

Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938

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Since it first appeared in 1971, *Rise to Globalism* has sold hundreds of thousands of copies. The ninth edition of this classic survey, now updated through the administration of George W. Bush, offers a concise and informative overview of the evolution of American foreign policy from 1938 to the present, focusing on such pivotal events as World War II, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Vietnam, and 9/11. Examining everything from the Iran-Contra scandal to the rise of international terrorism, the authors analyze-in light of the enormous global power of the United States-how American economic aggressiveness, racism, and fear of Communism have shaped the nation's evolving foreign policy.

Stephen E. Ambrose is Director Emeritus of the Eisenhower Center, retired Boyd Professor of History at the University of New Orleans, and president of the National D-Day Museum. He is the author of over twenty books including the bestsellers *Undaunted Courage*, *Citizen Soldiers*, and *D-Day*, multiple biographies of Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard Nixon, and his compilation of 1,400 oral histories from American veterans.

Introduction

IN 1939, ON THE EVE OF WORLD WAR II, THE UNITED STATES HAD AN army of 185,000 men with an annual budget of less than \$500 million. America had no entangling alliances and no American troops were stationed in any foreign country. The dominant political mood was isolationism. America's physical security, the sine qua non of foreign policy, seemed assured, not because of American alliances or military strength but because of the distance between America and any potential enemy.

A half century later the United States had a huge standing Army, Air Force, and Navy. The budget of the Department of Defense was over \$300 billion. The United States had military alliances with fifty nations, over a million soldiers, airmen, and sailors stationed in more than 100 countries, and an offensive capability sufficient to destroy the world many times over. It had used military force to intervene in Indochina, Lebanon, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Central America, and the Persian Gulf, supported an invasion of Cuba, distributed enormous quantities of arms to friendly governments around the world, and fought costly wars in Korea and Vietnam. But despite all the money spent on armaments and no matter how far outward America extended her power, America's national security was constantly in jeopardy.

By 1993, however, the Soviet Union was gone, there were no military threats to the United States, and the American armed forces were shrinking. America's overseas concerns were no longer the armies and missiles of the communist superpower, but access to raw materials and markets and concern over small nations causing major upheavals, plus the trade policies of its World War II enemies, Germany and Japan. America had won the Cold War and was once again, as in 1939, turning away from the world.

Shifts in attitudes accompanied these bewildering changes in policy. Before World War II most Americans believed in a natural harmony of interests between nations, assumed that there was a common commitment to peace, and argued that no nation or people could profit from a war. These beliefs implied that peace was the normal condition between states and that war, if it came, was an aberration resulting from the irrational acts of evil or psychotic men. It was odd that a nation that had come into existence through a victorious

war, gained large portions of its territory through war, established its industrial revolution and national unity through a bloody civil war, and won a colonial empire through war could believe that war profited no one. Yet most Americans in the 1930s did so believe.

During and after World War II, Americans changed their attitudes. They did not come to relish war, but they did learn to accept it. They also became aware of their own vulnerability, which supported the post-Pearl Harbor belief that threats had to be met early and overseas. After World War I, the United States had adopted a policy of unilateral disarmament and neutrality as a way to avoid another war. After World War II, the nation adopted a policy of massive rearmament and collective security as a way to avoid another war. That meant stationing troops and missiles overseas.

Technological change, especially in military weapons, gave added impetus to the new expansionism. For the first time in its history the United States could be threatened from abroad. High-speed ships, long-range bombers, jet aircraft, atomic weapons, and eventually intercontinental missiles all combined to endanger the physical security of the United States.

Simultaneously, America became vulnerable to foreign economic threats. An increasingly complex economy, coupled with the tremendous economic boom of the postwar years maintained by cheap energy, made America increasingly dependent on foreign sources.

And so, the irony. America had far more military power in the early 1990s than she had had in the late thirties, but she was less secure. America was far richer in the nineties than she had been during the Depression, but also more vulnerable to economic blackmail.

It was an unexpected outcome. At the conclusion of World War II, America was on a high. In all the world only the United States had a healthy economy, an intact physical plant capable of mass production of goods, and excess capital. American troops occupied Japan, the only important industrial power in the Pacific, while American influence was dominant in France, Britain, and West Germany, the industrial heart of Europe. The Pacific and the Mediterranean had become American lakes. Above all, the United States had a monopoly on the atomic bomb.

Yet there was no peace. The Cold War came about because the United States and the U.S.S.R. were deeply suspicious of each other, and with good reason. Economic rivalry and ideological differences helped fuel the rivalry, but another important factor was the pace of scientific and technological change in the postwar period. Nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them became the pivot around which much of the Cold War revolved. The fear that its opponents would move ahead on this or that weapons system drove each nation to make an all-out effort in the arms race. In the United States the resulting growth of the armed services and their suppliers—the military-industrial complex—gave generals, admirals, and industrialists new sources of power, leading to a situation in which Americans tended to find military solutions to political problems. Not until the late sixties did large numbers of Americans learn the costly lesson that the power to destroy is not the power to control.

The United States of the Cold War period, like ancient Rome, was concerned with all political problems in the world. The loss of even one country to Communism, therefore, while not in itself a threat to American physical security, carried implications that officials in Washington found highly disturbing. In the early sixties, few important officials argued that South Vietnam was essential to the defense of the United States, but the attitude that "we have to prove that wars of national liberation don't work" (a curious attitude for the children of the American Revolution to hold) did carry the day.

America's rise to globalism was by no means mindless, nor was it exclusively a reaction to the Communist challenge or a response to economic needs. A frequently heard expression during World War II was that "America has come of age." Americans had a sense of power, of bigness, of destiny. They had saved the world from Hitler; now they would save the world from Stalin. In the process, American influence and control would expand. During World War II, Henry Luce of Life magazine spoke for most political leaders as well as American businessmen, soldiers, and the public generally when he said that the twentieth century would be "the American century." Politicians looked for areas in which American influence could dominate. Businessmen looked for profitable markets and new sources of cheap raw materials; the military looked for overseas bases. All found what they wanted as America inaugurated a program of expansion that had no inherent limits.

Americans launched a crusade for freedom that would be complete only when freedom reigned everywhere. Conservatives like Senator Robert Taft doubted that such a goal was obtainable, and old New Dealers like Henry Wallace argued that it could only be achieved at the cost of domestic reform. But most politicians and nearly all businessmen and soldiers signed on as crusaders.

While America's businessmen, soldiers, and politicians moved into South and Central America, Europe, and Southeast Asia, her leaders rarely paused to wonder if there were limits to American power. The disorderly expansion and the astronomical growth of areas defined as constituting a vital American interest seemed to Washington, Wall Street, and the Pentagon to be entirely normal and natural. Almost no important public figure argued that the nation was overextended, just as no one could suggest any attitude toward Communism other than unrelieved hostility.

But ultimately, military reality put limits on American expansion. At no time after 1945 was the United States capable of destroying Russia or her allies without taking on totally unacceptable risks herself; at no time was the United States able to establish an imperial dominion. The crusade against Communism, therefore, took the form of containment rather than attack. As a policy, containment, with its implication of an acceptance of a permanently divided world, led to widely felt frustration. These frustrations were deepened by self-imposed constraint on the use of force in Korea, Vietnam, and elsewhere.

The failure of containment in Indochina led to another basic shift in attitude toward America's role in the world. It was not a return to isolationism, 1939 style—the pendulum did not swing that far. It was a general realization that, given the twin restraints of fears of

provoking a Russian nuclear strike and America's reluctance to use her full military power, there was relatively little the United States could accomplish by force of arms. President Reagan showed an awareness of these limits in Poland, Afghanistan, and even Central America, and in withdrawing from Lebanon.

Following the involvement in Vietnam there was also a shift in the focus of American foreign policy, especially after 1973, when the Arab oil boycott made Americans suddenly aware that the Middle East was so important to them. Nixon's 1972 trip to China, the emergence of black Africa, and the discovery of abundant raw materials in both Africa and South America helped turn American eyes from the northern to the southern half of the globe. This shift emphasized the fundamentally changed nature of the American economy, from self-sufficiency to increasing dependency on others for basic supplies. America in the 1990s was richer and more powerful—and more vulnerable—than at any other time in her history.

But this cozy global arrangement didn't last long. On September 11, 2001, the United States was attacked by Islamic fundamentalist terrorists. The World Trade Center towers in New York City collapsed and the Pentagon was severely damaged by terrorists using commercial airliners as suicide bombs. Although U.S. intelligence services had warned of a Pearl Harbor-like sneak attack throughout the first months of 2001, President George W. Bush claimed innocence. "Had I known there was going to be an attack on America," he said, "I would have moved mountains to stop the attack." As historians we have the luxury of hindsight; our policymakers never do.

I returned and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise nor riches to men of understanding, but time and chance happeneth to them all.

bers of American troops to China.

Other Books

Rightful Heritage. The acclaimed, award-winning historian—"America's new past master" (Chicago Tribune)—examines the environmental legacy of FDR and the New Deal. Douglas Brinkley's *The Wilderness Warrior* celebrated Theodore Roosevelt's spirit of outdoor exploration and bold vision to protect 234 million acres of wild America. Now, in *Rightful Heritage*, Brinkley turns his attention to the other indefatigable environmental leader—Teddy's distant cousin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, chronicling his essential yet under-sung legacy as the founder of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and premier protector of America's public lands. FDR built from scratch dozens of State Park systems and scenic roadways. Pristine landscapes such as the Great Smokies, the Everglades, Joshua Tree, the Olympics, Big Bend, Channel Islands, Mammoth Cave, and the slickrock wilderness of Utah were forever saved by his leadership. Brinkley traces FDR's love for the natural world from his youth exploring the Hudson River Valley and bird watching. As America's president from 1933 to 1945, Roosevelt—consummate political strategist—established hundreds of federal migratory bird refuges and spearheaded the modern endangered species movement. He brilliantly positioned his conservation goals as economic policy to combat

the severe unemployment of the Great Depression. During its nine-year existence, the CCC put nearly three million young men to work on conservation projects—including building trails in the national parks, pollution control, land restoration to combat the Dust Bowl, and planting over two billion trees. Rightful Heritage is an epic chronicle that is both an irresistible portrait of FDR's unrivaled passion and drive, and an indispensable analysis that skillfully illuminates the tension between business and nature—exploiting our natural resources and conserving them. Within the narrative are brilliant capsule biographies of such environmental warriors as Eleanor Roosevelt, Harold Ickes, and Rosalie Edge. Rightful Heritage is essential reading for everyone seeking to preserve our treasured landscapes as an American birthright.

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