THE CHANGING AMERICAN ROLE IN A NEW WORLD ORDER

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Since the end of the Cold War, world politics have been constantly changing. We are living a period of transition from the stable ordered hierarchy of the bipolar system to a new world order that is yet to be fully defined. By definition, transition entails instability. The different states in the international system find themselves facing the negative threats as well as the positive opportunities of change. Depending on their position in the international structure and their power capabilities, states do engage each other in a natural competition to reorder the world in a way favorable to their interests and objectives. Presently, the United States of America is ranked as the most powerful nation, according to most scales of power and their different indicators. Scholars and politicians alike are involved in a heated debate about the shape of the new world order, the influence of the United States in its making, and the reaction of other states.  
A determining factor for the American influence in the making of the new world system is the commitment to remain engaged in international affairs and having clear vision for a viable role in re-achieving stability. American foreign policies of different administrations have seesawed between different variants of international liberalism and realism. The present administration, too, seems to insist on applying a mixed strategy that aims at insuring American security and primacy in world affairs. The Americans are yet to define the type of international primacy they are seeking. They have given different indications in different directions. Some seem to support unilateral hegemony. Some others highlight the preventive costs of unilateralism and are willing to settle for coalition leadership in a "balance of power" system.  
President George W. Bush’s new strategic doctrine of preemptive defense emphasizes the balance of power notion while reserving the right to pursue hegemonic unilateral acts. This article argues that sooner or later the US will learn to accept and prefer a prominent role in a stable balance of power system to costly hegemonic unilateralism that is naturally unstable and very difficult to maintain. The article analyzes the changes in American foreign policy during the present transition period into a new world order. It begins by identifying the constant foundational impulses of US foreign policy then it traces the changes from the stability of the Cold War bipolar system to the instabilities of liberal globalization of the 1990s, and the new doctrinal preemption of the aftermath of September 11.  
  
**THE CONSTANT TENETS OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY**  
It is essential to comprehend American foreign policy as an extension of American domestic politics. The US foreign policy is greatly determined by the general institutional framework of the American Government and by the overall liberal political philosophy.  
The liberal philosophy is operationalized in the American political system through the implementation of the two fundamental concepts of Democracy and Capitalism. It is imperative that we recognize, along with the obvious complementarity, the basic philosophical contradiction between democracy and capitalism. Democracy emphasizes equality between all. Capitalism exhibits constant tendency towards economic inequality and social class divisions. Mixing these two operational concepts successfully in the United States required an especially complex institutional setup, and generated the odd duality\_some call "split personality"\_of American politics. The product is an amalgam of "morality" and "interest" competing and acquiescing in determining policy. The fractured institutional framework showed immense ability in transforming the energy of the friction between morality and interest into productive dynamism in American politics. In domestic politics, equilibrium is maintained through an elaborate setup of institutional controls. In foreign policy, however, prudence dictates that we must anticipate a tilt in favor of interest over morality.  
The victorious "interest" is not necessarily the common national interest. It, too, is a creature of the fractured political system of "division of power" and "checks and balances." The system allows and facilitates the representation of all mobilized relevant interests in shaping the final policy outcome. The president shares decision making with the different administrative and bureaucratic agencies; like the departments of State and Defense, National Security Council, Central Intelligence Agency and many others; Congress and its numerous committees; and concerned Interest Groups and their professional lobbyists.([[1]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn1" \o ")) This process weakens the ability of the administration to produce a coherent and consistent foreign policy and creates problems for the relations with other governments.([[2]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn2" \o "))

History, interacting with the preceding theoretical analysis, has also produced two contradictory empirical impulses constant in the conduct of American foreign policy. Isolationism and missionary zeal have competed and taken turns in determining the general strategies of applied American foreign policy. The two impulses are deeply entrenched into the political psyche of Americans, and both are embedded in a superior sense of American exceptionalism. Americans seem to have split feelings about belonging to the world. In one sense, they want to preserve their exceptional uniqueness by hiding behind the oceans and not get involved in the entangled affairs of the rest of the world. This tradition is as old as the nation itself, since it was practiced and preached by President George Washington, pleading for insularity in his farewell speech, and seconded by President Thomas Jefferson, warning against entangling alliances.([[3]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn3" \o "))

At the same time, Americans are braggingly very expressive of the need to spread the American liberal values to all four corners of earth. They insistently prescribe democratization\_especially human rights\_and liberal economics as the only road to development, modernization and international peace.  
From a theoretical perspective, Americans and others are divided on how to achieve international peace and order into two general approaches: Realist and Idealist/Liberal. In the remaining sections of the paper I shall examine the interplay of these two approaches in determining the American foreign policy and role in world affairs.

**THE VICTORY OF THE REALIST CONTAINMENT**  
Since the early days of American ascendancy on the world stage at the turn of the past century, Americans who advocated participation in the world\_the internationalists\_were divided between those who wanted to benefit from the European experience in managing world affairs and those who sought to reshape the world in the American image. The early debate was engaged between the realist visions of President Theodore Roosevelt and the idealist liberal vision of President Woodrow Wilson.  
The earlier Roosevelt saw the world divided into three spheres. The "old world" of Europe and the Middle East would be a circle of power balanced by Great Britain. The Orient would be the second sphere with Japan as its balancer. And the third circle would be the western hemisphere of the Americas, balanced and policed by the US. The world system overall would be also balanced and policed by the US, as the superior power to both Britain and Japan. Roosevelt’s foreign policy conduct in Panama and towards Spain, Britain and Japan were clear manifestations of his realist vision based on the rising American power. Building the first metal naval fleet, forcefully visiting Japanese harbors, imposing the "open door" policy in China, and the heavy handed resolution of the Russo-Japanese War were some of the main international policing work of the US during the first decade of the Twentieth Century.  
American foreign policy changed course under President Wilson. Empowered realism was replaced by committed liberal internationalism. American involvement in World War One and the new world outlook, as elaborated through the League of Nations and the operational transformation of the hegemonic world of empires into a liberal world of national right to self-determination, were all integral parts of a comprehensive Wilsonian vision of an idealist world order([[4]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn4" \o ")) Wilson’s vision collapsed under the crushing lure of isolationism and its famous slogan: "Bring the boys back home."  
Isolationism of the 1920s and 1930s ended at the hands of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) after the beginning of World War Two. FDR and his Brain Thrust team wanted to build the world of Wilson through an effective United Nations and an active American sponsorship of a new liberal world order. The Soviet leader Joseph Stalin had alternative designs. FDR’s wishful liberal vision had to yield to the stronger reality of a bipolar division of the world presented by Stalin at Yalta.([[5]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn5" \o ")) Yalta was the birthplace of the bipolar system of the cold war.  
By definition, wartime is more amenable to brute realism than it is to any form of liberal idealism. Security was the main concern, everything else seemed a far second. Power politics prevailed in defining bipolar interactions as well as most other relationships America had with other nations. America engaged the world applying a clear strategy within the confines of the Containment Doctrine,([[6]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn6" \o ")) and its Deterrence corollary. The guidelines of American foreign policy were clear-cut and easy to adhere to by decision makers from both parties. All policies, domestic and foreign, had to fit under the priority ceiling of containment. The immediate result of having an American set strategy, that was recognized and reciprocated by the Soviet Union, was generating clarity for American interactions with the rest of the world and providing for overall stability of the international system.([[7]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn7" \o "))

**The Collapse of the Bipolar Order**  
The stability of the Cold War system evaporated as the lid of bipolarity lifted with the collapse of communism as the ideological political system of the Second World. Theoretical confusion ensued, gradually followed by increasing political chaos at the level of the international system. Was the United States to extend its hegemonic control to cover the entire world as the lone superpower?([[8]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn8" \o ")) Was the world to develop a multi-polar system with a number of regional power centers trying to balance each other?([[9]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn9" \o ")) Was the world to evolve into a unitary polity under a world government?([[10]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn10" \o ")) Could it be that the US would be lured back to isolationism, leaving behind a fragmenting world in total anarchy? Or could it be the actual end of the Westphalia nation-state system and the start of a virtual system of integrated communities in a global flexible issue-based structure?([[11]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn11" \o "))

To be sure, all these options are presented as viable theories by world-renowned scholars. The common intervening variable to all, however, is the position adopted by the United States. Since the end of the Cold War, the US seems to have been testing her footing in most if not all theories. Before examining the alterations in the US foreign policy and conduct, let us briefly identify the key properties that define the existing situation of the international system, since the collapse of bipolarity.  
J. Martin Rochester describes the present conditions of the international system as having four general properties: 1- a growing diffusion and ambiguity of power; 2- a growing fluidity of alignments; 3- an ever expanding agenda of newly salient issues facing national governments and forcing the involvement of states in ever more intricate patterns of interdependence; and 4- a growing importance of multinational corporations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other non-state actors.([[12]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn12" \o "))

The concept of power in international relations is increasing in complexity. The distinction between absolute and relative power has enhanced our understanding of the application of power and may have improved our predictive calculations for conflict outcomes. So did the expansion of the concept of power to include, in addition to the traditional military and economics, indicators that account for intangible human dimensions. Even core realists have adapted their definitions of power to include "incalculable" aspects like technology and prestige,([[13]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn13" \o ")) and other organizational and psychological variables like "will, motivation, and leadership."([[14]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn14" \o ")) These conceptual modifications to international relations theory were the direct result of empirical events in world affairs. The oil crisis of 1973 showed very clearly the importance of finance and economics as power resources in international conflict. The defeat of both superpowers by "a band of night-riders in black pajamas" in Vietnam,([[15]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn15" \o ")) and by irregular Mujahideen in Afghanistan, proved the drastic need to improve our understanding of power as an applicable relative phenomenon, and not absolute. The ultimate and most intense illustration of the efficacy of applicable relative power is the infamous event of September 11, 2001. A small group of individuals with very limited financial resources, no military power at all, but with lots of will and superb planning, were able to strike at the very heart of the greatest military and economic power in history, causing such a shakeup of the international system traditionally reserved to major world powers in international conflicts. Power, today, is diffused and ambiguous.  
Alignment seems to share the same symptoms effecting power. The old fixed and clear lines of the Cold War\_dividing the world into East, West, and a Third World\_are erased and substituted by a new mixture of ideology, "class," and interest lines that are diffused, interrupted, and intertwined all at once. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

is gradually expanding to encompass all the East European former enemies, including Russia in a double tier structure with two separate councils.([[16]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn16" \o ")) Presently, the very expanding NATO is facing a severe crisis caused by the division over the issue of war with Iraq. Germany and France are in solidarity with Russia and China in opposing the US and Great Britain. China, itself, has denounced communism and is investing its newly acquired wealth in devising a new ideological system of "Market-Leninism" instead of Marxist-Leninism.([[17]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn17" \o ")) Economic alliances are increasing in numbers with memberships from across the North-South dividing line. Regional economic areas are gaining in salience over the traditionally rich-poor divisions. Intra-West conflict between trade blocs seems more volatile than any confrontation between G-7 and Group 77. This growing "fluidity of alignments" is very likely to continue and increase before settling down into a stable structure once again.  
The confusion and multiplicity on alignments are also reflected in the expanding agenda of issues that the nation-states have to manage. The original liberal mission of the state, of having to provide domestic order and external peace, has expanded to include so cial, economic, and ecological securities as well as the physical security of citizens. The commitment to the welfare of citizens has involved the state in the micro-management of all issues necessary for enhancing the wealth and the overall well being of citizens. The state has to prohibit and prevent anything that may harm and at the same time protect and provide the things that may improve the quality of life of citizens. The enlargement of the state’s mission into all these areas created a web of entanglements of interactions between the individuals, groups, and the state and between the different states. Security lost its monopoly or domination and the state fell capture to "complex interdependence" in issues related to economics, environment, space, and spreading epidemics.([[18]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn18" \o ")) All these issues, especially economics, became the "continuation of war by other means."([[19]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn19" \o ")) The United States, despite its relative moderation as a welfare state, due to its enormous size of demography, resources, productivity and market; is very much engaged in the continuation of such wars employing all available means.  
The US is joined in this structure of "complex interdependence" by more than 190 other countries and an ever-expanding set of non-state actors that include Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), NGOs, Multinational Corporations (MNCs), groups and empowered individuals. States have lost their monopoly dominion over "international relations." Organizations, corporations, groups and some individuals even are considered full fledge players in the game of international politics. We only need to consider the "War on Terrorism" as an example and try to identify the players. Along with the involved governments, we have the UN and its many agencies, NATO and other IGOs like the European Union, Banks and other MNCs affected in the process, many small groups and key individuals like Ossama Bin Laden, and others. All these actors have enough power and influence to affect and participate in the making of international politics nowadays. It compels us to wonder whether we are really living in a "global village" or in a "new feudalism" where we are yet to establish a defined hierarchy and stable order.([[20]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn20" \o "))

**THE US SEARCH FOR POSITION IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER**  
The American foreign policy conduct since the end of the Cold War may be identified through three main transition stations. First, President George Bush Sr. had to oversee the peaceful completion of the Soviet and Communist collapse in Europe, expressing great hopes for a new world order ordained by the US. He had to leave office with great disappointment that his American co-patriots were far more interested in direct economic benefits than in a new world order dominated by them. Second, President William Jefferson Clinton, who won the presidency on slogans like "Change" and "It’s the economy stupid," focused on liberalizing the world economy through globalization and had a hesitant reactive foreign policy. Finally, President George W. Bush, and after exhibiting strong signs of being under the influence of traditional conservative isolationism, was propelled into severe internationalism by the event of September 11, 2001.  
  
**President George Bush Sr. and a New World Order**  
The presidential tenure of George Bush Sr. witnessed the unfolding of the most highlighted event of the past half-century. The Cold War ended. Communism in Europe collapsed. It was the epic time for liberalism to snatch a triumph out of the demise of the Soviet empire. The US had invested enormously towards such a conclusion. To some, it was the "end of history."([[21]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn21" \o ")) To President Bush, it had to be the beginning of "a new world order." He used that phrase repeatedly, indicating that America had the opportunity to achieve its ultimate "manifest destiny" by fulfilling Thomas Paine’s prophecy of the ability to "begin the world again,"([[22]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn22" \o ")) and this time in the very image of the United States of America. The US was to lead the whole world in absorbing the change gracefully, and then implementing the American vision of free peoples, in democratic states, in a liberal world. All free, all in peace.  
While President Bush was busy outlining his rosy vision of a dreamful future world order, many peoples around the world were practicing the very old and real political life. They expressed their long bottled national aspirations and went about achieving self-determination and independence at any price. With the elimination of the deterrent imminent threat of a nuclear superpower confrontation, smaller states and national communities felt free to act upon their old grievances. Some wanted to erase borders, others wanted to draw new ones. Few peacefully, many did not care about the means; they were consumed with the perceived glorious ends. Managing the world is a big job. Was the US able and willing to take the charge and carry the burden? President Bush discovered very quickly that he had to be very selective in accepting the challenges based on the rational formula of "cost and benefit."  
In Europe, Western Europe at least, the benefits of German reunification and cementing the liberal victory in general outweighed the costs of continued American military deployment and political engagement, but not by much. When some European countries tried to reduce the margin of profit for the Americans, President Bush was hastened to respond by asking his European counterparts: "Do you want us to stay or not?" German Chancellor Helmut Khol could only afford the "yes, of course" answer, at the time. America stayed in Europe on its terms, but it was abundantly obvious that some Europeans were itching to get rid of the American presence and influence as soon as possible.  
In Yugoslavia, the Bush foreign policy team seemed convinced that the cost of intervention was much higher then any prospective benefits. Th ey chose a policy of nonintervention and prescribed it to the European allies who insisted on the need for proper management of the disintegrating federation. The Europeans failed in their attempts at conflict resolution in complex Yugoslavia and ended up reenlisting the American support later in 1995. Resolution of the Yugoslav conflict came very late and at an enormous price.  
In the Middle East, the costs of non-intervention exceeded by far any possible benefit of disengagement. The American involvement in the Middle East during this period was most intense in regards to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and then building upon the enhanced prestige and the powerful presence trying to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.  
The Gulf War to many Americans and especially President Bush was an exemplary bookcase of American world leadership. It was presented as a successful experience in international "coalition building" to fulfill the very raison d’être of the United Nations\_collective security. In reality, it was a classic hegemonic endeavor veiled with the legitimacy of the international community. The objective was to maintain international order and stability, especially as prevalent to the continued free flow of oil as a main source of energy, fueling the international economy at a low very affordable price. Despite the bright success in achieving the "flow of oil" objective, the US failed to bring the Iraqi issue to an honorable end befitting a hegemonic power, and suitable to basic humanitarian standards of reducing the suffering of innocent people, and not exposing them to the "cruel and unnecessary" punishment of "double jeopardy." The present djˆ vu situation with Iraq is explicit in exposing the immense US failure as world hegemony. It leads Immanuel Wallerstein to conclude: "In retrospect, US efforts in the Gulf War accomplished a truce at basically the same line of departure. But can a hegemonic power be satisfied with a tie in a war with a middling regional power?"([[23]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn23" \o ")) In the final analysis, the US intervention in the Iraq-Kuwait conflict produced very limited temporary success in respect to oil interest, and a drastic long term failure in terms of its relations with the Arab world and inflicting enormous unnecessary suffering on the people of Iraq and the region.  
The Middle East peace process was supposed to makeup for any short fallings of the American intervention. The US kept its traditional pattern of trying to harness the energy generated by conflict to implant peace for the affected peoples.([[24]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn24" \o ")) The United States sponsored, along with dying Soviet Union, the Madrid Peace Conference where they laid the foundations for comprehensive peace to be negotiated on bilateral tracks. Only the Jordanian track bore fruits through signing a peace treaty that formalized "normalcy" between Israel and Jordan. The three remaining and more intricate tracks of Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon are still bogged by Israeli intransigence and American non-committal\_hardly a leadership virtue. The failure of the US to commit itself in a leadership capacity to resolving the Middle East conflict continues to exert its toll of unwarranted sacrifices and sufferings not only by the people of the Middle East, but by the international community at large. Fundamentalism and terrorism are not the least of the ensuing consequences.([[25]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn25" \o "))

In Africa, the Somali experience, which began as a "humanitarian intervention" by the Bush Administration, few days before leaving office, ended as a disastrous failure under the supervision of the Clinton Administration. Again, some of the consequences were unnecessary suffering, strengthening fundamentalist groups like al-Qaeda, and showing the US as a paper tiger that can be tested and pushed around in the open international arena.  
The Bush foreign policy seemed somewhat more successful in Latin America. The intervention in Panama, despite obvious flaps, ended up producing the stated objective of removing General Immanuel Noriaga from power and installing a "democratic" regime to further the peaceful development of the country. American constructive engagement with other governments throughout Latin America seemed to produce a general inertia for peaceful democratization of the continent, leaving out the island of Cuba.  
The smooth constructive diplomacy with Japan, China, and the rest of the Orient countries also seemed to produce positive results. Japan was co-opted into gradual opening of its market for foreign competition, which loosened the monopoly control of the ruling party and provided for further democratization. China, itself, felt increasingly convinced of having to adopt free market strategies to its economy, but remained committed to political communism and to regaining its territories, preferably through gradual peaceful means.

**The Clinton Presidency and the Revival of International Liberalism**  
Two main features define the Clinton legacy in American foreign policy. In political economy, President Clinton pursued progressive liberal internationalism of the world economy, and tied the US strongly into the expanding globalized web of interdependence. Globalization and "global village" were favorite terms to President Clinton and his economic policy team. In the area of security, the Clinton foreign policy conduct did not reflect a coherent design of long-term strategic interests of the United States.  
The world order envisioned by President Clinton was that of globalization and free transfer of technology and other resources across national borders, allowing for faster and more integrated development of the entire world. He seemed to believe that better economic conditions will produce better social situation and then improved political interactions. The socio-economic emphasis is the traditional liberal approach for solving political problems. However, the world was not homogenous in terms of compatibility in the levels of development of different regions and countries. The hailed benefits went to the rich industrialized and modern societies. The poorer countries and people only received a trickle of economic rewards and a little development that raised their awareness and expectations but failed to deliver to their satisfaction.([[26]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn26" \o ")) The gap between rich and poor grew bigger and began issuing ominous signs of possible troubles in the future. The cleavage between the developed and developing worlds grew to become a schism within societies and between states and regions. We ended up having an integrating modern world reaping the rewards of globalization, and a disintegrating "traditional" world feeling only the negative consequences of globalization. Benjamin Barber described these two contradictory phenomena and the new world order saying:  
Just beyond the horizon of current events lie two possible political figures--both bleak, neither democratic. The first is a retribalization of large swaths of humankind by war and bloodshed: a threatened Lebaonization of national states in which culture is pitted against culture, people against people, tribe against tribe--a jihad in the name of a hundred narrowly conceived faiths against every kind of interdependence, every kind of artificial social cooperation and civic mutuality. The second is being borne in on us by the onrush of economic and ecological forces that demand integration and uniformity and that mesmerize the world with fast music, fast computers, and fast food--with MTV, Macintosh, and McDonald’s, pressing nations into one commercially homogenous global network: one McWorld tied together by technology, ecology, communications, and commerce. The planet is falling precipitantly apart and coming reluctantly together at the very same moment.([[27]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn27" \o "))

The globalized world order of the 1990s generated mixed and opposite feelings. The pro-globalization optimists were euphoric about the bright prospects of the future. They predicted the end of conflict, peace, prosperity, and extended cooperation and development. Francis Fukuyama and Allan Goodman represent this group of scholars.([[28]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn28" \o "))

Some others even went beyond simple optimism about the future and began promoting the image of highly developed internationalized communities that can manage their affairs without the need to the control and authority of government. They advocated "governance without government."([[29]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn29" \o ")) Such hyper-optimist visions worried many realists. They saw a different scenario for the development of the future. They focused on the fragmentational forces as a powerful source of conflict. Due to the opening and free movement prescribed and guaranteed by globalization, the elements of fragmentation and conflict will spread from one country to the other, and they themselves would become global, and national governments will not be able to stop them. In such an open world of globalization; terrorists, drug traffickers, gangsters, as well as diseases, pollution, and environmental problems; will spread freely and end up destroying even the developed world. The whole world will evolve in a similar pattern to that of the West African cities, proclaimed Robert Kaplan.([[30]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn30" \o ")) The US government was called upon to institutionalize the proper precautions and develop the suitable defense strategies.  
The Clinton Administration failed to develop a general framework of clearly defined national strategy for the conduct of foreign policy and the management of world affairs. The preoccupation with global liberalization detracted much of the needed attention from security matters towards economic and environmental issues. The emphasis on globalization led President Clinton to drop his predecessor’s views on a leading US role in a "comprehensive" world order. The US under Clinton was not to behave as a hegemonic military power. Its leadership role was to be limited to reactive ad hoc treatment of situations that required intensive care. Having to share power with a conservative Republican Congress (starting in 1994)

with high isolationist overtones did not help President Clinton in devising an internationalist political strategy. He also had to face a reluctant military under General Colin Powell, who had his own doctrine for limited military intervention with clear achievable objectives, congressional and popular support, and clear exit strategy.([[31]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn31" \o "))

The fist security policy President Clinton had to devise was the management of the Somali fiasco. The "humanitarian intervention," started by President Bush, quickly ran its humanitarian course of securing the delivery of food to famine stricken people, and escalated to a full attempt at resolving ethnic conflict. The complexity of the Somalia case surpassed by far the level of commitment invested by President Clinton. The outcome was a defeat for the American intervention, with many American and Somali casualties, strengthening fundamentalism, and prolonged chaos and misery for the Somali people.  
The lessons of Somalia helped shape and formalize the hesitance of Clinton’s foreign policy, at least during his first term in office. The US refrained from attending to the drastic needs of Africa, and was dragged grudgingly to Yugoslavia. The Rwanda conflict was watched from afar as it simmered and then exploded into a full-scale genocide of historic proportions. The US did not intervene to prevent the catastrophe and did not entice the UN to carry on with its most fundamental objectives\_security and peace. The much delayed intervention in former Yugoslavia, and despite the success of the Dayton Accords of 1995 in stopping the Bosnian War, was not an integral part of an all encompassing American strategy to deal with ethnic strife even as it threatened to spill over into regional wars. The heavy handed handling of Kosovo and the moral diplomatic engagement in Northern Ireland were also examples of the US in the role of a "re-acting fire fighter" and not a "pro-active policeman." Even the intervention in Haiti, which originally had the makings of policing action, was muzzled and handed over to the UN to bare the responsibility of "nation-building."  
In North Korea, the Clinton policy was dangerously complacent in postponing what might have been a small confrontation, allowing the situation to fester and increase the reach of its threat beyond the immediate region to the rest of the world, through the high likelihood of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the missile capability and technology to deliver them. Also, the US failed in applying preventive measures to deter India and Pakistan from developing and deploying nuclear weapons while permanently engaged in a brinkmanship contest at a crisis level conflict. Only in mediating the conflict between China and Taiwan was the Clinton Administration ready to embark on a preventive diplomacy course with no hesitation to use the policy instrument of "show of force," by ordering an aircraft carrier group to sail through the straights separating the two states.  
In the Middle East, President Clinton seemed to have believed that he could leave his mark for history. He invested the prestige of the office of the presidency and his personal effort and time trying to reduce the gap of differences between the parties. As we have seen earlier, the Middle East conflict proved superior to the level of leadership the US was willing and capable of practicing over the stubborn Israeli aggressiveness. President Clinton failed to leave his history mark, and the people of the region continue to agonize, awaiting true leadership of the international community that is firm in its belief in peace and justice.  
  
**Conservatism, September 11, and a New National Security Strategy**  
The election of President George W. Bush reintroduced conservatism to the processes of American foreign policy making. Instead of global economic liberalization and greater integration, the emphasis began to shift towards unilateral American interests. Instead of practiced interventionism, he indicated withdrawal and isolationism. Instead of economic cooperation, he stressed the need for defensive security arrangements. Then, came the attacks of September 11, 2001. They were extensive enough to shake the very foundations of the American precious sense of security. They were a different kind of the imminent threats Americans would anticipate. The damage was severe enough to cause a war, against a new kind of enemy, requiring a new kind of strategy. Defensive isolationism could not work. Containment was deemed insufficient. Preemption was believed to be the suitable national security strategy. The American Administration decided that offence was the best defense against such irregular "armed" groups bent on destroying the preeminence of the United States of America.

Prominent amongst the casualties of September 11, was isolationism as an American Founding Myth.([[32]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn32" \o ")) The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI),  first proposed by President Reagan to shield the US from Soviet attacks, modified and adapted by George W. Bush to use the best space and laser technology to insulate America from any kind of foreign attacks was proven totally ineffective. The most advanced defense system would have been useless against the very low-tech "internal" attacks by suicide bombers. Deterrence, nuclear or conventional, simply would not apply. It was a new kind of "internal" threat that Cold War strategies were not designed to counter. The enemy was within. The war front was at home. "Home security" became the source of vulnerability. It struck at the very core and mission of statehood. American policy makers could not allow that threat to continue. They had to redefine it in a compatible way with the types of power at their disposal. "War on Terrorism" was their answer; an all-encompassing assault\_political and military, starting with securing the home base by reorganizing the administration of security agencies, reversing the freedom of movement of people and finances of the 1990s globalization, cutting off the supplies to the identified terrorists, and preventing any potential future attacks by destroying or transforming the probable sources of weapons, finance, and ideology. This summary of the American thinking is very evident in the new official document of The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, issued by President George W. Bush, on September 17, 2002.([[33]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn33" \o ")) It is the new American defense doctrine.  
The new doctrine proclaims a security strategy that is based on a distinctly American internationalism that reflects both American "values" and "interests." The doctrine gives special attention to the presentation of American values as "universal." These values include freedom, democracy, and human rights and dignity. President Bush insists that "people everywhere want to be able to speak freely; choose who will govern them; worship as they please; educate their children\_male and female; own property; and enjoy the benefits of their labor. These values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society." Accordingly, the doctrine identifies the general stated goals of political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity. Achieving these goals, the United States commits itself to pursue a strategy of cooperation with allies and friends and preemption of foes and threats.  
A common theme in the doctrine is the creation of a "balance of power that favors freedom." In this pronounced balance of power the US would lead the "freedom loving nations" against the terrorist groups and who-ever sponsors, shelters, or aids terrorism. With this political stand, President Bush seems to have completed the American ideological cycle\_of realist balance of power, liberal internationalism, isolationism, realism of the Cold War, liberal globalization, isolationism, and realist balance of power\_that spanned a whole century since President Teddy Roosevelt in 1901.  
Teddy Roosevelt’s balance of power pitted the rising American nation as the balancer of established empires competing to conquer the world, or at least maintain the favorable status quo international order. Today, and after a hundred years of human and political evolution, there are no more empires or even ideologies to compete with and balance. The difficulty lies in dealing with and balancing integrated cultures or civilizations, along with the economic and moral interests of the western states themselves. President Bush is facing that very prospect right now with the French and German leadership of the opposition to the war against Iraq, and the strong popular rejection and moral denunciation of the whole theory of preemption.  
Preemption, as President Bush is suggesting, would mean a very proactive role for the United States as a world hegemony leading a "coalition of the willing" to strike and destroy any potential threat to the security of the US and the west in general. This notion of preemption contradicts with the accompanying notion of balance of power. The US has to choose between a hegemonic role, as the sole global superpower, and accepting the legitimate presence of other states with differing political outlooks and engage them in an international structure of balance of power. What the US is doing presently, towards Iraq specifically, suggests that it has opted for the first option of international hegemony, especially if it decides to work outside the legal framework of the United Nations Security Council.  
The Iraqi case is the litmus test of the new American role in the shaping of a new world order. President Bush made the first decisive choice in this matter when he decided to go to the United Nations and try the multilateral rout to Baghdad, against the advice of many heavy weights in his administration.([[34]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn34" \o ")) His commitment to multilateralism, however, seems conditioned by the perception of the high price of "going it alone," relative to the exacting price demanded by the influential members on the Security Council and by strategic allies in the region, whose facilities and participation are necessary for the conduct and legitimacy of the war. The US, it seems, is not finding the proper support for its war on Iraq, not at the UN and not even within its own NATO. The price of multilateralism seems prohibitive to American designs for war on Iraq. President Bush and his aids made it amply clear that if the other members of the international community set a very high price, the Americans will pursue the option of leading a "coalition of the willing" to achieve their objectives in Iraq. If there is no compromise soon in this high intensity diplomatic brinkmanship between the US and Britain on one side and France and Germany on the other, the world may be set to witness the early makings of the new balance of power system resulting from the severe cleavages within NATO and the European Union. Russia and China seem to enjoy immensely this high intensity "chicken game" diplomacy. The outcome depends on who flinches first.  
If the US yields to France and Germany, it runs the risk of losing enormous prestige resulting in automatic acceptance of multilateral balance of power where the US is only one amongst many. It is highly unlikely at this stage.([[35]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn35" \o ")) The second alternative of unilateralism\_with the willing allies\_seems more likely. The consequences for the new world order are to be highly effected by the level of success or failure in the conduct of the war. If the US and her allies were to succeed in achieving a quick and convincing victory and then manipulate the spoils of Iraqi resources to their advantage, the US would have a clear opportunity to maintain a prolonged role as the world hegemony.  
International hegemony is expensive and exhaustive, however. History has been unkind towards any nation that wanted to monopolize international order. Granted that the level of superiority of power of the US in the present system is unprecedented, and the type of American control is different from the traditional actual conquest, but given the high level of integration and interdependence between peoples and states and the very nature of modern interactions and threats, we must anticipate drastic and sudden changes at any time. Sooner or later, the ability of the US to continue practicing international hegemony will decline, giving way to a new multi-polar structure of balance of power.([[36]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn36" \o ")) This historically tested approach to international management provides the best opportunity for continued American primacy\_instead of hegemony. Joseph S. Nye Jr. presents another possibility for continued American primacy through emphasizing multilateralism.([[37]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_edn37" \o "))  
As the situation stands now, multilateralism may very well be the mechanism for graceful descending of the US into the proper position in a balance of power system. Multilateralism will gradually allow other major powers to increasingly participate in international decision making while gaining in relative power visa vi the US. This gradual approach is our best hope for peaceful transition from the present unstable situation of an anarchic world system with a confused and injured superpower trying to find a suitable position to a more stable and less dangerous balance of power system. At least one positive outcome of that transition will be increased and institutionalized moderation in the management of world affairs. After all, "division of power" and "balance of power" concepts have been the main stay of American politics. They have served well in the domestic American arena. Hopefully, they will achieve similar results internationally.  
  
**CONCLUSION**  
Politically speaking, we are living in a very interesting time\_according to the Chinese definition of "interesting." It is not only that we just witnessed the beginning of a new century and millennium; we are really having the special privilege of participating in the political remaking of world order. The shape of the new world order is highly determined by the existing power structure and the relative states’ capabilities in political management of world affairs. The United States is by far the most powerful state in the system. What remains to be seen is how capable are the Americans in managing world politics? Thus far, they have shown strong adherence to contradictory notions and ideologies that have prevented them from settling on a unified vision of a new world order with a suitable role for them in it.  
For a full century now, different American administrations have tried different strategies for dealing with the rest of the world. Some were influenced by the natural tendency to remain separated from the world. Others wanted a prominent role in the world, but were divided on the method of engagement. Some saw the US as the political savior of the world’s nations and peoples by offering them the American liberal philosophy of human rights and democracy. Others were more inclined to recognize the eternal realities of human interactions based on power and tried to design a balance of power that favored them. Yet some others exhibited confusion and mixed feelings between isolationism and internationalism; liberalism and realism; and unilateralism and multilateralism. All these "isms" seem to coexist in the pronounced policy of the present administration of President George W. Bush. However, disentangling the contradictions from these ideologies is essential for having a consistent and coherent foreign policy. In turn, such consistency and coherence in American foreign policy is indispensable for developing and maintaining peace and stability in the international system. We hope they do so soon, not just for their sake, ours too.

[[1]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref1" \o ") See Theodore Lowi, The End of Liberalism (New York: Norton, 1979).

[[2]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref2" \o ") Henry Kissinger, Does America Need A Foreign Policy (London: Simon and Schuster, 2002) p. 18.

[[3]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref3" \o ") See Michael Hirsh, "The Death of a Founding Myth," News Week, December 2001 - February 2002, p. 20.

[[4]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref4" \o ") See President Woodrow Wilson speech to Congress requesting declaration of war, in John A. Vasquez, Classics of International Relations, 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1990), pp. 12-15.

[[5]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref5" \o ") See Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Eagle Has Crash Landed," Foreign Policy, (July/August 2002), pp. 60-68.

[[6]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref6" \o ") See George F. Kennan, "Diplomacy in the Modern World," in Vasquez, Classics of International Relations, 2nd ed, op. cit., pp. 36-39.

[[7]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref7" \o ") See John J. Mearsheimer, "Why we Will Soon Miss the Cold War," The Atlantic Monthly (August 1990), pp. 35-50.

[[8]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref8" \o ") See Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 70, No.1 (1991), pp. 23-33; US Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, "The United States as A Superpower," Defense Issues, Vol. 5 (May 7, 1990), pp. 5-8.

[[9]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref9" \o ") Henry Kissinger, American Foreign Policy, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997).

[[10]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref10" \o ") This notion was advocated as the final lasting solution for international conflict by the very father of modern realism Hans Morgenthau in Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973).

[[11]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref11" \o ") See Robert Keohane, After Hegemony (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) ; Joseph S. Nye, "Conflicts After the Cold War," Washington Quarterly (Winter 1996),  p. 2; Jonathan Clarke and James Clad, After the Crusade: American Foreign Policy for the Post-Superpower Age (New York: Madison Books, 1995); and James Rosenau, Turbulence in World Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[[12]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref12" \o ") J. Martin Rochester, "American Foreign Policy at the Millennium: The Case for a New Multilateralism," Brown Journal of World Affairs (Fall 1998).

[[13]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref13" \o ") See Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 13.

[[14]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref14" \o ") See A.F.K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, The War Ledger (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[[15]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref15" \o ") A phrase used by President Lyndon Johnson and his advisors about the inconceivable situation of the US in Vietnam. Quoted by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "The Quagmire Papers," New York Review of Books, December 16, 1971, p. 41

[[16]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref16" \o ") See Henry Kissinger, Does America Need A Foreign Policy. Op.cit.

[[17]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref17" \o ") See Nicholas Kristof, "China Sees 'Market-Leninism' As Way to Future," New York Times, September6, 1993.

[[18]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref18" \o ") See Robert Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Power and Interdependence (Boston: Little & Brown, 1977).

[[19]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref19" \o ") This Clausewitz phrase is used by J. Martin Rochester, "American Foreign Policy at the Millennium: The Case for a New Multilateralism," op. cit., and by Daniel Bell, quoted in Samuel P. Huntington, "Why International Primacy Matters," International Security, Vol. 17 (Spring 1993).

[[20]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref20" \o ") For a comprehensive survey of theoretically possible world orders, see Frederic S. Pearson and J. Martin Rochester, International Relations: The Global Condition in the 21st Century, 4th ed. (McGraw-Hill, 1998).

[[21]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref21" \o ") Francis Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man (London: H. Hamilton,1992)

[[22]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref22" \o ") Thomas Paine cited in Michael Hirsh, "The Death of a Founding Myth," op. cit.

[[23]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref23" \o ") Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Eagle Has Crash Landed," op. cit. p. 65.

[[24]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref24" \o ") See President Ronald Reagan's speech announcing the Reagan Peace Plan for the Middle East on September 1, 1982 in The Department of State Bulletin, 23 (September 1982).

[[25]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref25" \o ") For a comprehensive analysis of the correlation between US policy and terrorism, see Samuel P. Huntington, "The Age of Muslim Wars," News Week, December 2001-February 2002.

[[26]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref26" \o ") For extended analysis of the effects of development on political stability and conflict, see Mayron Weiner and Samuel P. Huntington, Understanding Political Development (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1987).

[[27]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref27" \o ") Benjamin Barber, "Jihad Vs. McWorld," Global Issues (1994/1995), pp. 23-28.

[[28]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref28" \o ") Francis Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man. Op. cit. and Allan E. Goodman, A Brief History of the Future (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

[[29]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref29" \o ") See the issues of Global Governance journal, especially James Rosenau, "Governance in the Twenty-First Century," Global Governance Vol. 1 (1995), pp. 13-43.

[[30]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref30" \o ") Robert Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," The Atlantic Monthly (February 1994), pp. 44-52.

[[31]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref31" \o ") For an extended analysis of the Powell Doctrine, see J. Martin Rochester, Waiting for the Millennium: The United Nations and Future World Order (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993).

[[32]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref32" \o ") See Michael Hirsh, "The Death of a Founding Myth," op. cit.

[[33]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref33" \o ") The National Security Strategy of the United States of America is available at the official White House web cite http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html

[[34]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref34" \o ") See Michael Hirsh, "Evolution of a President," News Week, December 2002 - February 2003, pp. 8-18.

[[35]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref35" \o ") See Michel Nehme, "Iraq Facing Harsh Trends in the New International Order," Lebanese National Defense, Vol. 43 (January 2003).

[[36]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref36" \o ") See Henry Kissinger, American Foreign Policy, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), and his updated argument on the same topic of multiple power centers, in "We Are Living in an Age of Transition," Daedalus, Vol. 124 (Summer 1995).

[[37]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order" \l "_ednref37" \o ") Joseph S. Nye Jr. The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

- See more at: https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/changing-american-role-new-world-order#sthash.CVA0CmVJ.dpuf