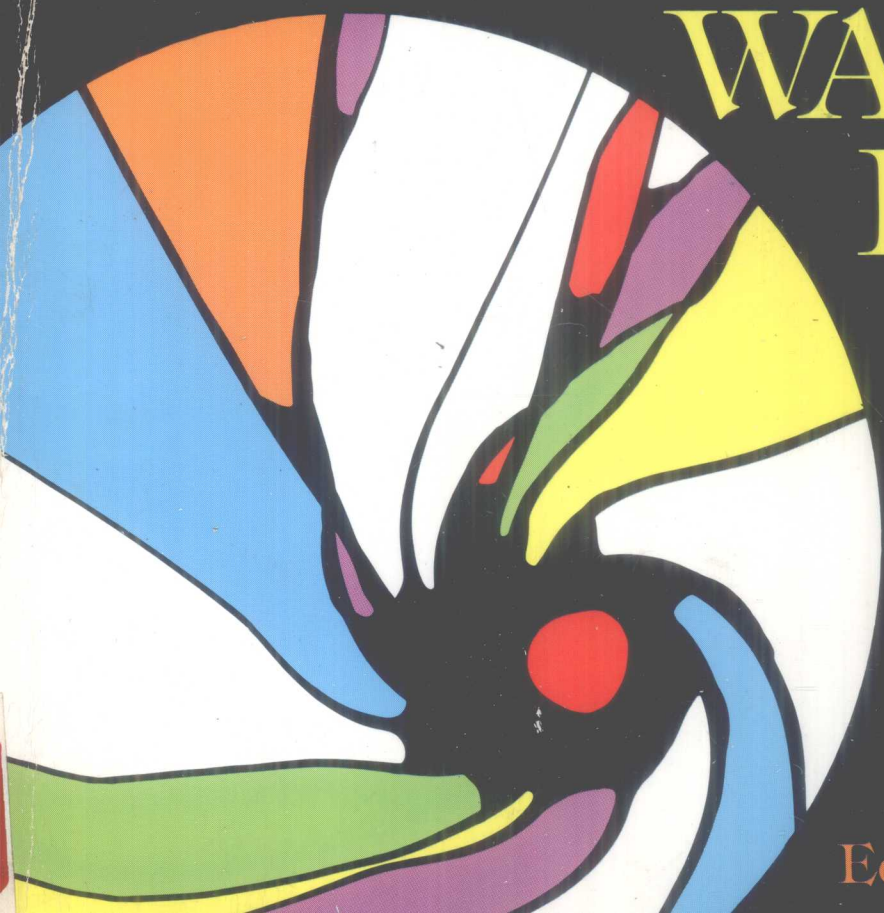


# AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY SINCE WORLD WAR II

JOHN  
SPANIER



12th  
Edition

American  
Foreign Policy  
Since World War II  
Twelfth Edition

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University of Florida



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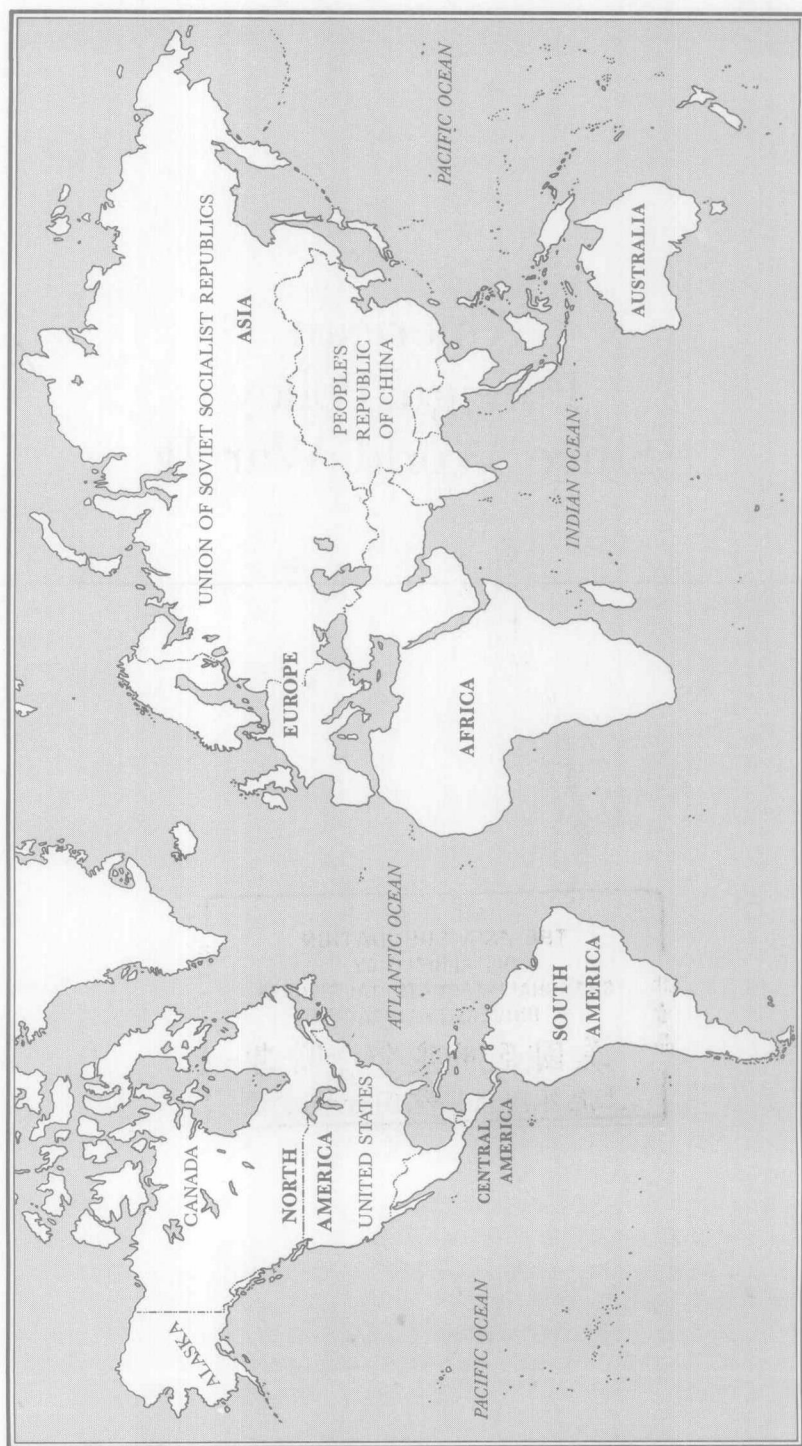
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For David and Lisa

*Love, all alike, no season knows, or clime,  
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.*

—John Donne, *The Sun Rising*

# Preface

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The first edition of this book was published in 1960 at the height of the cold war. Thirty years later this twelfth edition is going to press in the midst of the world's first major post-cold-war crisis, precipitated by Iraq's August 1990 invasion and annexation of Kuwait. This crisis in the Persian Gulf, involving the largest movement of U.S. armed forces in a generation, is taking place on the very heels of revolutionary changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The social and economic transformations now under way there are ending one of the most protracted great-power conflicts in history.

Had any Western leader, or for that matter the leaders of the Soviet Union, been asked early in 1989 what the world would look like a year hence, none of them could have predicted what did in fact occur: the disintegration of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe. One country after another rejected Soviet-imposed regimes, repudiated the Communist party's leading role, and arranged for free elections in 1990. No leader could have predicted the collapse in 1989 of both the Berlin Wall and the East German economy, followed by the disintegration of the new East German government's authority and the increasingly rapid acceleration toward German unification in October 1990. Although the Soviet economy had long shown signs of great strain, things got even worse as the economy stagnated further, ethnic strife increased as more violence erupted, and outright demands for independence were voiced more assertively than ever before, especially in the Baltic republics (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania).

Perhaps most astounding of all, the Communist party of the Soviet Union declared early in 1990 the end of its seventy-year monopoly over the economy. It also announced the creation of a multiparty system and the right to private ownership of capital—a rejection of Marx and Lenin that, if carried out, would radically change the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

These momentous events have all occurred since the middle of 1989, and most of the ensuing reforms were in place by the summer of 1990. The reunification of the two Germanies will have taken place by the time this book is published, and so too may the centralized Soviet economy have begun its shift to a decentralized free-market economy. The rapidity and momentousness of these events have been startling. While the strategic arms negotiations between the two superpowers, begun during the Reagan administration, continued, Vienna talks on troop and weapons reductions in Europe were being overtaken by events as Moscow agreed to withdraw its troops from Hungary and Czechoslovakia. A complete pullback of all Soviet forces to the Soviet Union itself is scheduled by 1994. One critical question amid these events was, not the (quickly vanishing) Soviet threat, but the prospect of the USSR's disintegration. Would it go the way of the Austro-Hungarian empire, which collapsed under the weight of its ethnic conflicts and calls for self-determination? Indeed, would the Soviet Union become a *nuclear* Austria-Hungary?

It is amid these truly revolutionary events that this twelfth edition appears. This book still endeavors to discuss American foreign policy from the closing days of World War II up through the present, which in this edition will take us through the first year and a half of the Bush administration. My focus is, as before, on the superpower rivalry, which has dominated postwar international politics, although this focus neither excludes events in other regions nor ignores problems such as the role of terrorism or the plight of developing countries and their relations with the industrialized world. But this book is not a diplomatic history—a detailed presentation of American action in the world since 1945. Rather, it is an interpretation of the roles the United States has played on the world stage over the past four decades. The assumption is that the present cannot be understood without a historical context. As Germany once more became a single state, for example, and the “German question” arises once more, the manner in which policy makers dealt with Germany following World War II, and the reasons they did so, provides us with a much-needed perspective on today's news. As the Soviet threat declines, attention is once more focusing on Germany.

The thesis of the book continues to be what I call the “American style” in foreign policy, a style unlike that of any other major nation in its distaste for “power politics.” The United States has historically preferred an isolationist course. If it cannot avoid power politics, however, the United States will launch moral crusades against its enemies. The constancy of this style in the making of foreign policy since World War II has been remarkable. Richard Nixon, much influenced by Henry Kissinger, has perhaps been the only postwar U.S. president not to adopt it. I have balanced this emphasis on the American “style” of the making of foreign policy with a section on the Soviet Union's style, which, until the advent of Mikhail S. Gorbachev at least, was a composite of czarist Russian and Soviet historical experiences and perceptions. This presentation is included partly to show how antithetical the two styles were and

partly to provide a better explanation and understanding of Soviet behavior during World War II and immediately after, when the alliance forged during the war fell apart and the cold war began.

This book has also placed a strong emphasis on the international, or "state," system in explaining the origins and conduct of the cold war. That is to say, the environment in which states exist is the primary influence on their behavior. By placing the U.S.-Soviet rivalry within the context of twentieth-century geopolitics, I am able to stress the similarities between the two wars that pitted Germany, a land power, against Great Britain, a maritime power, and the cold war conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States.

This twelfth edition also continues to place great emphasis on international economics. There is ample discussion of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its manipulation of oil prices and also of the plight of the developing countries and their debt problems. Greater weight is assigned, however, to the difficulties being experienced by the U.S. economy and its growing uncompetitiveness in an increasingly interdependent world economy. In my judgment, the implications of this development are profound.

The United States may have won the cold war as the Soviet economy collapsed, making it necessary for Gorbachev to call for an end to the conflict to focus on the Soviet Union's domestic problems. But it may not be wrong to add that the United States simply outlasted the Soviet Union. Reagan left the country with a huge trade deficit, even bigger federal deficit and as the world's largest debtor nation. With a labor force poorly prepared by an educational system that placed American students in math and science among the lowest in the industrial world, with insufficient nonmilitary research and development, and corporate managers and financiers focusing on quarterly returns rather than long-term developments of commercial products, the United States was increasingly losing its technological edge to Japan and other Pacific Rim countries. In the 1990s it will also be faced with a Europe moving toward greater unity and economic efficiency. The trade deficit, while narrowing to some degree, stubbornly resisted elimination. The United States too needed time off from the cold war to concentrate on its own *perestroika*.

The swiftness with which the world changes is truly astounding. It provides the impetus to incorporate unfolding events into the patterns of foreign policy analysis. Revising this text has been a major task given the number of momentous developments since the publication of the last edition. My burden has been lightened by a number of helpful individuals. I wish to thank the reviewers, with whom I did not always agree but whose observations put matters in a new perspective. Joanne Daniels, the former director of CQ Press, made my relationship with my new publisher effortless and rewarding. I also thank Margaret Benjaminson, who patiently and tactfully supervised most of this project.



## U.S. Administrations Since World War II

<i>Dates</i>	<i>President</i>	<i>Secretary of State</i>	<i>Secretary of Defense</i>	<i>National Security Adviser</i>
1945-1952	Harry Truman	Edward Stettinius James Byrnes George Marshall Dean Acheson	James Forrestal Louis Johnson Robert Lovett George Marshall	
1953-1960	Dwight Eisenhower	John Dulles Christian Herter	Charles Wilson Neil McElroy Thomas Gates	
1961-1963	John Kennedy	Dean Rusk	Robert McNamara	McGeorge Bundy
1963-1968	Lyndon Johnson	Dean Rusk	Robert McNamara Clark Clifford	McGeorge Bundy W. W. Rostow
1969-1974	Richard Nixon	William Rogers Henry Kissinger	Melvin Laird Elliot Richardson James Schlesinger	Henry Kissinger
1974-1976	Gerald Ford	Henry Kissinger	James Schlesinger Donald Rumsfeld	Henry Kissinger Brent Scowcroft
1977-1980	Jimmy Carter	Cyrus Vance Edward Muskie	Harold Brown	Zbigniew Brzezinski
1981-1988	Ronald Reagan	Alexander Haig George Shultz	Casper Weinberger Frank Carlucci	Richard Allen William Clark Robert McFarlane John Poindexter Frank Carlucci Colin Powell
1989-	George Bush	James Baker	Richard Cheney	Brent Scowcroft

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## The American Approach to Foreign Policy

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NATIONS, like individuals, face the world differently. How nations see the world, their place in it, and how they act in the international arena depend in large measure on their geography, historical backgrounds, and experiences. These national styles, as we shall call them, vary considerably. The perceptions and behavior of most states are heavily influenced, if not primarily influenced, according to some observers, by the environment or state system in which they coexist. States quickly learn “the rules of the game” or what they must do to ensure their survival and to achieve a measure of security. They ignore or disregard these rules at their peril.

Because for most of its existence the United States had isolated itself from the European state system, its national style was molded to a far greater extent than that of other states by its domestic experiences and democratic values and outlook. Not schooled by continuous involvement in international politics, as were the Europeans, the Americans approached foreign policy in a way that was not only peculiarly theirs, but also significantly different from that of other great powers. The contrast was particularly strong between the American experience and that of the Soviet Union, which emerged after World War II as the United States’ chief adversary. The United States felt absolutely secure in the Western Hemisphere, but czarist Russia (later Soviet Russia) could never feel secure because of its proximity to other great powers who, over the centuries, had their own problems and ambitions.<sup>1</sup> During the postwar decades of conflict with the Soviet Union, the United States learned

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1. John Spanier, *Games Nations Play*, 7th ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1990), esp. 92-117.

to play the international game with increasing skill, but its distinctive national style exerted a strong influence for most of that period.

### The State System

American foreign policy since World War II is the story of the interaction and tension between the state system and the American style of dealing with other countries. In the state system, each member—especially the great powers, its principal actors—tends to feel a high degree of insecurity. In the absence of a world government that could safeguard it, each state knows that it can depend only on itself for its preservation and safety. Self-protection is the only protection in an essentially anarchical system; understandably, states tend to regard one another as potential adversaries, menaces to one another's territorial integrity and political independence. In short, the very nature of the state system breeds feelings of insecurity, distrust, suspicion, and fear.

This atmosphere produces a constant scramble for power. To reduce its insecurity, each state seeks to enhance its power relative to that of a possible foe. If a state perceives its neighbor as a potential enemy, it tries to deter an attack or political coercion by becoming a little stronger than its neighbor. The neighbor, in turn, also fears attack or political intimidation. It understands that its best interests lie in increasing its strength to forestall either contingency or if necessary, in winning a war, should matters go that far.

It is not the alleged aggressive instinct of humans as “naked apes” or their presumed desire for acquiring ever greater power that accounts for what is popularly called “power politics.” Rather, power politics stems from each state's continuous concern with its security, which is the prerequisite for each for the enjoyment of its particular way of life. Because the external environment is seen as menacing to their security, states react fearfully against what they believe to be threats. In such a context it does not take much for one state to arouse another's apprehensions and to stimulate reciprocal images of hostility that each finds easy to substantiate by its opponent's behavior. Indeed, in most instances this enmity is maintained despite contradictory evidence and even avowedly friendly acts. Conciliatory behavior is likely to be seen as an indicator of weakness and may invite exploitation. Or it may be regarded as a trick to persuade a state to relax its guard.

It is easy to understand why in these circumstances a balance of power is what keeps the state system from breaking down. A balance or equilibrium makes victory in a war less probable and more costly. Therefore, a balance is presumed to be that distribution of power most likely to deter an attack. By contrast, possession of disproportionate power might tempt a state to undertake aggression by making it far less costly to gain a predominant position and impose its will upon other states. In other words, the funda-



mental assumption underlying the state system is that its members cannot be trusted with power because they will be tempted to abuse it. Unrestrained power in the system constitutes a threat to all states; power is, therefore, the best antidote to power. As one close observer of international politics, Arnold Wolfers, has noted:

Under these conditions [of anarchy] the expectation of violence and even of annihilation is ever-present. To forget this and thus fail in the concern for enhanced power spells the doom of a state. This does not mean open constant warfare; expansion of power at the expense of others will not take place if there is enough counterpower to deter or to stop states from undertaking it. Although no state is interested in a mere balance of power, the efforts of all states to maximize power may lead to equilibrium. If and when that happens, there is "peace" or, more exactly, a condition of stalemate or truce. Under the conditions described here, this balancing of power process is the only available "peace" strategy.<sup>2</sup>

Power thus elicits countervailing power. The basic rule of the "international game" is to resist attempts by any state to expand and seek a predominant position in the international system. Therefore, when the balance is disturbed, equilibrium tends to be restored by the emergence of counterpower. States ignore at their peril the rule to maintain the balance of power.

## The Balance of Power and the End of U.S. Isolationism

What all this means is that any state's behavior can be explained to a very significant degree in terms of the ever-changing distribution of power. As that distribution changes, so does a state's behavior or foreign policy. For example, the impact of a shift in the distribution of power is evident in U.S. participation in the two world wars of this century. During most of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the United States was able to preserve its historical isolation from power politics and enjoy an unprecedented degree of security because the balance of power on the European continent was maintained by Britain.

Germany's unification in 1870 and its subsequent rapid industrialization eventually forced the United States to end its isolation. The immediate impact of Germany's growing strength was the relative decline of British power. The early years of World War I showed clearly that even when British power was thrown in on the side of France and Russia, the three allies could barely contain Germany. With the collapse of czarist Russia in 1915 and the transfer of almost 2 million German soldiers from the Russian front to the western front, a German victory became a distinct possibility. The United States would then have faced a Germany astride an entire continent, dominating

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2. Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 83.