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Introduction

THE LONG AMERICAN CENTURY

In the 1990s, following the end of the Cold War, Americans were unsure about their place in the world. For the previous half century, U.S. foreign policy had been defined by resistance to fascism and communism. But after these struggles, it was no longer clear what America's world mission should be—or, indeed, if America should have a mission. In this climate, former secretary of state Henry Kissinger, perhaps the world's most recognized diplomat, worried that many Americans did not believe the United States needed a foreign policy at all. He thought it did and, alarmed by their apathy, wrote a call to action in early 2001.[1]

Kissinger's book could not have been better timed. Only months after publication, the terrorist group al-Qaeda launched the devastating 9/11 attacks against targets in New York and Washington, D.C. Nothing could have shown Americans more clearly that they needed a foreign policy. And yet Kissinger had missed a great deal, too. His book made no mention of al-Qaeda or its leader, Osama bin Laden, and contained only a brief discussion of international terrorism. As Kissinger would be the first to admit, foreign policy priorities are apt to change, often suddenly and unpredictably.

When they do, as at the end of the Cold War and after 9/11, Americans usually find themselves locked in ferocious debate over how their country should act on the world stage. And in such debates, all sides refer to the past—successes and mistakes alike—in order to craft, justify, and legitimate plans for the present and future. Making claims about the past is common practice. Misperceptions about the history of American foreign relations are also common. Discussions of history often lack knowledge, context, or specificity. Distortions, half-truths, and catechisms of national faith made without regard to evidence, offered by all parts of the political spectrum, are even more prevalent during highly politicized debates about the terms of America's "proper" role in the world.

By bringing together important and revealing original documents, we hope that *America in the World: A History in Documents from the War with*

[1] Henry Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy? Toward a Diplomacy for the 21st Century* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

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Spain to the War on Terror will contribute to a deeper understanding of America's role in the world by promoting the study of the past on its own terms and for its own sake and by informing present and future debates. Above all, we hope that readers, both students and the broader public, will come to appreciate through the following pages the sheer complexity of America's historical encounters with the outside world and the myriad factors—economic, political, cultural, ideological—that have driven U.S. behavior since the late nineteenth century.

Dating the rise of American international power is no easy task. When the Time-Life publishing baron Henry R. Luce proclaimed the advent of "the American century" in early 1941, he intended to suggest that the United States had suddenly arrived as a great power and was likely to dominate global affairs in the future.[2] By dating the emergence of the United States to the World War II era, however, Luce underestimated the historical extent of U.S. power and influence. In fact, the American century's origins lie farther back, in the late nineteenth century, when the nation's unprecedented industrial growth enabled its leaders to play a world role. World War II may have marked the culmination of America's rise as a global superpower, but the process began much earlier.

Our book charts this process, one of world-historical importance, through an examination of the documentary record. Surveying what might be called the "long" American century, it examines the career of the United States as a world power from the 1890s to the first decade of the twenty-first century. By using original documents, we hope to capture the thoughts and perspectives of a wide variety of Americans who grappled with the complexities of their evolving world roles. Americans, in the past as now, rarely agreed on how to engage with the rest of the world or to use their power. Perhaps the best way to appreciate these arguments is by listening to the voices that originally made them. It is instructive as well to heed foreign voices, which commented with ever-increasing urgency and insight on the role of the United States in international affairs.

For ease of use—and because the first step for any student of history is to develop a timeline of events—documents are presented in chronological order within each chapter. But close reading reveals not a single line of narrative so much as the recurrence and intermingling of several themes that have cut across the history of U.S. relations with the outside world. We hope that this volume enables readers to trace the development of dilemmas and debates that have long sat at the heart of American foreign policy making.

[2]Luce's phrase originally appeared in "The American Century," *Life*, February 17, 1941. In 1999, the journal *Diplomatic History* reprinted Luce's essay along with sixteen essays of commentary on the notion of an "American century." See "The American Century: A Roundtable (Part I)," *Diplomatic History* 23 (Spring 1999), 157–370; and "The American Century: A Roundtable (Part II)," *Diplomatic History* 23 (Summer 1999), 391–537.

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One central theme is the expanding definition of *national security*, from a narrow concept of continental self-defense to an expansive, global vision that sometimes seemed to have no limit. Even outer space and the moon became battlegrounds for playing out American policies and influence during the Cold War. Another key theme is the concern Americans have often had with the influence of private capital and industry—what President Dwight D. Eisenhower famously called a "military-industrial complex"—on their nation's foreign policy. Equally, we are interested in exposing the ideological currents that have driven American engagement in the world or, conversely, given Americans pause about ever-expanding international ambitions. We also examine the waging of wars and opposition to them, the importance of human rights and democracy in the exercise of U.S. power, and the intersections between race, religion, empire, and revolution in Americans' views of the world.

In choosing these themes, we have been guided partly by interest in the old question that has preoccupied historians since they started writing rigorously about American foreign relations in the 1950s: In making policy toward the outside world, have U.S. leaders been guided principally by ideology, material ambitions, or geostrategic calculation? Many of the documents provide windows into the ways in which these three types of motives weighed in the minds of American decision makers. But we have also been guided by two newer concerns that have decisively reshaped the writing of U.S. foreign-relations history in the last couple of decades.

First, in keeping with a pronounced trend away from exclusive focus on decision-making elites in explaining U.S. foreign relations, we include documents that reflect how Americans outside the rarified world of Washington decision making thought about international affairs. To this end, we highlight the voices of academics, activists, clergymen, novelists, poets, and songwriters in addition to presidents, cabinet secretaries, and military officers. To be sure, the book contains plenty of "classics," indisputably important landmark documents, often written by easily recognizable figures who are familiar to any student of American foreign relations. By emphasizing the perspectives of Americans who never served in government alongside those of policy makers, however, we hope to capture a fuller, richer, and more nuanced interpretation of U.S. diplomatic history than is sometimes conveyed in textbooks or documentary collections surveying the history of American diplomacy.

Second, consistent with efforts by scholars to view the United States as just one participant in a complex web of international relationships, we include numerous non-American sources. Above all, the book highlights materials from the Soviet bloc that became available following the end of the Cold War, transforming historians' ability to write about the East-West conflict that dominated international affairs for half a century. But the book

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also contains non-American documents from earlier and later periods. Our hope is that such documents—comprising approximately one quarter of the entire collection—will generate deeper discussion of U.S. behavior by revealing what foreign observers, as well as Americans, thought about it. This material also reminds us that U.S. foreign policy generated a tremendous amount of comment abroad during the American century. As Canadian prime minister Pierre Trudeau once put it in a speech in Washington, D.C., "Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant; no matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, one is affected by every twitch and grunt."[3] A similar cliché, commonly heard during the economic crisis that began in 2008, contends, "When America sneezes, the world catches a cold."[4]

Like many clichés, these aphorisms have more than a ring of truth; at the very least, they reflect widespread perceptions of American power.[5] In 2004, for example, during a presidential election that many believed would shape the fate of the entire world, the *Guardian*, one of Britain's major daily newspapers, wrote that non-Americans felt "increasingly helpless" at not having a say over the outcome. "[U]nless you happen to be a voter in a handful of swing states, there's little you can do about the final result. If you're not American, the situation is more acute" because "the actions of the US impact on our lives in overwhelming ways." Even British politics, the *Guardian* warned, "may now be at least as heavily influenced by White House policy as by the choices of UK voters."[6]

[3] Pierre Trudeau, quoted in John Herd Thompson and Stephen J. Randall, *Canada and the United States: Ambivalent Allies*, 2nd ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 250.

[4] "When America Sneezes, Clichés Spread," *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, January 24, 2008, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18368571.

[5] The literature on such foreign perspectives of the United States is vast, even more so when comparative histories and studies of America's relations with other countries and regions are taken into account. But for good general introductions from a variety of approaches, see Geir Lundestad, "Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945–1952," *Journal of Peace Research* 23 (September 1986): 263–77; Rob Kroes, *If You've Seen One, You've Seen the Mall: Europeans and American Mass Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May, eds., *"Here, There, and Everywhere": The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2000); Alan McPherson, *Yankee No! Anti-Americanism in U.S.–Latin American Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Tony Judt and Denis Lacorne, eds., *With Us or Against Us: Studies in Global Anti-Americanism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Andrei S. Markovits, *Uncouth Nation: Why Europe Dislikes America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007); Giacomo Chiozza, *Anti-Americanism and the American World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); and Steven Kull, *Feeling Betrayed: The Roots of Muslim Anger at America* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2011).

[6] Oliver Burkeman, "My Fellow Non-Americans . . . ," *Guardian*, October 13, 2004, 2.

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We hope that our inclusion of some non-American documents, from adversaries as well as allies, captures these international sentiments and illustrates for Americans just how deep and profound their effect on the rest of the world can be. However, we hasten to add that while our book examines foreign perceptions of U.S. behavior, it does not analyze policy decisions by other countries. Not only is such an analysis beyond the scope of this book, but its proper treatment is also beyond the book's size.

In fact, one of the most difficult challenges in compiling this book was to select a mere 223 documents from the monumentally vast pool of material from which to draw. To help with this problem, we have organized each chapter around one or two broad interpretive questions and selected material that relates, in one way or another, to that central agenda. Such questions are spelled out in the introduction to each chapter and, we hope, lend coherence to a project that could clearly spill in an infinite number of directions. If we have been successful, each chapter will read not as a loose collection of material organized around historical topics but as sustained considerations of major interpretive questions that have preoccupied historians of American foreign relations. We hope, for example, that our consideration of the role played by economic, ideological, and cultural factors in driving U.S. behavior abroad will dovetail with the flourishing debate about which of these impulses has been most important in explaining American decision making. We also hope that our juxtaposition of documents reflecting geostrategic calculation with other materials illuminating the political and cultural landscape of the United States will promote consideration of the extent to which foreign policy grows from—and is restrained by—the nation's internal character.

Even as we have been heavily influenced by the long-standing preoccupations of diplomatic historians, we have also been guided by a sense of which questions about the past will most likely resonate in future debates over American foreign relations. For this reason, we have included many documents that reflect in one way or another on the questions of how deeply the United States should be involved in international affairs, how the nation should balance self-interest and principle, and how closely Americans' self-perceptions correspond to the opinions held by foreigners of the role played by the United States on the global stage. We readily acknowledge, however, our keen awareness of the impossibility of knowing what issues will stand out in the future. Many of our selections provide abundant evidence that prognosticators about the global order have a decidedly mixed track record.

One point stands out above all others when the documents in this book are considered: the American century has given rise to an extraordinary array of commentary that defies generalization. The documents that follow reflect a spectrum of opinion from ecstatic faith in the United States

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as global leader to certainty of American malfeasance. Who was right is perhaps a less interesting question than how various authors made their arguments, why they wrote as they did, and what kinds of responses they generated. Reckoning seriously with these matters will, we hope, make for well-informed students, general readers, and—in the best case—citizens.

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