



# America's Traditions in Foreign Policy

Wherever the standard of freedom and Independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.

SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

JULY 4, 1821

Do not think . . . that the questions of the day are mere questions of policy and diplomacy. They are shot through with the principles of life. We dare not turn from the principle that morality and not expediency is the thing that must guide us and that we will never condone iniquity because it is most convenient to do so.

PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON

OCTOBER 1913

**P**olitics, at its roots, deals with values and value differences among individuals, groups, and nations. Various definitions of *politics* attest to the central place that values play in political life. For example, political scientist Harold Lasswell has written that politics “is the study of influence and the influential. . . . The influentials are those who get the most of what there is to get.”<sup>1</sup> What there is to get, he continues, is values, such as “*deference, income, and safety*.”<sup>2</sup> Robert Dahl, drawing on Aristotle and Max Weber, notes that what seems to be common across these definitions is that they deal with values such as power, rule, and authority.<sup>3</sup> David Easton’s famous definition of politics is even more explicit in its assessment of the relationship between politics and values as “the authoritative allocation of *values*.”<sup>4</sup> According to this definition, authority structures (e.g., governments) distribute something, and that something is values.

**Values** refer to “modes of conduct and end-states of existence” that guide people’s lives. They are “abstract ideals” that serve as an “imperative” for action.<sup>5</sup> Further, they are viewed as “goods” (in an ethical, not a material, sense) that ought to be obtained or maintained by a person or a society. In the Declaration of Independence, for instance, the values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were explicitly stated as reasons for founding the United States, and they came to serve as guides to political action in the earliest days of the nation. Indeed, these values remain important to this day. Liberty, or freedom, is emphasized again and again by American political leaders as one value that differentiates this nation from so many others.

## **VALUES, BELIEFS, AND FOREIGN POLICY**

Because the essence of politics is so closely related to achieving and maintaining particular values, the analysis of **values and beliefs** is a deliberate choice as the organizing theme for our study of U.S. foreign policy.<sup>6</sup> Further, because values and beliefs are the motivation for individual action—and because we make the assumption that foreign policy is ultimately the result of individual decisions—their importance for our analysis becomes readily apparent. By identifying the values and beliefs that American society fosters, we ought to be in a good position to understand how they have shaped our actions toward the rest of the world.

Social psychologists have analyzed the relationships among values, beliefs, and the behavior of individuals. Milton Rokeach, for example, defines beliefs as propositions “inferred from what a person says or does” whose content “may *describe* an object or situation as true or false; *evaluate* it as good or bad; or *advocate* a certain course of action as desirable or undesirable.” Individuals thus may have numerous beliefs, but some are more central than others in accounting for their behavior. These core beliefs are values. As Rokeach notes, “A value is a type of belief, centrally located within one’s total belief system, about how one ought, or ought not, to behave, or about some end state of existence worth, or not worth, attaining.” Although these values are likely to be few in number, they are crucial to an understanding of the attitudes and behaviors that an individual expresses.<sup>7</sup>

By extension, nation-states operate as individuals do because they ultimately comprise individuals.

The use of values and beliefs (or “ideas,” as Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane call them<sup>8</sup>) as our organizing scheme fits broadly within the constructivist tradition in the study of foreign policy and international relations. This focus contrasts with that of other principal models of analysis offered in recent years: the rational actor model, the organizational process model, and the governmental or bureaucratic politics model.<sup>9</sup> However, although each of these has something to offer in helping us analyze foreign policy, none emphasizes the role of values and beliefs in the behavior of nations.

- The **rational actor model**, for example, begins with the assumption that nations (like individuals) are self-interested and seek to maximize their payoffs (or outcomes) when making foreign policy decisions. The key to understanding foreign policy is to identify a state’s policy preferences and their rank orderings. The source of these state preferences and their relative ordering, however, has not been well explored.
- The **organizational process model** focuses more on identifying the decision-making routines of policy makers. Thus it sees foreign policy behavior less as the result of clear choices and more as a function of organizations following standing operating procedures. In large measure, the values and beliefs of the policy makers are assumed and not fully analyzed.
- The **bureaucratic politics model** pays some attention to values and beliefs (because each bureaucracy has institutional beliefs that it seeks to maximize). Still, the primary explanatory focus here is on the competition among bureaucracies, based on their relative power and influence.

The foreign policy models just described have much to offer (and careful readers will note that we use them in various ways throughout the book). However, an initial focus on values and beliefs will enable a fuller understanding of America’s foreign policy decisions.

### Some Cautions

There are potential difficulties in focusing on values and beliefs and in assuming a direct analogy between individuals and nation-state behavior. We outline them here:

- Factors such as the idiosyncratic personality traits of some leaders, the dynamics of the bureaucratic environment, and the restraints of the governmental process will intrude on a complete identification of a nation’s values and beliefs.<sup>10</sup>
- The very definition of national values is likely to be problematic. Whose values are we to identify? Should they be those of leaders or the public? With both the public and the elite, the array of values—religious and secular—in a pluralist society is considerable. Our analysis will focus primarily on the values held by political elites, but the values and beliefs of the public, by necessity, will be considered from time to time.

- By focusing on values and beliefs, and using them as an explanation for U.S. foreign policy, we are close to relying on the national character (or, more generally, the political culture) explanation of behavior.<sup>11</sup> As A. F. K. Organski has written, the national character approach makes several key assumptions:

(1) that the individual citizens of a nation share a common psychological make-up or personality or value system that distinguishes them from citizens of other nations, (2) that this national character persists without major changes over a relatively long period of time, and (3) that there is a traceable relationship between individual character and national goals.<sup>12</sup>

Such assumptions are difficult to maintain, and thus there are limits to the national character approach as a meaningful explanation of foreign policy, and it cannot be relied on completely. However, in a more limited sense, to identify the “basic attitudes, beliefs, values, and value orientations” of a society as a beginning point for analysis, its use is appropriate, because individuals (and hence, nations) make decisions within the context of a particular set of values and beliefs.<sup>13</sup>

### Rationales for the Values Approach

Although we acknowledge and recognize the difficulties just described, we believe that the **values approach is a sufficiently useful first step in policy analysis that it warrants more coverage than it has received.** Moreover, our analysis does not contend that certain values and beliefs are unchangeable, although surely some are less changeable than others. Rather, we will assess the changes in value emphasis and consistency, especially in the past six decades, during which the United States has been an active and continuing participant in the global arena.

Beyond its utility, the values approach, is especially germane to the study of American foreign policy for at least three additional reasons.

First, the nation was explicitly founded on particular sets of values, and these values made it view itself as “different” (or “exceptional”) from the nations of the Old World.<sup>14</sup> In this view, politics was to be conducted not on the principles of power politics but on the basis of democratic principles. In the view of many, then, America should act in the world only according to its moral principles or in defense of them, and at all times domestic values were to be the guide to political behavior. Whether the United States has always lived up to these standards is debatable, but the inevitable desire to justify actions within a value context emphasizes the role of principles in U.S. foreign policy.

Second, because some American values toward international affairs have changed in recent years, understanding these changes is especially important for U.S. foreign policy analysis. As we will discuss, America moved from its isolationist past to an active globalism in the post–World War II years. Indeed, a particular set of values often labeled the Cold War consensus came to dominate American policy actions from the late 1940s to at least the middle 1960s.

In the post-Vietnam period (roughly 1973–1990), for example, the value orientation of the various American administrations toward the world changed a

number of times—from the realism of Richard Nixon to the idealism of Jimmy Carter and back to the Cold War realism of Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush. In the post–Cold War era, Bill Clinton initially emphasized greater global and economic engagement and the promotion of democracy and then reverted to a focus on political–military concerns. George W. Bush made similar shifts in his foreign policy values and emphases, propelled most dramatically by the terrorist attacks on the United States in the fall of 2001. His administration started with a unilateralist emphasis, but was compelled toward multilateralism (at least for a time) in its war on terrorism. However, with its failure to win UN approval and the support of key allies, the administration largely reverted to a unilateralist approach (although it was able to forge a “coalition of the willing”) in initiating the Iraq War in March 2003. Moreover, it has been unable to shake a widely held image of unilateralism since that time.

With such discernible shifts throughout the recent history of U.S. foreign policy and the current search for a definitive set of foreign policy values, a familiarity with both past value approaches and their policy implications is important as the United States looks toward the twenty-first century.

Third, the lack of consensus on foreign policy at either the elite or the mass level in American society today invites the use of a values approach. According to several national surveys, no foreign policy of the post–Vietnam, post–Cold War, and post–9/11 eras has been fully embraced by the American public or its leaders. Indeed, both are divided as to the set of values that should guide American policy in the future.<sup>15</sup> The domestic divisions between elites and the public and within the public over the Iraq War convey this continuing gulf. We will discuss these divisions fully in Chapters 12 and 13, but it suffices to say here that values and beliefs remain a useful way of understanding American foreign policy, especially as the United States seek to combat global terrorism.

Finally, and on a normative level, there have lately been efforts by prominent political scientists to revitalize the role of values in foreign policy and international politics and in the study of foreign policy decision making.<sup>16</sup> The constructivist tradition in the study of international politics, as well, invites an emphasis on ideas, values, and culture as core concepts in an understanding of the behavior of states.<sup>17</sup>

In this first chapter, then, we begin our analysis by sketching the historical values and beliefs of American society; we then suggest how those beliefs and values have influenced foreign policy, especially in the first century and a half of the nation.

## **THE UNITED STATES: A NEW DEMOCRATIC STATE**

Numerous scholars have noted that the United States was founded on values different from those of the rest of the world.<sup>18</sup> It was to be a **democratic nation** in a world governed primarily by monarchies and autocracies. Indeed, according to one historian, America’s founders “didn’t just want to believe that they

were involved in a sordid little revolt on the fringes of the British Empire or of European civilization. They wanted to believe they were coming up with a better model . . . a better way for human beings to form a government that would be responsive to them.”<sup>19</sup> In the words of Thomas Jefferson the new American state was to be “the solitary republic of the world, the only monument of human rights . . . the sole depository of the sacred fire of freedom and self-government, from hence it is to be lighted up in other regions of the earth, if other regions shall ever become susceptible to its benign influence.”<sup>20</sup> Because of its democratic value emphasis, moreover, America developed with the belief that it was unique and possessed a set of values worthy of emulation by others. In this sense, the country emerged as a deeply ideological (although Americans do not readily admit this) and as one not always tolerant of contrary views.<sup>21</sup> In short, American “exceptionalism” came to be a key tradition in guiding American actions abroad.

### A Free Society

In 1776, the United States was explicitly conceived in **liberty and equality**, in contrast to other nations where ascription and privilege were so important.<sup>22</sup> It emerged as an essentially free society in a world that stressed authority and order. In large measure, this new American state was dynamic, classless, and free, in contrast to Europe, which was largely classbound and restrictive.<sup>23</sup> (Revolutionary France does not fit this description, but “classbound and restrictive” certainly describes politics under the Concert of Europe, the power arrangement dominated by the conservative regimes of Prussia, Russia, and Austria after the defeat of Napoleon.<sup>24</sup>) Thus, the American Revolution had been fought in defiance of the very principles by which Europe was governed. In this sense, there developed a natural aversion to European values—and foreign policies—which further reinforced America’s beliefs in its uniqueness.

The fundamental American beliefs that were perceived to be so different from those of Europe can be summarized as classical liberalism, especially as espoused by the seventeenth century thinker John Locke.<sup>25</sup> In the liberal tradition the individual is paramount and the role of government is limited. Government’s task is to do only what is necessary to protect the life and liberty of its citizens. Citizens are generally left alone, free to pursue their own goals and to seek rewards based solely on their abilities.

### Equality before the Law

From such a concern for the individual, **personal freedom and personal achievement** naturally emerged as cherished American values. Yet equality before the law was also necessary to ensure that all individuals could maximize their potential on the sole basis of their talents. In a society that placed so much emphasis on the freedom of the individual, however, this equality for all was viewed not as equality of outcomes (substantive equality) but as equality of opportunity (procedural equality).<sup>26</sup> Although all citizens were not guaranteed the same ultimate station in life, all should (theoretically) be able to advance as far as their individual capabilities would take them.

Thus, although equality of opportunity was important, the freedom to determine one's own level of achievement remained the dominant characteristic of this new society. In his first inaugural address in January 2001, President Bush captured the importance of the individual and of freedom and equality in this way: "The grandest of these ideals is an unfolding American promise that everyone belongs, that everyone deserves a chance, that no insignificant person was ever born." In his second inaugural address in January 2005, he reiterated this core American principle: "From the day of our Founding, we have proclaimed that every man and woman on this earth has rights, and dignity, and matchless value, because they bear the image of the Maker of Heaven and earth."<sup>27</sup>

One prominent visitor to the United States in 1831 and 1832 recognized these distinctive American values. In *Democracy in America*, in which he catalogued his travels, **Alexis de Tocqueville** expressed amazement at the country's social democracy ("The social condition of the Americans is eminently democratic; this was its character at the foundation of the colonies, and it is still more strongly marked at the present day"); its equality ("Men are there seen on a greater equality in point of fortune and intellect, or, in other words, more equal in their strength, than in any other country of the world, or in any age of which history has preserved the remembrance"); and its popular sovereignty ("If there is a country in the world where the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people can be fairly appreciated, where it can be studied in its application to the affairs of society, and where its dangers and its advantages may be judged, that country is assuredly America").<sup>28</sup> To be sure, de Tocqueville raised concerns about this equality and its implication for governance in domestic and foreign policy matters; nevertheless, his admiration for America as a different kind of nation was indeed profound.<sup>29</sup>

### The Importance of Domestic Values

America's early leaders differed from their European counterparts in a third important way: their views on the relationship between **domestic values and foreign policy**. Unlike European rulers of the time, most American leaders did not view foreign policy as having primacy over domestic policy, or as a philosophy whereby the power and standing of the state must be preserved and enhanced at the expense of domestic well-being. Nor did they view foreign policy values and domestic policy values as distinct from one another, with one moral value system guiding domestic action and another, by necessity, guiding international action. Instead, most saw foreign policy as subordinate to domestic interests and values. According to a recent analysis of Thomas Jefferson's beliefs on the relationship between the domestic and foreign policy arenas, "The objectives of foreign policy were but a means to the ends of protecting and promoting the goals of domestic society, that is, the individual's freedom and society's well-being."<sup>30</sup>

### The Dual Emphasis on Isolationism and Moral Principle

America's values and beliefs came to have important consequences for its foreign policy. Because the United States adopted a democratic political system, developed strong libertarian and egalitarian values, and believed in the primacy of

domestic over foreign policy, two important traditions quickly emerged: an emphasis on isolationism in decisions regarding involvement abroad and an emphasis on moral principle in shaping that involvement.<sup>31</sup> Both traditions, moreover, were surely viewed as complementary and perpetuated unique American values: the former by reducing U.S. involvement in world affairs, and particularly those of Europe; the latter by justifying U.S. involvement abroad only for sufficient ethical reasons.

At times, these two traditions pulled policy makers in different directions (one based on the impulse to stay out of world affairs, the other on the impulse to reform world affairs through unilateral action), but both came to dominate American foreign policy actions.

## THE ROLE OF ISOLATIONISM IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Philosophical and practical reasons led the United States in an isolationist direction. Philosophically, because democratic values were so much at variance with those of the rest of the world, many early Americans came to view foreign, and especially European, nations with suspicion.<sup>32</sup> They feared that their values would be compromised by those of other states and that international ties would only entangle them in alien conflicts. From the beginning, therefore, there was a natural inclination to move away from global involvement and toward **isolationism**. Throughout the greatest part of its history, in fact, isolationism best describes America's foreign policy approach.<sup>33</sup>

Although philosophical concepts were influential, this isolationist orientation was also guided by important practical considerations. First, the United States was separated geographically from Europe—the main arena of international politics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—and from the rest of the world. Thus, staying out of the affairs of other nations seemed a practical course. Second, because the United States was young and weak, with a small army and a relatively large land mass, seeking out adversaries and potential conflicts abroad would hardly be prudent. Third, domestic unity—a sense of nationalism—was as yet limited and merited more attention than foreign policy. And fourth, the overriding task of settling and modernizing the American continent provided reason enough to adopt an isolationist posture.<sup>34</sup>

### Two Statements on Isolationism

Early in the history of the country, two statements—**Washington's Farewell Address** and the **Monroe Doctrine**—effectively described America's policy of isolationism and set limits on its application. The first, Washington's Farewell Address of September 1796, was originally meant to thank the American people for their confidence in his leadership, but it also warned of threats to the continuance of the republic. Washington admonished American citizens not to become involved in factional groups (i.e., political parties), sectional divisions (e.g., East



versus West, North versus South), or international entanglements. His comments on the dangers of international involvements explain much of what isolationism was to mean for American foreign policy for the next century and a half.

America's attitude toward the world, Washington said, should be a simple one:

Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all. In the execution of such a plan nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations and passionate attachments for others should be excluded, and that in place of them just and amicable feeling toward all should be cultivated.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, he warned against the danger of forming close ties with other states:

a passionate attachment of one nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite nations, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary interest in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter without adequate inducement or justifications.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, Washington provided a "rule of conduct" for the United States, warning that any involvement in the Byzantine politics of Europe would not be in America's best interest:

The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop. Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendship or enmities.<sup>37</sup>

In sum, Washington's strong belief was that, although the foreign policy of the United States should not be one of total noninvolvement (because economic ties with some states were good and useful, and amicable diplomatic ties with others were commendable), he strongly opposed the establishment of permanent political bonds to other countries. More important, he directly warned against any involvement in the affairs of Europe.

Whereas Washington's Farewell Address outlined a general isolationism, the Monroe Doctrine set forth specific guidelines for U.S. involvement in international affairs. Named after President James Monroe's seventh annual message to Congress, delivered on December 2, 1823, this doctrine was promulgated in part as a response to the possibility of interference by the European powers in the affairs of the American continents, especially at a time when certain South American states were moving toward independence or had just achieved it.<sup>38</sup> Monroe's message contained several distinct and identifiable themes: an end to European colonization of Latin America and for "maintenance of the *status quo*," there; the differences in the political systems of Europe and America; and U.S. intentions not interfere in European affairs.<sup>39</sup>

Monroe stated the first of these themes by declaring that the American continents were “henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European power” because such involvement would affect the “rights and interests” of the United States. Near the end of the message, he highlighted the differences in policies between the United States and Europe toward each other and toward Latin America:

Of events in that quarter of the globe [Europe] with which we have so much intercourse and from which we derive our origin, we have always been anxious and interested *spectators*. . . . In the wars of the European powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy so to do. . . . With the movements in this hemisphere we are of necessity more immediately connected and by causes which must be obvious to all enlightened and impartial observers. The political system of the allied powers is essentially different in this respect from that of America. These differences proceed from that which exists in their respective Governments. . . . We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety. With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the Governments who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition . . . by any European powers in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States.<sup>40</sup>

With these words, the Monroe Doctrine gave rise to the “two spheres” concept in American foreign policy by emphasizing the differences between the Western and Eastern Hemispheres—that is, the New World versus the Old.<sup>41</sup> As Washington had earlier, Monroe spoke out against political involvement in the affairs of Europe, but he went further in declaring that the U.S. policy of political noninvolvement did not apply to Latin America. By asserting that the “rights and interests” of the United States would be affected by European involvement in the Western Hemisphere, his doctrine made clear that the United States did, indeed, have political interests beyond its borders.

Together, Washington’s Farewell Address and the Monroe Doctrine are a valuable guide to understanding early America’s isolationism in global affairs. The principles they enunciate were generally reflected in the diplomacy of the United States throughout much of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, and their words became the basis of the nation’s continuing foreign policy.

### **The Isolationist Tradition in the Nineteenth Century**

As a result of America’s isolationism in foreign policy during the nineteenth century, there emerged a severe restriction on treaty commitments that would bind it politically to other nations. In fact, one prominent historian has pointed out that

**Table 1.1 Content of International Agreements by the United States**

Content	1778–1899	1947–1960
Alliance	1	1,024
Amity and Commerce	272	3,088
Boundary	32	4
Claims	167	105
Consular Activities	47	212
Extradition	47	12
Multilateral	37	469
Territorial Concessions	18	4
Total	621	4,918

Sources: Calculated from Igor I. Kavass and Mark A. Michael, *United States Treaties and Other International Agreements, Cumulative Index 1776–1949, Volume 2* (Buffalo, NY: Wm. S. Hein & Co., 1975); and from Igor I. Kavass and Adolf Sprudz, *United States Treaties Cumulative Index 1950–1970, Volume 2* (Buffalo, NY: Wm. S. Hein & Co., 1973). For a discussion of how the table was constructed, see the text and note 44.

the United States made no alliances between the treaty with France in 1778 and the Declaration of the United Nations in 1942.<sup>42</sup> A survey of American treaties, however, shows that it did in fact enter into a number of “political” agreements—<sup>43</sup> for example, extradition, navigation of the seas, treatment of nationals, and amity and friendship—but none of these could be construed as “entangling”. Instead, they served primarily to facilitate amicable trade relations.

Table 1.1 is a summary of the agreements made by the United States from its founding to the twentieth century and, for comparison, from 1947 to 1960.<sup>44</sup> The first column of data, for 1778–1899, confirms the emphasis on economic and limited political ties in the early history of the nation, with agreements on amity and commerce and claims (largely economic) constituting about 70 percent of the total. Even agreements with more direct political elements, such as those dealing with consular activities and extradition, were largely routine, involving good relations with other states rather than controversial political issues. Only pacts that dealt with boundary issues and territorial concessions (the Louisiana Purchase, the purchase of Alaska, the Oregon Treaty, the Gadsden Treaty) might be considered controversial, and even those make up less than 10 percent of all commitments. The single true alliance between 1778 and 1899 was the treaty with France, which was ultimately allowed to lapse in 1800.<sup>45</sup>

Table 1.1’s data for 1947–1960—the initial period of America’s active engagement in global affairs—show a strikingly different pattern of commitments. First, their number is markedly higher—rising from just over 600 in a 120-year period to over 4,900 in a 14-year period. Second, although economic agreements (amity and commerce) still constituted the largest single type (about 63 percent), alliances and multilateral commitments now made up over 30 percent of the total. To be sure, these ties were broadly defined—dealing with military

bases, defense pacts and mutual security agreements, and military missions—but they nevertheless demonstrated a level and scope of involvement much different from those in the early years. Similarly, the number and kind of multilateral pacts are distinctive in the two periods. In 1947–1960, the number of such pacts was over 10 times greater than in 1778–1899, and their content reflected a new dimension. At least 15 percent of the multilateral pacts in the immediate postwar years were defense commitments. There were no such registered in the earlier period.

In short, then, the comparative data bring into sharp relief the differences between America's global involvement in the late eighteenth century and the entire nineteenth century and its global involvement since 1947.

A brief survey of its diplomatic history during the nineteenth century will further demonstrate America's commitment to the principles of Washington and Monroe. For example, President James K. Polk, in his first address to Congress on December 2, 1845, reaffirmed the tenets that Monroe had set down twenty-two years earlier: "It should be distinctly announced to the world as our settled policy, that no future European colony or dominion shall, with our consent, be planted or established on any part of the North American continent."<sup>46</sup> Polk was not explicitly referring to the ongoing dispute with the British over the Oregon Territory, but the implication (in the view of at least one noted diplomatic historian) was clear.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Polk expressed concern over rumors that the British were about to acquire territory in the Yucatan and in another message to Congress (in April 29, 1848), declared, "[the] United States would not permit such a deal, even with the consent of the inhabitants."<sup>48</sup>

During this same period the United States concluded the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, which stipulated that neither Britain nor the United States would "obtain or maintain for itself any exclusive control" over a canal across the isthmus at Panama and that neither would "exert or maintain fortification commanding the same, or in the vicinity thereof, or fortify, or colonize, or assume, or exercise any dominion over Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Mosquito Coast, or any part of Central America."<sup>49</sup> Although this pact was later viewed by some as a mistake because it gave standing to the British in the Western Hemisphere, it did allow U.S. involvement in the political affairs of Latin America to continue. Consistent with the prescriptions of the Monroe Doctrine, it also was an attempt to regulate Europe's involvement there.<sup>50</sup>

Late in the nineteenth century, during the presidency of Grover Cleveland, American policy makers again invoked the principles of the Monroe Doctrine to support Venezuela's claim against the British over a boundary dispute between Venezuela and British Guiana. On July 29, 1895, Secretary of State Richard Olney sent a note to Great Britain stating that it was violating the Monroe Doctrine with its involvement and that the United States could not permit any weakening of this policy. The British, with good reason, rejected the American complaint. President Cleveland responded angrily by asking Congress for funds to establish a commission to investigate the boundary dispute; he got them quickly, thus fueling war fever over what was a relatively minor issue.<sup>51</sup> This incident illustrates the continuing influence of the Monroe Doctrine on American foreign policy throughout much of the nineteenth century.<sup>52</sup>

As these examples illustrate, the United States was not wholly isolationist, especially with regard to the Western Hemisphere. If we couple these episodes with efforts to expand control over the American continent through the policy of “manifest destiny” in the 1800s, we can once again specify the degree and extent of isolationism. Moreover, many of these actions had a unilateral bent to them, further specifying the nature of American actions abroad.

### The Isolationist Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century

Despite the appeal of imperial expansion for some American leaders, global isolationism and noninvolvement continued to be the guiding principle in much of America's interactions with Europe in the early twentieth century. Only when moral principle justified intervention in European affairs, as World War I surely illustrates and as we discuss shortly, was isolationism abandoned temporarily, and even then intervention was largely a last resort, justified in strong moral tones by President Woodrow Wilson. Several social, economic, and political actions, largely directed toward Europe, show that isolationist sentiment continued to dominate American thinking and policy at this time.

In social policy, perhaps the most notable development in the early twentieth century was the passage of the **National Origins Act of 1924**, which restricted further immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe and prohibited all immigration from Asia. This was largely a reaction to the American fear of communism at the time (the so-called red scare) and the fear of aliens that had also shaken the country. Importantly, it also represented an attempt to control foreign influences.

In economic policy, the **Smoot-Hawley tariff of 1930** was passed, imposing high tariffs on foreign products to be sold in the United States. Such protectionist legislation was yet a further attempt to isolate the nation from global economic influences. Further, in the words of one analyst, “the belief . . . that the Depression stemmed from forces abroad against which the United States had to insulate itself . . . also gave a ‘protective’ tariff an irresistible symbolic appeal.”<sup>53</sup>

In the political arena, the isolationist impulse was equally pronounced. After World War I, a “return to normalcy” was the dominant theme, implying a more isolationist and pacifist approach toward world affairs. This return to normalcy was manifested in the American refusal to join the **League of Nations** established after the war; its refusal to recognize the Soviet Union (until 1933) and other regimes of which it disapproved; its attempt to outlaw international war with the signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928; and its effort to limit global armament through a series of conferences in the 1920s and again in the early 1930s. The 1920s also saw the emergence of a strong pacifist movement, which brought the founding of more than 50 peace societies across the country. Efforts such as these to eliminate international conflicts were viewed as moral reparation for involvement in World War I and as a way to prevent such involvement in the future. They show that international reform was wholly consistent with domestic reform in the minds of many Americans at this time.<sup>54</sup>

### Involvement in Latin America in the Twentieth Century

America's isolationism and noninvolvement were not the guiding principles of its policies toward Latin America as they were of its policies toward the rest of the world in the new century. Instead, in the 1904 **Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine**, President Theodore Roosevelt refined the meaning of Monroe's message and in so doing expanded U.S. involvement in the Western Hemisphere. Now American intervention would be undertaken, if deemed necessary, as a means of blunting European interference in the affairs of some Western Hemisphere states that had not paid their debts.

In a letter to the Congress on December 6, 1904, Roosevelt stated the rationale for his corollary:

Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power. Our interests and those of our southern neighbors are in reality identical. They have great natural riches, and if within their borders the reign of law and justice obtains, prosperity is sure to come to them. While they thus obey the primary laws of civilized society they may rest assured that they will be treated by us in a spirit of cordial and helpful sympathy. We would interfere with them only in the last resort and then only if it became evident that their inability or unwillingness to do justice at home and abroad had violated the rights of the United States or had invited foreign aggression to the detriment of the entire body of American nations.<sup>55</sup>

Ironically, although the Monroe Doctrine had been initiated to prevent intervention from abroad, it was now used to justify American intervention closer to home.

The Roosevelt Corollary was quickly implemented in 1905 by American intervention in the Dominican Republic to manage its economic affairs and to prevent any other outside interference. Similar financial and military interventions followed, with American forces occupying the Dominican Republic from 1916 to 1924, Haiti from 1915 to 1934, Nicaragua from 1912 to 1925 and 1926 to 1933, and Mexico for a time in 1914. In addition, the United States established a protectorate over Panama from 1903 to 1939 and over Cuba from 1898 to 1934. (See Map 1.1.)<sup>56</sup>

### The Monroe Doctrine in the Present Era

Since World War II, the Monroe Doctrine has hardly lost its relevance for American policy. In 1954, the United States supported a coup to overthrow the government of the Jacobo Arbenz Guzman in Guatemala after Arbenz initiated domestic reforms and obtained arms from the Soviet bloc. Both the fear of communism



**MAP 1.1** U.S. Involvements in Central America and the Caribbean, 1898–2004

Source: The involvement data for 1898–1939 are taken from the map in Walter LeFeber's *The American Age* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1989), p. 233. The subsequent American involvements have been added.



in the Western Hemisphere and the Monroe Doctrine figured prominently in this support of the coup.<sup>57</sup> Three years after Fidel Castro seized power in Cuba in 1959, a U.S.-backed force of Cuban exiles attempted to topple his regime in April 1961. Known as the Bay of Pigs, this invasion ended in disaster but it was defended as an effort to stop the spread of communism in the Western Hemisphere. In 1962, the Monroe Doctrine again justified the American blockade against Cuba after the discovery of Soviet missiles there. In his address to the nation during the **Cuban Missile Crisis**, President John F. Kennedy declared that these missiles violated “the traditions of this nation and the Hemisphere.”<sup>58</sup> In April 1965, when Communists were allegedly seizing power in the Dominican Republic, President Lyndon Johnson sent in some 23,000 U.S. and Organization of American States (OAS) forces to protect American citizens and to restore a government more to America’s liking.

Over the past four decades, the tenets of the Monroe Doctrine have continued to shape American foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere. In September 1979, when the presence of up to 3,000 Soviet combat troops in Cuba was revealed, Senator Richard Stone of Florida cited this as one reason those troops had to be removed. When successful political revolutions occurred in El Salvador and Nicaragua in 1979, the United States immediately became concerned that they would produce “Soviet beachheads” at America’s back door. Moreover, the Reagan administration challenged the new Marxist-led Sandinista government in Nicaragua and, by late 1981, had initiated a covert operation to support the Contras, a counterrevolutionary force committed to its overthrow. When funding for the Contras was stopped by Congress from late 1984 to late 1986, administration officials devised a scheme to continue its support by secretly selling arms to Iran and transferring part of the profits from those sales to the Nicaraguan rebels. This operation became known as the **Iran–Contra affair**.

During the 1980s, both the Reagan and Bush administrations were heavily involved in Panama. The United States worried about the corrupt regime of Manuel Antonio Noriega and its implication for American influence in that country. General Noriega, who had been in power since the violent death of General Omar Torrigos in 1981, reportedly had made huge profits from the drug trade that traversed Panama, and in turn his regime had become increasingly repressive. The Reagan administration sought and obtained his indictment in absentia on drug smuggling in Miami and undertook various efforts to oust him from power through American economic and diplomatic actions.

After a military coup covertly supported and encouraged by the Bush administration failed in October 1989, the United States employed a military force totaling about 25,000 to overthrow the Noriega regime two months later. Noriega was captured, brought to the United States, and convicted and imprisoned for drug trafficking.

When in 1994 the Clinton administration attempted to remove General Raoul Cedras and restore democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power in Haiti, the Monroe Doctrine hovered in the background as an important policy justification. The administration had been reluctant to intervene or remain in other trouble spots around the world (e.g., Bosnia, Somalia, or Rwanda),



but the proximity of Haiti and its location in the Western Hemisphere (as well as the promotion of democracy) became part of the rationale for its occupation by American troops in September 1994.

The George W. Bush administration took an equally keen interest in the Western Hemisphere with its support for legislation to aid Colombia in its fight against drug trafficking, including the continuing use of American military advisors, and in its effort to promote a free trade zone among the states in the region. In late February 2004, the pattern continued. President Bush directed U.S. Marines into Haiti to restore and maintain order after President Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled the country, apparently with American encouragement.

In Venezuela, the actions of the government of Hugo Chavez—its nationalizing of various sectors of the economy, its increasingly close ties with Cuba, and its continuing anti-American rhetoric—have drawn the attention and concern of the United States. Likewise, the administration's interest in Cuba remains intense as Fidel Castro's health deteriorates, as Fidel's brother Raul, has assumed the presidency, and as the future of leadership in that country remains in doubt.

In short, the imperative to keep the Western Hemisphere free of outsiders and to keep the Monroe Doctrine alive continues. The American view, since at least Theodore Roosevelt, is largely that it should use its power to establish and maintain order in this region of the world.

## THE ROLE OF MORAL PRINCIPLE IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

The founding of the United States with a unique set of values, as well as the nation's development in the context of political isolationism, has yielded another important dimension of American foreign policy: **a reliance on moral principle** as a guide to world affairs.<sup>59</sup> Americans did not feel comfortable with international politics (especially power politics as practiced in the Old World), and largely honored the imperative of both Washington and Monroe to stay out of foreign entanglements. This policy generated a distinct approach to the world when the country did become involved in international issues. Political scientist John Spanier and others have argued that discernible American attitudes developed toward such important political concepts as the balance of power, war and peace, and force and diplomacy as a result of these global experiences.<sup>60</sup>

More generally, moral values (as opposed to political interests) became an important feature of American policy making. On occasion, moral fervor led to policies that seemed more like crusades seeking to right a perceived wrong. At times, too, as some have contended, this rhetoric of morality could be cynically used to mask the use of power politics.

Before we proceed, we should note that our discussions are not intended to convey that moral principles are absent in the actions of other nations or that they underlie only the actions of the United States. To be sure, all nations are governed by particular value codes, although they clearly differ (at least in

emphasis) from one state to another. What we do mean to convey, however, is that the United States as a nation has been particularly sensitive to reconciling its actions with moral principle, perhaps more so than many others. Indeed, the religious underpinnings of America's founding—and their continued impact to this day—account in perhaps a large part for a reliance on moral principle in foreign affairs.<sup>61</sup> As we will subsequently discuss, fidelity to those principles has not always been sustained in action; yet the very concern for moral principle is nonetheless an important characteristic of U.S. foreign policy, especially when compared to other national traditions at the beginning of the American Republic.

### Moral Principle and the Balance of Power

The **balance of power** concept, which has dominated policy making in Europe since the inception of the nation-states, is predicated on several key assumptions:

- That all states want to prevent large-scale war and preserve the existence of at least the major states in the international system
- That all states are fundamentally motivated in their foreign policy by power considerations and national interests
- That states are willing and able to join alliances (and to change them) to prevent the dominance of any one state
- That there are few domestic political constraints preventing states from acting in the political arena<sup>62</sup>

The essence of the balance of power concept is thus the adroit use of diplomacy and bargaining, but it holds that force and violence can—and should—be used to perpetuate the system.

Until several decades ago, the United States rejected philosophically virtually all of the key assumptions of balance of power politics.<sup>63</sup> American society has maintained that foreign policy should be motivated not by interests and power considerations but by moral principles, and that domestic values should be the sole basis for foreign policy behavior. As Henry Kissinger, a critic of American antipathy toward power politics, has observed: "It is part of American folklore that, while other nations have interests, we have responsibilities; while other nations are concerned with equilibrium, we are concerned with the legal requirements of peace."<sup>64</sup>

These **views on war and peace** and **force and diplomacy** follow from Americans' views on power politics. Because they have rejected the balance of power concept, most would find little comfort in Carl von Clausewitz's dictum that war is "the continuation of political activity by other means."<sup>65</sup> Instead, they have generally perceived war and peace as dichotomous: Either one or the other exists. Intermediate conditions in which limited force is used (e.g., to settle border disputes or achieve some limited objectives, such as in Bosnia in 1995 or Kosovo in 1999 or the lingering peacekeeping and peace-building operations in Iraq after 2003) are not always understandable or tolerable to many Americans. When war

does break out, and the country must become involved, an all-out effort should be made to win. If the cause is sufficiently important in the first place, should not the effort be complete and total? Alternatively, if the cause is not important, why should U.S. forces be committed at all?

The continued impact of this view of war and peace to the present is illustrated by public reaction to the “limited wars” the United States has engaged in over the past five decades. For many Americans, the Korean and Vietnam wars were extraordinarily frustrating because an all-out military effort was not undertaken. Instead, a mixture of military might and diplomacy was employed. As a result, the outcomes—prolonged stalemate in the first, defeat in the second—were unsatisfactory. Even the highly successful U.S. effort in the Persian Gulf War of 1991 did not end satisfactorily for some because, once again, political restraints entered the process. In particular, segments of the public (including the American general in charge of the coalition forces against Iraq) were unhappy that the United States did not “finish the job.”

More generally, American peace building, peacemaking, and humanitarian interventions (e.g., Somalia in 1992–1993, Bosnia in 1995 and after, and in Kosovo in 1999) have received decidedly mixed support from the American public and explain in part the initial impulse of the George W. Bush administration in 2001 to reduce American actions abroad. The reaction to the Iraq War exhibits many of these same sentiments. As the reconstruction efforts dragged on and as American casualties mounted, nearly three-quarters of the public viewed the war as a mistake as of 2007. That year also saw presidential approval plummet, with President Bush’s approval rating reaching the low 30 and high 20 percent range (See Chapter 6).

In contrast to this attitude on limited war is the American public’s response to the “**war on terrorism**” immediately after 9/11. When President Bush issued his clarion call for an all-out effort against terrorism that included all actions necessary, the public responded with the highest levels of support ever received by an American president. Although Bush had averaged in the mid-50s range prior to September 11, 2001, his support reached the mid-80s in the months immediately following the tragedy.<sup>66</sup> With initial success in the attack on the Taliban in Afghanistan and the quick toppling of Saddam Hussein in Iraq support remained high. However, as Iraq dragged on and anti-terrorism efforts seemed to yield fewer quick successes, support fell.

In all, then, even though Americans support all-out efforts on war and peace; they become more skeptical of in-between measures and expect quick and decisive results.

The public’s view of force and diplomacy parallels its attitudes toward peace and war. Americans generally believe that when a nation resorts to force, that force should be sufficient to meet the task at hand. There should be no constraints of “politics” once the decision to use force has been made. As a consequence, combining force and diplomacy (as in the balance of power approach) is not understandable to large segments of the American people because it appears to compromise the country’s moral position. Again, the Korean and Vietnam wars illustrate this point. In both instances, Americans did not understand or accept “talking and fighting.” Thus, the efforts by Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger

to combine force and diplomacy (“coercive diplomacy”) were criticized by both the political right and the political left because they suggested a certain amorality in American foreign policy.

American diplomacy itself has historically been heavily infused with this moral tradition. Historian Dexter Perkins notes that the reliance on moral principle has produced a certain “rigidity” in U.S. dealings with other nations. Even though by its very nature diplomacy requires compromise on competing points, he argues, when “every question is to be invested with the aura of principle, how is adjustment to take place?”<sup>67</sup> John Spanier similarly notes that, given that moral principle is so prevalent in American policy making, it has traditionally been difficult for Americans to understand how compromise is possible or necessary on some questions in global politics.<sup>68</sup> When to compromise, and on what principles, thus remains a source of debate.

### Moral Principle and International Involvement

Before 1947, when the United States finally committed itself to global involvement, American engagement in international affairs was generally tied to explicit violations of international ethical standards by other states. Four prominent instances—the **War of 1812**, the **Spanish-American War**, **World War I**, and **World War II**—illustrate the importance of moral principle as a justification for U.S. involvement and foreign policy actions.<sup>69</sup>

**The War of 1812** The first instance in which isolationism was abandoned in favor of moral principle occurred when Congress voted a declaration of war against Great Britain in June 1812. It did so only after various efforts to avoid involvements with France and England—the dominant European powers of the time—and only after what it perceived as continuous violations of an important principle of international law: freedom of the seas for neutral states.<sup>70</sup>

Under a series of policy directives to limit Napoleon’s power and enhance its own, the British government barred American commerce from France and from any continental ports that barred the British. Further, it barred from conducting commerce any neutral American vessel that had not passed through a British port or paid British customs duties. U.S. ships violating such standards were subject to seizure. (France, under Napoleon, imposed similar restrictions on American shipping, but, for a variety of reasons, the United States responded to the British with greater hostility.<sup>71</sup>) These actions infuriated the United States and were characterized by American leaders as blatant violations of freedom of the seas. In addition to the seizure of American vessels, the British, in their effort to control the seas, began the impressment of American sailors from American vessels, forcing them into the British navy (from which the British alleged they were deserters). Impressment was yet another challenge to America’s freedom of commerce and the seas and was seen as besmirching U.S. honor. America’s involvement in this war proved costly and ultimately unpopular and the final results largely confirmed the status quo. However, it does suggest the potency of moral principle in guiding early American action.<sup>72</sup>

**The Spanish–American War** A variety of arguments based on moral principle were advanced to justify the Spanish–American War of 1898: the harsh Spanish treatment of the Cubans, the sinking of the American battleship *Maine*, and the personal affront to President William McKinley by the Spanish ambassador in a private letter (in which McKinley was portrayed as a “bidder for the admiration of the crowd” and as a “common politician.”<sup>73</sup>) Fewer arguments for American participation were made on the basis of how it might affect the national interest; instead, in one view, moral arguments provided the dominant rationale.<sup>74</sup> (It is important to point out, however, that this war encouraged the United States to pursue territorial expansion abroad with its seizure of the Philippines, the Hawaiian Islands, and Wake Island in the Pacific, albeit without the same moral umbrage as taken over Cuba.)

**World War I** American participation in the First World War in 1917 and 1918 was also justified in terms of a moral imperative rather than as a response to the demands of the European balance of power. Only for sufficient ethical reasons did the United States feel compelled to enter this European conflict. In this case, the ethical justification was provided by Germany’s violation of the principle of freedom of the seas and the rights of neutrals through its unrestricted warfare in the Atlantic.<sup>75</sup>

The outrage that occurred in 1915, the sinking of the British passenger ship *Lusitania* (and later the ship *Sussex*) and the accompanying loss of American lives provided sufficient reason to temporarily abandon isolationism. The proximate events that precipitated the U.S. entry into the war, however, were the German announcement of its unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917 and Germany’s **Zimmermann Telegram to Mexico** that sought to prod that country into war with the United States.<sup>76</sup> Additional moral justification was reflected in the slogans devised to boost American participation: World War I was to be a “war to end all wars” and a campaign to “make the world safe for democracy.”

**World War II** Although the United States had been assisting the allies prior to its formal involvement in the Second World War (1941–1945), its reentry into the world conflict could be justified only as a response to a moral violation. The Neutrality Act of 1939, for example, had reduced restrictions on arms sales and allowed the United States to supply its allies, France and Britain. The Destroyers for Bases deal with Great Britain—in which the United States gained naval and air bases in Newfoundland and certain Caribbean islands in exchange for fifty destroyers—was completed in September 1940.<sup>77</sup> In March 1941, moreover, Congress passed the Lend–Lease Act, which provided additional aid.<sup>78</sup>

Nevertheless, it was not until the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, which President Franklin Delano Roosevelt called “a date which will live in infamy,” that the United States finally had a wholly satisfactory reason for plunging into the conflict.<sup>79</sup> Consistent with its attitude, it felt compelled to seek “absolute victory,” as Roosevelt said. Hence, a total war effort was mounted that ultimately led to the unconditional surrender of the Japanese in September 1945, only a few months after victory in Europe.

### Implications for U.S. Involvement

In general, the examples just described demonstrate that the United States has been reluctant to give up its isolationism and has done so only for identifiable moral reasons. That is, unlike other states, it has traditionally agreed to international involvement only in response to perceived violations of clearly established principles of international law and not to the requirements of power politics. As a consequence, sustained American engagements in the world of power politics have been decidedly few and have been entered into only in special circumstances.

After the first three global engagements discussed here the United States moved back to its favored position of isolationism; none brought about a basic change in American foreign policy orientation. (The significance of World War II is considerably different; Chapter 2 discusses its impact on U.S. foreign policy.) After the War of 1812, for example, America immediately reaffirmed its policy of noninvolvement in European affairs and warned against European interference in the Western Hemisphere via the Monroe Doctrine of 1823.

The strong American affinity for isolationism was vividly demonstrated at the end of World War I with the rejection of the idealistic foreign policy proposed by President Woodrow Wilson. “**Wilsonian idealism**,” as it came to be called, attempted to shake the United States from its isolationist moorings and encourage it to become a continuing participant in global affairs. This idealism, largely borne out of President Wilson’s personal beliefs, consisted of several key tenets.

- Moral principle should be the guide to U.S. actions abroad.
- The Anglo-American values of liberty and liberal democratic institutions are worthy of emulation and promotion worldwide. Indeed, they are necessary if world peace is to be realized.
- The old order, based upon balance of power and interest politics, must be replaced by an order based upon moral principles and cooperation by all states against international aggression.
- The United States must continue to take an active role in bringing about these global reforms.<sup>80</sup>

For Wilson, then, moral principle would serve as a continuing guide to global involvement, but the interests of humankind and global reform would take precedence over any narrowly defined national or state interest.

The most complete description of the new world that Wilson envisioned can probably be found in his **Fourteen Points**, which he delivered to a joint session of Congress in January 1918 and which became the basis for the Paris Peace Conference held at the end of World War I.<sup>81</sup> This new order, he declared, would ban secret diplomacy and foster international trade among nations and would emphasize self-determination and democracy for nations. In his speech, Wilson set forth several specific requirements resolving nationality and territorial issues in Central Europe at the time. (See Document 1.1.)

Point 14 of Wilson’s plan is particularly notable—and was ultimately troubling to many Americans—because of its explicit rejection of isolationism. It called for the establishment of a collective security organization—a **League of Nations**—that would rid the world of balance of power politics and create a new order

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**Document 1.1 Wilson's Fourteen Points**


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- I. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at. . . .
- II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas. . . .
- III. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of equality of trade conditions among all the nations. . . .
- IV. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.
- V. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims. . . .
- VI. The evacuation of all Russian territory and . . . a settlement of all questions affecting Russia . . . [and] an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy. . . .
- VII. Belgium . . . must be evacuated and restored without any attempt to limit the sovereignty which she enjoys in common with all other free nations.
- VIII. All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine, which has unsettled the peace of the world for nearly fifty years, should be righted. . . .
- IX. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.
- X. The peoples of Austria-Hungary . . . should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development.
- XI. Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated; occupied territories restored; Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea; and the relations of the several Balkan states to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality. . . .
- XII. The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities . . . under Turkish rule should be assured . . . [an] opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations. . . .
- XIII. An independent Polish state should be erected . . . [with] political and economic independence and territorial integrity . . . guaranteed by international covenant.
- XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.

*Source:* Taken from a speech by President Woodrow Wilson to a joint session of the U.S. Congress as reported in *Congressional Record*, January 8, 1918, 691.

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based on universal principles. The League would exploit the cooperative potential among states and emphasize the role of collective (i.e., universal) action to stop warfare and regulate conflict. Thus, it would require its members to be involved in the affairs of the international system. If the United States were to join, it would be permanently involved in international politics and would be an active participant in global reform efforts. In essence, Wilson's collective security proposal would have moved the United States away from isolationism and would have produced a strong moral cast to American involvement and to global politics generally.

Wilson's dream of a League of Nations became a reality for a time, but without the participation of the United States—the U.S. Senate failed to approve the Versailles peace treaty by the necessary two-thirds vote. Indeed, on two of three roll calls, the treaty even failed to obtain majority support.<sup>82</sup> Clearly, despite America's long-standing rejection of balance of power politics, it remained unwilling



to increase its global involvement in order to destroy it. Instead, it reaffirmed its isolationist beliefs and in the 1920s reverted to “normalcy,” remaining in that posture throughout the 1930s.

The return to isolationism was manifested in another way in the interwar years. As the situation in Europe began to polarize, and conflict seemed once again imminent, the United States passed a series of neutrality acts, in 1935, 1936, and 1937, that sought to prevent the export of arms and ammunition to belligerent countries and to restrict travel by American citizens on the vessels of nations at war.<sup>83</sup> The ultimate aim, of course, was to reaffirm U.S. noninvolvement and to reduce the prospects of the country being drawn into war through these means. Although President Roosevelt had, by 1939, asked for and received certain alterations in these neutrality acts,<sup>84</sup> it was not until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that the United States was fully shaken from its isolationist stance.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

A reliance on isolationism and moral principle largely forms the essence of America’s past foreign policy<sup>85</sup>; the values and beliefs that underlie this reliance continue to influence its international orientation to this day. To be sure, the American approach to the world would change in response to the shock of World War II, the substantial destruction of the major European powers of France, Britain, and Germany, the emergence of the Soviet challenge, and the onset of the Cold War. These events and phenomena would lead to the rejection of global noninvolvement, even as a commitment to moral principles as a guide to policy was retained.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, and the emergence of terrorism on American soil, the appeal of these traditional foreign policy values has been reinvigorated. This can be seen in the Bush administration’s initial adoption of a more unilateralist (and isolationist) approach to the world. Since the attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center in September, 2001, however, it has lurched in the other direction, with a commitment to a new globalism animated by moral outrage. The magnitude of this new globalism evolved with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; however, the justification for these actions is deeply rooted in America’s past—the promotion of freedom and democracy—in a world now fraught with terrorism and an expanding cast of political actors.

In the next five chapters, we will highlight the changes in America’s foreign policy values and beliefs from post–World War II to post–9/11. We will not only demonstrate how these historical traditions have changed, during this period but illustrate how they have continued to influence successive administrations and their policies. In Chapter 2, we will examine the global political and economic factors that shook the United States from its isolationist moorings and propelled it into global politics. At the same time we will see how moral principle as a guide to policy remained largely intact.



## NOTES

1. Harold D. Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1936), p. 3.
2. *Ibid.* Emphasis in original.
3. Robert A. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), pp. 4–6. Also see Christian Bay, *The Structure of Freedom* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1965), pp. 20–21, for another discussion of the definition of politics.
4. David Easton, *The Political System* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 90. Emphasis added.
5. Milton Rokeach, *Beliefs, Attitudes and Values* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1968), pp. 124, 159–160.
6. We will use the terms *values* and *beliefs* interchangeably throughout this book. These concepts (along with attitudes), while distinct, are very closely related, as discussed in Rokeach, *Beliefs*, pp. 113 and 159–160.
7. See Milton Rokeach's discussion under "Attitudes" in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: The Macmillan Company and The Free Press, 1968), pp. 449–457. The quotations are at pp. 450 and 454, respectively. Emphasis in original.
8. Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytic Framework," in Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 3–30. Some of the discussion of the models in the next paragraphs draws upon Goldstein and Keohane. For good introductions to constructivism and its role in foreign policy analysis, see Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy* 110 (Spring 1998): 29–46, and Jack Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories," *Foreign Policy* 145 (November/December 2004): 53–62.
9. For an argument for the rational actor model as a way to explain foreign policy, see Stephen Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investment and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), and for all three models, see the seminal discussions in Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971).
10. Lloyd Jensen, in *Explaining Foreign Policy* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1982), surveys the research done within the context of these various factors to explain foreign policy.
11. For a discussion of how the political culture concept can be used to explain a nation's behavior, see Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1963).
12. A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 87.
13. Kenneth W. Terhune, "From National Character to National Behavior: A Reformulation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 14 (June 1970): 259. For more discussion by Terhune and others on national character, see Howard Bliss and M. Glen Johnson, *Beyond the Water's Edge: America's Foreign Policies* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1975), pp. 93–98.
14. For two recent discussions of American "exceptionalism" and its effect on foreign policy, see Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), and Stephen Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *The Silence of the Rational Center* (New York: Basic Books, 2007).
15. See, for example, Benjamin I. Page with Marshall M. Bouton, *The Foreign Policy Disconnect* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006).
16. See Joseph S. Nye, *Nuclear Ethics* (New York: The Free Press, 1986); Stanley Hoffmann, *Duties beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981); and Robert W. McElroy, *Morality and American Foreign Policy: The Role of Ethics in International Affairs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992). The McElroy volume brought the Nye and Hoffmann books to my attention at p. 3, for which I am grateful.
17. Walt, "International Relations," pp. 40–41.