avoiding diplomatic ties to the great powers of Europe while building an industrial economy that would make the United States a major force in global trade markets. As for territorial expansion, the western frontier offered a limitless opportunity to create, in the words of Thomas Jefferson, an "**empire of liberty**" from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans.

The second period covers the conduct of U.S. foreign policy once the country became a great power in the twentieth century. The United States began the century in the midst of a struggle to colonize the Philippines and then asserted hegemonic control over Central America. Other leaders became engulfed in a struggle against the Soviet Union and other communist states. The Soviet Union's collapse in 1991 left the United States in a position of unprecedented global primacy. A decade later, terrorists attacked in the heart of New York City. As journalist Michael Hirsh (2003, 25) observed, "We are in this world with both feet now. We have achieved our Founding Fathers' fondest dream, and, at the same time, their worst nightmare. We are a

shining success, the supreme power on earth. And we are entangled everywhere.” Such is the paradox of world power.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Barack Obama On September 28, 2014, President Obama appeared on the CBS news program *60 Minutes*. Interviewer Steve Kroft questioned the high costs of U.S. activism on the world stage. Obama’s response reflected his view of American primacy while also capturing the nation’s historic sense of mission.

America leads. We are the indispensable nation. We have capacity no one else has. Our military is the best in the history of the world. And when trouble comes up anywhere in the world, they don’t call Beijing. They don’t call Moscow. They call us. That’s the deal.

When there’s a typhoon in the Philippines, take a look at who’s helping the Philippines deal with that situation. When there’s an earthquake in Haiti, take a look at who’s leading the charge making sure Haiti can rebuild. That’s how we roll. And that’s what makes this America.

Source: CBS, *60 Minutes*, “President Obama: What Makes Us America,” September 28, 2014, www.cbsnews.com/news/president-obama-60-minutes/.

ECONOMIC AND TERRITORIAL EXPANSION

America’s earliest leaders were concerned first and foremost with building political institutions that could preserve the nation’s independence. The Articles of Confederation, which in 1781 established the framework of the first American political system, featured a very weak central government. Under the articles, the original thirteen states conducted their own trade policies while the cash-starved Congress largely dismantled the nation’s military forces, thereby making the United States vulnerable to intimidation by more unified powers overseas. The country cried out for a stronger national government. Under the U.S. Constitution, drafted in 1787 and ratified in 1788, states maintained primary control over their internal affairs while ceding sovereignty to the federal government. The president and Congress shared responsibilities for American foreign policy (see Chapters 4 and 5).

The new framework was not meant to encourage U.S. activism in diplomacy, which many Americans saw as an artifact of the Old World, long dominated by monarchs, church leaders, and feudal despots. Thomas Jefferson, the first secretary of state and third president, observed in a note to his personal secretary, William Short, that diplomacy was “the pest of the peace of the world, as the workshop in which nearly all the wars of Europe are manufactured.” By 1820, the United States had become the fourth-richest country in the world as measured by per capita income (Prestowitz 2003, 84). Alexander Hamilton, the first Treasury secretary, believed the country should “erect one great American system superior to the control of all trans-Atlantic force or influence and able to dictate the terms of the connection between the old and the new

world” (Hamilton et al. 1937, 69). Jefferson, too, envisioned U.S. dominance extending beyond the nation’s borders.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the United States was hardly an isolationist country in its formative years (see Table 2.1). The expansion of American power featured a consistent pattern of **unilateralism**. Rather than collaborating and pooling resources with like-minded states, leaders adopted a unilateral foreign policy. President George Washington held the benefits of going it alone, and three years later, he summarized his view in his Farewell Address (1796):

The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. . . . Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none; or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. . . . Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. . . . It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world.

TABLE 2.1 ■ U.S. Foreign Policy Chronology, 1783–1945

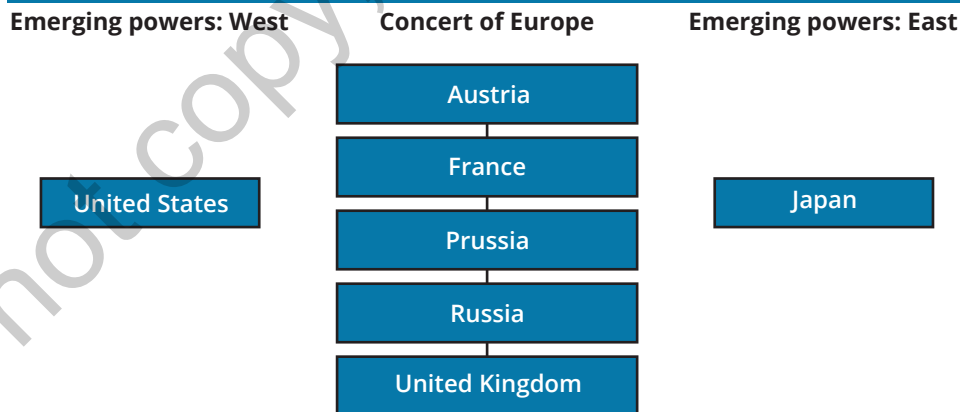
1783	United States gains independence from Great Britain.
1788	Constitution establishes stronger American government.
1793	United States proclaims neutrality in European wars.
1803	France sells Louisiana Territory to United States.
1812	Territorial and trade disputes provoke U.S. war with Great Britain.
1823	Monroe Doctrine proclaims U.S. sphere of influence throughout Western Hemisphere.
1845	United States annexes Texas.
1846	The Mexican-American War begins.
1853	United States forcefully opens Japan to American trade.
1867	Russia sells Alaska to the United States.
1898	United States annexes Hawaii.
1898	Spanish-American War begins.
1899	United States calls for “Open Door policy” toward China.
1902	U.S. troops, after three years of guerrilla war, colonize the Philippines.
1903	United States signs treaty to build Panama Canal.
1904	Roosevelt Corollary to Monroe Doctrine grants United States “international police power.”
1914	World War I begins in Europe.
1917	United States declares war against Germany.

1918	German surrender ends World War I.
1919	U.S. Senate rejects Treaty of Versailles and League of Nations.
1928	Kellogg-Briand Pact renounces war as an “instrument of national policy.”
1935	Congress passes Neutrality Acts barring U.S. intervention in Europe.
1939	German territorial conquests lead to World War II.
1941	Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor provokes U.S. entry into World War II.
1944	Bretton Woods system, including World Bank and International Monetary Fund, is created.
1945	Defeat of Axis powers ends World War II. United Nations is established.

Manifest Destiny on the Western Frontier

The United States, driven by a “cult of nationalism” that provided a moral basis for expansion, came to dominate the Western Hemisphere by default (Van Alstyne 1965). The nation’s emergence as a regional power coincided with the demise of the British, French, Russian, and Spanish outposts in North America. Globally, a **multipolar** balance of power existed that was anchored by the European powers, which maintained relatively peaceful relations with each other in the century separating the Napoleonic and world wars. The United States, which along with Japan emerged as formidable “offshore powers” in the nineteenth century (see Figure 2.1), filled this geopolitical vacuum in a variety of ways: by buying vast territories at bargain prices, negotiating settlements, and forcefully seizing territories when other measures failed.

FIGURE 2.1 ■ Multipolar Balance of World Power (Mid-Nineteenth Century)



The first major territorial gain occurred in 1803, when Jefferson acquired the vast Louisiana Territory, which stretched westward from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains and northward from the Gulf of Mexico to the Oregon Territory. French ruler Napoleon Bonaparte,

who had regained the territory from Spain two years earlier, was unable to govern, let alone defend, such a massive amount of land in North America while pursuing his ambitions in Europe. He made the most of the situation by offering Louisiana to the United States for \$15 million (or about three cents an acre). Jefferson, though suspecting that his role in the Louisiana Purchase was “an act beyond the Constitution,” eagerly accepted the offer (see Kukla 2003).

The acquisition of the Louisiana Territory, followed by the displacement of Spain from Florida, left the United States free to focus on state building, economic development, and further continental expansion (see Map 2.1, Nineteenth-Century European Empires and U.S. Continental Expansion). After the War of 1812, in which they struggled over unresolved trade and territorial differences, the United States and Great Britain established close economic ties. The demise of the Spanish empire in Latin America, which led to the liberation of its colonies, paved the way for U.S. regional hegemony. In 1823, President James Monroe, seeking to discourage renewed European intrusions into Latin America as well as Russian ambitions along the Pacific coast, claimed the **Monroe Doctrine**, which further separated the United States from the European powers:

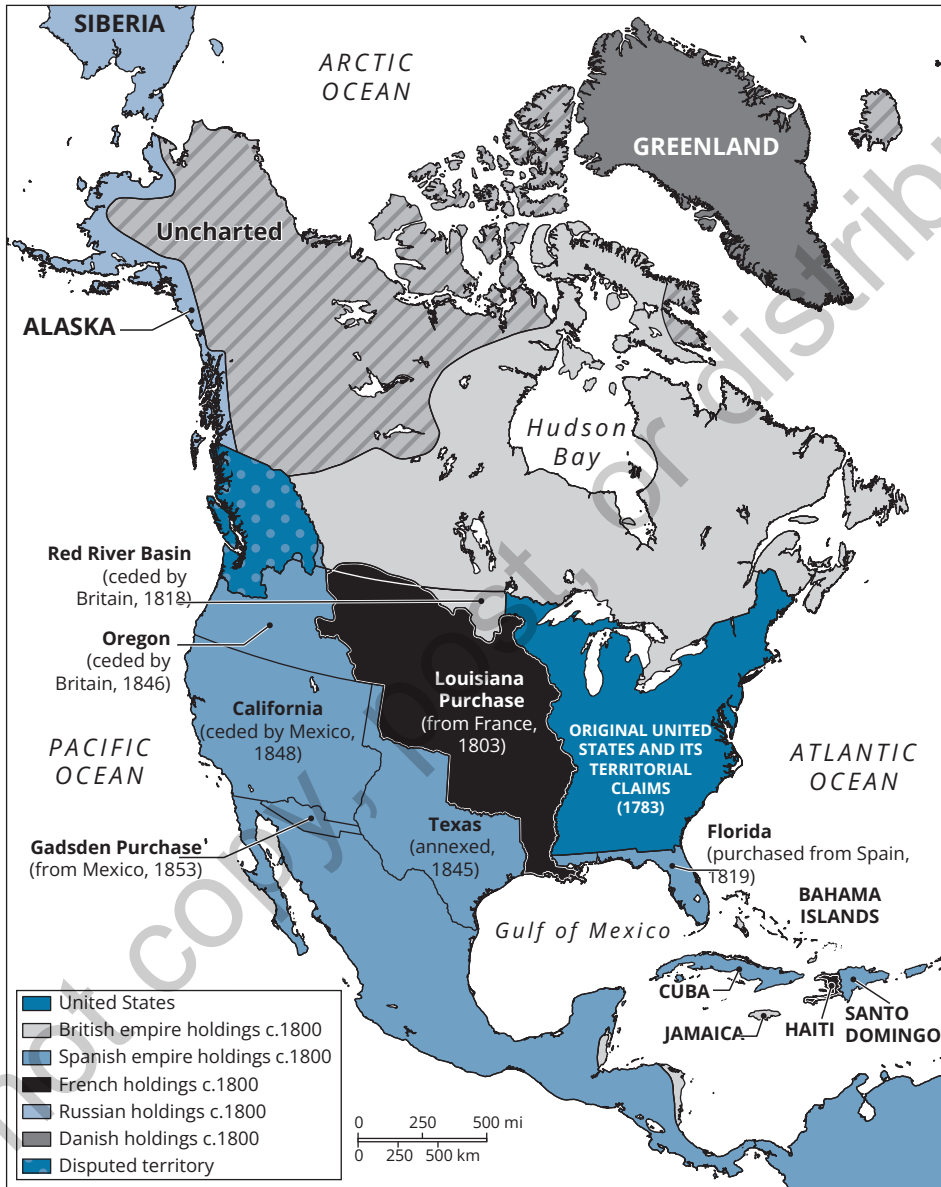
In the wars of the European powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy to do so. . . . With the movements in this hemisphere we are of necessity more immediately connected. . . . The political system of the [European] powers is essentially different in this respect from that of America. . . . We should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.

Mexico’s independence from Spain in 1821 paved the way for the next significant act of U.S. expansion. The U.S. government’s annexation of Texas in 1845 was viewed as evidence that the United States had God’s blessing to continue its westward expansion. In the *Democratic Review*, editor John O’Sullivan claimed the **manifest destiny** of the United States “to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions” (quoted in Pratt 1927, 797–798). The United States quickly defeated the Mexican army.

Opening the Door to Asia

The conquest of northern Mexico, along with the acquisition of the Oregon Territory from Great Britain in 1846, effectively closed the western frontier, which had been a symbol of virtually endless opportunity for American expansion. Advocates of continued expansion turned to the Pacific Ocean as the new frontier. “He would be a rash prophet who should assert that the expansive character of America has now entirely ceased,” wrote historian Frederick Jackson Turner in 1920 (37). The United States had much to gain economically by tapping into the enormous markets of East Asia. Japan offered commercial relations as well as docking and fuel rights. When these efforts failed, President Millard Fillmore deployed naval vessels to Tokyo. Faced with this early example of **gunboat diplomacy**, Japan’s emperor accepted a “treaty of friendship” in 1854 that provided for U.S. access to the Japanese market.

American interests in the Pacific Ocean extended well beyond Japan. In addition to the several islands it occupied to serve as coaling stations for U.S. ships and to prevent other countries

MAP 2.1 ■ **Nineteenth-Century European Empires and U.S. Continental Expansion**


Source: Thomas M. Magstadt, *An Empire If You Can Keep It: Power and Principle in American Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2004), xviii, xix. Reprinted by permission of CQ press, an imprint of SAGE Publications Inc.

from taking the islands, the United States was especially interested in the Hawaiian Islands, located midway between North America and Asia. Unable to achieve a treaty on its own terms, the U.S. government, in 1893, recruited a rebel army that staged a successful coup against the monarchy. Within days, the new government of Hawaii signed a treaty of annexation with the United States. The United States also gained control of Alaska during this period, purchasing the remote territory from Russia's czar for \$7 million.²

Critics accused the United States of behaving like the European empires it had long condemned. But such protests proved futile, as illustrated by the Spanish-American War in which the United States clashed with Spain over its colony in Cuba. As American forces were ousting Spain from Cuba, a U.S. fleet on the other side of the world was defeating Spanish forces in the Philippines, another Spanish colony. The United States gained control of the Philippines only after waging a lengthy war that left thousands of casualties, largely Filipino, in its wake. Advocates of American occupation seized on the prospect of bringing Christianity and “civilization” to the Philippines. These factors contributed to McKinley's decision in 1902 to rule the Philippines as a U.S. colony, marking an exception to the U.S. government's general rule of opposing colonization.

The nation's territory extended across North America and the Pacific Ocean; its population doubled between 1865 and 1890 to 71 million, in large part from European immigration. Meanwhile, U.S. economic output matched, and then exceeded, that of the major European powers. More Americans lived in cities than in rural areas, and industrial production contributed more than agriculture to national output. Securing overseas markets, therefore, became a national priority. In 1899, the United States claimed an **Open Door policy** designed to prevent China from being carved up among European trading interests.

A Big Stick in Latin America

President Theodore Roosevelt, a former naval officer and a veteran of the Spanish-American War, and also a strong advocate of U.S. expansion, proved to be the central American figure in foreign policy as the new century began (see E. Morris 2001). He eagerly sought to become a world leader. In 1905, Roosevelt received the Nobel Peace Prize for negotiating the end of the Russo-Japanese War. Two years later, Roosevelt deployed a U.S. naval armada around the world, a symbol of the nation's arrival as a global power. The president believed in a version of social Darwinism that viewed wars as both inevitable and noble, with the victors assigned a “mandate from civilization” to look after less powerful nations. Citing a favorite aphorism from his safaris in Africa, Roosevelt pledged that the United States would “speak softly, but carry a big stick.”

Roosevelt was concerned with Latin America, a U.S. sphere of influence since the proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine. The president engineered a domestic uprising in northern Colombia in 1903, after which the United States recognized the new Republic of Panama and signed a treaty to build and lease the Panama Canal. Concerned then not only with European meddling in the region but also with internal power struggles that threatened friendly governments, the president issued the **Roosevelt Corollary** to the Monroe Doctrine. Following this logic, Roosevelt ordered U.S. military interventions in the Dominican Republic (1904), Honduras (1905), Cuba (1906), and Panama (1908).

FIGHTING TWO WORLD WARS

The Roosevelt Corollary may have affirmed U.S. dominance of the Western Hemisphere, but developments elsewhere created new challenges for the United States. In Europe, a century of calm was quickly coming to an end. The creation of a unified German state in 1871 started this downward spiral. Germany's rise coincided with the decline of the Ottoman, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian empires, all of which had contributed to a crude but stable peace in Europe. Major shifts in the global balance of power, which included the rise in stature of the United States and Japan, would lead to two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century.

The First World War

For Americans, Europe's plunge into war in 1914 affirmed the prudence of their country's historic aversion to foreign entanglements (see Tuchman 1962). As order unraveled in Europe, President Woodrow Wilson sought to keep the United States "neutral in fact as well as name." But the country could not maintain its detached posture once the conflict in Europe extended into the Atlantic Ocean. Any hopes for hiding ended in May 1915, when a German submarine destroyed the British ocean liner *Lusitania*, whose passengers had included 128 American citizens. Russia's withdrawal from the conflict in November 1917 secured Germany's position in the east and allowed its forces to concentrate along the western front. The prospect of German control over all Europe and its implications for U.S. security prompted Congress to declare war against Germany in 1917.

The United States contributed to the war effort in two ways. First, Wilson drew on the nation's immense industrial capacity by shipping massive volumes of weapons, munitions, and medical supplies to its allies, who were mired in a defensive stalemate against Germany. Troops on both sides were dug into long lines of mud-filled trenches, unable to advance against the new generation of armored tanks, long-range artillery, and automatic weapons. Second, Wilson deployed U.S. troops to the western front to reinforce exhausted French and British forces and begin a slow counteroffensive. The strength of the U.S. forces ultimately tipped the balance, leading to Germany's surrender in November 1918.

To Wilson, the United States should not fight simply for its survival or that of its allies. The nation should defend a more general principle: the right of citizens of any country to determine their own destinies. World War I, then, became a war to "make the world safe for democracy." When the war ended, Wilson felt duty bound to seek a world order that would put these principles into practice and ensure that the recent conflict had been "the war to end all wars." He proposed a new system based on the concept of **collective security**. In such a system, leaders would defend each other in the event of outside aggression. Wilson outlined his plan to Congress in early 1918, when he identified "fourteen points" that all countries should respect, including worldwide disarmament, freedom of the seas, open markets, and the prohibition of secret diplomacy. Most famously, the president proposed the formation of a **League of Nations** that would provide the institutional foundation for collective security.

An array of major powers called for global treaty to "outlaw" war. Two assumptions underlaid the Pact of Paris, also known as the **Kellogg-Briand Pact** (named for the U.S. and French foreign ministers). First, military force was an unacceptable tool of statecraft. Second, the destructive

power of modern military weapons, clearly demonstrated in the First World War, made the future use of such weapons suicidal to all parties. In 1928, representatives from fifteen countries signed a pact that condemned “recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and . . . as an instrument of national policy.” Eventually, sixty-two governments, including those of Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Soviet Union, signed the agreement. These reforms did not prevent the major powers from playing the same old game of power politics. After Japan seized control of Manchuria in 1931, Prime Minister Tojo Hideki ordered his forces to gain control of the entire Chinese coastline. Two years later, Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany and repudiated the Treaty of Versailles. Taking his cue from Hitler, Italy’s fascist Benito Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in 1935.

The Second World War

While some American leaders favored intervention in World War II as early as 1940, the American public and isolationists in Congress remained unconvinced. President Franklin Roosevelt bowed to the popular view. During the 1940 presidential campaign, he had declared, “I have said this before and I shall say it again and again and again: Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars” (quoted in Schulzinger 1994, 172). Nevertheless, Roosevelt brought the nation’s considerable resources to bear in support of its allies in Europe. As German forces advanced toward the English Channel, the president, through the **lend-lease program**, provided Great Britain with U.S. military hardware and ships in exchange for American access to British bases in the Caribbean.

Despite the fact that the U.S. State Department confirmed in 1942 that German dictator Adolf Hitler was systematically killing Jewish people and others, in what later would be called the Holocaust, President Roosevelt and the United States did not take decisive action and stayed out of the war. Moreover, the restrictive U.S. immigration laws in place since the stock market crash of 1929 prevented the U.S. from accepting hundreds of thousands of fleeing Jewish refugees, limiting the number to the existing quota and forcing fleeing refugees to go through an arduous immigration process. While the *New York Times* reported eye witness accounts and presented almost daily updates on Hitler’s plan to exterminate the Jews, the reports were buried in the paper far from the front pages and most Americans would not learn about the horrors of the Holocaust and the killing of more than 6 million Jews and others until after World War II was over (see Greene and Phillips, 2022).

It took a direct assault on the United States in Hawaii for the U.S. to officially enter World War II. On December 7, 1941, Japanese warplanes attacked the large American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The raid killed some 2,500 Americans and devastated the U.S. fleet. Roosevelt declared December 7 a “date which will live in infamy.” Three days later, Germany, which had formed an “axis” with Japan and Italy, declared war against the United States. The United States would be engaged militarily on two fronts, thousands of miles apart. In the Pacific, the United States restored its naval forces and reversed Japan’s advances, which by 1943 included the Philippines (a U.S. colony). In 1944, Allied forces landed on the coast of France and began their eastward push against German troops. These forces joined Soviet troops, who had been equally successful on the eastern front. Germany’s surrender, along with Hitler’s suicide, came in May 1945.

A month before Germany’s surrender, Roosevelt had suffered a fatal stroke, and Vice President Harry Truman had succeeded to the presidency. Truman suddenly learned about the

U.S. military scientists experimenting with nuclear energy that could yield an explosive force of unprecedented magnitude. The scientists involved in the secret Manhattan Project, based in Los Alamos, New Mexico, detonated the first nuclear bomb there on July 16, 1945. Only then did government officials notify Truman of this awesome new weapon, which could be used to drop nuclear bombs against Japan. With this in mind, he approved the August 6 nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and the August 9 bombing of Nagasaki, which together killed nearly 150,000 Japanese citizens. Faced with the prospect of additional U.S. nuclear attacks, Japan surrendered to the United States and brought World War II to a merciful close.

GLOBAL PRIMACY AND THE COLD WAR

Immediately after World War II, the United States entered the third global conflict of the twentieth century. This conflict was labeled the **Cold War** because it never led to direct military combat between its principal antagonists, the United States and the Soviet Union. The basis of this conflict was ideological, pitting the capitalist countries, led by the United States, against the communist countries, led by the Soviet Union. Whereas capitalism respected private property and glorified free enterprise, communism sought to improve living standards by erecting a powerful state that owned and operated the means of economic production. A military showdown between the two superpowers would have produced death and destruction of unknowable proportions. The Cold War, while it avoided such an outcome, produced an endless series of “hot” wars in other parts of the world, mainly among developing countries caught in the crossfire (see Table 2.2).

TABLE 2.2 ■ U.S. Foreign Policy Chronology: The Cold War

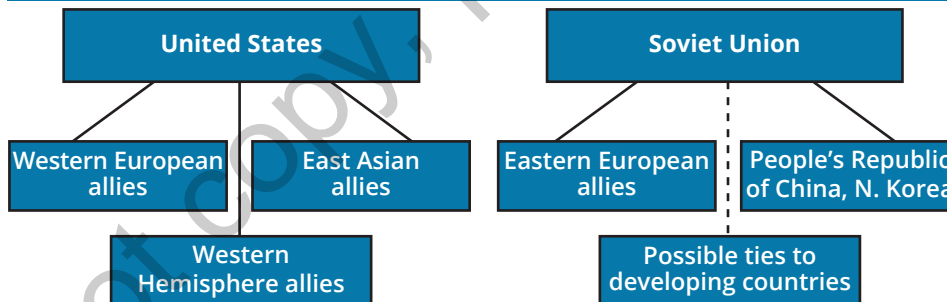
1945	Yalta Conference of victorious powers seeks to organize the postwar world.
1946	George Kennan devises containment strategy as the Cold War sets in.
1947	Marshall Plan and Truman Doctrine call for U.S. aid to allies.
1948	The State of Israel is created and immediately recognized by the United States.
1949	NATO is formed by United States and eleven other nations.
1950	North Korea attacks South Korea, prompting UN military intervention.
1953	Korean War ends; CIA aids overthrow of Iran's government.
1954	CIA aids overthrow of Guatemala's government.
1959	The Cuban Revolution produces a communist state close to the U.S. border.
1962	Cuban missile crisis prompts nuclear showdown between the Soviet Union and United States.
1964	Congress authorizes U.S. military intervention in Vietnam.
1968	Tet offensive in Vietnam prompts birth of antiwar movement in United States.
1970	Nixon orders invasion of Cambodia; four student protestors are killed at Kent State University.

(Continued)

TABLE 2.2 ■ U.S. Foreign Policy Chronology: The Cold War (Continued)

1972	Nixon launches détente strategy, visits Soviet Union and China.
1973	The last combat troops leave Vietnam.
1979	Iranian militants seize U.S. embassy in Tehran; Soviet Union invades Afghanistan.
1981	Reagan begins major military buildup as the Cold War heats up.
1986	U.S. covert support for Nicaraguan rebels leads to Iran-Contra scandal.
1989	Hungary opens borders with Austria, signaling the Cold War's demise.
1990	Russia and Ukraine declare independence from Soviet Union; Germany is reunified.
1991	Soviet Union dissolves, ending the Cold War.

The United States emerged from World War II as the predominant world power, maintaining a nuclear monopoly for a time and producing as much economic output as the rest of the world combined. However, the Soviet Union, exploiting its considerable resources, both real and potential, soon shifted the global balance of power to a **bipolar** one, with the United States and the Soviet Union representing the contesting “poles” (see Figure 2.2). With a sphere of influence that spanned from East Germany to the Alaskan border, the Soviet Union possessed the world’s largest conventional forces and gradually caught up with the United States in the nuclear arms race. In addition to the arms race, the worldwide competition for allies became a defining element of the Cold War.

FIGURE 2.2 ■ Bipolar Balance of Power in Early Cold War

Strains between the United States and the Soviet Union, allies against the Axis powers in World War II, became insurmountable shortly after the war. Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader, imposed firm control over the countries of Eastern Europe that his armies had liberated from Nazi Germany. In February 1946, he predicted an inevitable clash between the communist and capitalist countries and the eventual triumph of communism. A month later, Winston Churchill, the former British prime minister who left office just before the war ended, articulated the division of Europe that would last throughout the Cold War: “An **Iron Curtain** has descended across the Continent” (see Map 2.2, Cold War Division of Europe).

MAP 2.2 ■ Cold War Division of Europe



Sources: Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *Principles of International Politics: People's Power, Preferences, and Perceptions*, 4th ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009), 197; Steven W. Hook and John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, 20th ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2016), 30. Reprinted by permission of CQ Press, an imprint of SAGE Publications Inc.

The task of formulating a Cold War strategy was assigned to George Kennan, a Soviet specialist in the State Department. Kennan first laid out his plan in a February 1946 “long telegram” that circulated within the government. It was reprinted a year later in the journal *Foreign Affairs*. Kennan’s call for the **containment** of communism struck a middle ground between two alternatives: U.S. detachment from the emerging conflict and an all-out invasion and “liberation” of the Soviet Union. Under the containment strategy, the United States would accept the existing sphere of Soviet influence, but it would prevent further Soviet expansion by any means, including military force. In doing so, the United States would wait out the Soviet Union, looking forward to the day when its internal flaws—the denial of individual rights, the lack of a market economy, the high costs of foreign occupation—would cause the communist system to collapse from within.

Beyond waging the Cold War, the United States sought to create a “stable world order” that reflected its own political and economic principles. The behavior of the fascists had provided a strong case for democratic rule. The U.S. economy would thrive in a market-friendly global trading system that provided outlets for American goods and services. In addition, U.S. banks, multinational corporations, and private investors would benefit enormously if they had free access to foreign markets. In this respect, the American grand strategy during the Cold War pursued objectives overseas and within the United States.

New Structures of Foreign Policy

The challenges and opportunities facing the United States after World War II, combined with the lessons of the interwar years, deterred U.S. foreign policy makers from retreating again into their hemispheric shell. The country had to engage in world politics. Less clear, however, was *how* the United States would engage in politics at that level. Would the U.S. government pursue its own interests or those of the international community? Would it choose military or nonmilitary instruments to achieve its goals? Would it act alone or in collaboration with other governments? The answers came in the late 1940s, when President Truman concluded that the nation’s interests were intimately tied to global stability, political reform, and economic growth. Led by Secretary of State Dean Acheson, the “wise men” of the Truman administration believed that a world of governments and economies resembling those of the United States would be more peaceful, democratic, and prosperous than the present one (see Isaacson and Thomas 1986; McMahon 2008).

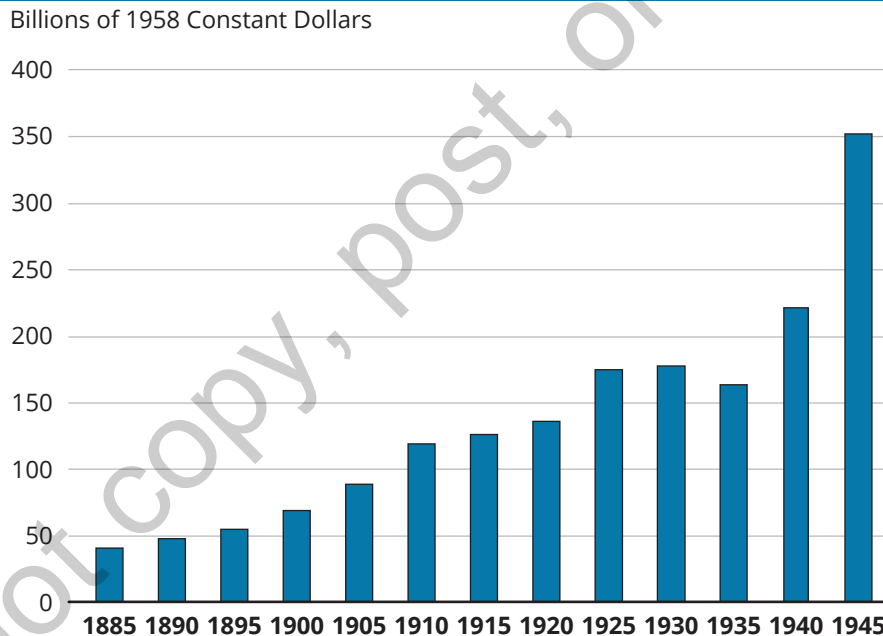
Global pressures compelled the United States to centralize national security structures and increase the president’s direct control over military policy—steps viewed as vital in the nuclear age. The National Security Act of 1947, the most sweeping reorganization of U.S. foreign policy in the nation’s history, paved the way for the creation of the Department of Defense, the National Security Council, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Officials from fifty governments came to San Francisco in early 1945 to create the United Nations (UN). Along with the other powers of the immediate postwar period—China, France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union—the United States protected its interests by means of a permanent seat and veto power on the UN Security Council. Countries in the UN General Assembly have one vote, but their votes are nullified by permanent members of the Security Council. The assembly provides a chance for exchanges, debates, and resolutions.

The creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949 resulted from several troubling developments in Europe. In 1947, Great Britain had withdrawn its military support for Greece and Turkey, whose governments faced internal revolts by communists and other groups. Under the **Truman Doctrine**, the United States provided military aid to both states and, more broadly, pledged support for “free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.” In February 1948, the Soviet Union gained control of Czechoslovakia by supporting a coup against its elected leader and imposing a communist regime in its place.

On the economic front, the U.S. government also engaged in a flurry of institution building. The nation’s economy had grown rapidly in the years before and during the war (see Figure 2.3), and by 1945, U.S. output matched that of the rest of the world combined. In the summer of 1944, officials from forty-four governments met in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, to discuss postwar financial arrangements.

FIGURE 2.3 ■ U.S. Economic Growth, 1885–1945



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Statistical History of the United States: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

The **Bretton Woods agreements** created a system of fixed currency exchange rates based on the U.S. dollar, which, because of American economic clout, would be considered “good as gold.” The Bretton Woods system included two international financial institutions designed to stabilize the world economy further (see Chapter 6). The first, World Bank, would lend money

to member states to rebuild their industries, and the second, International Monetary Fund, would manage currency exchanges and provide relief to member states facing short-term currency crises.

The **Marshall Plan**, named after Secretary of State George Marshall, paved the way for Western Europe's economic recovery and its eventual political alignment within the European Union. Truman agreed with Marshall that Europe urgently needed U.S. help to revive its slumping economies. Congress then authorized the transfer of \$13 billion (about \$100 billion in current dollars) in low-interest loans to these countries, which were required to coordinate their plans for recovery. They did so in 1948 by creating the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). The success of the OEEC in 1957 led to the creation of the European Economic Community, which later became the European Community and now is the European Union.

Regional Conflicts and the Vietnam Syndrome

The new architecture also countered two threats: the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC), the largest countries by area and population, respectively. Of most concern was the USSR's detonation of a nuclear device in September 1949, an act that neutralized the U.S. advantage in this area of military power. The PRC came into being in October 1949 under the leadership of Mao Zedong. Among its first actions, the PRC signed a treaty of cooperation in 1950 with the Soviet Union, which deepened fears in Washington that the balance of global power was shifting against the United States and toward communism.

The PRC was particularly troubling because, unlike the Soviet Union, China represented a potential role model for other developing countries. Colonial rule was yielding to the creation of new Asian and African countries, which quickly gained a voting majority in the UN General Assembly. The crushing poverty in these new states, and the lack of political institutions in place to satisfy their citizens' rising expectations, raised additional U.S. fears that these countries would turn to communism. The *third world*, a term used to distinguish the region from the *first world* (the capitalist bloc) and the *second world* (the communist bloc), figured prominently in U.S. foreign policy and attracted military intervention by both superpowers in three areas: Korea, Cuba, and Vietnam.

Korea

At the end of World War II, the winning allied forces, including the Soviet Union and United States, negotiated an agreement about Japan's former colony in the Korean peninsula in Northeast Asia. The allies agreed to divide control of the peninsula into two zones of occupation along the thirty-eighth parallel—with the Soviet Union controlling the northern region and the United States, the southern region—with the intention of establishing an independent unified national government in the near future. However, the World War II cooperation and alliance between the Soviet Union and the United States rapidly deteriorated shortly after as a new Cold War between them took hold. Both occupying forces began encouraging Korean leaders aligned with their own political ideologies and when they withdrew their forces a few years later, two very different Korean regimes remained. In the more powerful North, the

Democratic People's Republic of Korea was supported by the Soviet Union and China, and in the weaker South, the Republic of Korea was supported by the United States.

Any hopes for a Korean reunification vanished in June 1950 when communist forces from North Korea attacked their counterparts in South Korea hoping for a quick victory. The relatively new United Nations Security Council saw this as an unlawful invasion and dispatched a command force supported by nearly 20 countries although the United States supplied 90% of the military personnel (Pembroke, 2018) and eventually the command force successfully pushed North Korean troops back across the thirty-eighth parallel.³ In 1953, the Korean Armistice Agreement ended the fighting and created the Korean Demilitarized Zone to separate North and South Korea but did not officially end the war. With no clear victor, North Korea and South Korea remained divided for the rest of the Cold War and are still separate nations technically still at war.

The Korean War marked the first Cold War conflict and tested the containment strategy of the United States. When President Eisenhower took over from President Truman in 1953, he expanded the role of containment in his security strategy to include more funding for nuclear weapons and less for conventional forces. His “**New Look**” policy established the crucial role of nuclear weapons as a deterrence although his veiled threats to use nuclear weapons in the Korean War against China are sometimes credited with ending the conflict (Pach, 2023). The New Look strategy also increased reliance on the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to carry out covert actions to counter Soviet influence and expanded new military alliances that created a “containment belt” around the Soviet Union and China (see Map 2.3, Cold War Alliances With the United States).⁴ The Cold War now dominated U.S. foreign policy.

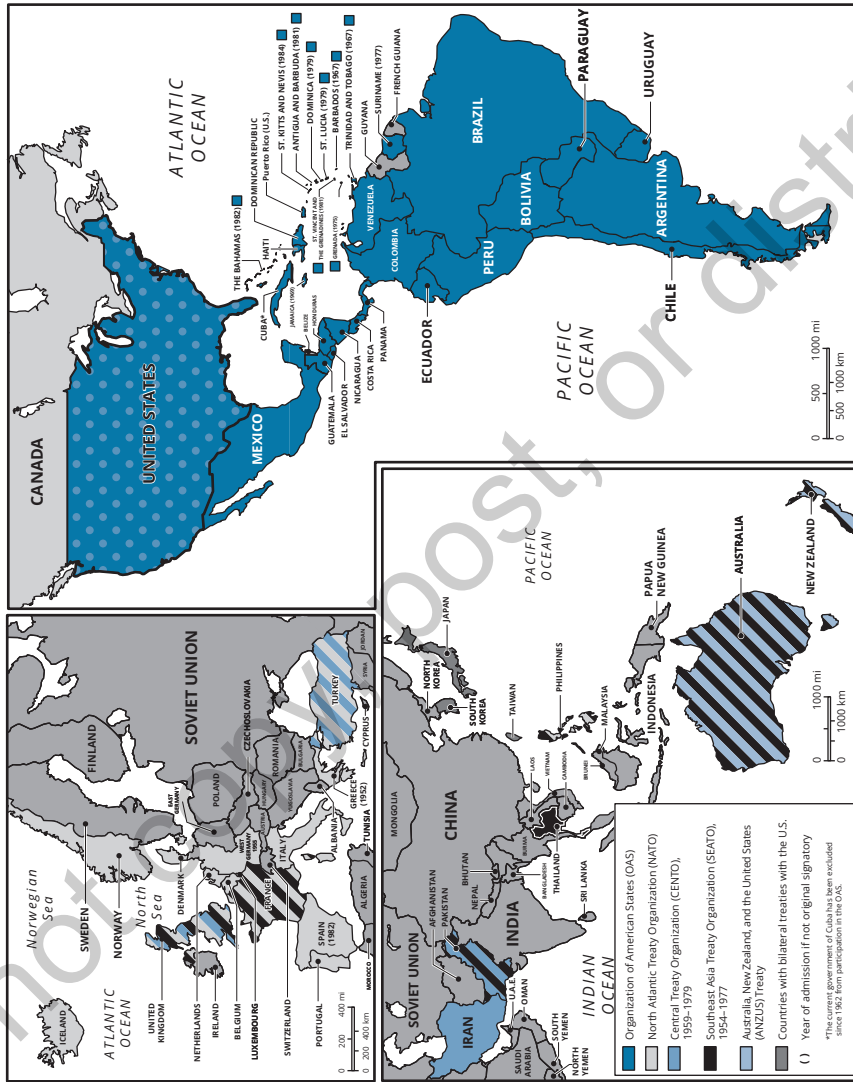
Cuba

The gravest challenge to U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War was posed by the nearby island of Cuba, less than a hundred miles from Florida. In 1959, the U.S.-backed military regime of Fulgencio Batista was overthrown and replaced by a Marxist regime led by Fidel Castro, who openly declared the United States to be an enemy of the Cuban people. But a U.S. covert operation failed miserably in 1961 when Cuban exiles were repelled at the Bay of Pigs. The standoff between the United States and Cuba took a perilous turn in November 1962. Americans discovered that the Cuban government began installing medium-range nuclear missiles on the island. President Kennedy, well aware of the source of the nuclear missiles, insisted that Castro remove the missiles or face swift military action. After nearly two weeks of tense negotiations between the U.S. and Soviet governments, which came to be called the **Cuban missile crisis**, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev ordered the missiles removed. A direct, and possibly apocalyptic, clash between the superpowers was narrowly averted. Castro's Cuba, however, remained a stubborn obstacle to U.S. regional and global interests (Schultz 2009).

Vietnam

As the events in Cuba unfolded, the United States also was becoming more deeply immersed in a more distant conflict. Its outcome would reveal the limits of U.S. military power, raise doubts about the country's moral posture in the Cold War, and shatter the domestic consensus favoring

MAP 2.3 Cold War Alliances With the United States



Sources: Organization of American States, www.oas.org; North Atlantic Treaty Organization, www.nato.int; Steven W. Hook and John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, 19th ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2013), 69.

the containment strategy (G. R. Hess 2009). The war began when France could no longer subdue a colony based in Vietnam. The U.S. government, which feared the rise to power of a communist regime, stepped into the quagmire. President Eisenhower viewed Vietnam through the lens of the “domino theory,” which held that a communist victory in one country would lead to a succession of additional victories in neighboring states.

The U.S. military presence in Vietnam grew slowly in the early 1960s and then soared to half a million soldiers and advisers by 1968. Like Korea, Vietnam was split into northern and southern regions, with the north allied with communism and the south receiving support from the United States and its allies. Despite the superior firepower of the United States, Kennedy and his successor in office, Lyndon Johnson, could not defeat the north’s Viet Cong forces, led by Ho Chi Minh. Television networks broadcast graphic images of the carnage on a daily basis. Despite President Richard Nixon’s promises to end the war when he took office in 1969, the conflict continued until 1975, when Vietnam gained independence under a communist government. Nearly 59,000 U.S. troops died in the conflict, and another 153,000 were wounded. More than 1 million North and South Vietnamese soldiers died along with more than 2 million Vietnamese civilians.



A North Vietnamese tank rolls through the gate of the Presidential Palace in Saigon, April 30, 1975, signifying the fall of South Vietnam. Thousands of Vietnamese citizens celebrated in Saigon, later renamed Ho Chi Minh City in honor of the leader of the revolutionary movement.

AP Photo

The Vietnam War proved disastrous for the United States in several ways. For one thing, U.S. leaders had wrongly viewed it as an ideological struggle rather than a war of independence and self-determination. As a result, their goal of winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people had been doomed from the start. Militarily, U.S. forces had failed to adapt to the demands of guerrilla

warfare while assaults by American bombers had merely strengthened the will of the Vietnamese.⁵ As the national soul-searching associated with the **Vietnam syndrome** took hold across the country after the war, the moral superiority of the United States could no longer be taken for granted—nor could the virtues and open-ended military commitments of the containment doctrine.

The End of the Cold War

As the United States faced the staggering consequences of the Vietnam War, the Soviet Union benefitted from the decline in U.S. power and its own technological and economic advancements. By the early 1970s, the Soviet Union had caught up with the United States in the most potent category of military power, nuclear weapons. By 1971, Leonid Brezhnev had consolidated power enough to be the undisputed Soviet leader and proved more willing to negotiate with President Nixon, as both were eager to move on from devastating military conflicts such as the Prague Spring for the USSR and Vietnam for the United States. With both leaders facing tough internal and external politics, the Nixon administration sought to change course in its policy of containment from direct or indirect military confrontation to an economic and negotiation approach known as **détente**, a French word meaning easing of tensions.

Under the *détente* policy, U.S. and Soviet leaders established a closer working relationship so that regional crises could be resolved without military escalation. The two governments also negotiated a series of arms control treaties that first limited, and later reduced, the stockpiles of nuclear weapons on both sides. In addition, the United States offered economic incentives to facilitate cooperation with the USSR, including badly needed American agricultural exports such as grain.

President Nixon also sought improved relations with the People's Republic of China, whose communist government the United States had not yet recognized. The PRC, still ruled by Mao Zedong, was struggling, so it stood to benefit greatly from the economic opportunities U.S. recognition would bring. The breakthrough between the countries came in a May 1972 visit by Nixon to China, during which the United States officially recognized the PRC as the legitimate government of China. In return, Mao agreed to cooperate with the United States rather than the Soviet Union. By securing this commitment, the U.S. achieved the upper hand in the now triangular superpower rivalry.

Despite these gains, the memories of Vietnam and the Watergate scandal that drove Nixon from office in 1974 compelled Americans to seek yet another shift in U.S. foreign policy. President Jimmy Carter, a former peanut farmer and born-again Christian from Georgia, turned the nation's attention away from the confrontation of the Cold War and toward a more cooperative posture emphasizing human rights, improved living conditions in the developing world, and a stronger role for the United Nations. Carter's policy of **liberal internationalism** offered a new route to global stability, and the president achieved a major foreign policy goal by brokering the 1978 Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt.

In his final years in office, however, Carter suffered a series of setbacks (see S. Kaufman 2008). First, a 1979 revolution in Nicaragua brought a Marxist regime to power in Central America. Second, the U.S.-backed shah of Iran was overthrown in 1979 by a new government harshly critical of the United States. On November 4, 1979, Iranian militants captured 70 Americans from the United States Embassy in Tehran and held them hostage for 444 days. The protracted Iran Hostage Crisis took place during the 1980 presidential election period where President Carter was challenged by the much more hawkish Republican challenger, Ronald Reagan. The final blow came in

December 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to bolster a new socialist government. Carter could not overcome these challenges and lost his 1980 bid for reelection to Ronald Reagan, a Republican “hawk” who launched a more forceful approach to foreign policy (see Mann 2009).

As president, Reagan revived superpower tensions and, in 1983, called the Soviet Union “the focus of evil in the modern world.” His rhetorical offensive was accompanied by an expansion of U.S. armed forces, which the president believed had been neglected during the détente and Carter years. The president took action on several occasions, including a 1983 invasion of Grenada amid chaos on the island and an ongoing effort to overthrow the communist government of Nicaragua, the Sandinistas. In this case, the White House approved secret shipments of weapons to be sent from Iran to a rebel group based in Honduras known as the *Contras*. Later, the Reagan administration’s involvement in selling illegal arm shipments to the Contras for the purpose of overthrowing the Sandinistas in Nicaragua would become publicly known as the Iran-Contra Affair and cast a shadow over his presidency.

Although President Reagan started his first term as a staunch anticommunist and hard-liner against the Soviet Union, his second term provided the opportunity to try a different approach to his relationship with Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. Reagan retreated from the arms buildup and ideological offensive that marked his first term, and used his skills as “the great communicator” and his fears of nuclear war to tamp down the arms race with the Soviet Union and to engage Gorbachev with conviction, empathy, and geniality. Reagan’s personal relationship to Gorbachev led to a remarkable change in the relationship between the U.S. and Soviet Union, culminating with Gorbachev’s visit to New York City in 1987. Reagan’s change in approach to the Soviet Union in his second term is often credited with paving the way to the end of the Cold War (Leffler, 2018).

By the time George H. W. Bush took office in January 1989, the only question remaining about the Soviet Union was whether its decay was irreversible. Gorbachev sought to ease strains on the Soviet periphery in Eastern Europe by permitting client states to launch their own reforms. Citizens seized on the opportunity—not to restructure their communist systems but to get rid of them altogether. The critical turning point came in September 1989, when Hungary’s government opened its borders with Austria, permitting thousands of East Europeans to cross the Iron Curtain. The Berlin Wall fell two months later, and in quick succession democratic regimes were established across the region.

As the Soviet bloc crumbled around him, Gorbachev confronted independence movements among the fifteen republics that comprised the Soviet Union. The largest of these, Russia, held free elections in May 1990, which brought President Boris Yeltsin to power. Gorbachev’s efforts to salvage the Soviet Union proved futile, and on Christmas Day 1991, the USSR ceased to exist. The U.S. government’s primary role during this period was to support a “soft landing” for the Soviet Union. In the end, the United States won the Cold War in the most favorable manner possible—through the peaceful and orderly dismantling of its longtime rival in Moscow.

NEW CHALLENGES AFTER THE COLD WAR

The end of the Cold War caught the world by surprise. The East-West conflict had become a deeply entrenched fact of life on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The ideological competition between communism and capitalism had seemed to defy resolution. The nuclear doctrine of

mutual assured destruction had locked the Soviet Union and the United States into a strategic stalemate, and the logic of bipolarity had established a manageable framework for superpower relations while constraining the ambitions of regional powers. Few expected the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, an outcome that seemed beyond the realm of possibility because of the firm grip in which the Kremlin held its citizens and the Warsaw Pact states. Moreover, the Kremlin's massive nuclear stockpile provided Moscow with indefinite military power.

Even so, the Soviet monopoly on power could not be sustained amid poor living conditions and drained government budgets. The communications revolution of the early 1990s broke down the walls between the Soviet bloc and the outside world. Advances in satellite technology extended the reach of televised coverage into areas that were previously isolated. The arrival of personal computers in the Soviet bloc, including Internet access and e-mail capabilities, permitted contacts across national borders that could not be controlled by government officials. As a result, citizens gained new exposure to the world around them. What they learned not only contradicted the images and messages they had been fed by the government but also revealed the profound gaps between their living standards and those of their Western neighbors.

Elements of the New World Order

The victory of the United States in the Cold War represented more than the defeat of one international coalition by another. The Soviet Union's collapse marked the triumph of liberalism over the two competing ideologies of the twentieth century: fascism and communism. The challenge of fascism was subdued with the military defeat of Germany, Italy, and Japan during World War II. Communism died a slower death with the demise of the Soviet bloc and the transition of Chinese communism into an economic system based largely on market forces. The United States, now the centerpiece of a unipolar balance of power, had achieved its two-century objective of transforming world politics.

President George H. W. Bush announced his success in an address to Congress: “We can see a new world coming into view, a world in which there is the very real prospect of a **new world order**, a world where the United States—freed from Cold War stalemate—is poised to fulfill the historic vision of its founders; a world in which freedom and respect for human rights finds a home among all nations” (see Table 2.3). The president did not fully detail what this order would look like but emphasized three overlapping elements: democratization, economic globalization, and multilateral cooperation.

President Bill Clinton embraced all three elements of this new world order when he took office in January 1993. Clinton, whose primary interest was domestic rather than foreign policy, believed the United States would be more secure and prosperous in a more tightly knit world whose nations shared common values, interests, and political institutions. His national security policy of “engagement and enlargement” presumed that closer interactions between countries, primarily on economic matters, would provide collective benefits to them while discouraging challenges to the status quo.

Overseas Unrest and Domestic Unease

Despite their great expectations for a more peaceful new world order, U.S. leaders confronted a variety of armed conflicts overseas. Regional conflicts suppressed during the Cold War

TABLE 2.3 ■ U.S. Foreign Policy Chronology: Post–Cold War

1991	Iraq forced out of Kuwait by a UN coalition led by the United States.
1992	Civil war escalates across former Yugoslavia.
1993	U.S. forces killed in Somalia, forcing U.S. withdrawal; Congress ratifies North American Free Trade Agreement.
1994	Plan for World Trade Organization is approved.
1994	Ethnic Hutus in Rwanda and Burundi commit genocide of more than 800,000 ethnic Tutsis.
1995	United States brokers Dayton Peace Accords, ending ethnic warfare in Bosnia-Herzegovina.
1996	Clinton signs Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.
1997	Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland are invited to join NATO.
1998	Al Qaeda terrorists bomb U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.
1999	NATO forces intervene in Kosovo to stop ethnic cleansing.
2000	Terrorist bombing of USS <i>Cole</i> kills seventeen and injures thirty-seven Americans.
2001	Islamic terrorists crash commercial airplanes into World Trade Center and Pentagon; United States invades Afghanistan and overthrows regime linked to 9/11 attacks.
2002	President Bush threatens preemptive strikes against U.S. enemies.
2003	The United States invades Iraq and overthrows Saddam Hussein's regime; U.S. occupation fails to uncover weapons of mass destruction.
2004	First democratic elections are held in Afghanistan; insurgency spreads across Iraq.
2005	Iraqi voters elect parliament and approve a constitution amid political violence.
2007	Bush announces surge of U.S. troops in Iraq to suppress sectarian violence.
2008	Financial crisis, based in the United States, is worst since the Great Depression.
2009	President Obama's surge in Afghanistan reverses gains by Taliban insurgents.
2010	United States leads relief effort following devastating earthquake in Haiti.
2011	Mass democratic uprisings occur across North Africa and the Middle East in the "Arab Spring."
2012	Terrorists invade U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, killing Ambassador Christopher Stevens.
2013	Syrian Civil War escalates with the use of chemical weapons on civilians by President Assad.
2014	Russian government seizes the Crimean Peninsula and fuels pro-Russian uprisings in Ukraine.
2015	Islamic State (ISIS) captures territory in Iraq and Syria.
2016	Donald Trump elected president; Great Britain votes to leave European Union.

(Continued)

TABLE 2.3 ■ U.S. Foreign Policy Chronology: Post–Cold War (Continued)

2017	Trump withdraws the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership regional trade agreement; withdraws the United States from the 2015 Paris Climate Accord; threatens to withdraw U.S. military support from NATO.
2018	Trump threatens tariffs against other countries; begins a trade war with China; U.S. withdraws from the Iran Nuclear Deal.
2019	Trump announces U.S.-Mexico border emergency in an attempt to secure funding to build a wall on the border with Mexico.
2020	Covid-19 pandemic starts in China and quickly spreads to countries around the world; U.S. enters lockdown in March.
2021	January 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol as Trump refuses to acknowledge he lost the election; President Biden is sworn in as president; Taliban takes over Kabul; U.S. withdraws all troops from Afghanistan in a chaotic departure.
2022	Russia unexpectedly invades Ukraine; U.S. and EU allies support Ukraine and prevent Russia from taking over the country.
2023	Hamas attacks Israel from Gaza, resulting in an Israeli declaration of war on Hamas and an invasion of the Gaza Strip.

resurfaced. Conflicts in three regions—the Persian Gulf, Northeast Africa, and Yugoslavia—dampened the enthusiasm of American leaders for “engagement” and provoked a turn away from multilateral cooperation, which would intensify in the new millennium under Clinton’s successor, George W. Bush.

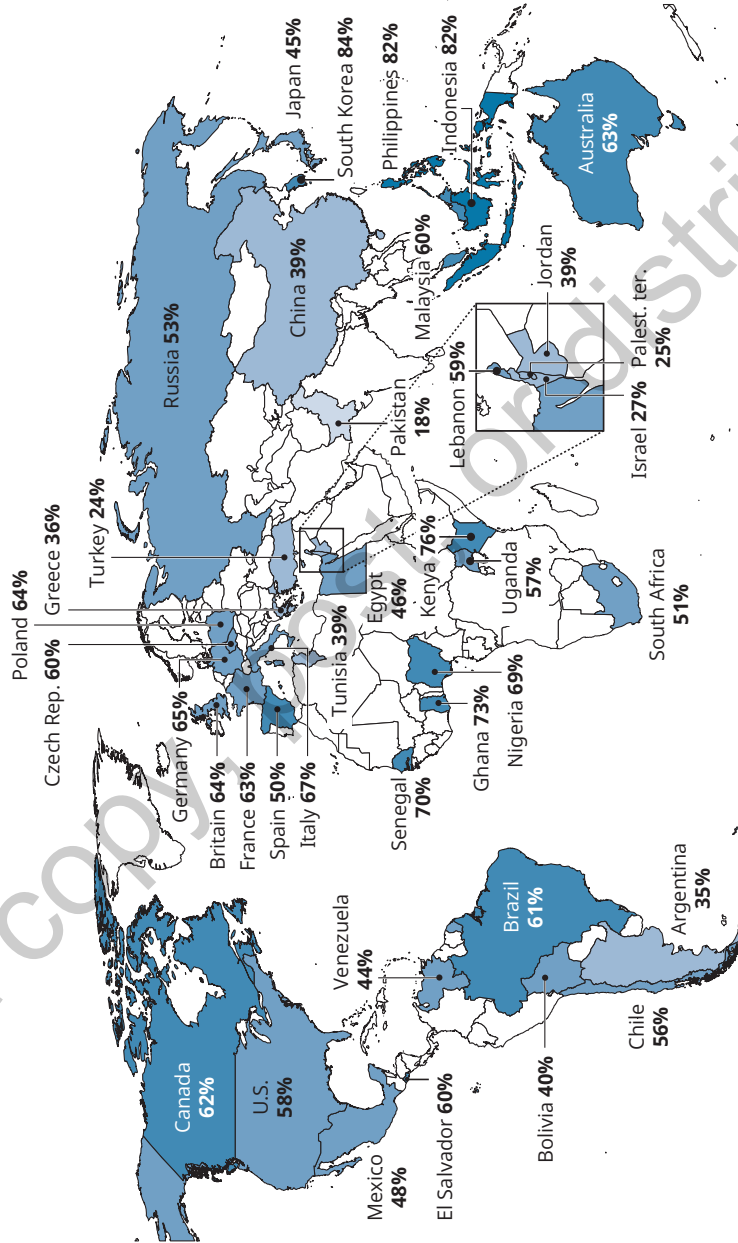
The first regional conflict erupted in the Persian Gulf before the Soviet Union collapsed. Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, directly challenged the new world order and prompted the United States to deploy a military force to protect Saudi Arabia and, later, to oust Iraq from Kuwait. The international response to the invasion included a series of UN resolutions demanding Iraq’s withdrawal. When Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein ignored these resolutions, the UN authorized a military assault (**Operation Desert Storm**) on Iraqi troops in the Kuwaiti desert. The U.S. crushed the Iraqi military but ultimately decided to leave the regime intact and not to take the capital city of Baghdad paving the way for future conflict.

The UN also struggled to resolve upheavals in **failed states**—those countries incapable of maintaining order or providing even minimal services to their citizens (see Map 2.4, The Rise of U.N. Peacekeeping in the Post–Cold World). Primary among these failed states was Somalia, where nearly 50,000 citizens died in a civil war before a UN-sponsored cease-fire could be arranged in March 1992. A second effort failed, leading to more unrest and casualties, prompting the United States to withdraw from Somalia. In 1994, a bloodier ethnic conflict broke out in nearby Rwanda and Burundi, leaving 1 million dead. The United States, fearing a repeat of the Somalia disaster, let the carnage run its course. With no other major powers willing to step in, the UN stood by as the genocide unfolded.

MAP 2.4 ■ The Rise of U.N. Peacekeeping in the Post-Cold World

International image of the United Nations, 2013

Percent in each country who have a favorable view of the UN



Source: Spring 2013 Global Attitudes survey

Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/02/un-peacekeeping-at-new-highs-after-post-cold-war-surge-and-decline/>.

The end of the Cold War also revived hostilities in the crumbling European state of Yugoslavia. Religious differences among Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Muslims had been suppressed for decades by a communist government led by Marshal Josip Tito. But the end of the Cold War quickly unearthed these differences, producing a new cycle of violence, territorial conquest, and foreign intervention. Neither the UN nor the European Union could organize an effective response to the “ethnic cleansing” in Yugoslavia. In response, the United States finally ended the bloodshed in the provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina (in 1995) and Kosovo (in 1999). By the end of the decade, Yugoslavia had broken up into several republics.

As stock markets reached record highs, inflation and unemployment fell to negligible levels. Enjoying a heyday in the first post–Cold War decade, Americans thus had little patience for conflicts overseas. The Senate’s refusal to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in October 1999 epitomized the unilateral turn in U.S. foreign policy. Upon taking office in January 2001, President George W. Bush renounced the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, the International Criminal Court, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with the Soviet Union.

September 11 and the War on Terrorism

As the United States entered the new millennium, it seemed secure from foreign threats, and most Americans agreed with President Bush’s emphasis on domestic problems. But all this changed on the morning of September 11, 2001, when al Qaeda terrorists hijacked four U.S. commercial jets and flew three of them into highly visible, well-known symbols of American power—the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon near Washington, D.C. The fourth jet, apparently headed for the U.S. Capitol, crashed in rural Pennsylvania after several passengers struggled with the hijackers for control of the cockpit.

The attacks forced the grounding of all air traffic in the United States and the indefinite closing of the New York Stock Exchange and many public attractions, including Disney World in Florida and the arch in Saint Louis, Missouri. After returning to the White House from Florida and conferring with his advisers, the president made two decisions that formed the core of the **Bush Doctrine**. First, the U.S. government would treat the attacks not as crimes but as acts of war. Second, the U.S. response would target not only the terrorist groups but also the



On September 11, 2001, al Qaeda terrorists attacked the United States by flying two commercial jets into the World Trade Center, bringing down the twin towers and killing nearly 3,000 people. A third hijacked airliner crashed into the Pentagon, and a fourth crash-landed in Pennsylvania on its way to another target in the nation’s capital.

AP Photo/Carmen Taylor

countries that harbored them. The subsequent “global war on terror” became the centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy and Bush’s presidency.

American officials immediately traced the terrorists to Afghanistan, whose Taliban government had provided Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda’s leader, with political cover and sites for training camps on the country’s remote mountainsides.⁶ U.S. retaliation, which began in late September, unfolded in two stages. First, American forces would help antigovernment Afghan militias overthrow the Taliban and round up the al Qaeda terrorists responsible for the attacks. Second, the United States would create a new, democratic regime that would not threaten its neighbors or serve as a sanctuary for Islamic terrorists. Although the first phase of the plan was met with initial success (the capital of Kabul fell on November 12), bin Laden evaded his captors and remained in the rugged terrain along Afghanistan’s 1,500-mile border with Pakistan. Even without bin Laden’s capture, the effort to replace the Taliban regime proceeded on schedule; Afghans elected a new leader, Hamid Karzai, in 2004 and a new parliament was called for in 2005.

After routing the Taliban from power in Afghanistan, Bush made the fateful decision to make Iraq the second front in the war on terrorism. Saddam Hussein’s cat-and-mouse game with UN weapons inspectors had outlasted Clinton and Bush’s top advisers. The invasion, code-named **Operation Iraqi Freedom**, began on March 20, 2003. As in the Afghanistan campaign, the initial “shock and awe” bombing campaign allowed coalition forces to advance rapidly and seize control of the capital and government. Although Saddam initially evaded capture, he was apprehended in December 2003 and was placed on trial before an Iraqi war crimes tribunal. President Bush left office in January 2009 with the U.S. mission in Iraq—and his global war on terrorism—far from over. Even as the violence in Iraq subsided, insurgents and Taliban forces regained control of much of Afghanistan.

Bush’s successor, President Barack Obama, had the difficult choice of withdrawing from the war-torn nation or escalating U.S. military activities there. In December 2009, Obama replicated Bush’s **surge strategy** by ordering the deployment of 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan. Obama pledged to remove U.S. forces from Afghanistan beginning in 2011.

Obama came into office facing the nation’s most severe economic crisis since the Great Recession. By then, the U.S. real estate bubble had burst as millions of Americans forfeited the overpriced homes offered to them by reckless mortgage brokers and investment banks (see Chapter 11 for details). The U.S. Treasury, faced with an imminent collapse of the nation’s financial system, loaned \$700 billion to these banks, along with teetering economic sectors such as the automobile industry, to help them stay in business. The financial crisis quickly spread worldwide, as foreign firms had close financial links to major U.S. banks and had adopted many of their failed practices. Lost assets worldwide estimated \$27 trillion, or about one-half of global economic output (Drezner 2014, 123).

Although forced to focus on domestic problems, Obama succeeded in removing U.S. troops from Iraq in 2011, and his efforts to “kill or capture” leading al Qaeda terrorists, including Osama bin Laden, proved effective (Klaidman 2012). The president cautiously navigated the **Arab Spring** of 2011, a democratic revolution that spread from North Africa across the Middle East. Tunisia’s democratic revolution, which sparked the Arab Spring, produced a peaceful regime change. Other uprisings were less successful. Syria’s government succumbed to a brutal

civil war that is one of the deadliest wars of the twenty-first century.⁷ A military coalition led by the United States overthrew the Libyan regime led by Muammar Qaddafi, ridding the nation of a brutal autocrat but leaving it in the hands of rival militias. And in Egypt, mass demonstrations led to the ouster of its entrenched leader, Hosni Mubarak, and to an election won by Mohamed Morsi, a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood who promised to treat all citizens fairly and equally.

Although Obama had promised to withdraw troops from Afghanistan, he was unable to accomplish this goal. Obama scaled back American troops by 90% of surge levels, but he feared his Iraq-style withdrawal strategy would backfire after seeing several large sections of Iraq and Syria be overtaken by the terrorist organization Islamic State (ISIS) once U.S. troops had left (Whitlock, 2021). As he prepared to leave office, he decided at least 5,500 troops would remain in Afghanistan after he left office.

In a surprising upset, President Donald Trump won the election in 2016 shocking many from around the world who had prepared for the first U.S. woman president, Hillary Clinton. Instead, the world witnessed a radical departure in U.S. foreign policy from Obama's stance of liberal internationalism. Trump acted immediately to implement his "America First" policy that he laid out in his campaign. He declared, "It's time to shake the rust off America's foreign policy . . . My foreign policy will always put the interests of the American people and American security above all else." Trump's America first policy involved moving toward unilateralism by withdrawing support for many international institutions and promising to renegotiate existing trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

In attempting to fulfill a promise to withdraw all U.S. troops from Afghanistan, Trump negotiated a withdrawal agreement with the Taliban and not the Afghan government to withdraw remaining U.S. troops by May 2021. After Trump lost the election in 2020, President Biden inherited this decision and pushed ahead with it despite warnings from intelligence officers that the situation in Kabul was deteriorating. In August, 2021, the Taliban moved into the capital city and quickly took over the weakened Afghanistan government. This forced the U.S. into a rapid and chaotic withdrawal that showcased a stunning defeat for the Biden administration and shocked the world as the U.S. war in Afghanistan came to a disastrous end. After twenty years and billions of U.S. dollars spent on the war, the U.S. suffered a stark defeat as the Taliban installed a non-democratic and Islamic rule over Afghanistan.

A Global Pandemic Impacts the World

In 2020, a novel virus known as Covid-19 began in Wuhan, China, and quickly spread throughout the world. Within a few short months, the world experienced a global pandemic that shut down societies, pushed health care infrastructure to the brink of collapse and caused thousands to become sick and die. In the first year alone, the World Health Organization estimates nearly 3 million people died worldwide from Covid-19 (WHO 2023). While no country was spared, some countries fared far better than others depending on how the government chose to respond to the pandemic. Some countries, like China, chose strict and extensive lockdowns and quarantines. Others, like Sweden, chose to keep schools, businesses, and stores open. Most countries had a national strategy, and many relied on the World Health Organization for recommendations and policy guidance.

The Trump administration responded with a mostly decentralized approach that left public health decisions and recommendations up to states. Trump approached the pandemic in a similar way to other crises in his presidency—with an America first nationalism that prioritized a U.S. response over a global one. He blamed China for the virus, withdrew the U.S. from the World Health Organization (including the 15% of funding the U.S. provided), and focused on developing a U.S. vaccine while refusing to fully cooperate with global vaccine distribution efforts (de Bengy Puyvallée and Storeng 2022). The ineffective public health response resulted in the highest death rate per capita of the industrialized world with over 18 million confirmed cases and nearly 350,000 deaths by the end of 2020 alone (Johns Hopkins University 2023). By 2023, the number of U.S. deaths from Covid-19 would surpass 1 million (WHO 2023). The first year of the pandemic coincided with Trump's reelection year, and with the daily average death rate hovering close to 1,000 a day in early November, Trump's pandemic response was under fire and he lost the election. Despite his election night loss, Trump refused to concede, leading to months of misleading accusations, legal challenges, and eventually a chaotic and violent day on January 6, 2021, when a storm of protestors, supported by President Trump, stormed the U.S. Capitol building as Vice President Mike Pence was officially certifying the election results. The U.S. Capitol attack shocked the world and stood as a reminder that even U.S. democracy could be threatened.

President Biden began his presidency as U.S. Covid-19 cases and deaths were hitting record highs and the newly launched vaccines were in short supply. To move the country past “a dark winter of this pandemic,” Biden promised to restore public trust, vaccinate the country, minimize the virus spread, reopen society, and resume America's global leadership (Simmons-Duffin and Huang 2022). Under Biden, the U.S. rejoined the World Health Organization and announced the U.S. would resume its place as the largest donor to the organization. The U.S. also pledged to donate over 1 billion doses of the Covid-19 vaccine worldwide and created the Global Vaccine Initiative funded by over \$16 billion to assist 120 countries worldwide in fighting the pandemic (USAID 2022). However, despite Biden declaring “the pandemic over” in October, 2022, the U.S. still faced 500 deaths a day at the start of 2023 and it was clear that Covid-19 would be here to stay.

In addition to the public health threat, the global pandemic posed the greatest challenge for the global economy in over a century. The global economy came to a halt, and governments stepped in to keep businesses and households afloat. Global poverty rose for the first time in a generation, and the unequal responses to the pandemic led to increases in inequality worldwide (World Bank 2022). After the initial shock of the pandemic on the world economy, countries struggled to recover from the disruptions to supply chains, massive domestic spending, and labor shortages and changes in how people choose to work and spend. As economic powerhouses China and the U.S. suffered economic fallout, other countries seized on the opportunity of perceived weakness and took risks to expand their power in the emerging post-pandemic order. In 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine from multiple sides and nearly succeeded in toppling the capital city before EU countries and the United States rallied to support Ukraine's much weaker military force and push Russia back to the perimeter of the country. The Russia invasion of Ukraine startled a world that was slowly emerging from the pandemic and proved that

a global health threat did not alter past grievances or **power politics**. While the post-pandemic world is still developing, it is clear that the pandemic altered more than public health and that there will be long-standing changes as a result of the global pandemic.

CONCLUSION

As described in this chapter, U.S. foreign policy historically stems from an uneasy combination of normative values and self-interested quests for greater power in the interstate system. A cultural sense of exceptionalism has provided both a moral rationale and an explanation for the nation's steadily growing strength and influence. Along the way, U.S. leaders faced a paradox of their nation's own world power. The same values and norms that fueled its rise to primacy also created problems for its management of foreign policy. While the U.S. system enhanced democracy at home, enemies of the United States had multiple pathways to the nation's weaknesses.

The paradox of America's world power gradually went global with the spread of modern technologies and active civil societies. In these and other respects, American world power was a role model for free governments overseas while often suffering as a victim of its own success.

KEY TERMS

Arab Spring	liberal internationalism
bipolar	manifest destiny
Bretton Woods agreements	Marshall Plan
Bush Doctrine	Monroe Doctrine
Cold War	multipolar
collective security	New Look
containment	new world order
Cuban missile crisis	Open Door policy
détente	Operation Desert Storm
empire	Operation Iraqi Freedom
exceptionalism	power politics
failed states	Roosevelt Corollary
gunboat diplomacy	surge strategy
Iron Curtain	Truman Doctrine
Kellogg-Briand Pact	unilateralism
League of Nations	Vietnam syndrome
lend-lease program	