

Pax Americana

Pax Americana^{[1][2][3]} (Latin for "American Peace", modeled after *Pax Romana*, *Pax Britannica*, and *Pax Mongolica*) is a term applied to the concept of relative peace in the Western Hemisphere and later the world beginning around the middle of the 20th century, thought to be caused by the preponderance of power enjoyed by the United States.^[4] Although the term finds its primary utility in the latter half of the 20th century, it has been used with different meanings and eras, such as the post-Civil War era in North America,^[5] and regionally in the Americas at the start of the 20th century

Pax Americana is primarily used in its modern connotations to refer to the peace among great powers established after the end of World War II in 1945, also called the Long Peace. In this modern sense, it has come to indicate the military and economic position of the United States in relation to other nations. For example, the Marshall Plan, which spent \$13 billion to rebuild the economy of Western Europe, has been seen as "the launching of the pax americana"^[6].

The Latin term derives from *Pax Romana* of the Roman Empire. The term is most notably associated with *Pax Britannica* (1815–1914) under the British Empire, which served as the global hegemon and constabulary from the late 18th century until the early 20th century.^[7]

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Early period

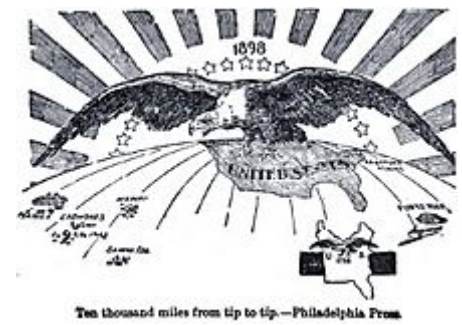
The first articulation of a *Pax Americana* occurred after the end of the American Civil War with reference to the peaceful nature of the North American geographical region, and was abeyant at the commencement of the First World War. Its emergence was concurrent with the development of the idea of American exceptionalism. This view holds that the U.S. occupies a special niche among developed nations^[8] in terms of its national credo, historical evolution, political and religious institutions, and unique origins. The concept originates from Alexis de Tocqueville,^[9] who asserted that the then-50-year-old United States held a special place among nations because it was a country of immigrants and the first modern democracy. From the establishment of the United States after the American Revolution until the Spanish–American War, the foreign policy of the United States had a regional, instead of global, focus. The Pax Americana, which the Union enforced upon the states of central North America, was a factor in the United States' national prosperity. The larger states were surrounded by smaller states, but these had no anxieties: no standing armies to require taxes and hinder labor; no wars or rumors of wars that would interrupt trade; there is not only peace, but security, for the Pax Americana of the Union covered all the states within the federal constitutional republic.^[5] According to the Oxford English

Dictionary, the first time the phrase appeared in print was in the August 1894 issue of *Forum*: "The true cause for exultation is the universal outburst of patriotism in support of the prompt and courageous action of President Cleveland in maintaining the supremacy of law throughout the length and breadth of the land, in establishing the *pax Americana*."^[10]

With the rise of the New Imperialism in the Western hemisphere at the end of the 19th century, debates arose between imperialist and isolationist factions in the U.S. Here, *Pax Americana* was used to connote the peace across the United States and, more widely, as a Pan-American peace under the aegis of the Monroe Doctrine. Those who favored traditional policies of avoiding foreign entanglements included labor leader Samuel Gompers and steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie. American politicians such as Henry Cabot Lodge, William McKinley, and Theodore Roosevelt advocated an aggressive foreign policy, but the administration of President Grover Cleveland was unwilling to pursue such actions. On January 16, 1893, U.S. diplomatic and military personnel conspired with a small group of individuals to overthrow the constitutional government of the Kingdom of Hawaii and establish a Provisional Government and then a republic. On February 15, they presented a treaty for annexation of the Hawaiian Islands to the U.S. Senate, but opposition to annexation stalled its passage. The United States finally opted to annex Hawaii by way of the Newlands Resolution in July 1898.

After its victory in the Spanish–American War of 1898 and the subsequent acquisition of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam, the United States had gained a colonial empire. By ejecting Spain from the Americas, the United States shifted its position to an uncontested regional power, and extended its influence into Southeast Asia and Oceania. Although U.S. capital investments within the Philippines and Puerto Rico were relatively small, these colonies were strategic outposts for expanding trade with Latin America and Asia, particularly China. In the Caribbean area, the United States established a sphere of influence in line with the Monroe Doctrine, not explicitly defined as such, but recognized in effect by other governments and accepted by at least some of the republics in that area.^[11] The events around the start of the 20th century demonstrated that the United States undertook an obligation, usual in such cases, of imposing a "Pax Americana".^[11] As in similar instances elsewhere, this Pax Americana was not quite clearly marked in its geographical limit, nor was it guided by any theoretical consistency, but rather by the merits of the case and the test of immediate expediency in each instance.^[11] Thus, whereas the United States enforced a peace in much of the lands southward from the Nation and undertook measures to maintain internal tranquility in such areas, the United States on the other hand withdrew from interposition in Mexico.^[11]

European powers largely regarded these matters as the concern of the United States. Indeed, the nascent Pax Americana was, in essence, abetted by the policy of the United Kingdom, and the preponderance of global sea power which the British Empire enjoyed by virtue of the strength of the Royal Navy.^[12] Preserving the freedom of the seas and ensuring naval dominance had been the policy of the British since victory in the Napoleonic Wars. As it was not in the interests of the United Kingdom to permit any European power to interfere in Americas, the Monroe Doctrine was indirectly aided by the Royal Navy. British commercial interests in South America, which comprised a valuable component of the Informal Empire that accompanied Britain's imperial possessions, and the economic importance of the United States as a trading partner, ensured that intervention by Britain's rival European powers could not engage with the Americas.



1898 political cartoon "Ten Thousand Miles From Tip to Tip" meaning the extension of U.S. domination (symbolized by bald eagle) from Puerto Rico to the Philippines.



1906 political cartoon depicting Theodore Roosevelt using the Monroe Doctrine to keep European powers out of the Dominican Republic.

The United States lost its Pacific and regionally bounded nature towards the end of the 19th century. The government adopted protectionism after the Spanish–American War and built up the navy, the "Great White Fleet", to expand the reach of U.S. power. When Theodore Roosevelt became President in 1901, he accelerated a foreign policy shift away from isolationism towards foreign intervention which had begun under his predecessor, William McKinley. The Philippine–American War arose from the ongoing Philippine Revolution against imperialism.^[13] Interventionism found its formal articulation in the 1904 Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, proclaiming the right of the United States to intervene in the affairs of weak states in the Americas in order to stabilize them, a moment that underlined the emergent U.S. regional hegemony.

Interwar period

The United States had been criticized for not taking up the hegemonic mantle following the disintegration of *Pax Britannica* before the First World War and during the interwar period due to the absence of established political structures, such as the World Bank or United Nations which would be created after World War II, and various internal policies, such as protectionism.^{[2][14][15][16]} Though, the United States participated in the Great War, according to Woodrow Wilson:

[...] to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power and to set up amongst the really free and self-governed peoples of the world such a concert of purpose and of action as will henceforth insure the observance of those principles.

[...] for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own government, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.^[2]



The Gap in the Bridge. Cartoon about the absence of the U.S. from the League of Nations, depicted as the missing keystone of the arch.

The United States' entry into the Great War marked the abandonment of the traditional American policy of isolation and independence of world politics. Not at the close of the Civil War, not as the result of the Spanish War, but in the Interwar period did the United States become a part of the international system.^[2] With this global reorganization from the Great War, there were those in the American populace that advocated an activist role in international politics and international affairs by the United States.^[2] Activities that were initiated did not fall into political-military traps and, instead, focused on economic-ideological approaches that would increase the American Empire and general worldwide stability.^[17] Following the prior path, a precursor to the United Nations and a league to enforce peace, the League of Nations, was proposed by Woodrow Wilson.^[2] This was rejected by the American Government in favor of more economic-ideological approaches and the United States did not join the League. Additionally, there were even proposals of

extending the Monroe Doctrine to Great Britain put forth to prevent a second conflagration on the European theater.^[18] Ultimately, the United States' proposals and actions did not stop the factors of European nationalism spawned by the previous war, the repercussions of Germany's defeat, and the failures of the Treaty of Versailles from plunging the globe into a Second World War.^[19]

Between World War I and World War II, America also sought to continue to preserve *Pax America* as a corollary to the Monroe Doctrine.^[18] Some sought the peaceful and orderly evolution of existing conditions in the western hemisphere and nothing by immediate changes.^[18] Before 1917, the position of the United States government and the feelings of the nation in respect to the "Great War" initially had properly been one of neutrality.^[18] Its interests remained untouched, and nothing occurred of a nature to affect those interests.^[18]

The average American's sympathies, on the other hand, if the feelings of the vast majority of the nation had been correctly interpreted, was with the Allied (Entente) Powers.^[18] The population of the United States was revolted at the ruthlessness of the Prussian doctrine of war, and German designs to shift the burden of aggression encountered skeptical derision.^[18] The American populace saw themselves safeguarding liberal peace in the Western World. To this end, the American writer Roland Hugins stated:^[20]

The truth is that the United States is the only high-minded Power left in the world. It is the only strong nation that has not entered on a career of imperial conquest, and does not want to enter on it. [...] There is in America little of that spirit of selfish aggression which lies at the heart of militarism. Here alone exists a broad basis for "a new passionate sense of brotherhood, and a new scale of human values." We have a deep abhorrence of war for war's sake; we are not enamored of glamour or glory. We have a strong faith in the principle of self-government. We do not care to dominate alien peoples, white or colored; we do not aspire to be the Romans of tomorrow or the "masters of the world." The idealism of Americans centers in the future of America, wherein we hope to work out those principles of liberty and democracy to which we are committed. This political idealism, this strain of pacifism, this abstinence from aggression and desire to be left alone to work out our own destiny, has been manifest from the birth of the republic. We have not always followed our light, but we have never been utterly faithless to it.^[2]

It was observed during this time that the initial defeat of Germany opened a moral recasting of the world.^[18] The battles between Germans and Allies were seen as far less battles between different nations than they represent the contrast between Liberalism and reaction, between the aspirations of democracy and the Wilhelminism gospel of iron.^{[18][21]}

Modern period

The modern *Pax Americana* era is cited by both supporters and critics of U.S. foreign policy after World War II. However, from 1946 to 1992 *Pax americana* is considered a partial international order, as it applied only to capitalist bloc countries, being preferable for some authors to speak about a *Pax americana et sovietica*.^[22] Many commentators and critics focus on American policies from 1992 to the present, and as such, it carries different connotations depending on the context. For example, it appears three times in the 90 page document, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*,^[23] by the Project for the New American Century, but is also used by critics to characterize American dominance and hyperpower as imperialist in function and basis. From about the mid-1940s until 1991, U.S. foreign policy was dominated by the Cold War, and characterized by its significant international military presence and greater diplomatic involvement. Seeking an alternative to the isolationist policies pursued after World War I, the United States defined a new policy called containment to oppose the spread of communism.



A world map of 1945 with three superpowers: the United States (in blue), the Soviet Union (in red), and the British Empire (in teal).

The modern *Pax Americana* may be seen as similar to the period of peace in Rome, *Pax Romana*. In both situations, the period of peace was 'relative peace'. During both *Pax Romana* and *Pax Americana* wars continued to occur, but it was still a prosperous time for both Western and Roman civilizations. It is important to note that during these periods, and most other times of relative tranquility, the peace that is referred to does not mean complete peace. Rather, it simply means that the civilization prospered in their military, agriculture, trade, and manufacturing.

Pax Britannica heritage

From the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 until World War I in 1914, the United Kingdom played the role of offshore-balancer in Europe, where the balance of power was the main aim. It was also in this time that the British Empire became the largest empire of all time. The global superiority of British military and commerce was guaranteed by dominance of a Europe lacking in strong nation-states, and the presence of the Royal Navy on all of the world's oceans and seas. In 1905, the Royal Navy was superior to any two navies combined in the world. It provided services such as suppression of piracy and slavery. In this era of peace, though, there were several wars between the major powers: the Crimean War, the Franco-Austrian War, the Austro-Prussian War, the Franco-Prussian War, and the Russo-Japanese War, as well as numerous other wars. *La Belle Époque*, William Wohlforth argued, was rather *Pax Britannica*, *Russica* and later *Germanica*, and between 1853 and 1871 it was not *Pax* of any kind!^[24]

During the British hegemony, America developed close ties with Britain, evolving into what has become known as a "special relationship" between the two. The many commonalities shared with the two nations (such as language and history) drew them together as allies. Under the managed transition of the British Empire to the Commonwealth of Nations, members of the British government, such as Harold Macmillan, liked to think of Britain's relationship with America as similar to that of a progenitor Greece to America's Rome.^[25] Throughout the years, both have been active in North American, Middle Eastern, and Asian countries.

Late 20th century

After the Second World War, no armed conflict emerged among major Western nations themselves, and no nuclear weapons were used in open conflict. The United Nations was also soon developed after World War II to help keep peaceful relations between nations and establishing the veto power for the permanent members of the UN Security Council, which included the United States.

In the second half of the 20th century, the USSR and US superpowers were engaged in the Cold War, which can be seen as a struggle between hegemonies for global dominance. After 1945, the United States enjoyed an advantageous position with respect to the rest of the industrialized world. In the Post-World War II economic expansion, the US was responsible for half of global industrial output, held 80 percent of the world's gold reserves, and was the world's sole nuclear power. The catastrophic destruction of life, infrastructure, and capital during the Second World War had exhausted the imperialism of the Old World, victor and vanquished alike. The largest economy in the world at the time, the United States recognized that it had come out of the war with its domestic infrastructure virtually unscathed and its military forces at unprecedented strength. Military officials recognized the fact that *Pax Americana* had been reliant on the effective United States air power, just as the instrument of *Pax Britannica* a century earlier was its sea power.^[26] In addition, a unipolar moment was seen to have occurred following the collapse of the Soviet Union.^[27]

The term *Pax Americana* was explicitly used by John F. Kennedy in the 1960s, who advocated against the idea, arguing that the Soviet bloc was composed of human beings with the same individual goals as Americans and that such a peace based on "American weapons of war" was undesirable:

I have, therefore, chosen this time and place to discuss a topic on which ignorance too often abounds and the truth too rarely perceived. And that is the most important topic on earth: peace. What kind of peace do I mean and what kind of a peace do we seek? Not a *Pax Americana* enforced on the world by American weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, and the kind that enables men and nations to grow, and to hope, and build a better life for their children—not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women, not merely peace in our time but peace in all time.^[28]

Beginning around the Vietnam War, the 'Pax Americana' term had started to be used by the critics of American Imperialism. Here in the late 20th century conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States, the charge of *Neocolonialism* was often aimed at Western involvement in the affairs of the Third World and other developing nations.^{[29][30][31][32][33]} NATO became regarded as a symbol of *Pax Americana* in West Europe:

The visible political symbol of the Pax Americana was NATO itself ... The Supreme Allied Commander, always an American, was an appropriate title for the American proconsul whose reputation and influence outweighed those of European premiers, presidents, and chancellors.^[34]

Contemporary power

Currently, the *Pax Americana* is based on the military preponderance beyond challenge by any combination of powers and projection of power throughout the world's *commons*—neutral sea, air and space. This projection is coordinated by the Unified Command Plan which divides the world on regional branches controlled by a single command. Notably, "the right to command" translated into Latin renders *imperium*. Integrated with it are global network of military alliances (the Rio Pact, NATO, ANZUS and bilateral alliances with Japan and several other states) coordinated by Washington in a hub-and-spokes system and worldwide network of several

hundreds of military bases and installations. Neither the Rio Treaty, nor NATO, for Robert J. Art, "was a regional collective security organization; rather both were regional imperia run and operated by the United States".^[35] Former Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski drew an expressive summary of the military foundation of *Pax Americana* shortly after the unipolar moment

In contrast [to the earlier empires], the scope and pervasiveness of American global power today are unique. Not only does the United States control all the world's oceans, its military legions are firmly perched on the western and eastern extremities of Eurasia ... American vassals and tributaries, some yearning to be embraced by even more formal ties to Washington, dot the entire Eurasian continent ... American global supremacy is ... buttressed by an elaborate system of alliances and coalitions that literally span the globe.^[36]

Besides the military foundation, there are significant non-military international institutions backed by American financing and diplomacy (like the United Nations and WTO). The United States invested heavily in programs such as the Marshall Plan and in the reconstruction of Japan, economically cementing defense ties that owed increasingly to the establishment of the Iron Curtain/Eastern Bloc and the widening of the Cold War.



Street art in Caracas, depicting Uncle Sam and accusing the American government of imperialism

Being in the best position to take advantage of free trade, culturally indisposed to traditional empires, and alarmed by the rise of communism in China and the detonation of the first Soviet atom bomb, the historically non-interventionist U.S. also took a keen interest in developing multilateral institutions which would maintain a favorable world order among them. The International Monetary Fund and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), part of the Bretton Woods system of international financial management was developed and, until the early 1970s, the existence of a fixed exchange rate to the US dollar. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was developed and consists of a protocol for normalization and reduction of trade tariffs.

With the fall of the Iron Curtain, the demise of the notion of a *Pax Sovietica*, and the end of the Cold War, the U.S. maintained significant contingents of armed forces in Europe and East Asia. The institutions behind the *Pax Americana* and the rise of the United States unipolar power have persisted into the early 21st century. The ability of the United States to act as "the world's policeman" has been constrained by its own citizens' historic aversion to foreign wars.^[37] Though there has been calls for the continuation of military leadership, as stated in "Rebuilding America's Defenses":

The American peace has proven itself peaceful, stable, and durable. It has, over the past decade, provided the geopolitical framework for widespread economic growth and the spread of American principles of liberty and democracy. Yet no moment in international politics can be frozen in time; even a global *Pax Americana* will not preserve itself. [... What is required is] a military that is strong and ready to meet both present and future challenges; a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad; and national leadership that accepts the United States' global responsibilities.^[38]

This is reflected in the research of American exceptionalism, which shows that "there is some indication for [being a leader of an 'American peace'] among the [U.S.] public, but very little evidence of unilateral attitudes".^[9] It should be noted that resentments have arisen at a country's dependence on American military protection, due to disagreements with United States foreign policy or the presence of American military forces. In the post-communism world of the 21st-century, the French Socialist politician and former Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine describes the US as a hegemonic hyperpower, while the U.S. political scientists John Mearsheimer and Joseph Nye counter that the US is not a "true" hegemony, because it does not have the resources to impose a proper, formal, global rule; despite its political and military strength, the US is economically equal to Europe, thus, cannot rule the international stage.^[39] Several other countries are either emerging or re-emerging as powers, such as China, Russia, India, and the European Union.

Joseph Nye discredited the United States as not a "true" hegemony in his 2002 article titled "The New Rome Meets the New Barbarians".^[40] His book of the same year he opens: "Not since Rome has one nation loomed so large above the others."^[41] And his 1991 book he titled *Bound to Lead*.^[42] *Leadership*, translated into Greek, renders *hegemony*; an alternative translation is *archia* – Greek common word for *empire*. Having defined the US hegemony as "not true", Nye looks for an analogy to the true empire: Decline, he writes, is not necessarily imminent. "Rome remained dominant for more than three centuries after the peak of its power ..."^[43]

In fact, there are striking parallels with the early *Pax Romana* (especially between 189 BC when the supremacy over the Mediterranean was won and the first annexation in 168 BC). Under that *Pax Romana* other states remained formally independent and very seldom were called "clients". The latter term became widely used only in the late medieval period. Usually, other states were called "friends and allies"—a popular expression under the *Pax Americana*.

One of the first to use the term *Pax Americana* was the Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Policy. In 1942, the Committee envisaged that the United States may have to replace the British Empire. Therefore, the United States "must cultivate a mental view toward world settlement after this war which will enable us to impose our own terms, amounting perhaps to a *Pax Americana*".^[44] According to Swen Holdar, the founder of geopolitics Rudolf Kjellen (1864–1922) predicted the era of US global supremacy using the term *Pax Americana* shortly after World War I.^[45] Writing in 1945, Ludwig Dehio remembered that the Germans used the term *Pax Anglosaxonica* in a sense of *Pax Americana* since 1918:

Now [1918] the [American colonial] cutting had grown into a tree that bade fair to overshadow the globe with its foliage. Amazed and shaken, we Germans began to discuss the possibility of a *Pax Anglosaxonica* as a world-wide counterpart to the *Pax Romana*. Suddenly the tendency toward global unification towered up, ready to gather the separate national states of Europe together under one banner and blanket in a *lger* cohesion ...^[46]

The United States, Dehio associates on the same page, withdrew to isolation on that occasion. "Rome, too, had taken a long time to understand the significance of her world role." Two years earlier, with the war still at its peak, the founder of the Pan-European Union, Richard von Coudenhove-Kalegi, invoked the example of the two-centuries long "*Pax Romana*" which, he suggested, could be repeated if based on the preponderant US air power:

During the third century BC the Mediterranean world was divided on five great powers—Roma and Carthage, Macedonia, Syria, and Egypt. The balance of power led to a series of wars until Rome emerged the queen of the Mediterranean and established an incomparable era of two centuries of peace and progress, the '*Pax Romana*' ... It may be that America's air power could again assure our world, now much smaller than the Mediterranean at that period, two hundred years of peace ... This is the only realistic hope for a lasting peace.^[47]

One of the first criticisms of "*Pax Americana*" was written by Nathaniel Peffer in 1943:

It is neither feasible nor desirable ... *Pax Americana* can be established and maintained only by force, only by means of a new, gigantic imperialism operating with the instrumentalities of militarism and the other concomitants of imperialism ... The way to dominion is through empire and the price of dominion is empire, and empire generates its own opposition.^[48]

However, Peffer was not certain that this would not happen: "It is conceivable that ... America might drift into empire, imperceptibly, stage by stage, in a kind of power-politics gravitation." He also noted that America was heading precisely in that direction: "That there are certain stirrings in this direction is apparent, though how deep they go is unclear."^[49]

The depth soon became clarified. Two later critics of *Pax Americana*, Michio Kaku and David Axelrod, interpreted the outcome of *Pax Americana*: "Gunboat diplomacy would be replaced by Atomic diplomacy. *Pax Britannica* would give way to *Pax Americana*." After the war, with the German and British militaries in tatters, only one force stood on the way to *Pax Americana*: the Red Army.^[50]

Four years after this criticism was written, the Red Army withdrew, paving the way for the unipolar moment. Joshua Muravchik commemorated the event by titling his 1991 article, "At Last, Pax Americana". He detailed:

Last but not least, the Gulf War marks the dawning of the Pax Americana. True, that term was used immediately after World War II. But it was a misnomer then because the Soviet empire—a real competitor with American power—was born at the same moment. The result was not a "pax" of any kind, but a cold war and a bipolar world ... During the past two years, however, Soviet power has imploded and a bipolar world has become unipolar.^[51]

The following year, in 1992, a US strategic draft for the post-Cold War period was leaked to the press. The person responsible for the confusion, former Assistant Secretary of State, Paul Wolfowitz, confessed seven years later: "In 1992 a draft memo prepared by my office at the Pentagon ... leaked to the press and sparked a major controversy." The draft's strategy aimed "to prevent any hostile power from dominating" a Eurasian region "whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power". He added: "Senator Joseph Biden ridiculed the proposed strategy as 'literally a *Pax Americana* ... It won't work ...' Just seven years later, many of these same critics seem quite comfortable with the idea of *Pax Americana*."^[52]

The post-Cold War period, concluded William Wohlforth, much less ambiguously deserves to be called *Pax Americana*. "Calling the current period the true Pax Americana may offend some, but it reflects reality."^[24]

The "Pax Americana" motif reached its peak in the context of the 2003 Iraq War. The phrase "American Empire" appeared in one thousand news stories over a single six-month period in 2003.^[53] Jonathan Freedland observed:

Of course, enemies of the United States have shaken their fist at its "imperialism" for decades ... What is more surprising, and much newer, is that the notion of an American empire has suddenly become a live debate inside the United States. Accelerated by the post-9/11 debate on America's role in the world, the idea of the United States as a 21st-century Rome is gaining a foothold in the country's consciousness.^[54]

The New York Review of Books illustrated a recent piece on US might with a drawing of George Bush toggled up as a Roman centurion, complete with shield and spears.^[55] Bush's visits to Germany in 2002 and 2006 resulted in further Bush-as-Roman-emperor invective appearing in the German press. In 2006, freelance writer, political satirist, and correspondent for the left-leaning *Die Tageszeitung*, Arno Frank, compared the spectacle of the visit by *Imperator* Bush to "elaborate inspection tours of Roman emperors in important but not completely pacified provinces—such as Germania."^[56] In September 2002, Boston's WBUR-FM radio station titled a special on US imperial power with the tag "Pax Americana".^[57] "The Roman parallel, wrote Niall Ferguson in 2005,^[58] is in danger of becoming something of a cliché." Policy analyst Vaclav Smil titled his 2010 book by what he intended to explain: *Why America Is Not a New Rome*.^[59] The very phenomenon of the Roman-American association became the subject of research for Classicist Paul J. Burton.^[60]

Peter Bender, in his 2003 article "America: The New Roman Empire,"^[61] summarized: "When politicians or professors are in need of a historical comparison in order to illustrate the United States' incredible might, they almost always think of the Roman Empire."^[62] The article abounds with analogies:

1. "When they later extended their power to overseas territories, they shied away from assuming direct control wherever possible." In the Hellenistic world, Rome withdrew its legions after three wars and instead settled for a role of all-powerful patron and arbitrator.^[63]
2. The factor for the overseas engagement is the same in both cases: the seas or oceans ceased to offer protection, or so it seemed.

Rome and America both expanded in order to achieve security. Like concentric circles, each circle in need of security demanded the occupation of the next larger circle. The Romans made their way around the Mediterranean, driven from one challenger to their security to the next. The struggles ... brought the Americans to Europe and East Asia; the Americans soon wound up all over the globe, driven from one attempt at containment to the next. The boundaries between security and power

politics gradually blurred. The Romans and Americans both eventually found themselves in a geographical and political position that they had not originally desired, but which they then gladly accepted and firmly maintained.^[64]

3. "Both claimed the unlimited right to render their enemies permanently harmless." Postwar treatments of Carthage, Macedon, Germany and Japan are similar.^[65]
4. "They became protective lords after each act of assistance provided to other states; in fact, they offered protection and gained control. The protected were mistaken when they assumed that they could use Rome or America to their own ends without suffering a partial loss of their sovereignty."^[65]
5. "World powers without rivals are a class unto themselves. They ... are quick to call loyal followers friends, or *amicus populi Romani*. They no longer know any foes, just rebels, terrorists, and rogue states. They no longer fight, merely punish. They no longer wage wars but merely create peace. They are honestly outraged when vassals fail to act as vassals."^[66] Zbigniew Brzezinski comments on the latter analogy: "One is tempted to add, they do not invade other countries, they only liberate."^[67]

In 1998, American political author, Charles A. Kupchan, described the world order "After Pax Americana"^[68] and the next year "The Life after Pax Americana".^[69] In 2003, he announced "The End of the American Era".^[70] In 2012, however, he projected: "America's military strength will remain as central to global stability in the years ahead as it has been in the past."^[71]

The Russian analyst Leonid Grinin argues that at present and in the nearest future Pax Americana will remain an effective tool of supporting the world order since the US concentrates too many leadership functions which no other country is able to take to the full extent. Thus, he warns that the destruction of Pax Americana will bring critical transformations of the World-system with unclear consequences.^[72]

American imperialism

American imperialism is a term referring to outcomes or ideological elements of United States foreign policy. Since the start of the cold war, the United States has economically and/or diplomatically supported friendly foreign governments, including many that overtly violated the civil and human rights of their own citizens and residents. American imperialism concepts were initially a product of capitalism critiques and, later, of theorists opposed to what they take to be aggressive United States policies and doctrines. Although there are various views of the imperialist nature of the United States, which describe many of the same policies and institutions as evidence of imperialism, explanations for imperialism vary widely. In spite of such literature, the historians Archibald Paton Thornton and Stuart Creighton Miller argue against the very coherence of the concept. Miller argues that the overuse and abuse of the term "imperialism" makes it nearly meaningless as an analytical concept.^[73]



Spheres of influence during the Cold War. The US and USSR are shown in dark green and orange respectively, and their spheres of influence in light green and orange.

More specifically, critics of American influence contend that the Bush Doctrine of advancing democracy throughout all the world is all that is needed to justify the term "American Imperialism". On the other hand, advocates of American influence define imperialism as colonialism to some degree and claim protectionism, rather than imperialism, as the rationale for recent American international behavior. Such people emphasize that American history of returning governance back to indigenous people, supporting decolonization, and insisting on a rejection of previous isolationist policies, do not constitute the embrace of imperialism. The argument is made that unlike Britain in the previous century (during Pax Britannica) America does not directly rule subject peoples and practice closed trading policies.

Regardless, it is acknowledged that American isolationism subsided only after major shocks associated with the Spanish–American War and the two world wars. Critics such as Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky argue that the United States has sought, or has found itself forced into, a quasi-imperialist role by its status as the world's sole superpower

As to the "isolationist" history of the United States, it mainly applies to the global stage; the United States has not been isolationist with respect to the Western Hemisphere, which fell within its sphere of influence, and pursued military interventions within this region of the world. Though relative peace existed in the Western world, the United States and its allies have been involved in various regional wars, such as the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, the Yugoslav wars, the Afghanistan War and the Iraq War. The United States also maintained espionage and covert operations in various other areas, such as Latin America in the 1980s.

See also

General

Overseas interventions of the United States, Timeline of United States military operations, United States withdrawal from the United Nations, Hyperpower

Doctrines

Truman Doctrine, Reagan Doctrine, Clinton Doctrine, Bush Doctrine, Powell Doctrine, Wolfowitz Doctrine, Obama Doctrine

Early concepts

Civilizing mission, Platt Amendment, Holy Alliance, Hague Conventions (1899 and 1907)

Modern concepts

Bretton Woods system, Cold War (1945–1991), Neoconservatism, Anti-communism ; New World Order, War on Terror

Other

Messianic democracy, Peace and Truce of God, 9/11 conspiracy theories, Pan Sahel Initiative, American Dream, Global Nightmare, Documentary film *Pax Americana and the Weaponization of Space*

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Monroe Doctrine

The **Monroe Doctrine** was a United States policy of opposing European colonialism in the Americas beginning in 1823. It stated that further efforts by European nations to take control of any independent state in North or South America would be viewed as "the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States."^[1] At the same time, the doctrine noted that the U.S. would recognize and not interfere with existing European colonies nor meddle in the internal concerns of European countries. The Doctrine was issued on December 2, 1823 at a time when nearly all Latin American colonies of Spain and Portugal had achieved, or were at the point of gaining, independence from the Portuguese and Spanish Empires

President James Monroe first stated the doctrine during his seventh annual State of the Union Address to Congress. The term "Monroe Doctrine" itself was coined in 1850.^[2] By the end of the 19th century, Monroe's declaration was seen as a defining moment in the foreign policy of the United States and one of its longest-standing tenets. It would be invoked by many U.S. statesmen and several U.S. presidents, including Ulysses S. Grant, Theodore Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and Ronald Reagan. The intent and impact of the Monroe Doctrine persisted with only small variations for more than a century. Its stated objective was to free the newly independent colonies of Latin America from European intervention and avoid situations which could make the New World a battleground for the Old World powers, so that the U.S. could exert its own influence undisturbed. The doctrine asserted that the New World and the Old World were to remain distinctly separate spheres of influence for they were composed of entirely separate and independent nations.^[3]

After 1898, Latin American lawyers and intellectuals reinterpreted the Monroe doctrine in terms of multilateralism and non-intervention. In 1933, under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the U.S. went along with the new reinterpretation, especially in terms of the Organization of American States.^[4]

The U.S. government feared the victorious European powers that emerged from the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815) would revive the monarchical government. France had already agreed to restore the Spanish Monarchy in exchange for Cuba.^[5] As the revolutionary Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) ended, Prussia, Austria, and Russia formed the Holy Alliance to defend monarchism. In particular, the Holy Alliance authorized military incursions to re-establish Bourbon rule over Spain and its colonies, which were establishing their independence.^{[6]:153–5}

Great Britain shared the general objective of the Monroe Doctrine, albeit from an opposite standpoint and ultimate aim, and even wanted to declare a joint statement to keep other European powers from further colonizing the New World. The British Foreign Secretary George Canning wanted to keep the other European powers out of the New World fearing that its trade with the New World would be harmed if the other European powers further colonized it. In fact, for many years after the Monroe Doctrine took effect, Britain, through the Royal Navy, was the sole nation enforcing it; the U.S. lacking sufficient naval capability. Allowing Spain to re-establish control of its former colonies would have cut Great Britain off from its profitable trade with the region. For that reason, Canning proposed to the U.S. that they mutually declare and enforce a policy of separating the New World from the Old. The U.S. resisted a joint statement because of the recent memory of the War of 1812, leading to the Monroe administration's unilateral statement.



U.S. President James Monroe



Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, author of the Monroe Doctrine

However, the immediate provocation was the Russian Ukase of 1821^[7] asserting rights to the Pacific Northwest and forbidding non-Russian ships from approaching the coast.^{[8][9]}

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Seeds of the Monroe Doctrine

Despite America's beginnings as an isolationist country, the seeds for the Monroe Doctrine were already being laid even during George Washington's presidency. According to S.E. Morison, "as early as 1783, then, the United States adopted the policy of isolation and announced its intention to keep out of Europe. The supplementary principle of the Monroe Doctrine, that Europe must keep out of America, was still over the horizon".^[10] While not specifically the Monroe Doctrine, Alexander Hamilton desired to control the sphere of influence in the western hemisphere, particularly in North America but was extended to the Latin American colonies by the Monroe Doctrine.^[11] But Hamilton, writing in the Federalist Papers, was already wanting to establish America as a world power and hoped that America would suddenly become strong enough to keep the European powers outside of the Americas, despite the fact that the European countries controlled much more of the Americas than the U.S. itself.^[10] Hamilton expected that the United States would become the dominant power in the new world and would, in the future, act as an intermediary between the European powers and any new countries blossoming near the U.S.^[10] In fact, in a note from James Madison, Thomas Jefferson's Secretary of State and a future president, to the U.S. ambassador for Spain, the federal government expressed the opposition of the American government to further territorial acquisition by European Powers.^[12] Madison's sentiment might have been meaningless because, as was noted before, the European powers held much more territory in comparison to the territory held by the U.S. Although Thomas Jefferson was pro-French, in an attempt to keep the French-British rivalry out the U.S., the federal government under Jefferson made it clear to its ambassadors that the U.S. would not support any future colonization efforts on the North American continent.

The Doctrine

The full document of the Monroe Doctrine, written chiefly by future-President and then Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, is long and couched in diplomatic language, but its essence is expressed in two key passages. The first is the introductory statement, which asserts that the New World is no longer subject to colonization by the European countries.^[13]

The occasion has been judged proper for asserting, as a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.

The second key passage, which contains a fuller statement of the Doctrine, is addressed to the "allied powers" of Europe (that is, the Holy Alliance); it clarifies that the U.S. remains neutral on existing European colonies in the Americas but is opposed to "interpositions" that would create new colonies among the newly independent Spanish American republics.^[11]

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 for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States.

Effects

International response

Because the U.S. lacked both a credible navy and army at the time, the doctrine was largely disregarded internationally.^[3] Prince Metternich of Austria was angered by the statement, and wrote privately that the doctrine was a "new act of revolt" by the U.S. that would grant "new strength to the apostles of sedition and reanimate the courage of every conspirator."^{[6]:156}

The doctrine, however, met with tacit British approval. They enforced it tactically as part of the wider Pax Britannica, which included enforcement of the neutrality of the seas. This was in line with the developing British policy of laissez-faire free trade against mercantilism. Fast-growing British industry sought markets for its manufactured goods, and, if the newly independent Latin American states became Spanish colonies again, British access to these markets would be cut off by Spanish mercantilist policy.^[14]

Latin American reaction

The reaction in Latin America to the Monroe Doctrine was generally favorable but in some occasions suspicious. John Crow, author of *The Epic of Latin America*, states, "Simón Bolívar himself, still in the midst of his last campaign against the Spaniards, Santander in Colombia, Rivadavia in Argentina, Victoria in Mexico—leaders of the emancipation movement everywhere—received Monroe's words with sincerest gratitude".^[15] Crow argues that the leaders of Latin America were realists. They knew that the President of the United States wielded very little power at the time, particularly without the backing of the British forces, and figured that the Monroe Doctrine was unenforceable if the United States stood alone against the Holy Alliance.^[15] While they appreciated and praised their support in the north, they knew that the future of their independence was in the hands of the British and their powerful navy. In 1826, Bolivar called upon his Congress of Panama to host the first "Pan-American" meeting. In the eyes of Bolivar and his men, the Monroe Doctrine was to become nothing more than a tool of national policy. According to Crow, "It was not meant to be, and was never intended to be a charter for concerted hemispheric action".^[15]

At the same time, some people questioned the intentions behind the Monroe Doctrine. Diego Portales, a Chilean businessman and minister, wrote to a friend: "But we have to be very careful: for the Americans of the north [from the United States], the only Americans are themselves".^[16]

Post-Bolivar events

In early 1833, the British reasserted their sovereignty over the Falkland islands. No action was taken by the US, and George C. Herring writes that the inaction "confirmed Latin American and especially Argentine suspicions of the United States."^{[6]:171[17]} In 1838–50 Argentina was blockaded by the French and, later, the British. No action was taken by the U.S., despite protestations.

In 1842, U.S. President John Tyler applied the Monroe Doctrine to Hawaii and warned Britain not to interfere there. This began the process of annexing Hawaii to the U.S.^[18]

On December 2, 1845, U.S. President James Polk announced that the principle of the Monroe Doctrine should be strictly enforced, reinterpreting it to argue that no European nations should interfere with the American western expansion (Manifest Destiny).^[19]

In 1862, French forces under Napoleon III invaded and conquered Mexico, giving control to the puppet monarch Emperor Maximilian. Washington denounced this as a violation of the doctrine but was unable to intervene because of the American Civil War. This marked the first time the Monroe Doctrine was widely referred to as a "doctrine." In 1865 the U.S. stationed a large combat army on the border to emphasize its demand that France leave. France did pull out, and Mexican nationalists executed Maximilian.^[20]



French intervention in Mexico 1861–1867

In 1862, Belize was turned into a crown colony of the British empire and renamed British Honduras. The U.S. took no action against Britain, either during or after the Civil War.^[21]

In the 1870s, President Ulysses S. Grant and his Secretary of State Hamilton Fish endeavored to supplant European influence in Latin America with that of the U.S. In 1870, the Monroe Doctrine was expanded under the proclamation "hereafter no territory on this continent [referring to Central and South America] shall be regarded as subject to transfer to a European power."^{[6]:259} Grant invoked the Monroe Doctrine in his failed attempt to annex the Dominican Republic in 1870.^[22]



President Cleveland twisting the tail of the British Lion; cartoon in *Puck* by J.S. Pughe, 1895

The Venezuela Crisis of 1895 became "one of the most momentous episodes in the history of Anglo-American relations in general and of Anglo-American rivalries in Latin America in particular."^[23] Venezuela sought to involve the U.S. in a territorial dispute with Britain over Guayana Esequiba, and hired former US ambassador

William L. Scruggs to argue that British behaviour over the issue violated the Monroe Doctrine. President Grover Cleveland through his Secretary of State, Richard Olney, cited the Doctrine in 1895, threatening strong action against Great Britain if the British failed to arbitrate their dispute with Venezuela. In a July 20, 1895 note to Britain, Olney stated, "The United States is practically sovereign on this continent, and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition."^{[6]:307} British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury took strong exception to the American language. The U.S. objected to a British proposal for a joint meeting to clarify the scope of the Monroe Doctrine. Historian George Herring wrote that by failing to pursue the issue further the British "tacitly conceded the U.S. definition of the Monroe Doctrine and its hegemony in the hemisphere."^{[6]:307–8} Otto von Bismarck, did not agree and in October 1897 called the Doctrine an "uncommon insolence".^[24] Sitting in Paris, the Tribunal of Arbitration finalized its decision on October 3, 1899.^[23] The award was unanimous, but gave no reasons for the decision, merely describing the resulting boundary, which gave Britain almost 90% of the disputed territory^[25] and all of the gold mines!^[26]

The reaction to the award was surprise, with the award's lack of reasoning a particular concern.^[25] The Venezuelans were keenly disappointed with the outcome, though they honored their counsel for their efforts (their delegation's Secretary, Severo Mallet-Prevost, received the Order of the Liberator in 1944), and abided by the award.^[25]

The Anglo-Venezuelan boundary dispute asserted for the first time a more outward-looking American foreign policy, particularly in the Americas, marking the U.S. as a world power. This was the earliest example of modern interventionism under the Monroe Doctrine in which the USA exercised its claimed prerogatives in the Americas.^[27]

In 1898, the U.S. intervened in support of Cuba during its war for independence from Spain. The U.S. won what is known in the U.S. as the Spanish–American War and in Cuba as the Cuban War for Independence. Under the terms of the peace treaty from which Cuba was excluded, Spain ceded Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam to the U.S. in exchange for \$20 million. Cuba came under U.S. control and remained so until it was granted formal independence in 1902.^[28]

The "Big Brother"

The "Big Brother" policy was an extension of the Monroe Doctrine formulated by James G. Blaine in the 1880s that aimed to rally Latin American nations behind US leadership and open their markets to US traders. Blaine served as Secretary of State in 1881 under President James A. Garfield and again from 1889 to 1892 under President Benjamin Harrison. As a part of the policy, Blaine arranged and led the First International Conference of American States in 1889.^[29]

The "Olney Corollary"

Also known as *Olney interpretation* or *Olney declaration* was United States Secretary of State Richard Olney's interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine when a border dispute for Guayana Esequiba occurred between Britain and Venezuela governments in 1895. Olney claimed that the Monroe Doctrine gave the U.S. authority to mediate border disputes in the Western Hemisphere. Olney extended the meaning of the Monroe Doctrine, which had previously stated merely that the Western Hemisphere was closed to additional European colonization. The statement reinforced the original purpose of the Monroe Doctrine, that the U.S. had the right to intervene in its own hemisphere and foreshadowed the events of the Spanish–American War three years later. The Olney interpretation was defunct by 1933.^[30]

Canada

In 1902, Canadian Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier acknowledged that the Monroe Doctrine was essential to his country's protection. The doctrine provided Canada with a de facto security guarantee by the United States; the US Navy in the Pacific, and the British Navy in the Atlantic, made invading North America almost impossible. Because of the peaceful relations between the two countries, Canada could assist Britain in a European war without having to defend itself at home.^[31]

The "Roosevelt Corollary"

The doctrine's authors, chiefly future-President and then secretary-of-state John Quincy Adams, saw it as a proclamation by the U.S. of moral opposition to colonialism, but it has subsequently been re-interpreted and applied in a variety of instances. As the U.S. began to emerge as a world power, the Monroe Doctrine came to define a recognized sphere of control that few dared to challenge.^[3]

Before becoming president, Theodore Roosevelt had proclaimed the rationale of the Monroe Doctrine in supporting intervention in the Spanish colony of Cuba in 1898. The Venezuela Crisis of 1902–1903 showed the world that the US was willing to use its naval strength to force an American viewpoint in world politics.



Spanish–American War, the result of U.S. intervention in the Cuban War of Independence.



American poses with dead Haitian revolutionaries killed by US Marine machine gun fire, 1915

In Argentine foreign policy, the Drago Doctrine was announced on December 29, 1902 by the Foreign Minister of Argentina, Luis María Drago. This was a response to the actions of Britain, Germany, and Italy during the Venezuela Crisis of 1902–1903, in which they had blockaded and shelled Venezuela's ports in an attempt to collect money owed as part of its national debt, accrued under regimes preceding that of president Cipriano Castro. Drago set forth the policy that no European power could use force against an American nation to collect debt. President Theodore Roosevelt rejected this policy as an extension of the Monroe Doctrine, declaring, "We do not guarantee any state against punishment if it misconducts itself".^{[6]:370}

Instead, Roosevelt added the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine in 1904, asserting the right of the U.S. to intervene in Latin America in cases of "flagrant and chronic wrongdoing by a Latin American Nation" to preempt intervention by European creditors. This re-interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine went on to be a useful tool to take economic benefits by force when Latin nations failed to pay their debts to European and US banks and business interests. This was also referred to as the Big Stick ideology because of the phrase from president Roosevelt to "*speak low and carry a big stick*".^{[3][6]:371[32]} The Roosevelt corollary provoked outrage across Latin America.^[33]

The Roosevelt Corollary was invoked to intervene militarily in Latin America to stop the spread of European influence.^[32] It was the most significant amendment to the original doctrine and was widely opposed by critics, who argued that the Monroe Doctrine was originally meant to stop European influence in the Americas.^[3] They argued that the Corollary simply asserted U.S. domination in that area, effectively making them a "hemispheric policeman".^[34]

The Lodge Resolution

The so-called "Lodge Resolution" was passed^[35] by the U.S. Senate on August 2, 1912, in response to a reported attempt by a Japan-backed private company to acquire Magdalena Bay in southern Baja California. It extended the reach of the Monroe Doctrine to cover actions of corporations and associations controlled by foreign states.^[36]

The Clark Memorandum

The Clark Memorandum, written on December 17, 1928 by Calvin Coolidge's undersecretary of state J. Reuben Clark, concerned U.S. use of military force to intervene in Latin American nations. This memorandum was officially released in 1930 by the Herbert Hoover administration.

The Clark memorandum rejected the view that the Roosevelt Corollary was based on the Monroe Doctrine. However, it was not a complete repudiation of the Roosevelt Corollary but was rather a statement that any intervention by the U.S. was not sanctioned by the Monroe Doctrine but rather was the right of America as a state. This separated the Roosevelt Corollary from the Monroe Doctrine by noting that the Monroe Doctrine only applied to situations involving European countries. One main point in the Clark Memorandum was to note that the Monroe Doctrine was based on conflicts of interest only between the United States and European nations, rather than between the United States and Latin American nations.

World War II

After World War II began, a majority of Americans supported defending the entire Western Hemisphere against foreign invasion. A 1940 national survey found that 81% supported defending Canada; 75% Mexico and Central America; 69% South America; 66% West Indies; and 59% Greenland.^[37]

Latin American reinterpretation



1903 cartoon: "Go Away, Little Man, and Don't Bother Me". President Roosevelt intimidating Colombia to acquire the Panama Canal Zone.

After 1898, jurists and intellectuals in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, especially Luis María Drago, Alejandro Álvarez and Baltasar Brum, reinterpreted the Monroe doctrine. They sought a fresh continental approach to international law in terms of multilateralism and non-intervention. However, American leaders were reluctant to renounce unilateral interventionism until the Good Neighbor policy enunciated by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1933. The era of the Good Neighbor Policy ended with the ramp-up of the Cold War in 1945, as the United States felt there was a greater need to protect the western hemisphere from Soviet influence. These changes conflicted with the Good Neighbor Policy's fundamental principle of non-intervention and led to a new wave of US involvement in Latin American affairs. Control of the Monroe doctrine thus shifted to the multilateral Organization of American States (OAS) founded in 1948.^[4]

In 1954, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles invoked the Monroe Doctrine at the 10th Pan-American Conference in Caracas (Venezuela), denouncing the intervention of Soviet Communism in Guatemala. President John F. Kennedy said at an August 29, 1962 news conference:

The Monroe Doctrine means what it has meant since President Monroe and John Quincy Adams enunciated it, and that is that we would oppose a foreign power extending its power to the Western Hemisphere [sic], and that is why we oppose what is happening in Cuba today. That is why we have cut off our trade. That is why we worked in the OAS and in other ways to isolate the Communist menace in Cuba. That is why we will continue to give a good deal of our effort and attention to it.^[38]

Cold War

During the Cold War, the Monroe Doctrine was applied to Latin America by the framers of U.S. foreign policy.^[39] When the Cuban Revolution (1953–1959) established a Communist government with ties to the Soviet Union, it was argued that the Monroe Doctrine should be invoked to prevent the spread of Soviet-backed Communism in Latin America.^[40] Under this rationale, the U.S. provided intelligence and military aid to Latin and South American governments that claimed or appeared to be threatened by Communist subversion (as in the case of Operation Condor).

In the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, President John F. Kennedy cited the Monroe Doctrine as grounds for America's confrontation with the Soviet Union over the installation of Soviet ballistic missiles on Cuban soil.^[41]

The debate over this new interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine burgeoned in reaction to the Iran-Contra affair. It was revealed that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency had been covertly training 'Contra' guerrilla soldiers in Honduras in an attempt to destabilize and overthrow the Sandinista revolutionary government of Nicaragua and its President, Daniel Ortega. CIA director Robert Gates vigorously defended the Contra operation in 1984, arguing that eschewing U.S. intervention in Nicaragua would be "totally to abandon the Monroe Doctrine."^[42]



The U.S.-supported Nicaraguan contras.

21st Century Approaches

The Kerry Doctrine

President Barack Obama's Secretary of State John Kerry told the Organization of American States in November 2013 that the "era of the Monroe Doctrine is over."^[43] Several commentators have noted that Kerry's call for a mutual partnership with the other countries in the Americas is more in keeping with Monroe's intentions than the policies enacted after his death.^[44]

America First

President Donald Trump implied potential use of the doctrine in August 2017 when he mentioned the possibility of military intervention in Venezuela,^[45] after his CIA Director Mike Pompeo declared that the nation's deterioration was the result of interference from Iranian- and Russian-backed groups.^[46] In February 2018, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson praised the Monroe Doctrine as "*clearly ... a success*", warning of "imperial" Chinese trade ambitions and touting the United States as the region's preferred trade partner.^[47] Pompeo replaced Tillerson as Secretary of State in May 2018.

Criticism

Historians have observed that while the Doctrine contained a commitment to resist colonialism from Europe, it had some aggressive implications for American policy, since there were no limitations on the US's own actions mentioned within it. Scholar Jay Sexton notes that the tactics used to implement the doctrine were "modeled after those employed by British imperialists" and their competition with the Spanish and French.^[48] Eminent historian William Appleman Williams described it as a form of "imperial anti-colonialism."^[49] Noam Chomsky^[50] argues that in practice the Monroe Doctrine has been used as a declaration of hegemony and a right of unilateral intervention over the Americas.

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External links

- [Monroe Doctrine and related resources at the Library of Congress](#)
 - [Selected text from Monroe's December 2, 1823 speech](#)
 - [Adios, Monroe Doctrine: When the Yanks Go Home](#) by [Jorge G. Castañeda](#), *The New Republic*, December 28, 2009
 - [as illustrated in a 1904 cartoon](#)
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American exceptionalism

American exceptionalism is an ideology holding the United States as unique among nations in positive or negative connotations, with respect to its ideas of democracy and personal freedom.^[2]

Though the concept has no formal definition, there are some themes common to various conceptions of the idea. One is the history of the United States is different from other nations.^[3] In this view, American exceptionalism stems from the American Revolution, becoming what political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset called "the first new nation"^[4] and developing the American ideology of "Americanism", based on liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, republicanism, democracy, and laissez-faire economics. This ideology itself is often referred to as "American exceptionalism."^[5] Another theme is the idea that the U.S. has a unique mission to transform the world. Abraham Lincoln stated in the Gettysburg address (1863), Americans have a duty to ensure "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." Another theme is the sense the United States' history and mission give it a superiority over other nations.

The theory of the exceptionalism of the U.S. has developed over time and can be traced to many sources. French political scientist and historian Alexis de Tocqueville was the first writer to describe the country as "exceptional" in 1831 and 1840.^[6] The actual phrase "American Exceptionalism" was originally coined by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin as a critique of a revisionist faction of American Communists who argued that the American political climate was unique, making it an 'exception' to certain elements of Marxist theory.^[2] U.S. President Ronald Reagan is often credited with having crystallized this ideology in recent decades.^[2] Political scientist Eldon Eisenach argues in the twenty-first century American exceptionalism has come under attack from the postmodern left as a reactionary myth: "The absence of a shared purposes ratified in the left sphere of liberal-progressive public policy....beginning with the assumption of American exceptionalism as a reactionary myth."^[7]



German professor Sieglinde Lemke argues that the Statue of Liberty "signifies this proselytizing mission as the natural extension of the US' sense of itself as an exceptional nation."^[1]

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Terminology

The exact term "American exceptionalism" was occasionally used in the 19th century. In his *The Yale Book of Quotations*, Fred Shapiro notes "exceptionalism" was used to refer to the United States and its self-image by The Times of London on August 20, 1861.^[8] Its common use dates from Communist usage in the late 1920s. Soviet leader Joseph Stalin chastised members of the Jay Lovestone-led faction of the American Communist Party for its claim the U.S. was independent of the Marxist laws of history "thanks to its natural resources, industrial capacity, and absence of rigid class distinctions". Stalin may have been told of the usage "American exceptionalism" by Broder & Zack in *Daily Worker* (N.Y.) on January 29, 1929, before Lovestone's visit to Moscow. American Communists started using the English term "American exceptionalism" in factional fights. It then moved into general use among intellectuals.^[9]^[10] In 1989, Scottish political scientist Richard Rose noted most American historians endorse exceptionalism. He suggests these historians reason as follows:

America marches to a different drummer. Its uniqueness is explained by any or all of a variety of reasons: history, size, geography, political institutions, and culture. Explanations of the growth of government in Europe are not expected to fit American experience, and vice versa.^[11]

However, postnationalist scholars have rejected American exceptionalism, arguing the U.S. did not break from European history, and accordingly, the U.S. has retained class-based and race-based differences, as well as imperialism and willingness to wage war.^[12]

In recent years scholars from numerous disciplines, as well as politicians and commentators in the traditional media, have debated the meaning and usefulness of the concept. Roberts and DiCuirci ask:

Why has the myth of American exceptionalism, characterized by a belief in America's highly distinctive features or unusual trajectory based on the abundance of its natural resources, its revolutionary origins and its Protestant religious culture that anticipated God's blessing of the nation, held such tremendous staying power, from its influence in popular culture to its critical role in foreign policy?^[13]

Some historians support the concept of American exceptionalism but avoid the terminology, thereby avoid entangling themselves in rhetorical debates. Bernard Bailyn, a leading colonial specialist at Harvard, is a believer in the distinctiveness of American civilization. Although he rarely, if ever, uses the phrase "American exceptionalism," he insists upon the "distinctive characteristics of British North American life." He has argued the process of social and cultural transmission result in peculiarly American patterns of education (in the broadest sense of the word); and he believes in the unique character of the American Revolution.^[14]

Origin of the term

Although the concept of American exceptionalism dates to the founding ideas,^[15] the term was first used in the 1920s.

Some claim the phrase "American exceptionalism" originated with the American Communist Party in an English translation of a condemnation made in 1929 by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin criticizing Communist supporters of Jay Lovestone for the heretical belief the US was independent of the Marxist laws of history "thanks to its natural resources, industrial capacity, and absence of rigid class distinctions".^{[9][16]} This origin has been challenged, however, because the expression "American exceptionalism" was already used by Brouder & Zack in the *Daily Worker* (N.Y.) on the 29th of January 1929, before Lovestone's visit to Moscow. Also, Fred Shapiro, editor of *The Yale Book of Quotations*, has noted "exceptionalism" was used to refer to the United States and its self-image during the Civil War by *The New York Times* on August 20, 1861.

Early examples of the term's usage do include a declaration made at the 1930 American Communist convention proclaiming "the storm of the economic crisis in the United States blew down the house of cards of American exceptionalism".^[17]

The phrase fell to obscurity after the 1930s, and in the 1980s American newspapers popularized it to describe America's cultural and political uniqueness.^[17] The phrase became an issue of contention between presidential candidates Barack Obama and John McCain in the 2008 presidential campaign, with Republicans attacking Obama for not believing in the concept.^[18]

History of the concept

Alexis de Tocqueville and others, from 1835

The first reference to the concept by name, and possibly its origin, was by French writer Alexis de Tocqueville in his 1835/1840 work, *Democracy in America*.^[19]

The position of the Americans is therefore quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one. Their strictly Puritanical origin, their exclusively commercial habits, even the country they inhabit, which seems to divert their minds from the pursuit of science, literature, and the arts, the proximity of Europe, which allows them to neglect these pursuits without relapsing into barbarism, a thousand special causes, of which I have only been able to point out the most important, have singularly concurred to fix the mind of the American upon purely practical objects. His passions, his wants, his education, and everything about him seem to unite in drawing the native of the United States earthward; his religion alone bids him turn, from time to time, a transient and distracted glance to heaven. Let us cease, then, to view all democratic nations under the example of the American people!^[20]

Kammen says many foreign visitors commented on American exceptionalism including Karl Marx, Francis Lieber, Hermann Eduard von Holst, James Bryce, H. G. Wells, G. K. Chesterton, and Hilaire Belloc; they did so in complimentary terms.^[21] The theme became common, especially in textbooks. From the 1840s to the late 19th century, the McGuffey Readers sold 120 million copies and were studied by most American students. Skrabec (2009) argues the *Readers* "hailed American exceptionalism, manifest destiny, and America as God's country... Furthermore, McGuffey saw America as having a future mission to bring liberty and democracy to the world."^[22]

Communist debate, 1927

In June 1927 Jay Lovestone, a leader of the Communist Party in America and soon to be named General Secretary, described America's economic and social uniqueness. He noted the increasing strength of American capitalism, and the country's "tremendous reserve power"; strength and power which he said prevented Communist revolution.^[23] In 1929, the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, disagreeing America was so resistant to revolution, called Lovestone's ideas "the heresy of American exceptionalism"^[24]—the first time the specific term "American exceptionalism" was used.^[25] The Great Depression appeared to underscore Stalin's argument

American capitalism falls under the general laws of Marxism.^[26] In June 1930, during the national convention of the Communist Party USA in New York, it was declared "The storm of the economic crisis in the United States blew down the house of cards of American exceptionalism and the whole system of opportunistic theories and illusions that had been built upon American capitalist 'prosperity'".^[27]

Uniqueness

In general, Americans have had consideration in national "uniqueness." Historian Dorothy Ross points to three different currents regarding unique characteristics.

1. Some Protestants believed American progress would facilitate the return of Jesus Christ and Christian Millennium.^[28]
2. Some 19th century historians linked American liberty to the development of liberty in Anglo-Saxon England.^[29]
3. Other American writers looked to the "millennial newness" of America. Henry Nash Smith stressed the theme of "virgin land" in the American frontier that promised an escape from the decay that befell earlier republics.^{[30][31]}

21st-century development

Recently, socialists and other writers tried to discover or describe this exceptionalism of the U.S. within and outside its borders.^[32] The concept has also been discussed in the context of the 21st century in a book co-authored by former American Vice President Dick Cheney: Exceptional: Why the World Needs a Powerful America (2015).^[33]

Causes in their historical context

Scholars have explored possible justifications for the notion of American exceptionalism.

Absence of feudalism

Many scholars use a model of American exceptionalism developed by Harvard political scientist Louis Hartz. In *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955), Hartz argued that the American political tradition lacks the left-wing/socialist and right-wing/aristocratic elements that dominated in most other lands because colonial America lacked any feudal traditions, such as established churches, landed estates and a hereditary nobility.^[34] The "liberal consensus" school, typified by David Potter, Daniel Boorstin and Richard Hofstadter followed Hartz in emphasizing that political conflicts in American history remained within the tight boundaries of a liberal consensus regarding private property, individual rights, and representative government. The national government that emerged was far less centralized or nationalized than its European counterparts.^[35]

Puritan roots and Protestant promise

Parts of American exceptionalism can be traced to American Puritan roots.^[36] Many Puritans with Arminian leanings embraced a middle ground between strict Calvinist predestination and a less restricting theology of Divine Providence. They believed God had made a covenant with their people and had chosen them to provide a model for the other nations of the Earth. One Puritan leader, John Winthrop, metaphorically expressed this idea as a City upon a Hill—that the Puritan community of New England should serve as a model community for the rest of the world.^{[37][38]} This metaphor is often used by proponents of exceptionalism. The Puritans' moralistic values remained part of the national identity of the United States for centuries, remaining influential to the present day.

In this vein, Max Weber was a pioneer in delineating a connection between capitalism and exceptionalism. Eric Luis Uhlmann of Northwestern University argues that Puritan values were taken up by all remaining Americans as time went by.^[39] Kevin M. Schultz underlines how they helped America to keep to its Protestant Promise, especially Catholics and Jews.^[40]

American Revolution and republicanism

The ideas that created the American Revolution were derived from a tradition of republicanism that had been repudiated by the British mainstream. Historian Gordon Wood has argued, "Our beliefs in liberty, equality, constitutionalism, and the well-being of ordinary people came out of the Revolutionary era. So too did our idea that we Americans are a special people with a special destiny to lead the world toward liberty and democracy."^[41] Wood notes that the term is "presently much-maligned," although it is vigorously supported by others such as Jon Butler^[42]

Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* for the first time expressed the belief that America was not just an extension of Europe but a new land, a country of nearly unlimited potential and opportunity that had outgrown the British mother country. These sentiments laid the intellectual foundations for the Revolutionary concept of American exceptionalism and were closely tied to republicanism, the belief that sovereignty belonged to the people, not to a hereditary ruling class.^[43]

Religious freedom characterized the American Revolution in unique ways—at a time when major nations had state religions. Republicanism (led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison) created modern constitutional republicanism, with a limit on ecclesiastical powers. Historian Thomas Kidd (2010) argues, "With the onset of the revolutionary crisis, a significant conceptual shift convinced Americans across the theological spectrum that God was raising up America for some particular purpose."^[44] Kidd further argues that "a new blend of Christian and republican ideology led religious traditionalists to embrace wholesale the concept of republican virtue"^[45]

Jefferson and the Empire of Liberty

According to Tucker and Hendrickson (1992), Jefferson believed America "was the bearer of a new diplomacy, founded on the confidence of a free and virtuous people, that would secure ends based on the natural and universal rights of man, by means that escaped war and its corruptions". Jefferson sought a radical break from the traditional European emphasis on "reason of state" (which could justify any action) and the usual priority of foreign policy and the needs of the ruling family over the needs of the people.^[46]

Jefferson envisaged America is becoming the world's great "Empire of Liberty"—that is, the model for democracy and republicanism. He identified his nation as a beacon to the world, for, he said on departing the presidency in 1809, America was: "Trusted with the destinies of this solitary republic of the world, the only monument of human rights, and 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 areas of the earth shall ever become susceptible of its benign influence."^[47]

Basis of arguments

Marilyn B. Young argues that after the end of the Cold War in 1991, neoconservative intellectuals and policymakers embraced the idea of an "American empire," a national mission to establish freedom and democracy in other nations, particularly poor ones. She argues that after the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks, the George W. Bush administration reoriented foreign policy to an insistence on maintaining the supreme military and economic power of America, an attitude that harmonized with this new vision of American empire. Young says the Iraq War (2003–2011) exemplified American exceptionalism.^[48]

In 2012, conservative historians Larry Schweikart and Dave Dougherty argued that American Exceptionalism be based on four pillars: (1) Common Law; (2) Virtue and morality located in Protestant Christianity; (3) Free-market capitalism; and (4) the sanctity of private property.^[49]

In a 2015 book entitled *Exceptional: Why the World Needs a Powerful America*, former U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney sets out and argues the case for American Exceptionalism, and concludes: "we are, as Lincoln said, 'the last, best hope of earth.' We are not just one more nation, one more same entity on the world stage. We have been essential to the preservation and progress of freedom, and those who lead us in the years ahead must remind us, as Roosevelt, Kennedy, and Reagan did, of the unique role we play. Neither they nor we should ever forget that we are, in fact exceptional."^[50]

Republican ethos and ideas about nationhood

Proponents of American exceptionalism argue that the United States be exceptional in that it was founded on a set of republican ideals, rather than on a common heritage, ethnicity, or ruling elite. In the formulation of President Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address, America is a nation "conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal". In Lincoln's interpretation, America is inextricably connected with freedom and equality, and in world perspective, the American mission is to ensure, "that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." Historian T. Harry Williams argues that Lincoln believed:

In the United States man would create a society that would be the best and the happiest in the world. The United States was the supreme demonstration of democracy. However, the Union did not exist just to make men free in America. It had an even greater mission—to make them free everywhere. By the mere force of its example, America would bring democracy to an undemocratic world.^[51]

American policies have been characterized since their inception by a system of federalism (between the states and the federal government) and checks and balances (among the legislative, executive and judicial branches), which were designed to prevent any faction, region, or government organ from becoming too powerful. Some proponents of the theory of American exceptionalism argue that this system and the accompanying distrust of concentrated power prevent the United States from suffering a "tyranny of the majority", are preservative of a free republican democracy and also that it allows citizens to live in a locality whose laws reflect those voters' values. A consequence of this political system is that laws can vary widely across the country. Critics of American exceptionalism maintain that this system merely replaces the power of the national majority over states with power by the states over local entities. On balance, the American political system arguably allows for more local dominance but prevents more domestic dominance than does a more unitary system.^[52]

Historian Eric Foner has explored the question of birthright citizenship, the provision of the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) that makes every baby born in the United States a full citizen. He argues that:

birthright citizenship stands as an example of the much-abused idea of American exceptionalism... birthright citizenship does make the United States (along with Canada) unique in the developed world. No European nation recognizes the principle.^[53]

Global leadership and activism

Yale Law School Dean Harold Hongju Koh has identified what he says is "the most important respect in which the United States has been genuinely exceptional, about international affairs, international law, and promotion of human rights: namely, in its outstanding global leadership and activism." He argues:

To this day, the United States remains the only superpower capable, and at times willing, to commit real resources and make real sacrifices to build, sustain, and drive an international system committed to international law, democracy, and the promotion of human rights. Experience teaches that when the United States leads on human rights, from Nuremberg to Kosovo, other countries follow.^[54]

Peggy Noonan, an American political pundit, wrote in The Wall Street Journal that "America is not exceptional because it has long attempted to be a force for good in the world, it tries to be a force for good because it is exceptional".

Former U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney explores the concept of United States global leadership in a 2015 book on American foreign policy entitled Exceptional: Why the World Needs a Powerful America, co-authored with his daughter, Liz Cheney, a former official of the United States Department of State.^[55]

Frontier spirit

Proponents of American exceptionalism often claim that many features of the "American spirit" were shaped by the frontier process (following Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis). They argue the American frontier allowed individualism to flourish as pioneers adopted democracy and equality and shed centuries-old European institutions such as royalty, standing armies, established churches and a landed aristocracy that owned most of the land.^[56] However, this frontier experience was not entirely unique to the United States. Other nations had frontiers, but it did not shape them nearly as much as the American frontier did, usually because it was under the control of a strong national government. South Africa, Russia, Brazil, Argentina, Canada and Australia had long frontiers, but they did not have "free land" and local control.^[57] The political and cultural environments were much different—the other frontiers did not involve widespread ownership of free land nor allow the settlers to control the local and provincial governments as in America. Their edge did not shape their national psyches.^[58] Each nation had entirely different frontier experiences. For example, the Dutch Boers in South Africa were defeated in war by Britain. In Australia, "mateship" and working together was valued more than individualism was in the United States.^[59]

Mobility and welfare

For most of its history, especially from the mid-19th to early 20th centuries, the United States has been known as the "land of opportunity", and in this sense, it prided and promoted itself on providing individuals with the opportunity to escape from the contexts of their class and family background.^[60] Examples of this social mobility include:

- Occupational—children could easily choose careers which were not based upon their parents' choices.^[61]
- Physical—that geographical location was not seen as static, and citizens often relocated freely over long distances without barrier.^[62]
- Status—as in most countries, family standing and riches were often a means to remain in a higher social circle. America was notably unusual due to an accepted wisdom that anyone—from poor immigrants upwards—who worked hard, could aspire to similar standing, regardless of circumstances of birth. This aspiration is commonly called living the American dream. Birth details were not taken as a social barrier to the upper echelons or high political status in American culture. This stood in contrast to other countries where many larger families were socially determined, and usually hard to enter without being born into the suitable social group.^[63]

However, social mobility in the U.S. is lower than in some European Union countries if defined regarding income movements. American men born into the lowest income quintile are much more likely to stay there compared to similar people in the Nordic countries or the United Kingdom.^[64] Many economists, such as Harvard economist N. Gregory Mankiw, however, state that the discrepancy has little to do with class rigidity; rather, it is a reflection of income disparity: "Moving up and down a short ladder is a lot easier than moving up and down a tall one."^[65]

Regarding public welfare, Richard Rose asked in 1989 whether the evidence shows whether the U.S. "is becoming more like other mixed-economy welfare states, or increasingly exceptional." He concludes, "By comparison with other advanced industrial nations America is today exceptional in total public expenditure, in major program priorities, and in the value of public benefits."^[66]

Criticism

Scholars have been polarized on the topic, according to Michael Kammen with historians generally against it, while empirical social scientists have tended to be supporters. Kammen reports that historians Lawrence Veysey, C. Vann Woodward, Eric Foner, Sean Wilentz, Akira Iriye, and Ian Tyrrell have been opponents, while support has come from social scientists Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset, Alex Inkeles, Sanford Jacoby, Samuel P. Huntington, Mona Harrington, John P. Roche, Richard Rose, Peter Temin, and Aaron Wildavsky.^[67]

Kammen argues that the hostile attacks began in the 1970s in the wake of the Vietnam War, when many intellectuals decided, "The American Adam had lost his innocence and given way to a helpless, tarnished Gulliver."^[68] At about the same time, the new social history used statistical techniques on population samples that seemed to show resemblances with Europe on issues such as social mobility. By the 1980s, labor historians were emphasizing that the failure of a work party to emerge in the United States did not mean that America was exceptionally favorable grounds for workers. By the late 1980s, other academic critics started mocking the extreme chauvinism displayed by the modern usage of exceptionalism. Finally mid-1980s, colonial historians downplayed the uniqueness of

the American experience in the context of British history.^[69] On the other hand, some of the critics pulled their punches, with Wilentz arguing for "distinctively American forms of class conflict" and Foner saying there was a "distinctive character of American trade unionism."^[70]

The third idea of American exceptionalism—superiority—has been attacked with charges of moral defectiveness and the existence of double standards. In *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights* (2005), Canadian commentator Michael Ignatieff couches his discussion of the topic in entirely pejorative terms. He identifies three main sub-types: "exemptionalism" (supporting treaties as long as U.S. citizens are exempt from them); "double standards" (criticizing "others for not heeding the findings of international human rights bodies, but ignoring what these organizations say of the United States"); and "legal isolationism" (the tendency of U.S. judges to ignore other jurisdictions).^[71]

Exceptionalism as "exemptionalism"

During the George W. Bush administration (2001–2009), the term was somewhat abstracted from its historical context.^[72] Proponents and opponents alike began using it to describe a phenomenon wherein certain political interests view the United States as being "above" or an "exception" to the law, specifically the Law of Nations.^[73] (This phenomenon is less concerned with justifying American uniqueness than with asserting its immunity to international law.) This new use of the term has served to confuse the topic and muddy the waters since its unilateralist emphasis, and actual orientation diverges somewhat from prior uses of the phrase. A certain number of those who subscribe to "old-style" or "traditional American exceptionalism"—the idea that America is a more nearly exceptional nation than are others, that it differs qualitatively from the rest of the world and has a unique role to play in world history—also agree that the United States is and ought to be entirely subject to and bound by the public international law. Indeed, recent research shows that "there is some indication for American exceptionalism among the [U.S.] public, but very little evidence of unilateral attitudes".^[74]

On September 12, 2013, in the context of U.S. President Barack Obama's comment about American exceptionalism during his September 10, 2013, talk to the American people while considering military action on Syria for its alleged use of chemical weapons against civilians, Russian President Vladimir Putin criticized Obama saying that "It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation."^[75]

In his interview with RT on October 4, 2013, President of Ecuador Rafael Correa criticized Obama's policies and compared America's exceptionalism with Nazi Germany, saying: "Does not this remind you of the Nazis' rhetoric before and during World War II? They considered themselves the chosen race, the superior race, etc. Such words and ideas pose extreme danger."^[76]

Moral purity

Critics on the left such as Marilyn Young and Howard Zinn have argued that American history is so morally flawed, citing slavery, civil rights and social welfare issues, that it cannot be an exemplar of virtue.^[77] Zinn argues that American exceptionalism cannot be of divine origin because it was not benign, especially when dealing with Native Americans.^[78]

Donald E. Pease mocks American exceptionalism as a "state fantasy" and a "myth" in his 2009 book *The New American Exceptionalism*.^[79] Pease notes that "state fantasies cannot altogether conceal the inconsistencies they mask", showing how such events as the revelations of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib prison and the exposure of government incompetence after Hurricane Katrina "opened fissures in the myth of exceptionalism".^[79]

American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr argued that the automatic assumption that America acts for the right will bring about moral corruption. However, Niebuhr did support the nation's Cold War policies. His position (called "Christian realism") advocated a liberal notion of responsibility that justified interference in other nations.^[80]

Double standards

U.S. historians like Thomas Bender "try and put an end to the recent revival of American exceptionalism, a defect he esteems to be inherited from the Cold War".^[81] Gary W. Reichard and Ted Dickson argue "how the development of the United States has always depended on its transactions with other nations for commodities, cultural values and populations".^[82] Roger Cohen asks, "How exceptional can you be when every major problem you face, from terrorism to nuclear proliferation to gas prices, requires joint action?"^[83] Harold Koh distinguishes "distinctive rights, different labels, the 'flying buttress' mentality, and double standards. (...) [T]he fourth face—double standards—presents the most dangerous and destructive form of American exceptionalism."^[84] Godfrey Hodgson also concludes that "the US national myth is dangerous".^[85] Samantha Power asserts that "we're neither the shining example, nor even competent meddlers. It's going to take a generation or so to reclaim American exceptionalism."^[86]

The Americanist heresy

In 1898 Pope Leo XIII denounced what he deemed to be the heresy of Americanism in the encyclical *Testem benevolentiae nostrae*.^[87] He targeted American exceptionalism in the ecclesiastical domain, arguing that it stood in opposition to Papal denunciations of modernism.^{[88][89]} At the end of the 19th century, there was a tendency among Catholic clergy in the United States to view American society as inherently different from other Christian nations, and to argue that the understanding of Church doctrine had to be enlarged in order to encompass the 'American Experience', which included greater individualism, tolerance of other religions, and Church–State separation.^[90]

Pre-emptive declinism

Herbert London has defined *pre-emptive declinism* as a postmodern belief "that the United States is not an exceptional nation and is not entitled by virtue of history to play a role on the world stage different from other nations".^[91] London ascribed the view to Paul Krugman, among others.^[92] Krugman had written in *The New York Times* that "We have always known that America's reign as the world's greatest nation would eventually end. However, most of us imagined that our downfall, when it came, would be something grand and tragic."^[92]

According to RealClearPolitics, declarations of America's declining power have been common in the English-language media. In 1988, Flora Lewis said that "Talk of U.S. decline is real in the sense that the U.S. can no longer pull all the levers of command or pay all the bills." According to Anthony Lewis in 1990, Europeans and Asians are already finding confirmation of their suspicion that the United States is in decline. Citing America's dependence on foreign sources of energy and "crucial weaknesses" in the military, Tom Wicker concluded "that maintaining superpower status is becoming more difficult—nearly impossible—for the United States".^[93] In 2004, Pat Buchanan lamented "the decline and fall of the greatest industrial republic the world had ever seen".^[94] In 2007, Matthew Parris of *The Sunday Times* in London wrote that the United States is "overstretched", romantically recalling the Kennedy presidency, when "America had the best arguments" and could use moral persuasion rather than force to have its way in the world. From his vantage point in Shanghai, the *International Herald Tribune's* Howard French worries about "the declining moral influence of the United States" over an emergent China.^[93]

In his book, *The Post-American World*, *Newsweek* editor Fareed Zakaria refers to a "Post-American world" that he says "is not about the decline of America, but rather about the rise of everyone else".^[95]

Similarities between the U.S. and Europe

In December 2009, historian Peter Baldwin published a book arguing that, despite widespread attempts to contrast the 'American way of life' and the 'European social model', America and Europe are actually very similar to a number of social and economic indices. Baldwin claimed that the black underclass accounts for many of those few areas where a stark difference exists between the U.S. and Europe, such as homicide and child poverty.^[96]

The historian Felipe Fernández-Armesto argues that it be commonly thought that all people consider themselves exceptional. In most cases in which this subject has broached the similarities between the conflicting parties outweigh the differences. Things such as the "dynamic wealth creation, the democracy, the accessibility of opportunity, the cult of civil liberty, the tradition of tolerance," and

what Fernández-Armesto considers evils such as the materialistic economy, the excessive privileges of wealth, and the selective illiberality are standard features in many modern societies. However, he adds, America is made exceptional by the intensity with which these characteristics are concentrated there.^[97]

Current official stance and its detractors

In April 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama responded to a journalist's question in Strasbourg with the statement, "I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism."^[98] Obama further noted that "I see no contradiction between believing that America has a continued extraordinary role in leading the world towards peace and prosperity and recognizing that leadership is incumbent, depends on, our ability to create partnerships because we create partnerships because we can't solve these problems alone."^[99] Mitt Romney attacked Obama's statement, arguing it showed Obama did not believe in American exceptionalism.^[100] Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee said that Obama's "worldview is dramatically different from any president, Republican or Democrat, we've had... He grew up more as a globalist than an American. To deny American exceptionalism is in essence to deny the heart and soul of this nation."^[101]

In a speech on the Syria crisis on September 10, 2013, Obama said: "however, when, with modest effort and risk, we can stop children from being gassed to death, and thereby make our kids safer over the long run, I believe we should act... That is what makes America different. That is what makes us exceptional."^[102] In a direct response the next day, Russian President Vladimir Putin published an op-ed in *The New York Times*, articulating that "It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation... We are all different, but when we ask for the Lord's blessings, we must not forget that God created us equal."^[103] Putin's views were soon endorsed by future president Donald Trump who declared the op-ed "a masterpiece" to British television personality Piers Morgan: "You think of the term as being beautiful, but all of sudden you say, what if you're in Germany or Japan or any one of 100 different countries? You are not going to like that term," Trump said. "It is very insulting, and Putin put it to him about that."^[104] Some left-wing American commentators agree with Trump's stance; one example is Sherle Schwenninger, a co-founder of the New America Foundation, who in a 2016 *Nation* magazine symposium remarked that "Trump would redefine American exceptionalism by bringing an end to the neoliberal/neoconservative globalist project that Hillary Clinton and many Republicans support"^[105]

See also

- American civil religion
- American imperialism
- Americanism (ideology)
- Americanization
- Americentrism
- Anti-Americanism
- International rankings of the United States
- Moral equivalence
- Juche (Nationalist North Korean State Ideology)
- Sonderweg (German exceptionalism)
- Yamato-damashii (Japanese spirit)
- Nihonjinron (Japanese uniqueness)

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