

WAR AND THE REPUBLIC



A STUDY GUIDE COMPANION TO THE FILM

WHY WE FIGHT

A SONY PICTURES CLASSICS RELEASE

BY EUGENE JARECKI

A NOTE TO TEACHERS

This study guide *War and the Republic* was developed at a time of war to help teachers discuss with their students the impact of war on the American republic. It is a companion to the award-winning documentary film *Why We Fight*.

War and the Republic was written by the film's director Eugene Jarecki, Senior Visiting Fellow on the faculty at Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies with extensive guidance from teachers at several public and private U.S. high schools.

In consultation with these teachers, the study guide was carefully designed to provide teachers maximum flexibility in its use. *War and the Republic* is divided into an introduction and six chapters, each of which offers its own brief introductory summary, classroom objectives, and discussion questions. The chapters are arranged chronologically, covering six major time periods from the dawn of the republic to the present. As such, they may be taught in sequence or individually. They may be taught in conjunction with viewing the whole film or only excerpts from it.

Above all, the goal of the study guide, like that of the film, is to encourage thoughtful dialogue among your students on the critical issues America faces at a time of war. As a teacher, you are encouraged to use the study guide and the film in any way that fits the particular needs of your classroom and curriculum.

"*Why We Fight* should be required viewing for Americans but even more for those on Capitol Hill. The film sends a chilling warning that should not be ignored by Congress and our executive branch." - **Walter Cronkite**

"Factual. Linear. Gut-punching." - **James Wolcott, *Vanity Fair***

"I wept when I left the theater." - **David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest***

"A dense and absorbing critique of American militarism." - **A.O. Scott, *The New York Times***

"This scary, eye-opening documentary looks back from a post-9/11 vantage point to see how Ike's prophecy has come horribly true." - **David Ansen, *Newsweek***



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A study guide companion to the film *Why We Fight*

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Why We Fight: War and the Republic **vii**

CHAPTER 1

Expanding Horizons, Widening Gaps **1**

1776-1918

CHAPTER 2

World War II: The End of Isolationism **9**

1919-1945

CHAPTER 3

The Cold War Part One: A Two-Superpower World **17**

1946-1952

CHAPTER 4

The Cold War Part Two: Proxy Wars and the Rise of Covert Action **25**

1953-1991

CHAPTER 5

A One-Superpower World: America After the Fall **37**

1992-2001

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion: America at a Crossroads **45**

2002-2006

Endnotes **54**



INTRODUCTION

Why We Fight: War and the Republic

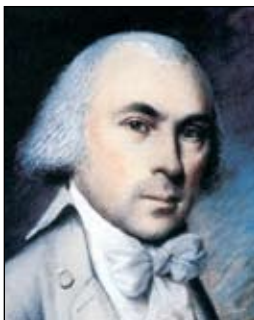
America was forged through war. Her founders fought the tyranny of the British Empire to secure the rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence. "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," it read, identifying these rights as "inalienable." The Declaration went on to assert that governments are "instituted among Men" to "secure these rights" and to do so "with the consent of the governed." The belief that ultimate power rests with the people is the essence of a **republic**.



The Declaration of Independence was signed July 4, 1776 by the Thirteen Colonies of the United States.

On September 17, 1787 America adopted the U.S. Constitution as the supreme law of the land. It created a framework for republican governance consisting of three branches – executive, legislative, and judicial – and fashioned a careful **separation of powers** between them. "If men were angels," James Madison famously wrote in **The Federalist Papers**, "no government would be necessary." Assuming they were less than angelic, Madison and his fellow Framers sought to create a **balance of power** out of the competition that would inevitably emerge between men.

The balance of power was achieved by placing the three branches of government in opposition to each other, such that the self-interest of each would curb the self-interest of the others. This system of **checks and balances** was a painstaking enterprise to ensure that no person or group of persons could grow too powerful and visit upon the others the kind of indignities the colonists had endured under the British crown.¹ On December 15, 1791, Congress amended the Constitution to include the Bill of Rights. Its stated purpose was to add "further declaratory and restrictive clauses" to the Constitution in order "to prevent misconstruction or abuse" of the powers it had assigned the branches of government. It thus vested with the people a set of sovereign rights. These rights, combined with the checks and balances provided for in the original Constitution, are the cornerstones of the American Republic.



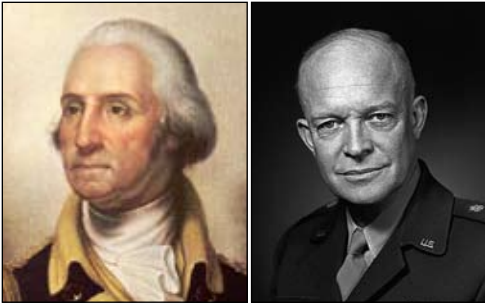
James Madison, one of the authors of the Federalist Papers, a framers of the Constitution, was the key proponent of the Bill of Rights.

Based on their own experience under British rule and their reading of the decline of the Roman Empire, the Framers understood that a country's external military projection could come at great domestic cost. They feared that "foreign entanglements" could create conditions that would undermine America's principles at home. A spirit of **isolationism** has thus remained a guiding principle of the Republic since her founding.

As America has grown from a colony to a superpower, her domain and global influence have expanded, first westward across the continent, then outward to the hemisphere and beyond. This growth has made her more prosperous but has come at a cost. Over her history, America has formally declared war only eleven times,² yet she has deployed her military and used force over a hundred times.³ As the Framers feared, these experiences of war have taken a toll not only in blood and national treasure, but on the

integrity of the checks and balances between the branches and on the liberties provided for in the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Throughout America's history, there has been division between those advocating foreign engagement and those warning it might weaken the country from within. Among those concerned were two wartime presidents who had previously served as celebrated generals. In 1796, a departing



George Washington (left) and Dwight D. Eisenhower (right) were both military generals before becoming President. Each used his farewell address to warn the nation against the dangers of excessive militarism.

George Washington cautioned that "permanent alliances" with other nations might give rise to "overgrown military establishments" that could undermine the Republic's delicate framework of checks and balances. Almost two centuries later, in his own Farewell Address, 34th President Dwight D. Eisenhower echoed Washington. Acknowledging that it was necessary for America to play an expanded global role after World War II, Eisenhower warned that such a commitment required the creation of a "permanent armaments industry" whose "acquisition of unwarranted influence" could threaten "the very structure of our society." Calling this the "military-industrial complex," he cautioned that America "must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes."⁴

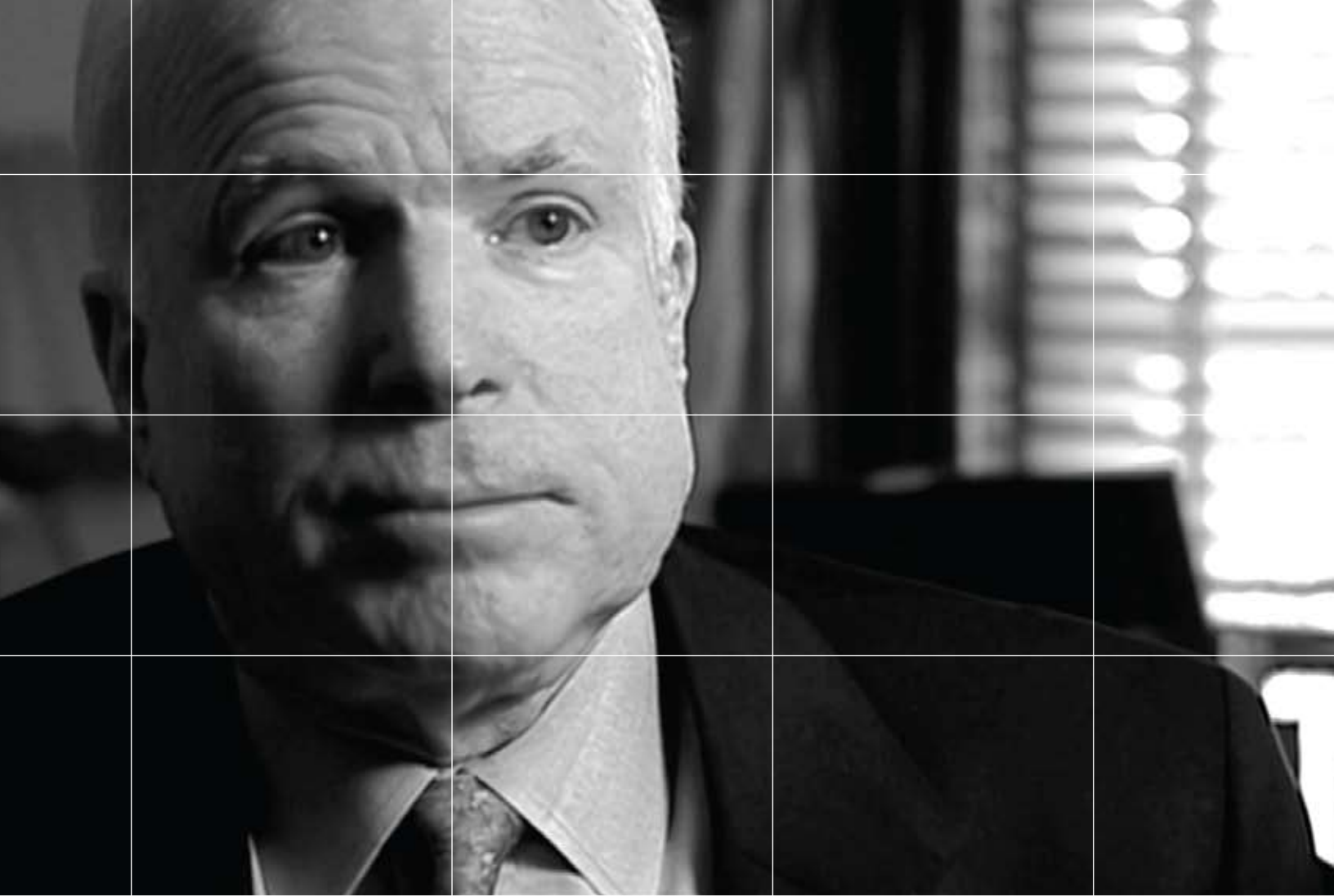
This tension between America's institutions of liberty and the demands of her security has been a recurring theme throughout her history. The film *Why We Fight* examines the rising influence of the military-industrial complex on a series of American wars since World War II. Several voices in the film argue that these wars helped America emerge as the world's sole superpower but that, as Washington and Eisenhower feared, this required the formation of an "overgrown military establishment" that exerts "unwarranted influence" on the delicate framework of checks and balances. Such an establishment may thus be characteristic of an empire but destructive to the core principles of a republic.

This study guide is intended to serve as a companion to the film *Why We Fight*, providing a broader historical overview from the birth of the Republic to the present. The chapters that follow examine America's evolution across six major historical periods:

- Chapter One examines America's expanding foreign engagements between her founding and the end of World War I (1776-1918);
- Chapter Two examines the challenges of further expansion between the end of World War I and the end of World War II (1919-1945);
- Chapter Three examines the start of the Cold War between America and the Soviet Union (1946-1952);
- Chapter Four examines the Cold War years from Dwight Eisenhower's inauguration to the fall of the Soviet Union (1953-1991);
- Chapter Five examines the implications of America's emergence as the world's sole superpower from the fall of the Soviet Union to September 11, 2001 (1992-2001); and
- Chapter Six examines the challenges America faces in a post-9/11 world (2002-present).

War and the Republic is not a comprehensive history of these periods but rather a survey of key moments of tension between America's modest republican roots and the consequences of her ever-expanding global role. By resurrecting the prophetic warnings of Washington and Eisenhower, the film *Why We Fight* raises vital questions for America's future as a republic. At a new time of war, the film goes beyond the question of its title to ask not just why America fights, but how that fighting affects others and, ultimately, how it affects America.

As a companion to the film, the study guide is intended to provide students with the historical context to find their own answers to these vital questions.



▀▀ Where the debate and controversy begins is how far does the United States go, and when does it go from a force for good to a force of imperialism. ▻▻

— Senator John McCain, *Why We Fight*



CHAPTER 1

Expanding Horizons, Widening Gaps 1776-1918

This chapter examines how, despite the Framers' founding commitment to isolationism, America grew beyond her borders between 1776 and the end of World War I (1918). With this expansion came early tests of the Republic's founding principles.

The Lessons of History

Following their victory in the Revolutionary War, the Constitution's Framers sought to establish a structure of government that would administer the affairs of the nation while safeguarding the liberties of her people. In this effort they were deeply influenced by lessons they drew from the rise and fall of the Roman Empire.¹ They were determined not to repeat what they saw as the tragedy of Rome, namely that what had begun as a republic had, through military expansion, become an empire and destroyed itself from within.

Through a series of wars, the Roman Republic vanquished its enemies and became the Roman Empire. This gave the Romans great wealth and security, but fatally undermined the Republic by upsetting its balance of power. As Roman soldiers were increasingly stationed at distant battlefields for long periods, they came to support their generals' political ambitions more than the Republic itself. After a period of turmoil and civil war, one general, who assumed the title Augustus Caesar, installed himself as emperor and reduced the Senate and popular assemblies to minor roles. The Roman Republic thus succumbed not to foreign invaders but to its own generals.²

From the Roman example, the Framers designed a system of checks and balances to prevent the kind of domestic tyranny that can result from expansion abroad. The most vital restraints were placed on the power to authorize military force. Having themselves fought a war against the British Empire, the Framers understood that military action is at times necessary. But having also witnessed firsthand the repressive use of military force by the British, they understood that such force, if misused by America, could lead to the suppression of the very liberties they had fought to secure.

The Framers thus vested ultimate command of the military with the President but checked this authority by assigning the power to declare and fund war to the Congress. If this protection should fail, the Framers further guaranteed, through the Second Amendment's right to bear arms, that the ultimate check on legislative and executive power would rest with the people.

Early Tests for the Republic

In his 1796 Farewell Address, George Washington warned America against becoming "entangled" in the affairs of Europe. He maintained that the young Republic needed the freedom to choose 'peace or war, as our interests, guided by justice, shall counsel.' The oceans separating America from the major powers of Europe appeared helpful in this regard. They provided a protective buffer that made a standing military for foreign engagement unnecessary. From the start, though, developments inside and outside the Republic tested her unity and commitment to her founding principles. Beginning in 1792, the first political parties emerged, reflecting differences of ideology regarding America's domestic and foreign policies.



In 1787, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and their fellow Framers gathered at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, PA to draft and sign the U.S. Constitution.

The Federalists, led by Alexander Hamilton, emphasized the power of a centralized federal government at home. Abroad, they sought the restoration of friendly relations with the British Crown. The Democratic-Republicans, led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison disagreed. They stood for a more modest federal government, claiming that the Constitution's 10th Amendment assigned those rights not expressly vested in the Congress to the states themselves—called **states' rights**. Abroad, the Democratic-Republicans identified with the French Revolution but rejected the prospect of U.S. involvement. They also viewed the Federalists' growing relations with the British Crown as counter to the revolutionary spirit expressed by Washington when he warned against "interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe."³

These tensions were aggravated in 1798 during the presidency of Washington's successor John Adams. His Federalist government saw in the French Revolution a sign of how Republicans in America might also try to rebel against Federalist leadership. In response, the Federalist Congress passed the **Alien and Sedition Acts**, which proved a divisive partisan issue. On the surface, the Acts were intended to fortify America against the threat of foreign agents by giving the executive new authority to deport non-citizens deemed "dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States." But the Acts also made the publication of "false, scandalous, and malicious writing" against the president or Congress unlawful. This unprecedented assertion of federal power resulted in the fining and imprisonment of a number of prominent Republican newspaper editors as well as a Republican congressman. Challenged by Jefferson and others as unconstitutional, the Acts demonstrated how a president and Congress of the same party could use a foreign threat to assert themselves over their ideological opponents. In so doing, they could blur the separation of powers and undermine the Republic's principles of liberty.

During the course of the 19th century, America would fight a series of wars of increasing scope at home and abroad. These wars would continue to weaken the country's adherence to her republican principles. Domestically, wars of conquest against Native Americans expanded America's territory westward, reflecting a growing sense that America possessed a "manifest destiny to overspread the

continent.”⁴ Increasingly, though, the young country also looked beyond her borders, seeking an expanded role overseas.

In 1823, faced with the prospect of European military action in the Spanish colonies of South America, fifth President James Monroe announced a shift in America’s foreign policy. He officially expanded America’s military mandate from simple homeland defense to the broader idea that America would regard a threat to any country within the western hemisphere as a threat to herself. The **Monroe**

America would fight a series of wars of increasing scope at home and abroad. These wars would continue to weaken the country’s adherence to her republican principles.

Doctrine, as this new policy would come to be called, chiefly proclaimed that European powers should no longer colonize the Americas nor interfere with sovereign nations located in the Americas. In return, the U.S. would stay neutral in wars between European powers and between those powers and their colonies. But if a European power were to engage in war with a colony in the western hemisphere, America would view such action as hostile toward herself. Thus, while appearing to discourage European colonialism, the Monroe Doctrine became a pretext for increased American expansion.

In the **Mexican-American War**, which lasted from 1846 to 1848, America expanded her reach south of her border. Foreign engagements of the latter half of the 19th century (discussed later in this chapter) would expand America’s footprint in the Western Hemisphere. While this expansion overtly violated the Framers’ cautions against foreign entanglements, in less visible ways it upset the Republic’s balance of power and fueled widening ideological differences at home.

An Imperfect Union

The American Civil War, which lasted from 1861-1865, was fought between the country’s Northern and Southern regions, to resolve differences that had emerged since the country’s founding. At the time, African slavery was an institution limited to the southern states. Though 16th President Abraham Lincoln had not proposed laws banning slavery, he had declared the institution to be on a “course of ultimate extinction.” Southern slave-owning interests who had sought to expand the institution throughout the 1850s feared losing power in Lincoln’s Federal government.

On the surface, the slavery debate focused on the morality of the institution. But on another level, it was also a culmination of the dispute over “states’ rights” that had fueled the discord between Hamilton’s Federalists and Jefferson’s Democratic Republicans. On December 20, 1860, South Carolina formally seceded from the United States, followed by ten other southern states. Collectively, they formed the **Confederate States of America**, a competing government led by President Jefferson Davis and dedicated to rejecting what they perceived to be an over-assertion of Federal power by Lincoln’s government. On April 12, 1861, Confederate forces attacked a federal military installation at Fort Sumter, South Carolina. The Civil War had begun.

The War lasted four years, leaving 600,000 dead and 400,000 wounded. The War ended in victory for Lincoln’s Union Army and defeat for the Confederates, leaving deep scars of division in the Republic that persist to this day. But it also proved a staging-ground for unprecedented assertion of executive power by Lincoln. On April 27, 1861, without the approval of Congress, he declared martial law and suspended the writ of **habeas corpus** provided for in Section 9, Clause 2, of Article I of the Constitu-

tion. Habeas Corpus, Latin for “you shall have the body,” is a legal instrument that compels a government that has detained an individual to produce that individual before the court and explain the reason for the detention. In effect, the government must charge the imprisoned person or let him go. The writ protects the citizen against arbitrary government action. Indeed, so central was the writ of habeas corpus to the Framers’ thinking that it was included in the body of the Constitution itself, while other rights were only added in the Bill of Rights four years after the original Constitution was ratified.

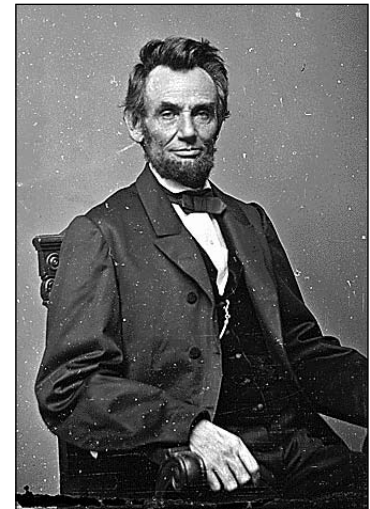
Nonetheless, faced with public disorder during the Civil War, Lincoln suspended Habeas Corpus. He declared that, “during the existing insurrection and as a necessary measure for suppressing the same,” a wide range of the Union’s enemies would be “subject to martial law and liable to trial and punishment by courts martial or military commission.” They would not be given the Constitutional protections of the U.S. courts. Under this order, Lincoln arrested and imprisoned some 15,000 of his political opponents, including newspaper editors and public officials. In doing so, he at once asserted executive power and used it to suppress his political adversaries very much as Adams had done with the Alien and Sedition Acts, only on a far greater scale.

When Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger Taney ruled in *Ex Parte Merryman*, 17 F. Cas. 144 (1861) that Lincoln’s actions violated the Constitution because only Congress had the power to suspend Habeas Corpus, Lincoln defied the Court order and continued to suspend it. He argued in a letter to critics in Congress that his actions were constitutional given “the provision of the constitution that ‘the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in cases of Rebellion or Invasion, the public safety may require it.’” Deeming the actions of the Confederacy, a “case of rebellion,” Lincoln asserted that the debate was not over the constitutionality of suspending Habeas Corpus but rather “as to who was to suspend it.”⁵

Lincoln’s defiance of the judicial branch at a level no lower than the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was an unprecedented assertion of executive power over both Congress and the courts. With the Habeas Corpus Indemnity Act of March 3, 1863, Congress upheld Lincoln’s actions, and the suspension of Habeas Corpus was codified into law. Still, Lincoln’s actions amounted to the most extreme assertion of executive power in the history of the Republic to that point. While Lincoln hoped “a more perfect union” might emerge from the Civil War, his assertion of executive power undermined the foundation on which such a union was built. Thus, while not a “foreign entanglement,” the Civil War illustrated how even domestic wartime pressures can create conditions challenging to the Republic’s vital checks and balances.

American Exceptionalism

As the internal wounds of the Civil War began to heal, America again turned her eyes beyond her borders. The considerable impact of the Monroe Doctrine on American foreign policy was compounded by the growing use of **American Exceptionalism** to justify foreign engagements over the latter half



The American Civil War arose when 16th President Abraham Lincoln opposed efforts by a confederacy of Southern states to secede. Lincoln succeeded in “preserving” the Union, but in the process assumed sweeping executive powers, upsetting the delicate balance of power so painstakingly crafted by the Framers.

of the 19th century. Coined in 1831 by French political theorist Alexis de Tocqueville, American Exceptionalism describes the perception that, owing to her special political and philosophical origins, America has a unique position and responsibility among the world's nations.⁶ This idea gave America's expansionism under the Monroe Doctrine an added level of self-perceived moral authority.

U.S. engagements in the Western Hemisphere in the late 19th century included a deployment of troops to Santiago Chile in 1891, an alliance with Germany to control the Pacific island of Samoa in 1889, and a dispute with Britain over the border between Venezuela and Guyana in 1895.⁷ Finally, in 1898, the **Spanish-American War** went further, giving America – once a colony herself – the role of colonial power over formerly Spanish colonies in the Western Hemisphere.

By the latter part of the 19th century, the Spanish Empire was all but gone, and the areas that remained under Spanish control were seeking independence. Faced with insurgency in Cuba, the Spanish brutally repressed thousands of Cuban people. Cuba's revolutionary leadership made their plight known to Democratic members of Congress, who in turn influenced U.S. public opinion. They argued that America had a moral responsibility under the Monroe Doctrine to police any such abuse by a European colonial power in the Western Hemisphere.

Though 25th President William McKinley and his Republican party were opposed to U.S. engagement with Spain, the growing moral pressure to act on Cuba's behalf compelled McKinley to send the **U.S.S. Maine** to Havana Harbor on January 25, 1898 to monitor the situation. Three weeks later, a mysterious explosion sank the Maine. Though this did not immediately bring war, it produced the slogan "To Hell With Spain, Remember the Maine!" a battle cry that would echo over the ensuing weeks, compelling McKinley on April 19 to secure a joint congressional resolution authorizing him to use military force to liberate Cuba from Spain. The Spanish likewise declared war against America, and the Spanish-American War was on. The war lasted



The sinking of the USS Maine in 1898 in Havana Harbor, Cuba provoked the Spanish-American War. "Remember the Maine," was the battle cry that galvanized U.S. public support for the War.

less than a year, killing 379 American soldiers, thousands of Spanish and Cuban soldiers, and thousands more Filipino civilians. Though the War would secure Cuban independence, it also won America the former Spanish colonies of the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico, and a controlling hand in the liberated Cuba. These territorial gains expanded America's sphere of involvement more widely across the Western Hemisphere than ever before.

The New Imperialism, as this period of expansion came to be called, took further shape in 26th President Theodore Roosevelt's 1904 **Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine**. That year, when the government of the Dominican Republic went bankrupt, Roosevelt feared that European nations might intervene in the Hemisphere to collect their debts. Asserting the responsibilities implied by American Exceptionalism, Roosevelt declared it a moral imperative for America to police the Western Hemisphere. His Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine expanded America's authority "in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence" to include "the exercise of an international police



26th President Theodore Roosevelt expanded America's role in the Western Hemisphere with his 1904 Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine.

SPOTLIGHT: WHO WERE THE MUGWUMPS?

During the last decades of the 19th century, an anti-imperialist movement among a number of America's leading thinkers, politicians, and businesspeople arose in response to what they perceived to be a growing pattern of U.S. expansionism. From former President Grover Cleveland to author Mark Twain to business tycoon Andrew Carnegie, these 'anti-imperialists' or **Mugwumps** as they were called, saw in the Spanish-American War the culmination of this growing departure from the country's isolationist origins.

The outbreak of the Spanish-American War all but ended the anti-imperialist movement, but while it lasted the movement underscored the capacity of foreign events to draw America away from her founding isolationism. The War also highlighted the distinction between economic and military expansionism. The Mugwumps resisted an "empire of conquest," but seemed more comfortable with an "empire of trade,"¹⁰ in which America could exert influence around the world through commerce rather than might. In his seminal work *Twelve Against Empire*, historian Thomas Beisner asks, "Was the anti-imperialist movement at bottom a camouflaged campaign for an informal empire? Was the primary aim of its leaders to expand American economic strength around the globe by means more sophisticated than those of the spread-eagle imperialists?"¹¹

As America entered the 20th century and her economic and military influence in the world grew, the distinction between economic expansionism and "spread-eagle imperialism" became central to the debate over America's conduct in the world. The anti-imperialist movement, despite its short life at the end of the 19th century, would thus echo into the 20th century and beyond.

power" in the Western Hemisphere. In his speech to Congress on December 6, 1904, Roosevelt rejected any suspicion of imperialism. "It is not true," he declared, "that the United States feels any land hunger or entertains any projects as regards the other nations of the Western Hemisphere."⁸ Still, his Corollary stripped away the Monroe Doctrine's requirement that American military action be a response to acts of aggression against either America or her neighbors in the Western Hemisphere. It could now be based upon America's own perception of any circumstance requiring police action.⁹

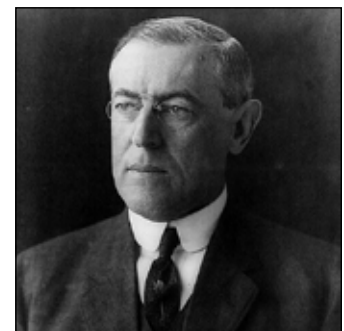
This assertion of broader American power and international jurisdiction marked a significant moment of expansion. A decade later, fighting would break out in Europe that would draw America even farther beyond the hemispheric restraints of the 19th century and the Framers' resistance to foreign entanglements.

The War to End All Wars

In 1914, fighting broke out in Europe in what would become **World War I**. From 1914 to 1916, as the "Allied Powers" of France, Canada, Britain, the Russian Empire, and Italy faced the "Central Powers" of Austria-Hungary and the German and Ottoman Empires, 28th U.S. President Woodrow Wilson maintained a military policy of neutrality. He did, though, give vital economic and material support to allies Britain and

France. This benefited the U.S. economy and resulted in a booming wartime export business that increased 200% between 1914 and 1917, from \$2.4 billion to \$6.3 billion.¹²

Though consistent with the Framers' caution against entanglement in the affairs of Europe, Wilson's resistance to official U.S. military entry into the war was decried by many as isolationism. Wilson's critics thus used the moral pressure of American Exceptionalism to turn an idea that had once been central to the spirit of the Republic into an insult. Other critics attacked Wilson for not being isolationist enough. They saw his economic support of the Allies as a behind-the-scenes form of entanglement in European affairs. On April 4, 1917, after a series of attacks by the German navy against American merchant ships overseas, Wilson sought a declaration of war by the U.S. Congress.



28th President Woodrow Wilson initially resisted U.S. entry into World War I. Following a series of German attacks on U.S. merchant ships, however, he sought a Declaration of War from the U.S. Congress.

Though earlier in his life Wilson had questioned the Constitution and, in particular, its separation of powers, he nonetheless secured a formal declaration of war by Congress before authorizing military action. Like his predecessors, Wilson imposed wartime restrictions on civil liberties. He asked Congress to pass the **Espionage Act** of 1917, which made it a crime to convey sensitive information to America's enemies at a time of war, and the **Sedition Act** of 1918, which made it illegal to write or print material critical of the U.S. Government.



On April 6, 1917 the United States abandoned its policy of neutrality and declared war on Germany, officially entering World War I.

These two wartime measures were upheld by the courts of the day and so did not represent an assertion of executive power judged to be unconstitutional. In the years since, however, the Sedition Act has increasingly been seen as a violation of the Constitution's First Amendment right to free speech. In any event, the episode serves as another demonstration of the tension between security and liberty encountered so often during the history of America at war.

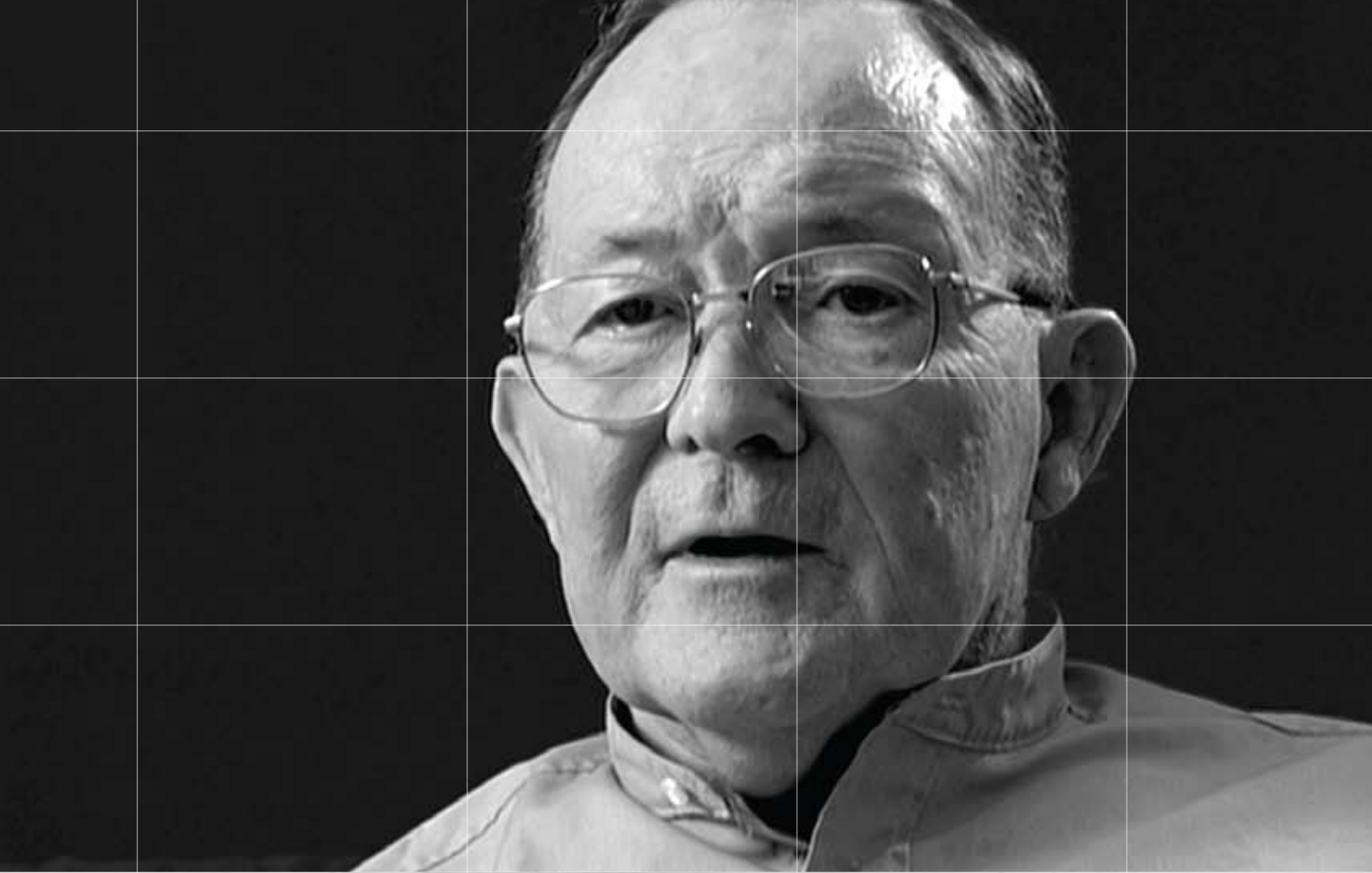
America's involvement in World War I lasted little more than a year but cost more than 300,000 lives and \$32.8 billion.¹³ In the end, the Allied Powers prevailed over the Central Powers, but World War I proved a deeply traumatic experience for all involved. The first war of its scale in world history, it shattered four major European empires – the German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian – and ended nearly 300 years of European global dominance. Though America returned to a period of isolationism afterward, World War I marked the most significant departure yet from Washington's farewell commitment against foreign entanglements.

Chapter Objectives

- ✓ Identify the difference between a republic and an empire.
- ✓ Consider the lessons America's Founders drew from the Roman Empire.
- ✓ Explore how America, between 1776 and 1917 began to shift from her founding republican principles toward more imperial pursuits.
- ✓ Identify the lessons of past empires for the American experience.

Discussion Questions

1. What is an empire? What is a republic? Can a republic become an empire? How can imperial pursuits endanger a republican form of government?
2. What lessons can be drawn from the experiences of Britain and ancient Rome?
3. What challenges did U.S. policymakers face as America's role in world affairs evolved between 1776 and 1918?
4. How did the Founders fear war might affect America? Were their fears realized?



▀▀ World War II is, without question, the formation of the American military empire. ▀▀

— Chalmers Johnson, *Why We Fight*



CHAPTER 2

World War II: The End of Isolationism

1919-1945

The previous chapter examined how a number of wars between 1776 and 1918 drew America away from her founding isolationism and began to undermine her framework of checks and balances.

This chapter examines how America returned to a posture of isolationism after World War I that prevailed until the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. America's sudden entry into World War II and ultimate victory established her more than ever before as a preeminent global power.

America First

Following a brief period of economic recession after World War I, the United States enjoyed a boom during the 1920s, becoming the richest country on earth. During this period, Americans turned inward in a renewed period of isolationism. "The Roaring Twenties," as these years were called, was a period of great industrial and economic prosperity for America.

All of this ended abruptly on the morning of October 29, 1929. The U.S. stock market crashed, beginning **the Great Depression**, a period of devastating global economic collapse that put millions out of work until the late 1930s.

Across the sea, Germany was also experiencing economic hardships. The pain of Germany's defeat in World War I had been aggravated by the severe terms of her surrender. In no position to negotiate, she had been stripped of various territories, demilitarized, and forced to pay devastating war reparations. These penalties weakened the German economy and contributed to suffering for the German people. Their despair helped fuel the rise of the Nazi party led by Adolph Hitler. Appointed Chancellor in 1933, Hitler gained popular support by promising economic revitalization and a restoration of German pride and prosperity.



250,000 young people were homeless during the Great Depression, a period of global economic crisis that began with the stock market crash of 1929.

Behind these promises, Hitler had more ambitious and menacing aspirations. Appointed **Führer** (“Leader”) in 1934, he sought to transform the struggling Weimar Republic of Germany into a **Reich**, or empire. By this time, the Nazis had become Germany’s largest party, yet they lacked the absolute majority needed for full control of the government. Hitler used the Nazis’ considerable influence to secure the passage of the **Enabling Act**, a bill that overrode the country’s republican constitution and gave Hitler unlimited legislative control.

Hitler moved quickly to form an authoritarian government that pursued racist, anti-Semitic, and chauvinistic policies against Jews, Communists, and other “undesirable” minorities. Portraying the German people as a master race and these minorities as the root of the country’s woes, he initiated a campaign of oppression and ethnic cleansing that ultimately became the **Holocaust**, a genocide of more than 10 million people in less than a decade.



Appointed Germany’s “Führer” in 1934, Adolph Hitler sought to transform the German republic into an empire, or *reich*.

Internationally, Hitler’s resurrection of the German economy and military enabled him to assert his imperial ambitions. First in Czechoslovakia and then in Poland, he used military force to

reclaim territories forfeited after World War I and to expand German **Lebensraum** (“living space”) into new areas across Europe. Claiming falsely to have been attacked by Poland, Germany invaded her neighbor on September 1, 1939. In response, Britain and France declared war on Germany. The Soviet Union invaded Eastern Poland, Finland and the Baltic states. **World War II** was launched in Europe.

The Great Arsenal of Democracy

As hostilities broke out overseas, 32nd President Franklin D. Roosevelt was still working to pull America out of the Great Depression. Wars historically jump-start struggling economies, and there is much evidence that Roosevelt was looking for ways to involve America in World War II.¹ He recognized, though, that he could not gain popular support for such involvement. The spirit of isolationism that had taken hold after World War I had intensified as people focused on their own economic woes. According to a September 1939 Gallup Poll, 90% of American adults wanted to keep out of the war.²

The **America First Committee**, a U.S. pressure group that opposed American entry into the war, exploited this spirit of isolationism. Publicly, Roosevelt reaffirmed the country’s founding commitment to “shun political commitments which might entangle us in foreign wars.” But behind the scenes he



Following their experience in World War I, a majority of Americans initially opposed U.S. entry into World War II.

involved America in the war as a supplier of weapons to the British and other allies. Roosevelt’s critics in the America First Committee saw this as a devious tactic to “entangle” the country against her will in the affairs of Europe. “Some of our people,” Roosevelt argued, “like to believe that wars in Europe and in Asia are of no concern to us.” He contended, though, that it was “a matter of most vital concern to us that European and Asiatic war-makers should not gain control of the oceans which lead to this hemisphere.” America’s friends, Roosevelt declared, needed her support and she, too, needed to act in self-defense.

Just as Monroe and Theodore Roosevelt had expanded the nation's overseas commitments to meet perceived threats, Franklin Roosevelt saw in the rise of Fascism a cause for expanded U.S. international engagement.³ He recognized that America's oceans, once seen as a vast buffer against attack, were becoming less protective as the range of modern aircraft increased. "Democracy's fight against world conquest," Roosevelt declared, must be aided by "gigantic efforts to increase the production of munitions." America, he proclaimed, must become "**the Great Arsenal of Democracy.**"



32nd president Franklin Delano Roosevelt presided over America during both the Great Depression and World War II, becoming her longest-serving president.

Roosevelt's military mobilization doubled the country's Gross National Product, helping to end the Depression.⁴ By 1940, France had fallen to the Nazis, and Britain was quickly running out of money. Roosevelt still did not enter the war but persuaded the American Congress to pass the **Lend-Lease Act** of March 11, 1941. This Act provided Britain and other allies with \$50 billion in military equipment and supplies. Roosevelt again sought to strike a balance between public sentiment of isolationism and his determination that America play a role in the conflict.

When the Japanese bombed **Pearl Harbor** on December 7, 1941, it was a sneak attack. Yet, there is evidence that the Roosevelt Administration—faced with popular resistance to entering the war—had quietly been seeking to provoke just such "an overt act of war" by Japan and so may not have been entirely surprised by it.⁵ Virtually overnight, the attack galvanized public support for American entry into World War II and prompted the disbanding of the America First Committee. The United States declared war on Japan on December 8, 1941. Three days later, Germany declared war on the U.S., assuring full U.S. involvement in the war both in Asia and Europe.

The Fury of an Aroused Democracy

While public support for war had been awakened, the country remained militarily unprepared. Since

SPOTLIGHT: THE LESSON OF WEIMAR

While America's founders drew their aversion to empire from the lessons of Rome and Britain, the 20th century offered its own cautionary example of the costs and consequences of a republic's pursuit of empire. Following World War I, Germany sought to recast herself as a federal republic. The Weimar Constitution of 1919 provided the framework for a republican form of government, but failures in its design created imbalance between the branches of government and ineffective checks on their respective powers.¹⁰ This dysfunction facilitated the rise of Adolph Hitler's Nazi Party, which cleverly exploited the fractures in the Weimar system.¹¹ Hitler sought, in his own words, to reestablish Germany as a global empire or **reich**. The catastrophe that arose from this campaign stands as a 20th century reminder of how easily the weaknesses in a republican system can be exploited by those seeking to centralize power at home and project national power abroad.

World War I, the U.S. had demobilized to the point that by 1939, the country had only 180,000 troops, the lowest level since the end of the Civil War.⁶ To remedy this, Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall requested the first peacetime conscription in the country's history. Millions of Americans were drafted under what became the Selective Service Act of 1940. Five years later, by the war's end, the number of those serving had increased from roughly 180,000 to 12 million.⁷ But at the time of Pearl Harbor, the number of U.S. troops had only just passed one million.⁸

American involvement in World War II lasted less than four years. "Hitler should beware," General Dwight Eisenhower proclaimed at the outset, "the fury of an aroused democracy."⁹ Indeed, in both the

Pacific and in Europe, America's industrial capacities proved decisive for victory. Combining low-cost mass-production methods with faster means of delivering materiel to the battlefield, America enabled the allies to outmaneuver the **Axis** powers of Germany, Italy and Japan. General Eisenhower, who had been appointed Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, led the successful D-Day invasion of Normandy in June 1944. In the single largest seaborne invasion in history, 156,000 Allied troops landed in Normandy, supported by air and naval bombardment. It proved a decisive blow. Germany surrendered on May 8, 1945. In less than a decade, the Nazis' campaign to transform Germany from a republic to an empire had ended disastrously both for Germany and the world. It was a moment of symbolic significance, as the "aroused democracy" Eisenhower described defeated a would-be empire.



On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor Hawaii. The next day, American officially entered World War II.

World War II is often referred to by historians as "the Good War,"¹² reflecting the view that America's fight against Fascism and genocide in Europe and Asia was righteous and warranted. While this is surely true, America's victory in the war also represents a pivotal moment in her evolution into a world superpower.

Alongside victory, World War II presented significant challenges to the Republic. First, the formation of a massive military establishment and its deployment to all corners of the globe forever changed America's global footprint, rendering the Framers' concerns about foreign entanglements virtually obsolete. Second, being at a state of war created conditions in which, as Lincoln had done before him, Roosevelt expanded executive power in the name of security. On February 19, 1942, less than three months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt issued **Executive Order 9066**, authorizing the U.S. military to forcibly remove persons with "foreign enemy ancestry" (U.S. citizens and non-citizens alike) from their homes and place them



Citing national security concerns during World War II, 32nd President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, under which 120,000 persons of Japanese descent were relocated to internment camps such as this.

into internment camps. This resulted in the internment of 120,000 people of Japanese descent, roughly 60% of whom were American-born U.S. citizens. Later that year, the Supreme Court gave the executive additional power when it ruled in the landmark decision **Ex Parte Quirin** to uphold Roosevelt's use of military tribunals to try accused German saboteurs within the United States.

Though Roosevelt was not the first U.S. president to assert wartime executive authority to imprison American citizens at his own discretion, the scale of the Japanese internment was unprecedented. Presidents have issued Executive Orders since 1789, though their constitutionality is not fully clear. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 has been viewed in the years since as an over-assertion of executive power. In 1976 38th President Gerald Ford officially and symbolically rescinded Roosevelt's Order. Though the shock of Pearl Harbor explains the sense of urgency that could produce so grave a measure, Executive Order 9066 remains a stain on Roosevelt's legacy and demonstrates how a nation at war can trade liberty for security and violate her founding principles.

SPOTLIGHT: THE ORIGINAL "WHY WE FIGHT"



In forming his strategy for World War II, General George Marshall concluded that what America's troops lacked in strength to defeat the Axis powers they could make up for in a sense of purpose. In early 1942, he invited legendary Hollywood director Frank Capra to Washington to enlist his filmmaking talents to communicate America's cause to new recruits. "He told me we were raising a very large army," Capra would later recall, "and that we were going to try to make soldiers out of boys who, for the most part, had never seen a gun. He said they were being uprooted from civilian life and thrown into Army camps. And the reason why was hazy in their minds... And that, Capra, is our job – and your job. To win this war we must win the battle for men's minds." Marshall explained that he wanted Capra to produce a series of films to "explain to our boys in the Army why we are fighting, and the principles for which we are fighting."¹³ Capra accepted the commission and began work on the *Why We Fight* films.

As One War Ends, Another Begins

Roosevelt died three weeks before Germany surrendered and so did not live to see the allied victory in Europe. As ticker-tape fell in New York City, Eisenhower returned home to a hero's welcome. "V-E Day," as it was called, celebrated the end of war in Europe. America's industrial development, combined with George Marshall's "battle to win men's minds" had indeed made America Roosevelt's "Arsenal of Democracy." And yet, despite the celebration, fighting in Asia continued. "The victory won in the West," Roosevelt's successor Harry S. Truman declared, "must now be won in the East."

From April 1 to June 21, 1945, the U.S. and Japan engaged in their last and bloodiest battle of the war. The Battle of Okinawa resulted in the deaths of over 13,000 American and 70,000 Japanese soldiers, as well as more than 80,000 Japanese civilians.¹⁴

What happened next has become a subject of intense historical debate. President Truman decided to use nuclear weapons against Japan, making America the first nation ever to use them. On August 6, 1945, "Little Boy" – the first nuclear weapon ever used in warfare – was dropped on the Japanese city of **Hiroshima**. Three days later, "Fat Man" – a more complex and powerful plutonium weapon was dropped on the Japanese city of **Nagasaki**. An

estimated 200,000 people died in the two bombings, and within a week the Japanese surrendered.

Proponents of the bombings maintain that they were necessary to compel Japanese surrender. Yet, declassified Japanese telegraphs intercepted at the time reveal that as early as the late spring of 1945, the Japanese were earnestly seeking some form of mediated end to the war.¹⁵ Truman was advised that the only unshakable condition sought by the Japanese was that their Emperor (seen by them as a direct descendant of their God) be left in power and not subject to a war crimes tribunal—a condition ultimately granted them by the U.S. in any event.¹⁶ Nonetheless, Truman remained insistent on unconditional Japanese surrender and saw the bombs as necessary for this purpose. Several of Truman's chief advisors, including his Secretary of War Henry Stimson and Chief of Staff Admiral William Leahy, disagreed, urging him instead to soften his stance on unconditional surrender.¹⁷



On August 6 and August 9, 1945, the United States dropped two atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. An estimated 200,000 people were killed.

In retrospect, many of Truman's military advisors including U.S. Fleet Commander Admiral Ernest King felt that the impact of the battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa, the firebombing of Tokyo and Operation Starvation, an air campaign that crippled the country's logistics by mining its ports and waterways, would compel Japanese surrender before too long.¹⁸ Though it is unclear how vocally they expressed their views at the time, many in subsequent years publicized their feelings that the bombs were unwarranted, gratuitous, and even immoral.¹⁹ These views were summarized powerfully by Supreme Allied Commander Dwight Eisenhower, who wrote in his memoirs that he had expressed "grave misgivings" on the basis of his belief "that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary."²⁰

Why, then, did Truman do it? From both his diaries and the minutes of meetings with Secretary of State James Byrnes and others, it is clear that Truman's decision was influenced as much by his desire for unconditional Japanese surrender as by his sense of the strategic relevance of nuclear power to the post-war relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.²¹ Shortly before the bombing, Truman's diary of July 19, 1945 betrays an almost playful sense of rivalry with Stalin over America's nuclear progress.²² In this way, the use of the bombs killed two birds with one stone – ending one war with Japan and firing the first warning shot in a new one – the **Cold War** against the Soviet Union that would dominate U.S. foreign policy for the next half-century.

SPOTLIGHT: MAKING THE CASE FOR THE A-BOMB

Ever since the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, conventional wisdom has been that without them, further ground combat with Japan would have been necessary to end the war, and that, in such combat, one million American lives would have been lost. Thus, the bombing and its loss of over 200,000 Japanese lives was necessary to save this greater number of American lives.

In his groundbreaking essay "Seizing the Contested Terrain of Early Nuclear History," Stanford University Historian Barton Bernstein challenges this reasoning and traces its questionable origins. Bernstein documents how, in September 1946, Harvard University President James Conant became concerned at questions arising in the press over the use of atom bombs against Japan. Conant had been Chairman of the National Defense Research Committee and a wartime atomic policy advisor. In a September 1946 letter, he expressed his fear that such doubt about the bombings "is bound to have a great influence on the next generation" and might result "in distortion of history."²³ To counter this, Conant urged former Secretary of War Henry Stimson to write an article in *Harper's Magazine* explaining the validity and necessity of the decision to use the bombs. Stimson's article "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," was ghostwritten under Conant's direction and heavily edited by Conant.²⁴

The article, published in *Harper's* in February 1947, presents, for the first time in print, the notion that "over a million casualties to American forces" would have resulted from a ground invasion of Japan. Bernstein points out, however, that there was no evidence at the time to support such a claim. Prior to the bombings, the only official estimate of potential U.S. losses in a ground invasion of Japan had appeared in a June 15, 1945 memo by the Joint War Plans Committee. Prepared for President Truman, this memo estimated that in a worst-case scenario American losses would range from 20,000 to 46,000 men, roughly 1/20th the number claimed in Stimson's article.²⁵

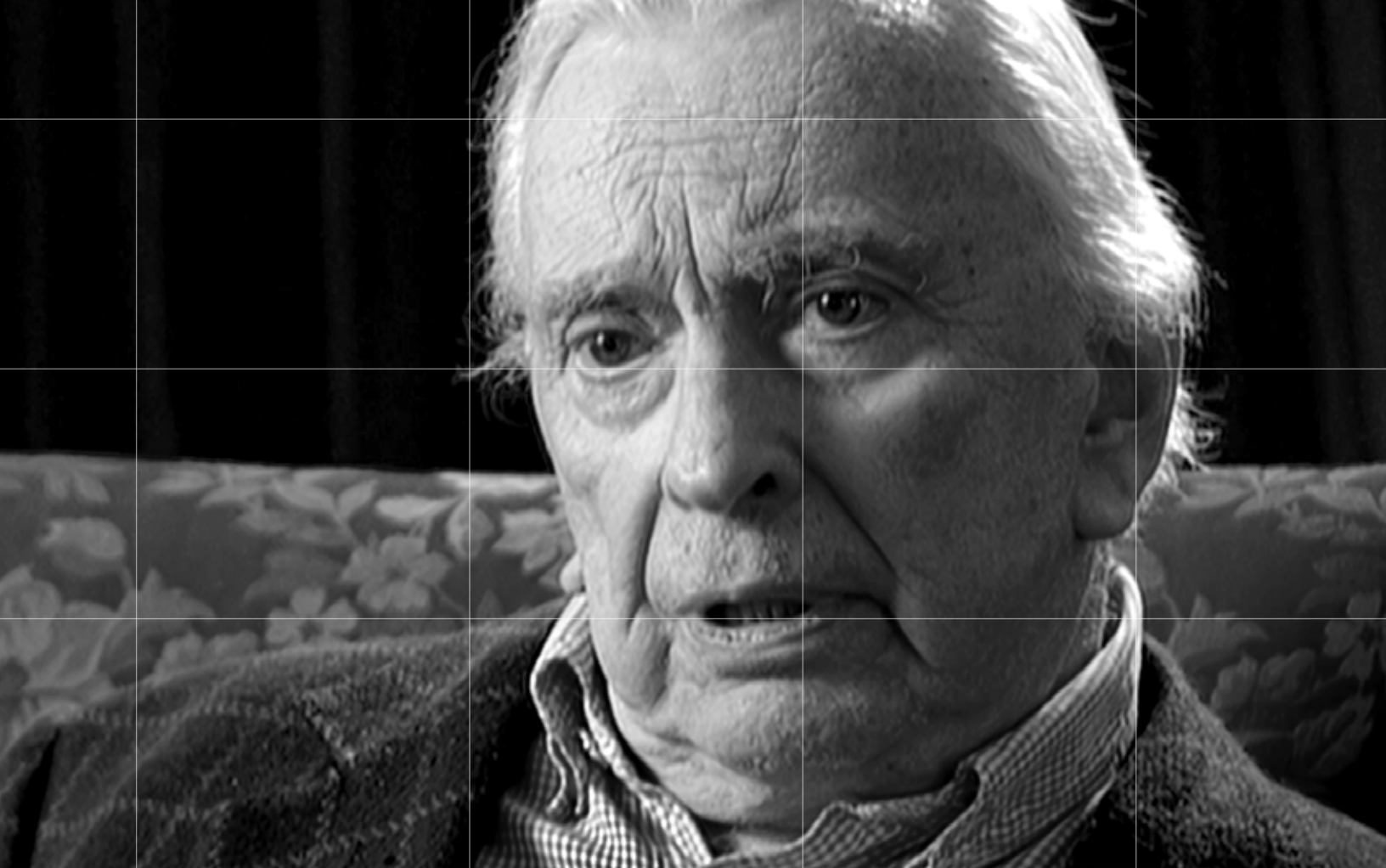
In the years since, Conant's campaign to shape public opinion has resulted in the conventional wisdom that the use of the bombs was legitimate and necessary since it saved one million American lives. In this sense, did Conant achieve the kind of "distortion of history" he sought to avoid?

Chapter Objectives

- ✓ Understand Isolationism, the America First Movement, and the debate over America's entry into World War II.
- ✓ Understand how the attack on Pearl Harbor changed U.S. attitudes toward entering World War II.
- ✓ Examine the catastrophic consequences of Adolph Hitler's campaign to transform the German Republic into an empire.
- ✓ Consider the impact of Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* films on the American war effort.
- ✓ Explore how victory in World War II left America in a new position of power eminence in the world.
- ✓ Weigh the issues facing policymakers as they developed and then decided to use atomic weapons against Japan at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

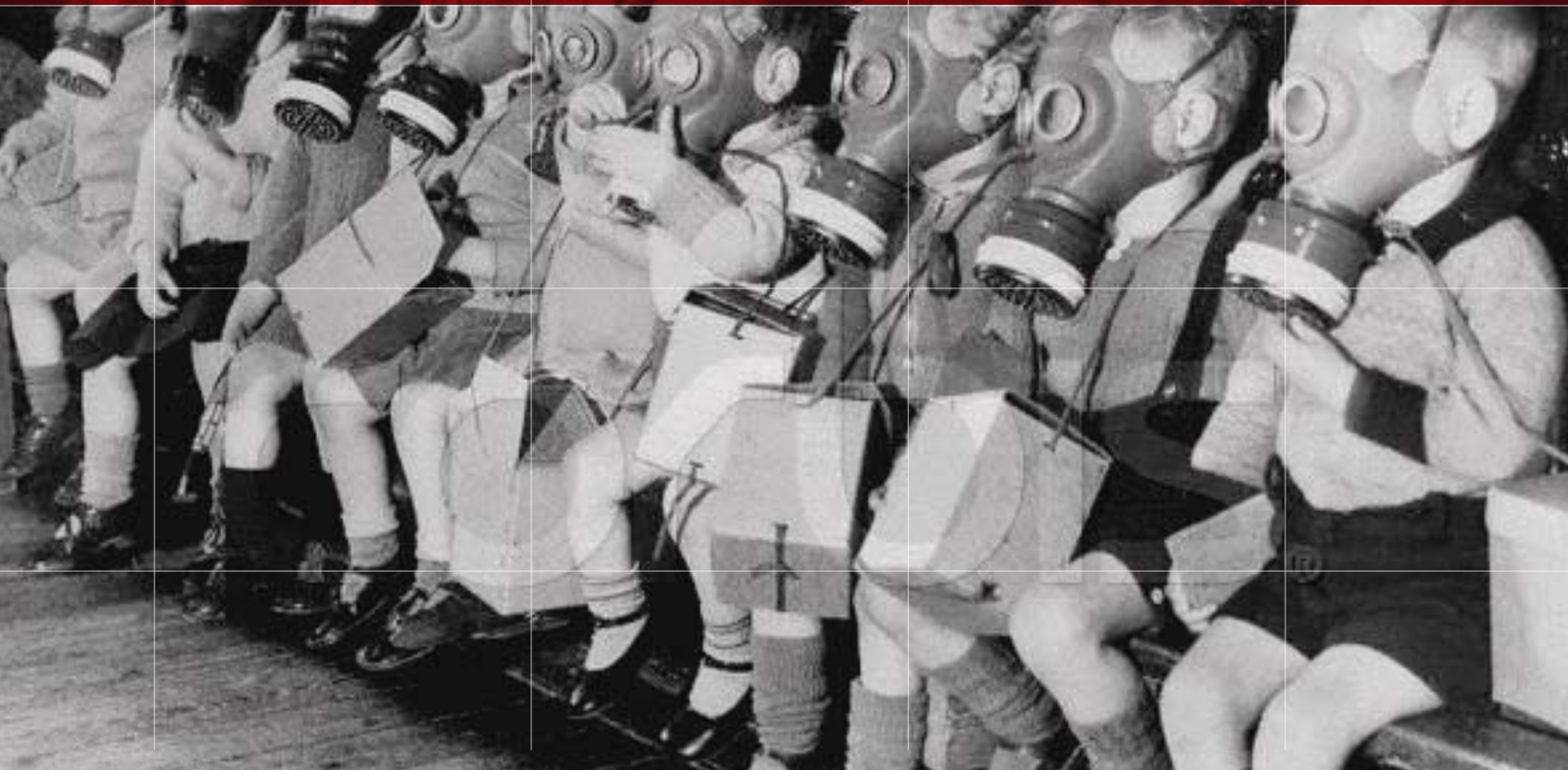
Discussion Questions

1. What lessons, if any, can be drawn from Hitler's disastrous attempt to transform Germany's Weimar Republic into an empire?
2. Before Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt was accused of having maneuvered Americans into a war they were reluctant to enter. Today, critics of the Bush Administration accuse it of having sought war with Iraq prior to September 11. Since World War II is widely seen as a "good war" and Iraq thus far is seen as a "bad war," consider the following questions: Is it ever okay for a president to mislead the country into war? What if he or she knows something the American public does not know about the necessity of going to war? Should this information be shared with the public and Congress or are there times when this is not necessary?
3. Was Roosevelt's decision to make America an "Arsenal of Democracy" supplying weapons to allies the kind of "foreign entanglement" feared by the Founders? Or did their fears only apply to more direct military involvement?
4. How were the reasons for World War II similar to or different from the reasons for the "war on terror" or the U.S. attack on Iraq? Do you think these wars are being fought for similar reasons? If so, what are those reasons? If not, how do America's goals in World War II compare with those today?
5. Those who advocate America's use of atomic weapons in World War II claim that they ended the war with Japan. If you had been President Truman, would you have felt that this justified the killing of 200,000 Japanese people? Consider when, if ever, you would decide to use such force and what factors would affect your decision?



▣▣ We had to fight Communism wherever it was in the world. So a decision was made that the United States remain militarized — permanently. ▣▣

— Gore Vidal, *Why We Fight*



CHAPTER 3

The Cold War Part One: A Two-Superpower World 1946-1952

The previous chapter explored how America reluctantly entered World War II and emerged from it a superpower. Faced in the 1930s with a resurgence of isolationism, 32nd President Franklin Roosevelt strove to make America what he called “The Great Arsenal of Democracy.” This decision brought about an industrial boom that, once America entered the war, proved decisive in securing victory in Europe.¹ The mobilization of America’s military industry culminated in the development and use of atomic weapons against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Historically seen as a regrettable but necessary measure to compel Japanese surrender, there is increasing evidence that the bombs were also motivated by a desire to assert American nuclear primacy in anticipation of a postwar rivalry with Russia.²

This chapter examines how that very rivalry, which came to be called the Cold War, resulted in a world dominated by two opposing superpowers. U.S. policymakers were presented with new opportunities and new challenges that would continue to drive America farther from her republican roots in the pursuit of increased global power.

A Warning Shot

America emerged from World War II a superpower. But she was not alone. Despite great damage to her economy, Stalin’s Russia also emerged a major player on the world’s stage.

Though Japan’s surrender has traditionally been attributed to the U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there is increasing evidence that Russia’s entry into the war against Japan just two days later played a role.³ Stalin’s Red Army attacked the Japanese at Manchuria on August 8, 1945 and in less than two weeks defeated a Japanese force of over one million.

Even before this, American policymakers had been watching their powerful ally with concern.⁴ Stalin’s territorial ambitions across Europe and his willingness to violate agreements had seemed a tolerable evil when he was allied with the U.S. But these qualities began to



Russian Dictator Joseph Stalin, a U.S. ally during World War II, became America’s chief adversary during the Cold War.

worry U.S. policymakers as the war came to a close and Stalin came into focus as a prospective competitor in the postwar world.⁵

The decision to use atomic weapons against Japan ended one war but arguably began another. It launched the nuclear age and sent a warning shot across Stalin's bow about America's nuclear superiority. Condemned by the Soviets, the bombings cooled relations between the two powers and widened fractures that had already begun to emerge between them.

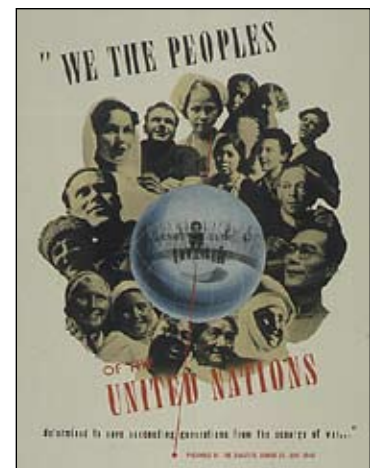
An Uneasy Winner

Despite their victory over the Axis powers, President Truman and his advisors remained concerned about a world that had just witnessed the ravages of totalitarianism. In 1945, the Allies founded the **United Nations** to establish an effective international body for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Its guiding premise was **multilateralism**, the notion of multiple countries working together. "We all have to recognize," Truman declared at the drafting of the UN Charter, "no matter how great our strength, that we must deny ourselves the license to do always as we please."⁶ With the triumphant allied experience of World War II so fresh in his mind, Truman reversed both America's past isolationism and her capacity to act unilaterally. Never before had American interests been as closely interwoven with those of Europe and in such official defiance of Washington's farewell caution against "permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world."⁷

Paradoxically, while encouraging this spirit of multilateralism, the experience of war also compelled U.S. policymakers to see America as a global policeman, echoing the late 19th century spirit of American Exceptionalism. With U.S. forces stationed more widely across the globe than ever before, America was poised to play such a role in the postwar world. A study conducted at the time revealed that by September of 1950, more than two-thirds of the 75,000 civilians engaged overseas were employed by the Department of Defense.⁸ Where ambassadors once held sway in foreign lands, field commanders now did. This shift in emphasis from diplomatic to Defense Department personnel illustrates how military viewpoints on international relations began to gain currency over diplomatic ones.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower and others who had been involved in the planning of World War II attributed America's victory to her military-industrial strength. "The lessons of the last war are clear," Eisenhower wrote in an April 1946 memo. "The armed forces could not have won the war alone. Scientists and businessmen contributed techniques and weapons which enabled us to outwit and overwhelm the enemy."⁹ **The Manhattan Project**, the secret scientific program that developed the atomic bomb, was the culmination of such collaboration between the military, industry, and science. Still, Eisenhower had opposed the bombings, because he felt America "should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives."¹⁰

While Eisenhower's concern about the bombs' effect on world opinion was well founded, more immediate was their impact on the psyche of Washington. Ironically, by dropping the bombs, the United



The United Nations was established in 1945 by America and her allies to create a forum for cooperation between nations of the world in the hopes of avoiding future wars.

States had opened the atomic Pandora's box, demonstrating the feasibility of nuclear weapons and compelling other nations to acquire them. "Hiroshima has shaken the whole world," Stalin remarked while authorizing Soviet efforts to catch up. "The balance has been destroyed...That cannot be."¹¹ Thus, as the horror of Hiroshima began to unfold, it was as much an illustration of what America had done to others as of what might someday be done to America.

Despite the Truman Administration's desire for a more assertive foreign policy and its rising fears of nuclear peril, the spirit of American isolationism remained strong and led to a rapid demobilization after World War II. Truman's Secretaries of War and of the Navy warned him in October of 1945 that such demobilization would undermine America's hard-won global position. Truman agreed but could not contain public and congressional demands for the swift return of American soldiers to civilian life. The armed forces thus shrank from twelve million in June 1945 to just one and a half million in June 1947. Likewise, annual defense spending plummeted from \$90 billion in January 1945 to \$10 billion in 1947. These shifts reflected the recognition by Truman and his advisors that, despite their fear of future conflict with the Soviet Union, continued mobilization was politically infeasible in the absence of a clear and present danger.

The Red Scare

Less than two years after the end of World War II, such danger appeared in the form of a plea for help from an ally and former imperial power. On February 21, 1947, British officials alerted the U.S. State Department that Britain could no longer afford to provide financial support to the governments of Greece and Turkey, each of which appeared vulnerable to communist influence. In a historical context, the request held great symbolic relevance. An implicit admission by the British that they had

been replaced by America as a power of global scope, it was a kind of passing of the torch of empire.¹² But would America accept the role? Six days later, President Truman and Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson assembled a group of congressional leaders in the cabinet room of the White House to discuss that very question.



The Red Scare was a period of widespread fear in the United States toward Soviet aggression and the spread of communism. In this photo, American children are fitted with gas masks to prepare for a possible nuclear attack.

This meeting was a watershed moment in the history of U.S. foreign policy. To those assembled, the idea of "pulling British chestnuts out of the fire"¹³ initially fell on deaf ears, until Secretary Acheson warned there was more at stake than Greece and Turkey. If these countries fell to the Communists, he argued, others might fall in an ominous spiral.¹⁴ The "**domino theory**," as this would come to be called, sparked fear in the room and set in motion the **Truman Doctrine**, a new approach to American foreign policy. The Truman Doctrine expressed the new role America would assume as the victor of World War II. Like it or not, proponents argued, America had inherited from the British the privileges, liabilities, and responsibilities of global leadership. In time, this policy would expand America's peacetime involvement around the world beyond anything previously contemplated.

Two weeks later, Truman asked Congress for \$400 million in military assistance for Greece and Turkey. At the Cabinet meeting two weeks before, Michigan Senator Arthur Vandenberg advised Truman that if he wanted to win the support of the Republican-controlled Congress (which was disinclined to inherit Britain's imperial burdens, much less spend money to do so), he would have to "scare the

hell out of the American people.” Truman’s March 12 speech to Congress sought to do just that.¹⁵ “The gravity of the situation which confronts the world today necessitates my appearance before a joint session of the Congress,” Truman warned. “The foreign policy and the national security of this country are involved.”

Declaring that the “very existence” of the Greek state was at risk and that Turkey’s security was vital to the “preservation of order in the Middle East,” Truman made Acheson’s domino theory the premise of a new and official U.S. foreign policy. “I am fully aware of the broad implications involved if the

United States extends assistance to Greece and Turkey,” Truman acknowledged. “I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”¹⁶



In 1947, 33rd President Harry S. Truman introduced the Truman Doctrine, a new foreign policy that expanded America’s international commitment to the defense of “free peoples” around the world.

The Truman Doctrine would prove the most significant change in American foreign policy since the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. Just as Monroe had expanded America’s military mandate from self-defense to the defense of all free peoples in the Western Hemisphere, the Truman Doctrine saw a threat to free people anywhere as a threat to America. This expanded definition blurred the line between peacetime and war, effectively calling for permanent military preparedness.

The Birth of the National Security State

By approving Truman’s request for military assistance to Greece and Turkey, Congress effectively endorsed the Truman Doctrine, setting in motion a systemic overhaul of America’s foreign policy and military system. Five months later, the **National Security Act of 1947** was passed, implementing the most significant administrative changes since the birth of the Republic.

Transforming what Truman called “the antiquated defense setup of the United States,” the Act added a number of instruments of foreign policy to the executive branch.¹⁷ Reflecting an anticipation of more extensive foreign air operations, the Act created an independent **Air Force** out of what had previously been an air division within the **Army**. Further, it sought to replace the Department of War with a much larger **National Military Establishment**, centralizing command over the army, navy, and air force under one roof. To run this new department, the Act created the cabinet post of **Secretary of Defense**, appointed by the President. The Act also established a **National Security Council** and **National Security Advisor** reporting directly to the President. Finally, the Act established the **Central Intelligence Agency**, the country’s first peacetime intelligence instrument responsible to provide the executive branch the kind of information necessary to maintain awareness of international affairs.

The National Security Act had profound implications for American foreign and domestic policy. Overseas, it provided the infrastructure to support the increased level of military involvement foreseen by the Truman Doctrine. Domestically, it added several new instruments of security policy to the executive branch while neither increasing the relative power of the State Department nor fortifying the legislative and judicial branches. This at once tilted the delicate balance of power toward the executive branch and, within that branch, established more military tools for problem-solving than diplomatic ones. Congressional debate over the Act’s passage was fierce. Its advocates cried “Remember Pearl Harbor,” raising the specter of American vulnerability to foreign attack. Its critics decried its em-

phasis on centralization, raising concerns about “an American Gestapo,” “military dictatorship,” and “domination by a group of military professionals.”¹⁸

The critics’ concerns echoed Washington’s warning that “overgrown military establishments” are antithetical to republican government. Republican congressman Clare Hoffman noted the Act’s implicit expansion of the executive branch. The United States Congress, Hoffman argued, did not help America achieve her position in the world by allowing itself to be dominated by a military “superorganization” in the executive branch.¹⁹ “We must not let our fear of communism blind us to the dangers of military domination,” warned Republican Senator Edward Robertson of Wyoming, who saw in the National Security Act the makings of a “Frankenstein monster.”²⁰ Despite its critics’ concerns, the National Security Act was passed on July 26, 1947, fundamentally altering the structure of America’s government. Two years later, the National Military Establishment was renamed the **Department of Defense**. Fulfilling critics’ fears, its Secretary was given expanded control over the various services and their secretaries.²¹

Heroic Soldier, Reluctant President

After the tickertape of V-E Day, General Dwight D. Eisenhower returned to civilian life, declaring he would “never seek political office.”²² He instead accepted a position as president of Columbia University, where he remained until 1952. In the meantime, America continued to undergo great changes, formalizing her commitment to an expanded international role. Before long, this expansion would bring the former Supreme Allied Commander back into service.



In 1950, President Truman appointed General Dwight D. Eisenhower to serve as Supreme Allied Commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO.

More than any previous instrument in the history of U.S. foreign policy, the Truman Doctrine defined U.S. national interests as being connected to those of her allies in Europe. **Collective security**, as this concept would come to be called, was the basis for the formation in 1949 of **NATO**, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, an alliance providing for the cooperation of its member-countries. NATO members would be bound by the North Atlantic Treaty that states “an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.” Under the treaty, each signatory country would be responsible to take action (including military) in the event of an attack on any other.



Between 1950 and 1953, the United States supported South Korea in its civil war against its neighbor North Korea, which was supported by Communist China.

Though he rejected calls to run for president, Eisenhower accepted the invitation to be NATO’s first Supreme Commander. Taking a leave from his University presidency, he was once again at the center of America’s foreign policy platform at a time of great transformation. Six months earlier, the **Korean War** had begun as a civil war between North and South Korea, competing for control after the division of the Peninsula that had occurred at the end of World War II. America and her allies entered the war in support of South Korea while the Soviets and Communist China did the same in support of the North. Korea thus became the first major proxy skirmish of the Cold War, a staging-ground for the opposition be-

tween superpowers. By 1952, the war had become a kind of stalemate, costing some 54,000 American lives and leaving Americans disillusioned about its purpose.

As the 1952 presidential election approached, disenchantment with Truman and the Korean War produced a “Draft Eisenhower” campaign from within the Republican Party with the slogan “I Like Ike.” This time, Eisenhower accepted the invitation. He defeated the isolationist Senator Robert A. Taft to secure the Republican nomination and then, campaigning on a platform critical of Truman’s handling of “Korea, Communism and Corruption,” defeated Democrat Adlai Stevenson to become the 34th President of the United States.

Eisenhower became president at the dawn of the Cold War, a time of increasing concern about the global implications of the nuclear age. While protecting America’s national security, he also recognized the costs – “economic, political, and spiritual” – of the competition between America and Russia to out-produce each other militarily. This competition would come to be known as the **arms race**.



During the arms race, the United States marshaled its vast industrial resources to out-produce the Soviet Union militarily.

Chapter Objectives

- ✓ Explore how the experience of World War II led to the founding of the United Nations and a new postwar relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union.
- ✓ Understand the effect of the Truman Doctrine on U.S. foreign policy.
- ✓ Examine the administrative changes implemented under the National Security Act of 1947 and their impact on the balance of power between the branches.
- ✓ Explore the evolution of Eisenhower's thinking as he made the transition from five-star general to American President.

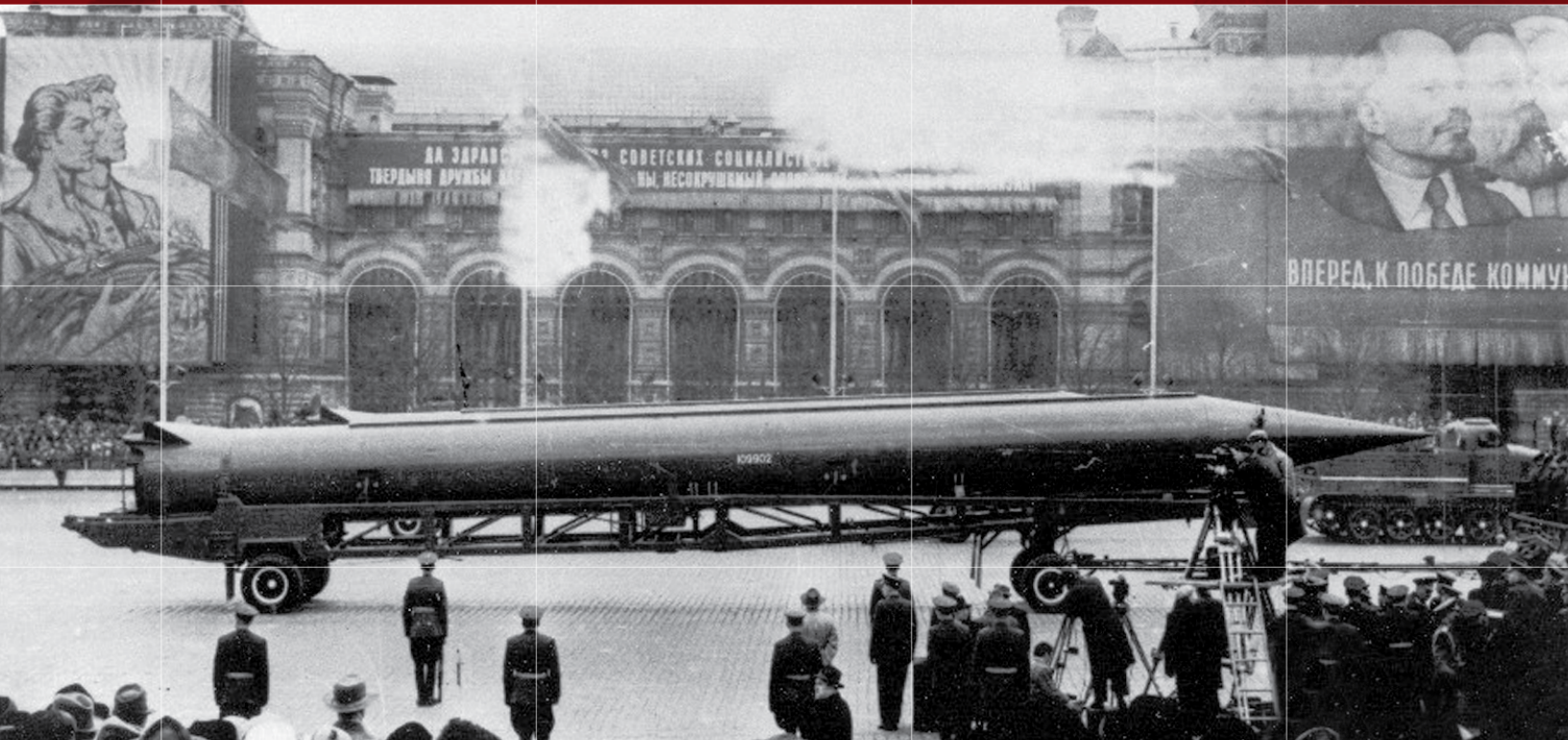
Discussion Questions

1. How did Truman's decision to use atomic weapons against Japan help end one war but start another?
2. What is multilateralism? How did the formation of both the United Nations and NATO reflect America's commitment to multilateralism after World War II? What are the pros and cons of multilateralism? Do you think it is an effective way for America to work with other nations?
3. What is the Truman Doctrine? How did it differ from previous foreign policy doctrines you have studied including the 1823 Monroe Doctrine and the 1904 Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine?
4. What was the National Security Act of 1947? What institutions did the Act create and how did they shift the balance of power to the executive branch?
5. In the film *Why We Fight*, Eisenhower, who was a five-star general before becoming president, said "God help this country when someone sits at this desk who doesn't know as much about the military as I do." Do you think it is important for the President of the United States to have military experience before taking office? What are the pros and cons of this?



It was a very dangerous time. My grandfather was the first to acknowledge that a permanent military establishment would be required during this period, but that unless we could find some kind of breakthrough it would end up creating a terrible cost. ▀▀

— Susan Eisenhower, *Why We Fight*



CHAPTER 4

The Cold War Part Two: Proxy Wars and the Rise of Covert Action 1953-1991

The previous chapter examined how the U.S. and the Soviet Union emerged from World War II as competing superpowers and entered into a new conflict called the Cold War.

This chapter examines how the Cold War shaped the latter half of the 20th century, drawing America and the Soviet Union into a spiral of ever-increasing militarization. Faced with the prospect of a disastrous nuclear exchange with Russia, America engaged instead in a series of proxy wars and covert campaigns designed to thwart her rival's growth. These would continue to distort the nation's republican framework.

Mutually Assured Destruction

The term "Cold War" was coined in print by author George Orwell in a prescient 1945 essay entitled "You and the Atomic Bomb," which presages the standoff between America and the Soviet Union that would dominate global politics for the next half-century. Despite their fiercely opposing ideologies, both U.S. and Soviet leadership recognized that a direct confrontation between them could result in a mutually destructive nuclear exchange. They instead vied for global primacy through a series of **proxy wars** in which each power lent support to smaller countries engaged in their own skirmishes from Korea to Vietnam to Afghanistan.

These proxy wars cost millions of lives and yet would be seen as a necessary evil to avert larger nuclear conflict between America and Russia. In this light, the atomic bomb, as George Orwell wrote in his seminal 1945 essay, had "put an end to large-scale wars at the cost of prolonging indefinitely a 'peace that is no peace.'"¹

A Chance for Peace?

Dwight D. Eisenhower served two terms as president, presiding over the country during a time of significant challenge and change. America's role in the world continued to grow, and Eisenhower witnessed firsthand the impact of that growth on the formation of policy. In the end, he emerged as one of the central figures of the Cold War as well as one of its most significant critics.

As early as April 1953, after less than three months in office, Eisenhower presented his now-famous “Chance for Peace” address, in which the former five-star general underscored the futility and tragedy of the Cold War. He blamed the Soviet Union for initiating tension with the U.S. by spending vast sums to develop weapons and thus compelling the U.S. to do the same. He also recognized that the arms race was diverting resources and energy disproportionately toward defense at the cost of other aspects of America’s national life. “Every gun that is made,” he declared, “every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”

Eisenhower went on to explain in stark detail how money spent on national defense is taken from other areas of national need:

We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people...this is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.²

The former Supreme Allied Commander also recognized the tension between the pursuit of security and the preservation of liberty that Benjamin Franklin outlined when he cautioned, “he who would trade liberty for some temporary security deserves neither liberty nor security.”³

Having entered the White House while the country was at war in Korea, Eisenhower fulfilled a campaign promise to end the war within six months. Over the eight years that followed, he continued his struggle to reconcile America’s security concerns with both her republican principles of isolation and the balance between the branches.

A Man of Two Minds

As the former Supreme Commander of the Allies in World War II and then of NATO, Eisenhower believed, like Truman before him, that America should be prepared to operate internationally in concert with others. At the same time, he recognized the danger that the vast expenditure associated with such preparedness could distract the nation from meeting her internal responsibilities. Eisenhower’s foreign and defense policies reflected this dichotomy in his thinking.



Nuclear deterrence based on the notion of “mutually-assured destruction” was America’s guiding strategic principle toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

On one hand, he initiated in 1953 a policy called the **New Look**, which sought to reduce wasted defense expenditure by placing greater emphasis on nuclear weapons. The threat of “massive retaliation” with nuclear weapons was both a deterrent and, in the worst case, a devastating but cost-effective form of warfare. In a contemporary context, this reliance on nuclear weapons might seem reckless, but in the wake of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the destructive promise of nuclear action seemed a cost-effective substitute to maintaining massive conventional forces, with the added advantage of providing a meaningful deterrent to Soviet aggression.

While in this context Eisenhower showed a preference for restraint over assertive foreign engagement, it was on his watch that America entered the era of covert activity. Using the newly established CIA and the State Department (run respectively by Allen Dulles and his brother John Foster Dulles),

SPOTLIGHT: THE MISSILE GAP

Despite the covert actions undertaken during his Presidency, Eisenhower's posture toward Communism remained one of restraint relative to others who advocated more aggressive action. From within his own Republican party, Eisenhower resisted calls to conduct a preemptive nuclear strike against the Soviet Union. From the opposing Democrats, Eisenhower endured claims that he had let the United States fall behind the Soviets in missile production.

Running against Eisenhower's Vice-President Richard Nixon in the presidential election of 1960, Democratic candidate John F. Kennedy used this so-called **missile gap** as a campaign platform to embarrass Eisenhower and, by association, Nixon. A vigilant steward of America's national security, Eisenhower knew the suggestion of a missile gap was untrue. Since 1956, he had authorized a top-secret program of aerial espionage from which he knew that the U.S. was in fact ahead of the Soviets. But because of the program's secrecy, Eisenhower could not publicly divulge its findings.⁹ Still, he authorized his military chiefs to share the intelligence quietly with the Kennedy camp, seeking to dissuade them from telling the public an untruth.¹⁰

After receiving the information, Kennedy pressed on with the "missile gap" charge undeterred, angering Eisenhower, who saw a matter of national security exploited for political gain. Because increased missile production was in the economic interest of the Pentagon and its weapons manufacturers, Eisenhower saw in Kennedy's conduct a fulfillment of George Washington's fears of the danger of an "overgrown military establishment" to the health of the Republic. "God help this country," the General-turned-President was overheard to say, "when someone sits at this desk who doesn't know as much about the military as I do."

serves as an early example (and by no means the last) of a disconnect between America's commitment to democratic processes at home and her willingness to annul through force the results of such processes abroad.

In Guatemala, it was United Fruit, a U.S.-based produce giant with strong ties to the Eisenhower administration.⁶ United Fruit's vast land ownership in Guatemala was threatened by Arbenz's initiative to redistribute land more equitably among the country's poor.⁷ Nationalization of industries and wealth redistribution were concerns that had first arisen during the Spanish-American War and had since become hallmarks for leftist revolutionary influence. Thus, while the corporations had a profit-motive for seeking covert disruption of these policies, U.S. officials authorized such action in the name of fighting Communism.⁸

the Eisenhower administration conducted several covert operations in foreign countries. Between 1953 and 1954, the CIA orchestrated the overthrows of two democratically elected leaders, President Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala and Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh of Iran. These overthrows heralded the dawn of a new era of secret international engagement for the U.S., conducted by the executive in secret from members of Congress and the American people.

Behind these CIA-directed actions was a combination of motives. For the U.S. government, they were tactical moves in the larger struggle against Communism. Often, though, these actions were also influenced by corporate interests wielding power in Washington to compel actions in their own economic interest. In this way, the CIA's conduct increasingly blurred the line between America's national interest and the private interests of entities friendly to the U.S. government.

In Iran, it was the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, a British-owned company whose interests were threatened by Mossadegh's plans to nationalize the country's oil resources.⁴ The British appealed to Eisenhower for help. Eisenhower declared Mossadegh a communist and set the CIA to overthrow him. A top-secret internal memo planning for the coup read "Mossadegh must go."⁵ These three words reveal how bluntly the U.S. had begun to exert its will overseas. It also



The Central Intelligence Agency or CIA was created by Congress with the passage of the National Security Act of 1947.

“A Few Final Thoughts”

On January 17, 1961, Dwight D. Eisenhower gave his Presidential Farewell address. Like Washington before him, he used this defining moment to issue a grave warning to the American people about the future of the Republic. Speaking to a television audience of millions, the two-term Republican president and hero of World War II revealed the wisdom of his years and the depth of his concern for the health of the nation. “We have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions,” he declared. “We recognize the imperative need for this development, yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications.”¹¹



In his Farewell Address as President on January 17, 1961, Dwight D. Eisenhower warned America against the acquisition of “unwarranted influence” by what he called the “Military Industrial Complex.”

The next words uttered by Eisenhower would haunt America for decades to follow and prove some of the most controversial ever spoken by an American president. “In the councils of government,” he continued, “we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the **military-industrial complex**. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.”

Just as Washington had warned that an “overgrown military establishment” was antithetical to republican liberties, Eisenhower, who just fifteen years before had been a leading advocate of military-industrialization, had come to realize that this alliance was growing out of control, tightening its grip on even his own decision-making as president. In unleashing American industry to support American military preparedness, he and other policymakers had created a kind of monster with a mind and agenda of its own. In his Farewell Address, he sought to warn the public about the danger this monster posed to the health of the Republic. But what did he mean? How could the military-industrial complex threaten “the very structure of our society”?



Passing the torch. 34th President Dwight D. Eisenhower confers with his successor John F. Kennedy.

Here, a lesser-known passage of the address sheds some light. Against the hawkish voices of his day, Eisenhower contended that each proposal for national security “must be weighed in light of a broader consideration: the need to maintain balance in and among national programs.” As one who had served his country as both a soldier and a statesman, Eisenhower understood that a nation’s strength derives from more than just its bombs – that an uneducated country is an undefended country; that a country with inadequate health care is unfit for war; that a country without infrastructure is as ill-prepared for war as for the floods; and that a country that abandons diplomacy for what he called “the certain agony of the battlefield” is a country destined to fight alone.

Like Washington, Eisenhower combined the wisdom of a soldier and a policymaker who understood both the need for defense and the danger of too much defense. His warning about the “military-industrial complex” brought Washington’s fears up to date, revealing more vividly how “this conjunction of an immense military establishment and a huge arms industry” can influence policymaking and undermine checks and balances. It was a candid warning for an outgoing president. But would it come to pass?



35th president John F. Kennedy oversaw the largest peacetime increase in defense spending in U.S. history.

“Pay Any Price, Bear Any Burden”

Eisenhower’s successor John F. Kennedy was inaugurated 35th President of the United States three days after Eisenhower delivered his Farewell Address. At his inauguration, Kennedy declared that America would “pay any price, bear any burden...to assure the survival and the success of liberty.” Having run on a platform that accused Eisenhower of being soft on the Soviets, Kennedy moved quickly to assume a more hawkish global posture. On April 17, 1961, after less than three months in office, he authorized a previously planned covert invasion of Cuba. The **Bay of Pigs** invasion was intended to overthrow the communist government of Fidel Castro. It failed disastrously, resulting in an early humiliation for the Kennedy administration but revealing his willingness to use covert action to fight Communism.

While his anti-Castro activities were covert, Kennedy overtly provided economic, political, and military support to South Vietnam in a civil war with communist North Vietnam. This early support grew into a much wider commitment as America became embroiled in a proxy war with the Soviet Union and China. As in Korea, rather than engage in what could be a devastating nuclear standoff between superpowers, America and her allies supported one side of a civil war while the communist powers supported the other.

As Eisenhower had feared, Kennedy’s aggressive internationalism came at a domestic cost. By the time of his assassination on November 22, 1963, Kennedy had overseen what he himself called “the most far-reaching defense improvements in the peacetime history of this country.”¹² Indeed, these improvements accounted for a 14% increase in defense spending between 1961 and 1962, the largest peacetime increase in American history—a development that confirmed Eisenhower’s fears about the “acquisition of unwarranted influence” by the defense sector. But beyond the economic impact, there was a significant human cost as well. In a further fulfillment of Eisenhower’s fears of runaway militarism, Kennedy’s expansion of America’s defense budget was followed by his



In 1961, a U.S. sponsored effort to overthrow covertly the government of Fidel Castro failed disastrously at Cuba’s Bay of Pigs.

decision to involve America militarily in the growing conflict in Vietnam. By the time of his death, Kennedy had committed 18,000 “advisors” to the conflict in Vietnam, losing 76 American lives in the first year. The War would continue for another decade, costing more than 58,000 American and two million Vietnamese lives.¹³



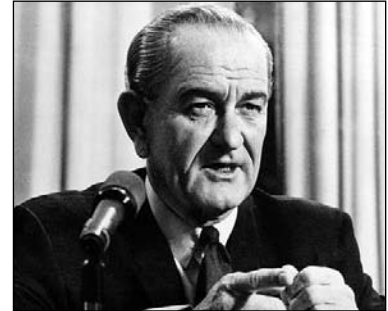
The Vietnam War cost roughly 58,000 American and two million Vietnamese lives.

A Proxy War

The Vietnam War would prove to be one of the most divisive and controversial episodes in American history, leading to a crisis of public trust in government and demonstrating the enormous damage that foreign war can inflict upon a republic’s domestic health. Vietnam dominated the presidencies of Kennedy’s successor Lyndon Johnson as well as Johnson’s successor Richard Nixon. American involvement in Vietnam had its roots in the aftermath of World War II and the birth of the Truman Doctrine. On May 1, 1950, as part of his campaign against communism, Truman

approved \$10 million in military aid to anti-communist efforts in Vietnam. From that moment on, Vietnam increasingly became a point of focus of U.S. foreign policy. As hostilities intensified between the North and South and as China and Russia increasingly became involved, the United States began expanding its own involvement in the region.

Following Kennedy's assassination on November 22, 1963, his Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson became the 36th President of the United States. On July 27, 1964, Johnson announced to the American people that U.S. ships had been fired on by the North Vietnamese Navy in the Gulf of Tonkin. In reply, Johnson sent 5,000 troops to Vietnam in addition to the 16,000 already sent by Kennedy. He also sought and acquired a congressional resolution known as the **Gulf of Tonkin Resolution**, which gave him license, without a formal declaration of war by Congress, "to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force" to defend South Vietnam.



In 1964, Kennedy's successor Lyndon B. Johnson sought a congressional resolution empowering him to commit troops to Vietnam without a formal declaration of war.

Over the next five years, the U.S. would massively expand its involvement in Vietnam, with the number of U.S. troops rising to over 550,000 by 1969. As the War dragged on and images of its destruction aired on American television, public opinion turned increasingly against it. War protests in cities and at universities reflected how deeply the War was dividing the country. Both the basic morality of the War and its usefulness to America were greatly in doubt.

Having lost his bid for the presidency in 1960 against John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon again ran for president in 1968. His campaign promise was that he had a plan to end the Vietnam War. **Vietnamization**, as this came to be known, was Nixon's plan to enable U.S. withdrawal by leaving the South

Vietnamese to hold their own against the North. This plan was intended to seize what Nixon called "peace with honor," allowing the U.S. to withdraw from the War with minimal loss of face. Suddenly, though, in 1971, a bombshell struck the Nixon Administration. The **Pentagon Papers**, a collection of classified documents leaked by Daniel Ellsberg, a former State Department official, exposed embarrassing truths about decades of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.¹⁴ The Papers revealed that the **Gulf of Tonkin** incident, on which Johnson had based his decision to commit additional U.S. troops to the region, had been partially fabricated. They also revealed secret bombing campaigns against the country of Laos in 1964. These revelations further eroded public faith in the war and the country's leadership.

Facing this collapse of support, Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger began to conduct aspects of the War in secret. From March 1969 to May 1970, Kissinger oversaw **Operation Menu**, a top-secret bombing campaign against Vietnam's neighbor Cambodia. Convinced that the North Vietnamese were using border areas between the two countries as a sanctuary from which to launch attacks on American and South Vietnamese troops, Kissinger kept Operation Menu secret from Congress and the American people. When rumors of the operation surfaced in the press, Nixon ordered Kissinger to find the source of the leak. To do so, Kissinger authorized the wiretapping of members of the White House staff.



Images such as these bombings of Vietnamese villages led many young Americans to protest the country's involvement in Vietnam.



When Operation Menu was exposed during 1972 meetings of the Senate Armed Services Committee, it was seen as an executive wartime overreach and as potentially questionable under the law. Worse still, the operation destabilized Cambodia, fueling the rise of the Khmer Rouge, an extreme communist political group that assumed power and implemented a reign of terror that killed one million Cambodians and displaced hundreds of thousands.

While the leak of information about the secret bombing to the public initiated the widespread wiretapping within the Nixon Administration, the Pentagon Papers compelled the Administration to orchestrate a burglary of whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office, presumably seeking information to discredit the impact of the leak. Though no one was apprehended in this incident, it revealed the culture of deception and distrust that had taken hold within an administration whose assertion of executive power was approaching outright illegality. This collapse of ethics eventually led to the downfall of Nixon's presidency.

During Nixon's 1972 campaign for re-election, a burglary was discovered at the Democratic National Committee's Watergate Hotel headquarters. This incident led to a Senate Committee investigation of possible involvement by members of the Nixon Administration. The investigation lasted from 1972 to 1974 and revealed a damaging convergence of disparate aspects of Nixon's unlawful activity.

On July 13, 1974, a lawyer for the investigating committee inquired whether there was any tape recording system in the White House that could confirm the content of conversations in the Oval Office and, thus, demonstrate the President's guilt or innocence. This simple question revealed the expanded

wiretapping system that Nixon and Kissinger had implemented to find the source of the leaks about secret bombing of Cambodia. Though he was not the first president to use such a taping system in the White House, the exposure proved devastating to Nixon, who later exercised executive privilege to prevent the release of the tapes. Ultimately, he was compelled by the Supreme Court to release the tapes, but, in a further episode of questionable ethics, 18 1/2 minutes of one tape had been mysteriously erased.

1974 would see the indictment of several key members of Nixon's Administration. Finally, on August 8, 1974 with the House of Representative formally investigating the possibility of impeaching him, Richard Nixon resigned. His fall from grace revealed how, in his effort to circumvent the checks and balanc-

es, Nixon committed a series of crimes and questionable acts that became interwoven with each other and returned in concert to haunt him. Ironically, the illegal wiretapping undertaken to find the leak of information concerning the secret and illegal bombing of Cambodia provided the tape-recorded evidence needed to confirm Nixon's involvement in the illegal burglary of the Watergate Hotel.



37th President Richard Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger expanded the Vietnam War into neighboring Cambodia without the knowledge of Congress or the American people.

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A year earlier, Nixon had suffered a blow to his conduct of the war in Vietnam. On November 7, 1973, in response to the perception that Nixon was overstepping the limits of the executive branch, the House and the Senate jointly passed the **War Powers Resolution** of 1973, limiting the power of the President to wage war without the approval of Congress. Nixon tried to use his executive veto power to stop the Resolution, but the Congress gathered sufficient votes to override his veto. Though debate continues to this day over how the Constitution distributes the responsibilities and powers of war between the branches, the passage of the War Powers Resolution added to the legacy of Vietnam the impression of an out-of-control executive. In this sense, while Nixon's conduct may have undermined the Constitution's separation of powers, the passage by Congress of the War Powers Resolution reformed it.

Despite Nixon and Kissinger efforts to seek "peace with honor," the last U.S. forces evacuated South Vietnam's capital city Saigon on April 29, 1975. Within hours, Saigon fell to the Communists. The legacy of Vietnam would be one of tragedy and senseless loss. The American public would lose great faith in government and, given Nixon's pattern of overreach, gain a sense of wariness toward an overzealous executive branch.

The Legacy of Vietnam

The Vietnam War haunted America for decades to follow. It cost the Republic dearly in blood and treasure while dividing her along ideological lines. On the surface, America withdrew from the international stage after Vietnam, entering a period of renewed isolationism. But behind-the-scenes U.S. policymakers remained focused on halting the spread of communism. Unable to prosecute their concerns publicly, they went underground, conducting a series of covert campaigns in foreign countries throughout the 1970s and 80s. In Chile, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, and elsewhere, the CIA secretly funded and armed local forces of resistance to communism.¹⁵⁰ This led to several violent overthrows of existing regimes and to the oppression of leftist opposition groups.



During the 1970s, Congress discovered a series of U.S.-sponsored covert overthrows of foreign governments. Amid public pressure, 38th President Gerald Ford issued Executive Order 11905, banning U.S. involvement in the assassination of foreign leaders. Ford is pictured here with his Deputy Assistant, future Vice-President Richard Cheney.

Unable to prosecute their concerns publicly, they went underground, conducting a series of covert campaigns in foreign countries throughout the 1970s and 80s. In Chile, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, and elsewhere, the CIA secretly funded and armed local forces of resistance to communism.¹⁵⁰ This led to several violent overthrows of existing regimes and to the oppression of leftist opposition groups.

In the mid-1970s, a series of unprecedented congressional hearings revealed to the American public the nature and scope of American involvement in these activities, heightening a crisis of confidence in U.S. foreign policy. Following a series of particular violence in Latin America, the hearings led 39th President Gerald Ford to issue Executive Order 11905 banning U.S. involvement in the assassinations of foreign leaders. The hearings also led to the passage of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) and the establishment of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC). These instruments

were intended to impose checks and balances over the executive's conduct of covert action.

Notwithstanding these new controls, U.S. policymakers continued to work covertly to contain the spread of communism. On July 3, 1979, 39th President Jimmy Carter authorized the CIA to conduct secret operations against the ruling Communist Party of Afghanistan. Conventional wisdom about these operations is that they were initiated by the Carter administration in response to a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on December 24, 1979. Two decades later, though, Carter's own National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski confessed to a French newspaper that the U.S. had actually involved

itself in Afghanistan *prior* to the Soviet invasion, not after, in order to “induce a Soviet military intervention,” which could have the effect of “giving to the Soviet Union its Vietnam War.”¹⁶

The Afghan War, which began under Carter, would go on to span the two terms of his successor, 40th President Ronald Reagan. The Afghan War was another proxy war between superpowers. The Soviet Union armed Afghanistan’s communist government, and the United States supported the Mujahideen (what Reagan called “freedom fighters”) resisting it.¹⁷ The War resulted in the deaths of nearly 15,000 Soviet soldiers and one million Afghan civilians and Mujahideen.¹⁸ Another five million Afghan civilians were displaced, creating a massive refugee crisis. The Soviet Union was hurt by the Afghan war in much the same way the United States was diminished by Vietnam. Public confidence in the Communist Party faltered, contributing to the fall of the Soviet Union just two years later.

Ronald Reagan and the End of the “Evil Empire”

In his first inaugural address on January 20, 1981, Reagan invoked the principles of the country’s founding. “Our government has no power except that granted it by the people,” he declared. “It is time to check and reverse the growth of government, which shows signs of having grown beyond the ‘consent of the governed.’” Despite his reference to the republican principles found in the Declaration



Ronald Reagan confronted the ideas of communism and negotiated with Russia to decrease both countries’ nuclear weapons supply

of Independence, Reagan committed America to a more vigorous pursuit of global primacy over the Soviet Union, which he called the “Evil Empire.” Reagan’s all-out crusade to defeat Communism called for massive increases in peacetime defense spending. This empowered America’s military establishment to acquire the kind of influence that, as feared by Washington and Eisenhower, so gravely threaten the Republic’s checks and balances.

Like Monroe, Truman, and other presidents before him, Reagan introduced a new foreign policy. The **Reagan Doctrine** expanded American global primacy by providing overt and covert aid to anti-communist resistance movements. Unlike previous doctrines that applied a general principle for America’s conduct with other nations, the goal of the Reagan Doctrine was specifically to diminish the Soviet Union’s global footprint and increase America’s. So committed was the Reagan Administration to this policy that it pursued it with unprecedented disregard for American law and the constitutional balance of power.

The most pronounced case of this disregard was the **Iran-Contra Affair**, a top-secret political operation that erupted in 1986 into a national scandal involving several members of Reagan’s National Security Council. The affair resulted from the convergence of two separate strands of covert action conducted by the Reagan Administration.

The first took place in Nicaragua where the Cuban-backed communist government was engaged in a civil war against the so-called Contras, a loose array of armed political opponents financed by the CIA. Reagan saw the Contras as heroes in the fight against Communism, calling them “the moral equivalent of our Founding Fathers.” As he had done with the Mujahideen Freedom Fighters resisting the Soviet-supported government in Afghanistan, Reagan authorized support for the Contras. Starting in 1980, the CIA conducted a number of operations in Nicaragua without congressional approval. When these were revealed in 1982, the Congress unanimously passed the **Boland Amendment**, outlawing further U.S. assistance to the Contras and cutting off previously appropriated funding.

SPOTLIGHT: THE IRAN/CONTRA PRECEDENT



On November 25, 1986, in an effort to contain the damage of the Iran/Contra scandal and stave off congressional critics, President Reagan and his Attorney General Edwin Meese held a news conference in which they confirmed the existence of the Iran-Contra operation but maintained that it was the work of a handful of “rogue” actors. Lt. Col. Oliver North, a National Security Council staff-member was relieved of his duties and his superior, Reagan’s National Security Advisor John Poindexter, resigned.

The scandal erupted into nationally televised hearings, involving North, Poindexter and others, that investigated the roots and mechanics of the executive branch’s Iran-Contra activities. Though the investigating congressional committees reached the conclusion that the operation involving the President and members of his staff was one of “secrecy, deception and disdain for the law” and that ultimate responsibility for the events in the Iran-Contra affair must rest with the President,²⁷ key Senators of the Senate select committee concluded that “the country didn’t need another Watergate.”²⁸ Thus, pressure toward White House accountability was all but abandoned.

Of those Administration officials who were in any way fined or convicted for their participation in the operation, all were granted immunity, acquitted, or later pardoned by Reagan’s successor, 41st President George H. W. Bush. The lack of any real accountability for the Iran/Contra affair demonstrated the power of an executive branch to operate in unlawful defiance of Congress and the courts, setting a precedent of non-accountability for assertions of executive power that overstep the limits of the Constitution.

This thwarted Reagan’s desire to continue to provide them support.¹⁹ But not for long.

8,000 miles across the globe, a second covert strand of Reagan’s foreign policy was unfolding in Iran that would soon enable him to continue to support the Contras. As described earlier in this chapter, one of the first covert actions conducted by the U.S. during the Cold War was the 1953 overthrow of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh. Following the CIA-sponsored coup, the U.S. reinstated the former Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The Shah ruled Iran until 1979 when he was overthrown in an Islamic revolution that was violently anti-American. On November 4, 1979, a group of Iranian revolutionaries took over the U.S. embassy in Tehran, holding 66 Americans hostage. From this moment, Iran became an enemy of the United States and a target of punitive measures including Executive Order 12205 which imposed an arms and trade embargo, prohibiting the sale of U.S. weapons to Iran.

After 444 days in custody, the U.S. hostages held in Iran were released within hours of Ronald Reagan’s inauguration as president. But the hostage-taking continued. In 1984 and 1985, several other Americans were abducted by the Lebanon-based militant political group Hezbollah. Iran was again implicated²⁰ and was added in 1984 to America’s watch list of state sponsors of terror. But despite official U.S. foreign policy toward Iran and his own presidential campaign pledge to “make no concessions to terrorists,” members of Reagan’s National Security Council entered into a covert negotiation to sell arms to Iran in exchange for Iran’s assistance in freeing the hostages held by Hezbollah.²¹ This “arms-for-hostages business,” as Secretary of State George Shultz called it, began in August 1985 and lasted until October 1986.²²

President Reagan authorized sales of weapons to Iran.²³ Between 1984 and 1986, members of Reagan’s National Security Council actively sought ways to circumvent the restrictions imposed by the Boland Amendment.²⁴ Their solution, which became the Iran-Contra affair, was to take the proceeds from the sale of arms to Iran and divert them to Nicaragua’s Contras without Congress knowing.²⁵ In this way, the two operations became intertwined and represented an assertion of executive power by the Reagan Administration to defy Congress, U.S. law, and the checks and balances.

On October 5, 1986, the operation went awry. A U.S. cargo plane was shot down over Nicaragua and its American pilot taken into custody. Before anyone in the Reagan Administration knew it, his Nicaraguan captors had put him before television cameras where he publicly confirmed his participation in a U.S.-sponsored covert arms re-supply operation for the Contras. Initially, Reagan publicly denied the existence of the program. A week later, though, he reappeared on national television to retract his initial claim, confirming that arms sales to Iran had occurred, but not in exchange for the release of American hostages. Though the extent of Reagan's knowledge of the operation's mechanics was never fully determined, his diary entries confirm his knowledge and authorization of arms sales to Iran.²⁶

Though Reagan emerged from the scandal legally unscathed, it represented the most brazen attack on the balance of power since the executive transgressions of the Vietnam era. In the context of America's longstanding debate over the balance of power between the branches, the Reagan Administration's creation of a shadow government to circumvent the other branches demonstrated the extreme lengths to which it would go in the name of fighting communism and the danger of such extremity to the nation's health.

Reagan left office in 1988, succeeded by his Vice-President George H.W. Bush. Though many credit Reagan's anti-communist activities with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, others argue that the Soviets collapsed under the weight of their own Cold War expenditures. In this light, rather than viewing the fall of the Evil Empire as an American victory, many saw its collapse, alongside the disconcerting revelations of the Iran/Contra scandal, as a warning about how imperial overreach can weaken a country from within.

Chapter Objectives

- ✓ Understand the relevance of the arms race to American foreign policy between 1953 and 1991.
- ✓ Become familiar with Eisenhower's Farewell Address about the military-industrial complex.
- ✓ Understand America's formal entry into the proxy war of Vietnam via the Gulf of Tonkin incident and the controversial questions revealed about this incident by the Pentagon Papers.
- ✓ Explore how illegal activities brought about the downfall of Nixon's presidency.
- ✓ Examine the United States' foreign policy post-Vietnam, specifically its covert engagements and the proxy war in Afghanistan.
- ✓ Understand the Reagan Doctrine and the reasons for the Iran-Contra Affair.

Discussion Questions

This chapter highlights some past US interventions including Iran, Guatemala, Cuba, Vietnam and Afghanistan. Pick one of these interventions and research the following questions:

1. What were the reasons for the intervention you researched?
2. Do you think those reasons justify the intervention? Why or why not?
3. Does intervening so often necessarily mean that America has become an empire?
4. Consider the future effects of America's current activities in Iraq and Afghanistan. Where do you think this might lead in the future?
5. In what part of the world do you think future engagements may occur and why?



▣▣ People complain a lot about American arrogance and American power. But the great threat for the future is not American power and American strength. It would be American weakness and American withdrawal. ▣▣

— William Kristol, *Why We Fight*



CHAPTER 5

A One-Superpower World: America After the Fall 1992-2001

The previous chapter examined how the Cold War drew America and the Soviets into a spiral of ever-increasing militarization and a series of costly proxy wars in the pursuit of global dominance.

This chapter examines the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the United States as the world's sole superpower. While many Americans sought a **peace dividend**, a shift in focus back to domestic concerns after Russia's fall, foreign actions taken by America during the Cold War would come back to haunt her, compelling her to remain on the world's stage.

Just Before the Fall

As America entered the last decade of the 20th century, few imagined it would bring the end of the Soviet Union and the prospect of a period of unprecedented global stability. The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 may have signaled the beginning of the end for the Eastern Bloc (a Soviet-led alliance of European communist countries), but the Soviet Union remained "the Evil Empire," requiring continued American vigilance.

While internal developments in the Soviet Union began to indicate that America could soften her foreign policy, this prospect was obscured by a new source of instability in the Middle East. On August 2, 1990, President Saddam Hussein of Iraq, a former American ally during the Iran/Iraq War, invaded his southern neighbor Kuwait.

Following the invasion of Kuwait, some American policymakers viewed Saddam as a threat to stability in the oil-rich Persian Gulf region. To them, the invasion underscored the need for continued American leadership on the world's stage. To others, it illustrated how economic differences (particularly relating to the world's petroleum resources) could drive nations to war as much as ideological ones. Hussein contended that wealthy Kuwait was illegally slant-drilling for oil across the Iraq-Kuwait border. For the U.S., Saddam's decision to invade Kuwait violated her sovereignty and, compounded by the danger that he could move beyond Kuwait to threaten American ally Saudi Arabia, was increasingly seen as a threat to America's national interests.

The international community condemned Hussein's invasion with U.N. sanctions and military action by a U.S. led coalition of states. The Gulf War, as this conflict came to be known, demonstrated a new kind of international leadership for the United States. While America's extensive efforts at coalition-building were welcomed by the international community, coalition members felt used for their manpower and resources but given no real voice in decision-making. The Gulf War thus became a staging ground for a new brand of American internationalism, appearing to work multilaterally but doing so on her own unilateral terms.

In a matter of weeks, the U.S. led coalition expelled Hussein from Kuwait and decisively defeated Iraqi forces. 41st President George H.W. Bush resisted pressure from certain voices in Washington to use military means to remove Saddam from his position of power in Iraq. In his memoir "A World Transformed," Bush Sr., explained that since the Gulf War had begun as a deterrent action by an international coalition in defense of Kuwait, "trying to eliminate Saddam" would be perceived internationally as unilateral and would entangle America in another country's internal affairs with "incalculable human and political costs" at home.



On August 2, 1990, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein invaded neighboring Kuwait. The United States responded on January 17, 1991 with Operation Desert Storm—a formidable military campaign that forced Hussein to retreat to Baghdad in less than 45 days.



For 28 years, the Berlin Wall separated East and West Germany. A symbol of a world divided, it fell in 1989, signaling the beginning of the end of the Cold War.

Bush Sr.'s restraint drew intense criticism from those in the U.S. seeking a more aggressive international posture.¹ But it seemed to reflect his recognition of the fine line between America's taking a leading international role and her becoming entangled in the affairs of others. While opposing overt military action to overthrow Saddam, Bush Sr. did authorize the CIA to engineer an internal coup against him, which failed. This would seem to suggest that Bush Sr. was concerned less about America entangling herself in the affairs of others than about her doing so visibly. Either way, the Gulf War demonstrated America's increased willingness to act unilaterally and the age-old domestic tensions that arise over her doing so.

Little did anyone know that this would prove to be the last such debate of the Cold War and that, within the year, America's global position would change completely, bringing new opportunities and new challenges.

No New Rival

On December 8, 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed, ending the Cold War and leaving America an unrivaled colossus astride the globe. The implications of this new role are to this day continuing to crystallize. In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse, many expected a significant "peace dividend." Moneys previously spent on the arms race, they believed, could now be redirected toward domestic needs. Instead, minor defense reductions occurred and America reaped only a modest peace dividend.

The debate about the peace dividend was consistent with the American custom after wars to reevaluate the relative significance of international and domestic concerns. As in the past, intense discourse arose in policy circles over where America's emphasis and resources should next be placed. Because

any clear and present danger had disappeared, it seemed a perfect opportunity to return America to the kind of domestic focus consistent with her republican roots.

But to a minority of policymakers, losing their central rival became the basis for a new foreign policy that sought to prevent any other nation from accruing similar power in the future. Though the fall of the Soviet Union had been Ronald Reagan's key presidential aspiration, it did not occur until the presidency of his successor George Bush Sr. When it happened, Bush's Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney (who would later become Vice-President under Bush's son) commissioned a group of policy-thinkers (led by Undersecretary for Policy Paul Wolfowitz) to draft a new American foreign policy. It was designed, in its own words, "to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival."



After expelling Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, 41st President George H.W. Bush made the decision not to pursue the Iraqi President's overthrow, fearing a situation with "no exit strategy" in which America would end up having to "occupy Baghdad."

This new foreign policy, entitled "Defense Planning Guidance for the 1994-99 Fiscal Years," was leaked to the press before completion, generating great controversy.²

If adopted, it would have proven the most radical expansion of American internationalism since the Truman Doctrine. While Truman called upon America to develop permanent military preparedness to "protect free peoples" around the world from the threat of a clear and present danger, this new foreign policy went further, committing America even in the absence of such a threat to preemptive military measures to prevent the emergence of any new rival. Such a doctrine would have significantly expanded America's global role and pushed her ever farther from her founding republican principles.

The controversy proved too great, though, and the policy was widely rejected as too imperial a departure from the country's republican roots. The document was quickly retracted and re-written by then-Secretary of Defense Cheney and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Colin Powell, who significantly reduced its imperial tone and provisions. Still, the publication and withdrawal of such overtly expansionist ideas underscored how the tension between imperialism and isolationism shaped the Bush Administration's approach to foreign policy in a post-Cold War world.



In 1992, William Jefferson Clinton became the first American President elected after the collapse of the Soviet Union. He chose former Tennessee Senator Al Gore to be his Vice-President.

What it Means to be an American

Though William Jefferson Clinton defeated George H.W. Bush in the 1992 presidential election, his inaugural address did not offer a radically different vision of America's foreign policy from that of his predecessor. "Each generation of Americans must define what it means to be an American," Clinton declared and yet proposed a similar medium between isolationist restraint and internationalist aspirations. Following "Communism's collapse," he recognized, "the world is more free." But it was also "less stable...threatened still by ancient hatreds and new plagues." Clinton declared that America "must continue to lead the world we did so much to make."³

A politician later lauded and reviled for his strategic cunning, Clinton had found a way to satisfy at once those committed to a guiding U.S. hand in foreign affairs and those who sought to turn inward from the taxing international posture of the Cold War. "While America rebuilds at home," he an-

nounced, “we will not shrink from the challenges, nor fail to seize the opportunities of this new world. Together with our friends and allies, we will work to shape change, lest it engulf us.”

In his youth, Clinton opposed America’s involvement in Vietnam and had as a politician advocated certain progressive social policies. Accordingly, despite his wariness toward foreign threats and expressed commitment to continued international leadership, Clinton sought as president to balance more equitably America’s international concerns with her domestic needs. His domestic achievements include record economic growth, job creation, family income increases, reduced unemployment, reduced inflation, increased home ownership, reduction in poverty, welfare-roll reduction, and the largest budget surplus of all time.

Clinton helped America reap some form of peace dividend by reducing moneys spent on the defense sector and redirecting them to eliminating the enormous deficit that had resulted from the exorbitant costs of the Cold War. In contrast to his predecessors Reagan and Bush, Clinton’s presidency was a period of great domestic focus for America. But before long, the “ancient hatreds and new plagues” he had foreseen in his Inaugural Address would draw her once again onto the world stage.

Ancient Hatreds

Weeks before Clinton took office, his predecessor George H.W. Bush had committed U.S. troops to the African nation of Somalia to play a peacekeeping role amid a civil war. The mission went terribly wrong, and eighteen U.S. servicemen were killed. Though not initiated by him, the crisis in Somalia was Clinton’s first foreign policy test as president. He appeared indecisive, first increasing the number of U.S. troops before later reversing his position and ordering complete withdrawal. To his critics, Clinton gave the impression of an America unprepared for resolute foreign engagement.

If America had appeared tentative in her approach to Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia, the war in Kosovo brought her criticism for the reverse.

Just one month later, another civil war broke out in the African nation of Rwanda. The conflict resulted in the death of up to one million Rwandans and the displacement of millions of refugees. Perhaps wary after his failed efforts in Somalia, Clinton was hesitant to involve U.S. forces. As thousands died from war, genocide, and disease, Clinton’s response was tentative, sending just 200 non-combat troops to the Rwandan capital. Both Clinton and the United Nations faced criticism for having responded ineffectually to crisis.

Meanwhile, a civil war had erupted in Bosnia, a southeastern European nation that declared its independence from Yugoslavia in 1992. This provoked a war between Bosnia’s Serbian population (who wanted to see Bosnia remain in the Yugoslav Federation) and her Muslims and Croats. Bosnia’s Serbs, supported by neighboring Serbia, were better armed than the Muslims and Croats and managed to control the countryside and besiege the cities.

As in Africa, the Balkan crisis tested America’s new position on the world’s stage. Clinton sought to work in concert with European nations to resolve the Balkan conflict. After initially seeking military action against the Serbs, he reversed his position amid European opposition, seeking diplomatic conciliation with the Serbs at Peace Talks held in Dayton, Ohio in 1995. The Peace Talks resulted in some measure of peaceful resolution, but Balkan violence reignited in 1998. This time, facing new

ethnic clashes between Serbia and Muslim and ethnic Albanians in the province of Kosovo, including reports of atrocities, ethnic cleansing, mass graves, and thousands of displaced refugees, Clinton called on America to lead a NATO force in a campaign of airstrikes against Serbia. The conflict lasted 78 days, killed several thousand people, and successfully compelled Serbian surrender. Because the military campaign was not sanctioned by the U.N. Security Council and was condemned by member-states China and Russia, it revealed emerging fractures between the U.S. and the U.N. over which should maintain international order.

If America had appeared tentative in her approach to Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia, the war in Kosovo brought her criticism for the reverse. Together, the crises revealed America's incoherent approach to playing a unilateral role on the world's stage. The U.N., however, did not offer a coherent or effective multilateral alternative, so the international system was left without effective leadership. As America wavered on how to approach the future, actions from her past would come back to haunt her in ways that would demand decisiveness before too long.

New Plagues

While Clinton struggled to define America's global role in relation to ancient hatreds like those in Africa and the Balkans, new threats began to emerge, this time in a series of terrorist attacks by non-state actors.

- **On February 26, 1993**, Islamic terrorists attacked New York City's World Trade Center, detonating a massive explosion in the buildings' underground parking garage;
- **On June 25, 1996**, Islamic terrorists attacked a housing complex in Khobar, Saudi Arabia. The Khobar Tower bombing claimed the lives of 19 American servicemen and wounded hundreds of other nationals;
- **On August 7, 1998**, Islamic terrorists simultaneously bombed U.S. embassies in Kenya, and Tanzania killing 257 people and wounding over 4,000 others; and
- **On October 12, 2000**, the *USS Cole*, an American naval destroyer anchored off Yemen, was attacked by suicide bombers. Seventeen sailors were killed and 39 injured.

These attacks began to form a pattern, requiring the Clinton Administration to formulate an approach to international terrorism as a new global phenomenon.

As it became clear that the attacks were the work of a non-state organization of Islamic terrorists led by Osama Bin Laden, a wealthy Saudi operating out of Afghanistan and Sudan, traditional approaches to international warfare no longer seemed to apply. Bin Laden was neither representative of Saudi Arabia, from which he had been exiled, nor of Afghanistan or Sudan, to which he was not native. Accordingly, the Clinton Administration approached the terrorist attacks as a matter for law enforcement rather than as acts of war. Using precision-guided weapons, Clinton sought to remove the threat with minimal military manpower and resources.

On August 20, 1998, following the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, Clinton authorized retaliatory airstrikes on alleged terrorist planning sites in Sudan and Afghanistan. The strikes failed to kill Bin Laden and were derided by Clinton's critics as evidence of his fecklessness as a steward of American security. The subsequent bombing of the *USS Cole*, occurring just three weeks before the 2000 presidential election, deepened this impression and so helped foster the electoral victory of George W. Bush over Clinton's Vice-President Al Gore.

“A New Pearl Harbor”

The 2000 presidential debates between Democratic candidate Al Gore and his Republican rival Texas Governor George W. Bush had focused on the question of what global role America should play in the 21st century. Gore expressed his conviction that “like it or not...the United States is now the natural leader of the world” and that it was in America’s interest to involve herself constructively in foreign affairs as Truman had done in Europe after World War II.

George W. Bush, who would win the 2000 presidential election, argued that it was not “the role of the United States to go around the world and say this is the way it’s got to be.”⁴ While Bush as a candidate had called for a “humble” U.S. foreign policy, as president he assembled a foreign policy team that drew a significant portion of its worldview from the more imperial inclinations of the “Defense Policy Guidance” that had produced so much controversy during his father’s presidency. A number of the policy-thinkers appointed to key positions in President Bush’s cabinet hailed from previous posts in his father’s Administration and had been responsible for drafting that controversial document. Key among these were Vice-President Dick Cheney and Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz.

During the Clinton years, Mr. Wolfowitz had participated in the work of a think tank called the Project for a New American Century (PNAC). In September of 2000, PNAC produced “Rebuilding America’s Defenses,” a policy paper that echoed portions of the 1992 “Defense Planning Guidance” and expressed concern over “the decline in the strength of America’s defenses...[for]...the exercise of American leadership around the globe.”

Central to its thesis was the importance of maintaining a **Pax Americana**, (American Peace). By alluding to the terms **Pax Romana** (Roman Peace) and **Pax Britannica** (British Peace), the document suggested that America assume the role of a modern day empire. After a decade of what they perceived to be a hesitant U.S. foreign policy, Mr. Wolfowitz and other proponents of this new doctrine argued that it was finally necessary for America to assume a controlling hand in world affairs.



On October 12, 2000, the U.S.S. Cole was attacked by suicide bombers. 39 American servicepeople were injured. 17 were killed.



On February 26th, 1993, Islamic terrorists attacked the World Trade Center in New York City, injuring 1,042 and killing 6.

They realized, however, that both the American public and arsenal were unprepared for this kind of re-assertion of American power and that “such a transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event – like a new Pearl Harbor.”⁵ One year later, the most significant attack ever conducted on U.S. soil would occur, lending chilling prescience to these words and providing Bush’s foreign policy team the kind of “catastrophic and catalyzing event” necessary to launch America into a period of foreign expansion. As the next chapter explores, this projection of America’s military power abroad would bring unprecedented challenges to her checks and balances at home.

Chapter objectives:

- ✓ Examine America's decision to enter the Gulf War and later her decision to leave Saddam Hussein in power.
- ✓ Understand the idea of a peace dividend.
- ✓ Understand the difference between "ancient hatreds" and "new plagues" during the 1990s.
- ✓ Explore the terrorist attacks of the 1990s and the Clinton Administration's response.
- ✓ Examine the debates about U.S. foreign policy during the decade preceding September 11th.
- ✓ Understand the relevance of 'Blowback' in U.S. foreign policy.

Discussion Questions:

1. Assess the success of US foreign policy-makers in responding to the shifting foreign policy paradigms of the post-Cold War world.
2. What does Pax Americana mean and what is its relevance as a development in U.S. foreign policy?
3. Should the US engage in "nation-building"? Can it reject this role and still be an effective world power?
4. What do you think the relative roles of the US and the UN should be as world leaders in the post-Cold War context?
5. What were the Ancient Hatreds and New Plagues that Clinton faced during his presidency?
6. What is blowback? Can you think of other instances of blowback in American history?
7. Look into the future and imagine what blowback might come from the Iraq War.



■ ■ I find one of the sillier ideas is the notion—and you hear it all the time—that American policy has been hijacked by a handful of people and that as soon as they’re out of there we’re going to go back to the way it was. They’re wrong about that. Because we are not the same people we were before. ■ ■

— Richard Perle, *Why We Fight*



CHAPTER 6

Conclusion: America at a Crossroads 2002-2006

The previous chapter examined how the United States became the world's sole superpower after the fall of the Soviet Union, yet she lacked a coherent foreign policy to reflect this new status. As "ancient hatreds" embroiled her in conflicts for which she was unprepared, a "new plague" of surprise terror attacks by non-state Islamic actors emerged over the 1990s, culminating in the devastating events of September 11, 2001.

This chapter examines the five-year period following 9/11, during which America has engaged not only in a **War on Terror** but also in the Iraq War. In his prosecution of both wars, 43rd President George W. Bush has asserted sweeping executive powers, reviving age-old constitutional concerns about the separation of powers and domestic challenges the can result from international engagement.

The War on Terror and Beyond

On September 11, 2001, a series of deadly attacks were carried out against targets inside the United States, killing nearly 3,000 people. In response, the Bush Administration introduced sweeping changes to American domestic and foreign policy to prosecute those responsible and protect America from further attacks. As in past moments of war, these changes would challenge the country's republican framework and push her toward a more imperial posture. But as the first attacks conducted on the continental United States in nearly 200 years, 9/11 held special significance, inspiring what would prove to be more far-reaching changes than ever before.

The Patriot Act, the principle legislative tool introduced by the Bush Administration to fight terror, was passed by Congress in a near unanimous fervor of post-9/11 unity. As a clearer picture emerged of Al Qaeda's history of antagonism toward the U.S., the Bush Administration argued that the freedom of American society made her vulnerable to attack and that, to preserve such freedom,



On September 11, 2001, the United States was struck by Islamic terrorists, using commercial airliners as missiles. 2,603 people were killed in the largest attack ever conducted on U.S. soil.

her existing mechanisms to stop terror needed to be overhauled. The Patriot Act thus overtly challenged long-cherished constitutional protections in the first, fourth, fifth, sixth, eighth and fourteenth amendments in the name of defending the country. Less visibly, though, it authorized the executive to operate in new ways at its own discretion in the domestic policing of terror. This shifted power away from the legislative and judicial branches and to the executive.

While the Patriot Act's impact was principally domestic, the **Bush Doctrine** would prove the most radical expansion of American foreign policy since the Truman Doctrine. Calling Al Qaeda "a new kind of enemy," President Bush argued that, after 9/11, America could no longer wait for a foreign threat to fully reveal itself. Instead, America needed to act preemptively to "confront the worst threats before they emerge."¹ In the years that followed, the Bush Doctrine would profoundly impact and broaden America's commitment to international military action. Together with the Patriot Act, the Doctrine revealed that the tragedy of 9/11 had indeed proven to be a "new Pearl Harbor" that would compel a dramatic transformation of American domestic and foreign policy. In his diary on the night of September 11, President Bush declared, "the Pearl Harbor of the 21st century took place today."²

The next morning, the President's national security team met to formulate a response to the attacks.³ While a majority of Americans supported retaliatory action against **Al Qaeda**, the Islamic terrorist organization deemed responsible, the team's discussion went further to include the prospect of a preemptive attack against the nation of Iraq.⁴ Resolving what Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and other authors of "Rebuilding America's Defenses" called "the unresolved conflict with Iraq"⁵ had long been a goal of certain members of Bush's foreign policy team. The events of 9/11 could provide an opportunity to realize this goal, but only if it could be demonstrated that Saddam was in some way involved with the attacks.⁶

While the Bush Administration visibly launched retaliatory strikes against terror training camps in Afghanistan, planning for a preemptive strike against Iraq was quietly under way.⁷ When claims of a link between Saddam and 9/11 could not be substantiated, the Administration made the case that a preemptive attack against Iraq was nonetheless required for America's self-defense because Iraq was either developing or in possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).⁸ These claims met resistance from members of the UN Security Council, as U.N. weapons inspectors had not to date found evidence of either WMDs or WMD programs. Facing such resistance, the Administration threatened unilateral military action against Iraq and produced its own evidence of Iraq's WMDs. Although this evidence would ultimately prove questionable, it was successful in leading the country to war.



Following September 11th, 43rd President George W. Bush ordered a preemptive military strike against the nation of Iraq. The Iraq War ushered in a change in U.S. foreign policy known as the "Bush Doctrine."

On March 19, 2003, the United States launched **Operation Iraqi Freedom**, a preemptive military campaign to overthrow the government of Saddam Hussein. The Operation, which would launch the **Iraq War**, would last far longer and prove more challenging than Bush's foreign policy planners anticipated. By July 2007, the War had cost the lives of over 3,600 American soldiers and thousands of Iraqi soldiers and civilians. When neither a link between Saddam and 9/11 nor Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction was found, the Administration contended that its purpose had been to bring democracy to Iraq. Were this the case, George W. Bush had, despite his campaign contention to the contrary, made nation-building a central component of America's new foreign policy.

SPOTLIGHT: FATHER AND SON

Critics of the Bush Administration argue that the Iraq War has wrought havoc upon Iraqi society and that the Bush Doctrine has more broadly damaged America's international standing. In this criticism, they have found an unlikely ally in President Bush's own father. In his book "A World Transformed", the 41st President's reasoning for having refrained in 1991 from overthrowing Saddam Hussein implicitly challenges his son's later decision to do so:

Trying to eliminate Saddam, extending the ground war into an occupation of Iraq would have violated our guideline about not changing objectives in mid-stream, engaging in "mission creep," and would have incurred incalculable human and political costs.

Beyond battlefield losses, Bush Sr. cites the political damage that unilateralism poses to America's role in the world:

Going in and occupying Iraq, thus unilaterally exceeding the United Nations' mandate would have destroyed the precedent of international response to aggression that we hoped to establish.

The 41st President presages how his son's Administration, by imposing its will so forcefully on the community of nations, would threaten the international cohesion needed for "handling aggression in the post-Cold War world." Support for the United States, so strong after September 11, has eroded considerably. The capacity for cooperation among nations in addressing international crises (including the prevention of future attacks) is thus compromised. "Had we gone the invasion route," Bush Sr. ominously concludes, "the United States could conceivably still be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land."

As fighting in Iraq worsens and animosity against the U.S. grows, Bush Sr.'s words prove a haunting challenge to his son. Still, as discussed in Chapter Five, Bush Sr.'s critics argue that while he was resistant to overthrowing Saddam Hussein overtly, he was willing to do so covertly. If this is true, then the difference in approach between father and son lies more in how visibly America involves herself in the affairs of other nations than in whether she does so at all.

This distinction is significant, for by liberating America from the self-restraints of overt military power, Bush Jr. has set a precedent for future administrations to follow. To do so he has asserted unprecedented executive power. This underscores with almost arithmetic clarity the way foreign engagements, when pursued at the cost of domestic checks and balances, can challenge the very foundations of the Republic.

The Path to War

Days after the September 11 attacks (and without knowledge of the Administration's ambitions regarding Iraq), the House and Senate approved **Joint House Resolution 23** authorizing the President to use all "necessary and appropriate force" against those whom he determined "planned, authorized, committed, or aided" the attacks. In doing so, Congress effectively abdicated its war-making powers and conferred them on the president. Since members of the Administration had sought the overthrow of Saddam Hussein long before 9/11, when empowered by Congress to use "any force necessary," these officials were predisposed to consider a strike against Saddam Hussein. Their pursuit of this goal further disrupted the balance of power between the executive and legislative branches.

In the October 27, 2003 issue of *The New Yorker* magazine, investigative reporter Seymour Hersh described the mechanics of a process called "**stovepiping**," in which raw intelligence is inappropriately provided to high-level officials, bypassing vital filters that are intended to refine intelligence, determine its accuracy, and separate legitimate information from potentially misleading chatter. Hersh claimed that members of the Bush Administration had engaged in this practice, arming Administration officials with information of unverifiable quality on which to base foreign policy decisions. These officials then provided this information to Congress, the media, and U.N. member-states, characterizing it as "slam-dunk" evidence of a case for war against Iraq.

Two years later, on May 1, 2005, a top-secret memorandum recording the minutes of a July 23, 2002 meeting between British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his senior ministers, was released. The **Downing Street Memo**, as it came to be known, confirmed that, following 9/11, members of the Bush Administration "wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD." The memo went on to recount that "the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy."⁹

By "fixing" the intelligence the Bush Administration skirted vital checks on its conduct of office. It also un-

determined the authority of the Legislature by presenting as facts to members of Congress manufactured claims on which to base their vote on **House Joint Resolution 114**, the Authorization for the Use of Military Force Against Iraq. This Authorization gave the executive branch unprecedented license to declare war against Iraq at its sole discretion. The executive's interpretation of this license demonstrated its willingness to bypass further checks and balances at home and to exempt America from conventions to which it had previously adhered abroad.

The Hidden Costs of War

On June 8, 2004, *The Washington Post* revealed the existence of the "**Torture Memo**," a secret document written for the President by his Office of Legal Counsel. It reassessed the executive's prerogatives and responsibilities under U.S. law and under the **Geneva Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment**.¹⁰ The Memo reinterpreted the meaning of the word "torture" to give the executive broader license than that traditionally permitted

by the Geneva Conventions and U.S. Law. The Memo argued that the Administration could engage in "cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment" so long as such activities did not cause a level of pain "equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death."

The mistreatment of detainees first came to light in April of 2004 when an internal investigation by the U.S. army and publicly-released photographs revealed American military personnel abusing and humiliating prisoners at **Abu Ghraib** Prison in Iraq. At the time, Administration officials characterized the scandal as an isolated incident, a handful of aberrant soldiers departing from standard procedures otherwise respectful of the Geneva Conventions. The Torture Memo suggested, however, a widespread and premeditated program authorized by the executive branch to interpret the Geneva Conventions and U.S. law more liberally than previous administrations.



In April 2004, publicly-released photographs revealed American military personnel abusing and humiliating prisoners at Iraq's Abu Ghraib Prison.

On November 2, 2005, *The Washington Post* revealed the existence of a "hidden global internment network" as part of the War on Terror.¹¹ This network had secretly engaged in the kind of interrogation practices foreseen by the Terror Memo. Given the controversy that had surrounded the Abu Ghraib

scandal and the subsequent release of the Terror Memo, the exposure of this secret network suggested that the executive had simply circumvented congressional opposition it deemed inconvenient.

After 9/11, the Administration had transferred hundreds of alleged Taliban and Al Qaeda detainees to the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Classifying them as "enemy combatants" rather than prisoners of war, the Bush Administration denied the detainees protection under the Geneva Conventions. Basing its actions on the 1942 Supreme Court decision **Ex Parte Quirin** (discussed in Chapter Two), the Bush Administration labeled the Guantanamo detainees "unlawful," thus denying them access to U.S. courts and trying them instead in military tribunals. In such tribunals, detainees do not have the constitutional privilege of the writ of habeas corpus. Hearsay, coerced testimony, and secret evidence may also be used. The appeal of any verdict cannot be filed with federal courts. Rather, it is subject to final review by the president himself. Like Lincoln and Roosevelt before him, George W.

Bush determined that, at a time of “invasion or rebellion,” the Constitution gives the executive the right to deny detained “unlawful combatants” constitutional legal protections.

Five years later, after challenges from legal experts and members of Congress, the Supreme Court ruled in the landmark decision **Hamdan v. Rumsfeld** that the Bush Administration’s use of military tribunals “violate both the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the four Geneva Conventions.” By then, however, hundreds of detainees at Guantanamo (and an untold number elsewhere) had been denied due process under U.S. law and subject to violations of the Conventions.

On May 10, 2006, *USA Today* revealed the existence of a secret program conducted by the National Security Agency of the Department of Defense to monitor and catalog phone calls made from the four largest telephone carriers in the United States. The revelation of this secret program and an estimated database of 1.9 trillion phone call records generated immense national controversy. Critics charge that the program violates the Constitution’s Fourth Amendment protection against warrantless search and seizure as well as the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), which requires that electronic surveillance of “U.S. persons” be carried out only with a warrant. Advocates of the program assert that the collection of such information was a necessary and legal means by which to monitor communication between possible terror actors in the U. S. and their accomplices abroad. They further assert that FISA unconstitutionally infringes on executive power and that when Congress after September 11 enacted its joint resolution conferring on the President the authority to “use all necessary and appropriate force” to prosecute those responsible, it implicitly exempted him from FISA’s restrictions.



As early as September 12, 2001, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was among those in the administration advocating war with Iraq in response to 9/11.

Amid the controversies over torture and wiretapping, the Administration sought not to curtail these practices but rather to codify them into law. On October 17, 2006, President Bush signed the **Military Commissions Act of 2006**, providing for continued controversial practices in its detention and treatment of “unlawful combatants” including granting the President authority to suspend the writ of habeas corpus at his discretion. American Civil Liberties Union Executive Director Anthony D. Romero said “the President can now, with the approval of Congress, indefinitely hold people without charge, take away protections against horrific abuse, put people on trial based on hearsay evidence, authorize trials that can sentence people to death based on testimony literally beaten out of witnesses, and slam shut the courthouse door for habeas petitions.” In a further reduction of the court’s power

to curb the power of the executive, the Military Commissions Act provides a retroactive, nine-year immunity for U.S. officials who authorized, ordered, or committed possible acts of abuse on detainees prior to its enactment. Thus, while passage of the Act by Congress was a step toward greater balance of power between the branches, the Act grants the executive extensive wartime powers including the power without accountability to suspend the writ of habeas corpus, a cornerstone of the Constitution.



An estimated 50,000 prisoners have been detained by the United States in the War on Terror and the Iraq War. The grounds and handling of their detention have been challenged in several international fora.

Likewise, when the Administration’s unlawful wireless surveillance of U.S. persons was revealed, it sought to pass laws to le-

SPOTLIGHT: HOW FAR DOES THE U.S. GO?

In the film *Why We Fight*, Senator John McCain (R/AZ) contends that America has the obligation to “spread democracy and freedom throughout the world.” But is such an obligation consistent with America’s founding principles? “Where the debate and controversy begins,” Senator McCain goes on to say, “is how far does the United States go, and when does it go from a force for good to a force of imperialism?” This is the central challenge facing America as she moves from republican roots to an uncertain future as the world’s sole superpower.

Like Rome and Britain before her, America is coming to discover the costs of imperial ambition, not only in the physical challenge of maintaining power abroad but in the spiritual toll taken on body and soul at home. A nation pursuing “perfect security,” Eisenhower once cautioned, risks “destroying from within that which it is trying to protect from without.” Today, U.S. defense spending exceeds \$500 billion per year, representing a far greater portion of the country’s federal budget than that spent by any other nation. To some, Eisenhower’s warning about the military-industrial complex has come to pass. The disproportionate nature of U.S. defense expenditure violates Eisenhower’s tenet about the “need to maintain balance in and among national programs” and thus diminishes other parts of America’s national strength. Critics argue that health care, education, infrastructure and other areas in which the United States trails other industrial nations would benefit from funding otherwise diverted to defense.

Yet, Eisenhower’s concern about the military-industrial complex is more than an economic one. In the film *Why We Fight*, Chalmers Johnson argues that the rise of the military-industrial complex is a by-product of America’s shift from republican roots to the kind of imperialism that John McCain describes in the film. Unlike republics, which can mobilize militarily when attacked, empires require permanent military preparedness. Yet, as Eisenhower and Washington warned, such permanence can concentrate undue influence in the military establishment and thus upset the delicate framework of checks and balances on which the Republic is based.

An Imperial Presidency?

“To his critics,” wrote Administration lawyer John Yoo, “Mr. Bush is a ‘King George’ bent on an ‘imperial presidency.’” But to Yoo and others in the Administration, “the inescapable fact is that war shifts power to the branch most responsible for its waging: the executive.”¹³ As one Administration critic wrote in the University of Pittsburgh’s law journal *Jurist*:

The President is determined to take any actions he deems necessary, in his own unilateral judgment, to protect us from terrorist attacks. His oath, however, is to ‘preserve, protect and defend the Constitution.’ Congress has been distressingly passive; the courts remarkably uninvolved.¹⁴

galize such practices. **The Electronic Surveillance Modernization Act**, passed by the House of Representatives on September 29, 2006, eased FISA restrictions and thus gave the executive branch greater license to conduct warrantless surveillance without oversight.

At the time of this writing, controversies over intelligence handling, torture, and domestic surveillance continue. However these issues are resolved, the principle concern is the effect they have on the balance of power between the branches. Following September 11, the executive asserted unprecedented authority to use “all necessary and appropriate force” at its sole discretion against those it deemed responsible for the attacks. As John Yoo, a lawyer in the Bush Administration’s Office of Legal Counsel and one of the authors of the Torture Memo, summarized it, “we are used to a peacetime system in which Congress enacts the laws, the President enforces them, and the courts interpret them. In wartime, the gravity shifts to the executive branch.”¹² The distinction between “wartime” and “peacetime” is an arbitrary measure that has sweeping implications, allowing the executive to deem the Constitution’s balance of power a fair-weather luxury that must be suspended in wartime. But when, one could argue, is it ever truly peacetime or wartime? And who is to arbitrate this?

The Bush Administration’s “fixing” of intelligence and reinterpretation of laws applicable to torture and domestic surveillance indicates that it saw itself as the arbitrating party not only of peace and war but, in turn, of when constitutional provisions relating to the separation of powers may be suspended.

Though it is true that the authority abdicated by Congress to the President on September 18, 2001 was limited to war-making, new concerns about executive authority are arising in areas that reach far beyond the battlefield. In early 2006, evidence emerged about President Bush's use of **Presidential Signing Statements**. These are written proclamations by the President upon his signing of a bill into law. President Bush has used these statements to mount over 750 challenges to new and existing laws, asserting the executive's right "to construe [such laws] in a manner consistent with the constitutional authority of the President to supervise the unitary executive branch and as Commander in Chief."¹⁵ Though previous presidents have used Signing Statements, none has done so as often as President Bush nor, as *The New York Times* reported, in a way so designed "to make the President the interpreter of a law's intent, instead of Congress, and the arbiter of constitutionality, instead of the courts."¹⁶ As the American Bar Association determined in July of 2006, President Bush's use of such signing statements to modify the meaning of duly enacted laws "is contrary to the rule of law and our constitutional system of separation of powers."¹⁷

The Administration also engaged in a controversial assertion of executive power when it quietly signed into law on October 17, 2006 the **John Warner Defense Authorization Act of 2007**. This Act allows the President to declare a "public emergency" and determine at his sole discretion that state authorities are incapable of restoring public order. He may then station troops anywhere on American soil and take control of state-based National Guard units to "suppress, in any State, any insurrection, domestic violence, unlawful combination, or conspiracy." The signing of this Act represents a major new assertion of executive power over the American homeland. When an executive seeks to be the sole interpreter of law and then to seize the power to use the military to suppress insurrection at its sole discretion, the prospects for a republican government conducted with the "consent of the governed," are diminished.



Constitutional scholars have expressed concern at the assertion of sweeping wartime presidential powers by the Bush Administration.

America at a Crossroads

At the time of writing, the War on Terror continues, but with questionable and arguably counterproductive results. International terror is on the rise. In the eight years between 1993 and 2001, Al Qaeda carried out eight major bombings around the world. In the five years since 9/11, Al Qaeda has carried out over twenty-two successful bombings.¹⁸ The Iraq War has also intensified ominously. Its tragic progress, combined with the shortfalls of the War on Terror, raise questions not only about the future of Iraq but about the wider domestic and foreign policy implications of the Bush Doctrine.

By projecting preemptive military power so unilaterally abroad and executive power so forcefully at home, the Bush Administration has revived and refocused the age-old discourse about America's role in the world, compelling public consideration of when and to what extent demands of security justify suspension of international and domestic laws. Citing the elusive nature of its enemy in the War on Terror, the Bush Administration has reinterpreted the Constitution, U.S. Law and international treaties to allow for unprecedented executive power. While this has been predicated on precedents set by past administrations in wartime, the Bush years have taken the executive to a new level of assumed

authority, setting new precedents to which future Administrations will refer. In this way, the impact on the separation of powers and other constitutional protections may be felt for years to come.

As the chapters of this study guide demonstrate, the Administration of George W. Bush by no means represents the first time the constitutional balance of power has been disrupted in wartime. This has indeed happened throughout America's history. But each time, there has been a postwar rollback in which wartime measures are undone in peacetime. Here, the War on Terror poses a special dilemma. Because it is of unlimited duration and scope and because it offers no national capital to conquer, no leader to overthrow, no fleets to sink, and no single enemy who can effectively declare surrender, the War on Terror does not provide a natural moment for a peacetime restoration of constitutional protections.

America today faces a crossroads that is in some ways familiar, but in others new and more troubling. Amid the rising threat of terror and an increasingly complex global security environment, she faces difficult decisions about the tension between security and liberty — between expressing her power through military action and expressing it through the power

of her democratic institutions. "Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry," Eisenhower warned in his Farewell Address, "can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together."

The authors of *War and the Republic* hope to have provided students with the historical understanding needed to consider these difficult and vital choices between America's founding republican principles and the demands arising from her evolving role in an ever-changing world.



On November 26, 2006 the Iraq War surpassed the length of American involvement in World War II. It would prove a far more difficult and involved conflict than its planners anticipated.

Chapter Objectives

- ✓ Examine the Bush Administration's foreign and policy decisions following September 11th.
- ✓ Understand how the Bush Administration "fixed" intelligence in the lead-up to the Iraq war.
- ✓ Understand the controversy surrounding the use of military tribunals, torture, and wireless surveillance in the War on Terror. What impact do these have on the separation of powers?
- ✓ Examine the impact of Presidential Signing Statements on the separation of powers.

Discussion Questions

1. After 9/11 the Bush Administration introduced changes to both domestic and foreign policy. What were they and what was their impact?
2. What is 'stovepiping' and how did it influence the lead up to the Iraq War?
3. "The Hidden Costs of War" section of this chapter discusses two controversial policies implemented by the Bush Administration. Choose one of the policies and discuss how it was discovered, why it is significant and how it affects the separation of powers.
4. Bush Administration lawyer John Yoo said, "We are used to a peacetime system in which Congress enacts the laws, the President enforces them, and the courts interpret them. In wartime, the gravity shifts to the executive branch." Do you agree with this statement?



"Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.

—President Dwight D. Eisenhower

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WAR AND THE REPUBLIC

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