

American Foreign Policy: Timeline

GVPT 170 — American Government

Instructor: Jesse-Douglas Mathewson

- 1781: Americans and French defeat British at Yorktown, VA; last major battle of the American Revolution
- 1783: Americans sign Treaty of Paris with British, officially ending the American Revolution
- 1796: George Washington retires from public life, warns against entering entangling alliances in farewell address**
- 1801: United States Navy blockades port of Tripoli on the Barbary Coast
- 1803: Thomas Jefferson convinces Congress to acquire Louisiana Purchase from Napoleon's France
- 1805: US concludes peace with Tripoli
- 1812: US declares war on British beginning War of 1812
- 1815: General Andrew Jackson defeats British at Battle of New Orleans, inflicting nearly 1,000 casualties while sustaining only ~50, nearly two weeks after Treaty of Ghent officially ended War of 1812
- 1822: With British Backing, President James Monroe warns France, Russia and Spain from making further imperial claims in the Americas**
- 1846: US declares war on Mexico to enforce its Texas claim; Mexican-American War begins
- 1847: Representative Abraham Lincoln (Whig-IL) demands clarification of causes of War against Mexico**
- 1848: Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo ends Mexican-American War; US gains most of its territory west of the Great Plains, known today as the Mexican Cession
- 1861: Civil War begins as Confederate troops open fire on Union-occupied Fort Sumter, Charleston, SC
- 1865: General Lee surrenders at Appomattox Courthouse, VA, sealing victory for the Union North
- 1898: US begins and concludes Spanish-American War, acquiring Puerto Rico, Cuba, Philippines, and Guam from Spain; Spain's imperial presence in the West ends after 406 years
- 1904: President Theodore Roosevelt threatens and uses US military force to protect commerce in Latin America**
- 1917: Communists seize Russian government, establish USSR, pull USSR out of WWI
- 1917: US enters WWI on the side of England, France, Italy, Japan, et al; Ends Washingtonian doctrine of non-intervention in European affairs
- 1918: President Woodrow Wilson outlines post-WWI policy in his Fourteen Points address**
- 1918: Armistice (cease-fire) declared November 11th, ending combat in WWI
- 1920: Treaty of Versailles officially ends war on the Western Front, imposes strict peace on Germany and establishes Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations
- 1920: US Senate fails to ratify League of Nations treaty
- 1941: President Franklin Roosevelt pledges support for Allies in WWII, vows to protect freedom at home and abroad**
- 1941: Japanese naval aircraft bomb and torpedo Pearl Harbor, HI; US declares war on Japan, Germany declares war on US, and US responds by joining WWII on the side of France, Russia, and England
- 1945: Hostilities between Allies and Germany cease in May; US and Russia occupy Berlin
- 1945: US drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan; Hostilities against Japan end soon after
- 1946: United Nations established
- 1946: Charge d'Affairs George Kennan wires report on Soviet Russia's goals and activities, outlines first USSR policy; Cold War begins**
- 1947: President Harry Truman pledges support for anti-communists in Eastern Europe**
- 1950: US intervenes as part of a United Nations force on the side of South Korea against North Korean communists, aided by Soviet Russia and later the People's Republic of China; First Cold War conflict
- 1953: Cease fire declared in Korea and demilitarized zone (DMZ) established along 38 degrees N latitude; no peace treaty signed, Koreans remain divided
- 1959: First US military advisers arrive to aid South Vietnamese in their war against the communist Viet Minh in the north.
- 1965: President Lyndon Johnson orders increase of American troop presence in Vietnam to 500,000
- 1973: Paris Peace Talks result in US pullout of Vietnam with promise from North not to invade the South
- 1975: North Vietnamese invade South, capture Saigon and rename Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam reunified
- 1991: US invade bomb and invade southern Iraq, expelling Saddam Hussein's Republican guard from Kuwait
- 1999: US-led NATO forces bomb Serbia to punish Slobodan Milosevic for ethnically cleansing Kosovars
- 2001: Al Qaeda operatives kill ~3,000 in terrorist attack on New York and Washington on September 11th
- 2001: US invades Afghanistan in autumn, removing Taliban-led government
- 2002: President George W. Bush outlines foreign policy, vows unilateral pre-emption against any enemy whom the US deems an imminent threat**
- 2003: US invades Iraq in March

A History of Superpowers

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Superpower: A country with the capacity or potential to effect creative and destructive power in any corner of the known world.

330 — 300 BCE: The Empire of Alexander the Great
221 BCE — 1271 CE: Various Chinese dynasties
200 BCE — 300 CE: Roman Republic / Empire
1492 — 1588: Empire of Spain
1588 — 1918: British Empire / United Kingdom
1945 — Present: The United States

The American Superpower: Relevant Statistics

Economic Power

Population: 300 Million (ranks 4th)
GDP: \$10.9 Trillion (ranks 1st)
Total Trade: \$2.3 Trillion (ranks 1st)
Imports: \$1.5 Trillion (ranks 1st)
Exports: \$800 Billion (ranks 1st)
Affiliate Sales: \$10 Trillion (approximate; ranks 1st)
GDP Growth: Ranks 1st among Western Industrialized Democracies

Military Power

Military Spending: \$400 Billion (ranks 1st)
Naval Supremacy: 9 Supercarrier Groups (ranks 1st)
More modern nuclear submarines than every remaining country
Air Supremacy: More advanced fighters than any other country
6,000-10,500 nuclear warheads (ranks 1st or 2nd)
Ground Supremacy: More armored forces than any other country
1.4 Million personnel on active duty (ranks 3rd)
6 continents occupied by American forces (ranks 1st)
Land Area: 6 million square miles (ranks 3rd)
Railroads: 140,000 miles of railway (ranks 1st, 2.3x Russia)
Highways: 4 million miles of highway (ranks 1st, 2x India)
Airports: 5,128 paved airports (7x Brazil, > next 20 countries combined)

Soft “Cultural” Power

American brands (McDonalds, Coca Cola, Apple) known worldwide
American entertainment known and available worldwide
Large numbers of American students and workers abroad