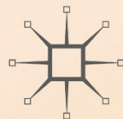


UNDERSTANDING **AMERICAN** POWER

THE CHANGING WORLD OF
US FOREIGN POLICY

BRYAN MABEE



Understanding American Power

Understanding American Power

The Changing World of US Foreign Policy

Bryan Mabee

palgrave
macmillan



© Bryan Mabee 2013

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The author has asserted his right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2013 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries

ISBN 978-0-230-21772-0 hardback

ISBN 978-0-230-21773-7 ISBN 978-1-137-36811-9 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-1-137-36811-9

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Contents

<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	vii
<i>Preface and Acknowledgements</i>	viii
Introduction: American Power in the World	1
Debates about the future of American power	4
The argument and organization of the book	8
1 The Rise of American Power	14
The state, power and foreign policy: 1776–1945	16
The ‘national security state’	30
The Cold War and American power	35
International order in the post-Cold War world	43
The first Obama Administration	47
Conclusion	51
2 American Power and International Relations	54
Wielding American power	55
What is power in international relations?	60
Competing conceptions of American power	65
The sources of power	78
Conclusion	80
3 The Power of the State and the Foreign Policy Process	83
The power of the American state: contexts of US power	85
The powers of Congress and President over foreign policy	92
Congressional–executive branch relations	101
The Foreign Policy Bureacracy	108
Societal influences on foreign policy-making	111
Conclusion	119
4 The Evolution of Military Power:	
An American Way of War?	121
The development of military power	123
The Cold War and the military establishment	130

Military power and power projection	138
Civil–military relations and the ‘American way of war’	142
The future of US military power	149
5 The Rise (and Fall?) of American Economic Power	151
US economic power in perspective	152
The development of economic power	159
National political economy and the national interest	166
American leadership and hegemony	169
Competition, crisis and the future of US capitalism	174
Conclusion	180
6 The Power of American Values:	
Ideology and Identity in American Foreign Policy	182
Ideology in American life	183
Liberalism, republicanism and exceptionalism	189
Exceptionalist nationalism and American power	195
Conclusion: the future of ideological power	207
7 Responses to American Power	209
Conceptualizing resistance to US power	211
Compulsory power: the balance of power, US coercive power and economic challengers	214
Institutional power: mobilizing bias and interest	226
Structural power: challenging American hegemony	229
Conclusion	235
Conclusion: The Second American Century and Beyond	236
The concept of power revisited	237
The particularities of the US state and US power	239
The future of American power: domestic crisis?	244
The future of American power: a ‘post-American world’?	246
Conclusion	249
<i>References</i>	251
<i>Index</i>	279

List of Tables and Figures

Tables

2.1	Sources of power and the power debates	81
-----	--	----

Figures

4.1	National defense share of the budget and economy	136
5.1	GDP in trillions current \$US, 2000–11	153
5.2	Annual GDP growth, in percentage, 2000–11	154
5.3	GDP per capita, in current \$US, 2000–11	155
5.4	US federal debt, 1980–2017	179

Preface and Acknowledgements

The book that follows is the product of attempts over many years to not only better understand US foreign policy, but also to broaden out the ways in which we might examine it. I focus on the much broader concept of ‘American power’ as a way of moving away from the ‘foreign policy process’ as the main explanation of how the American state engages with the external world (note: I use ‘United States’ and ‘American/America’ interchangeably in the text that follows; where I mean the Americas more generally the usage will be clear). It is not because such views are unimportant (indeed I take them very seriously in Chapter 3), but they tell us less than we might want to know about the wider dynamics of American society, the international system, and the state as a mediator – both as an active actor and as a structure – between these realms. Power is also a core way that the US is commonly examined and argued about in wider conversation, and looking at the US in terms of the scope of its power – past and present – will enable a better understanding of the future of US power. In this light, the book is also intended as an intervention into recent debates about American ‘decline’, providing a clearer analysis of power as a means to better contemplate current tendencies in American power, and also relate them to American historical development.

The book therefore is both an attempt at justifying a particular approach to thinking about American foreign policy through power dynamics as well as an analytic overview of the past, present and future of American power in the world (and therefore American foreign policy as well). It is intended to be a contribution to a political and historical sociology of international relations, with the intention of analysing American power in the context of international and domestic-societal dynamics. This presents a more complicated (and perhaps messier) picture of US power in the world than may be presently available, but it is one that in my opinion better situates the US in the world, and provides us with a richer understanding of the US as an actor in international relations.

With the general scholarly background out of the way, it remains to acknowledge the people and institutions that aided the completion of the book. First, I must thank Steven Kennedy, my publisher at Palgrave (and the rest of his team), who asked me to write the book in the first place, and has continually pushed and encouraged me over the years. Second, I have to give special thanks to colleagues who have read drafts, discussed ideas, and given me feedback that has had a major impact on my thinking about the book: Tarak Barkawi, Alex Colas, Mick Cox, Toby Dodge, Jean-François Drolet, James Dunkerley, Adam Fagan, Sophie Harman, Ray Kiely, Patricia Owens, Chris Phillips, Rick Saull, Srdjan Vucetic and Jeff Webber. Ray and James have been particularly supportive of this research project (and beyond), and I really owe them a great deal. Third, I'd like to thank my colleagues at the School of Politics and International Relations at Queen Mary, University of London, who have provided a collegial and supportive environment for producing scholarship. I also must thank the students of POL358 US Foreign Policy, where I have tested a number of the ideas and arguments of the book over the past few years, and the discussions and feedback I've had in those classes have been important in thinking and rethinking the content of the book. Fourth, I'd also like to thank the Center for Advanced Security Theory at the University of Copenhagen – and especially Lars Bo Kaspersen and Ben Rosamond for facilitating my visit – which generously put me up in the summer of 2012, and gave me a fantastic intellectual space to finalize a first draft of the manuscript. Fifth, the Teder family gave me a great deal of support while visiting Sweden, and I've appreciated their hospitality and patience while ostensibly on holiday. Finally, Maja Cederberg has not only been incredibly supportive of a project that has taken up an inordinate amount of time, but also read and commented on the manuscript, and gave me a much needed outside perspective. The book is undoubtedly clearer because of her: *tack Maja!*

BRYAN MABEE

Introduction: American Power in the World

Since the end of the Cold War, the future of American power has been much debated. The collapse of the Soviet Union ended an era where the US role in the world was well understood, and the new era saw the US as a sole superpower, and much contention in terms of what that might mean for America's future role. Would the US become predominant or preponderant in the international system? Would the US squander its newfound power through an increasing insularity? Would challengers rise to circumvent American power? In the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, such questions became even more heated. Were there new transnational threats that could undermine US power in different ways? Would the US reaction to such challenges jeopardize American legitimacy in the world? More recently, the economic crisis of 2007/08 has again brought the debates to the forefront, and with the Western capitalist system seemingly mired in continual problems, new economic challengers to American power are seen as on the rise (or as already arisen). Are we headed for a 'post-American world', where states such as China, India and Russia are peer competitors to the US? Is the unipolarity of the US in the international system to be replaced by a multipolar system?

What are we to make of such debates? How are we to evaluate them? This book is an attempt to better understand American power, but one that endeavours to go beyond the limits of the current debates, by paying more attention to the ways in which we define and analyse power, and how we examine it in terms of the historical development of the US state. Finding a way of navigating the question of the future of American power is important not just as an academic exercise, but also as an issue that goes to the core of the future of international relations. While the book is not about forecasting the future, it does attempt to develop an improved understanding of the development of American institutions over time in

order to provide a better critical understanding of the progress and prospects of American power.

Though now a decade old, the 2003 invasion of Iraq highlights a number of concerns with US power. In 2003, the United States, with an assortment of allies (a 'coalition of the willing'), attacked the state of Iraq, in an effort not only to prevent what its leaders and policy-makers perceived as an increasing international security threat, but also as part of a wider bid for regional order-making. The Iraq War became a highly controversial focal point for all manner of discussion of American power: the overall strength of US power (in terms of the ability to achieve the stated goals of the invasion), the potential for credible opposition (in terms of other key states which opposed the invasion), the perceived recklessness of the wielding of US power (by not having more broad-based international support), the goals and shape of US power (the clarity of the goals articulated), and the future of US power (would the invasion enhance or decrease American power?). That all of these issues were up for debate shows not only the problems associated with highly contentious foreign policy actions, but also a concern with the contours of power in international relations. While the Iraq War certainly brings moral and political concerns about the use and abuse of power in international relations to the fore, it also allows us to probe more deeply into the sources of American power. For example, it raised numerous questions about the role of power in US foreign policy-making, from the power of the executive branch over Congress in terms of the 'war power', through social forces in the US state in influencing the policy agenda, to the articulation of US power (and US 'imperialism') in international relations.

The 'Arab Spring' of early 2011 raised similar questions about American power in a new context: in the aftermath of years of war in both Iraq and Afghanistan, but also under a new American president, Barack Obama. Questions were raised concerning both the ability and the vision of the US in supporting the democratic movements in a variety of Arab states: Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Bahrain and Yemen. The Obama Administration took a pragmatic approach: while earlier speeches (such as that in Cairo in 2009) had provided a moral vision of the US supporting democracy, there was also an increased sense of restraint. The new foreign policy vision can be seen in two ways: as a repudiation of the previous Bush Administration's emphasis on imposing regime change; and as emphasizing the decreasing ability of the US to provide direct leadership everywhere in the world. The use of American power in this

context was pragmatic and cautious: support was given for democrats in Egypt (after initial support for President Mubarak), while no support was given to protesters in Bahrain. While intervention was never contemplated in the ongoing civil war in Syria, the US pushed for direct military intervention (though limited to air support for rebel forces) in Libya. The questions here surrounded the ability or desire of the US to wield power in the region: did it have the ability to influence actors in other regions? was there a coherent vision of US leadership? Furthermore, in the case of Libya, the power of the president was also questioned, in terms of overreaching his authority to bring the country into war: Congress was never properly consulted about the use of force, and questions were raised as to whether or not this was appropriate (or legal).

As will be elaborated upon later, part of the core argument of the book is that we need to go beyond looking at the US from only the perspective of international politics to actively incorporate the domestic institutions of American power into our analysis. In academic International Relations (IR), US foreign policy-making is often examined in the context of its international relations, looking at grand strategy and approaches to the world of international relations (such as realism and idealism). Alternatively, a narrower focus on the policy process could be seen as fundamental to understanding foreign policy outcomes. Here, analysis of policy-making starts with an emphasis on the formal powers of government, looking at the powers of the executive branch versus those of Congress and how the two bodies interact to form policy. Further extension of the examination of policy process would look at the role of bureaucracies, the impact of interest groups, and of course, the external environment. These approaches, while important, neglect broader societal influences on US foreign policy-making, and have a tendency towards presentism: that is, they do not see the dynamics of American power as embedded in institutions that have developed over time. A core argument of the book is that there is a need for a broader approach to US foreign policy and power that goes beyond both traditional approaches in IR and those that focus narrowly on the foreign policy process.

The book has two core analytic claims. First, it claims that in order to grasp the dynamics of US power, we need to understand more about the US itself: the way in which the American state draws upon domestic power resources to project internationally; how such power has developed historically and institutionally; and how the

international environment impinges on (and provides opportunities for) the expression of US power. To accomplish this, we need more than an analysis of the policy process (though we do need to understand this as well), as power is diffused throughout the state in different ways, and not everything can be accounted for through the mechanisms of formal politics. Second, the book claims that the analysis of American power requires a more nuanced understanding of power in order to get a better grip on what its future might be. Power needs to be understood not just as ‘power over’ – the power of the US to get what it wants in relation to other actors – but also as the power to structure outcomes (and interests) in the international system more generally. The book will argue that the ‘institutional’ and ‘structural’ power of the US is core to thinking about the past and future of American power, and crucial for putting current arguments about American decline into perspective. In essence, the book will argue that while US power (especially in the economic sphere) is in *relative* decline, its institutional and structural power is still rather robust. In fact, the case will be made that the main issue with US power in the future concerns the internal dynamics of the US state – politically and economically – rather than problems of relative power internationally.

The book further examines the debates about the sources of US power and their global projection, beyond the mechanics of foreign policy, analysing the broad array of social forces – ideological, economic, military, political – that contribute to America’s global position. The book will also put American power in a historical context, arguing that increases in American power were largely historically contingent and shaped by a variety of domestic and international factors. Therefore, the book puts the American state at the nexus of the international and domestic, arguing that both facets of politics are crucial for understanding American power now and in the future. The Introduction continues by first setting the future of American power in the context of debates about American decline, in order to get a better sense of the debates about power (and the possible deficiencies), before moving on to provide an overview of the argument and structure of the book that follows.

Debates about the future of American power

The future of American power has been debated repeatedly in recent years, especially in the context of the aftermath of the wars in Iraq

and Afghanistan, the impact of the global (but American-centered) financial crisis in 2007/08, and the purported rise of a number of developing states challenging the centrality of the US in the global economic system. However, concerns about relative decline have been prevalent since the late 1960s, and throughout the period of the 1970s and 1980s they were a prominent part of political, popular and academic discourse about the US. As Michael Cox (2001: 320) describes the earlier debates:

Divided at home, confronted by new competitors abroad, faced with new uncertainties in an increasingly crisis-prone world where both enemies and allies alike were eroding its previous position of strength, there seemed to be little room for complacency. At best the United States was becoming what Richard Rosecrance termed an 'ordinary country' with its wings 'entangled' like the metaphorical 'eagle'; at worst an indebted, has-been superpower, with a declining capacity to shape the world around it.

A core example of these tendencies (or one that became more popular because of them) can be found in the 1988 publication of Paul Kennedy's (1989) work, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, which provoked a substantial debate when it first appeared. This large work, covering some 500 years of history, with detailed footnotes, was in essence an erudite historical survey, though one with a purpose: to demonstrate that great powers had a tendency towards 'overstretch' in their ambitions abroad. Kennedy argued that the expansive use of military (and imperial) power needed to maintain dominance (or primacy) inevitably strained the domestic economy until power was lost (Kennedy, 1989; cf. Gilpin, 1981). There were large costs to maintaining leadership or dominance in the international system that inevitably could no longer be met when a state's resources were stretched to the point of collapse.

Kennedy's book became prominent due to his analysis of the US, claiming that the US was a great power like any other, and subject to the same pressures of over-extension. For Kennedy, the internal tensions from over-extension were already there to be seen: the Reagan Administration's massive defense expenditures were putting the US in great amounts of debt, from which it would never fully recover. Challengers of the Kennedy thesis saw the US as still the leading state in the international system – they contended that Kennedy had wilfully misinterpreted the facts, or missed out on

crucial pieces of evidence – they also believed that America *must* not decline (Cox, 2007: 646–7); not in the sense that it was impossible, but that it was supporting world order, and needed to retain its overall primacy in order for the world order itself not to collapse. However, the debate was side-lined with the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the US as the sole superpower. The considerable growth in the economy in the 1990s also helped to shift the focus away from decline, and it seemed that Kennedy's critics were proven right.

It is important how Kennedy's book played into a trend that had been around since the early 1970s. The Reagan Administration may have attempted to reverse what had seemed inevitable – 'morning in America' to oppose President Carter's 'malaise' (the nickname given to his national Address of July 1979) – but many of the structural problems were still there. The early 1970s had seen American power challenged in every area. It pulled out of the increasingly intractable war in Vietnam in 1973. In 1971, the Nixon Administration started the beginning of the end of the Bretton Woods international economic system, by stopping the dollar's direct convertibility to gold, which ultimately led to the development of an open exchange in currencies. Relative American productivity had also been in decline since the 1960s, with the states of Western Europe returning to pre-war levels of productivity, and states such as Germany and Japan having significantly improved economic growth. The American share of global productivity became about a fifth of world output by the early 1970s, down from half in the immediate post-war period (Kennedy, 1989: 558–9). There had also been a growing recognition of the growing complexity of the international system in terms of providing effective security, as well as an increasingly inter-dependent global economy (only highlighted by the ease with which the 1973 OPEC oil embargo effectively crippled the American economy, now very reliant on foreign sources of oil). Soviet gains in the 'Third World' also demonstrated the limits of American power, as did the tacit acceptance of Soviet power that was seen in the 1972 agreement of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) and the 1975 Helsinki Accords. Finally, the American economy had entered a period of structural economic problems that had been unheard of previously – stagflation, where inflation remained high and overall growth low. The election of Ronald Reagan was meant to deal with all of these problems, at least partially seen in terms of a moral decline within the US, and variously blamed on the previous admin-

istrations' approaches to foreign policy (especially those of Presidents Nixon and Carter). However, the Reagan years saw several other perceived challenges to American power, mainly in the rise of the East – and especially the threat of Japan – and it is in this context that Kennedy's thesis became the source of popular contention.

The decline debates of the 1970s and 1980s are of much relevance to current debates about American decline, especially in the context of what appear on the surface to be very similar conditions to those of the 1970s: the aftermath of two problematic wars, economic crisis, and the rise of rival economic powers. First, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan showed that American power was not all-encompassing: that despite having by far the most powerful (and expensive) military in the world, the US could not impose itself on either state in terms of the vague goals of national reconstruction and regional order building. Second, the wars and the campaign against terrorism that accompanied them showed an America that was often unwilling to play by the rules of the international system that it itself had set up, with a potential corresponding loss of legitimacy. Third, the economic crisis of 2007/08 initiated a recession that was as large as that of the Great Depression of the 1930s, with an accompanying crisis in American-led capitalism. Fourth, the economic crisis once again highlighted the problems with American public debt and trade deficits, and put in question the future of the dollar as the international reserve currency. Finally, a number of economic competitors emerged that are seen as real challengers to US economic power, most predominantly in the industrial powers of China and Germany, traditional challengers in the EU and Russia, but also in developing economies, such as India and Brazil (for different perspectives see, e.g., Beckley, 2011/12; Brooks and Wohlforth, 2008; Ikenberry, 2008; Kaplan, 2011; Kupchan, 2012; Layne, 2009; Luce, 2012; Moran, 2012; Nye, 2011; Rachman, 2010; Zakaria, 2009).

These factors have all been put forward to question the durability of American unipolarity or hegemony in the international system both today and in the near future. Of course, not everyone agrees on the present condition of American power, nor the future prospects. But three things are important about the current debates for the purpose of the book that follows. First, the decline debates need to be put in context, as the debates themselves ebb and flow with international events that challenge American perceptions of its role in the world. The debates of the 1970s and 1980s were soon forgotten

with the end of the Cold War and the booming economy of the 1990s. The current decline debate continues to draw on the past articulations of decline, which is one reason why we need to be critical of the current discourse. Why were the ‘declinists’ wrong then? What changed to bring America out of relative decline (or was it really in decline at all)? Second, we should also draw attention to the importance of perceptions of decline because, if American policy-makers themselves believe in the reality of relative decline they will act upon it; and there is real evidence that the Obama Administration has conceded this point (see discussions in Indyck et al., 2012; J. Mann, 2012; Singh, 2012), as have important policy reviews (US National Intelligence Council, 2008; 2012).

Finally, at the core of the present debates about American decline and power in the international system is the question of how we examine power itself. For the ‘declinists’ American decline is seen in terms of relative power that affects the ability of the American state (for better or worse) to achieve its interests in relation to other key actors in the international system. Many of those who have been critical of the discourse of decline have homed in on a problematic conceptualization of power as being at the heart of misunderstanding American power today (e.g. Beckley, 2011/12; Brooks and Wohlforth, 2008; Nye, 2011: ch. 6). The discussion of decline therefore requires a critical discussion of what power itself is international relations, as the debates on decline too often rely on a view of power mainly conceived of as a direct ‘power over’, avoiding other important aspects of power relevant to American power, and also avoids a sense of ‘power to’, a core articulation that is important for thinking about what kinds of powers the US has had and will continue to have.

The argument and organization of the book

Too often debates about the future of American power have been pitched at the level of clear clashes of interest, and ignore other contours of power. In particular, the book argues that ‘institutional’ power and ‘structural’ power are crucially important in examining the future of American power. Institutional power derives from the power the US has embedded in international institutions; structural power from the broader ways in which the US makes its own interests those of the rest of the international system. These forms of power are fundamental for two reasons. First, the institutional

dimension is essential for seeing the degree to which the US has managed to secure its interests through the creation and reproduction of international institutions, which have given other states a stake in the system. To the extent to which these institutions remain buoyant there is little incentive for challengers to overthrow them in favor of something else. While this does not necessarily mean that there will not be American decline, it emphasizes that institutions provide a framework in which relative decline can be managed. Second, the overlooking of more structural elements of power is likely the most problematic aspect of the decline debates. While the US as an economic actor is clearly in *relative* decline, the structural power that has allowed for American success has not disappeared. The real sources of international decline here can be seen in three core areas of challenge: in attempts to undermine the legitimacy of American leadership in the international system; in the potential undermining of the dollar as an international reserve currency, which would challenge the centrality of the US to the global economy, and also undermine its extravagant deficit spending; and in direct attempts to challenge the US geopolitically.

We have an added problem when thinking about power in international relations. While it is useful to think of states (and potentially other entities) as ‘actors’ with power capacities, it does not entirely get to the heart of where power resides. States are essentially collective actors *and* structures, which mobilize groups of people to achieve their own specific ends, but also structure the possibilities of those groups within the scope of state power. Therefore there is a clear need to understand American power through an analysis of the American state in its international role, but also in terms of its domestic institutions and sources of power. We need to move beyond the ‘domestic/international’ divide to better understand how American power is organized, and how the domestic sources of power relate to its international position and power projection (and vice versa). The power that states wield can be seen as a form of ‘social power’, defined as organized collective action. This is not to say that social power is ‘good’ or ‘soft’ as some might want to see it, but just that the power that states wield is through institutions that utilize the collective power of individuals working together.

The book develops these two further positions in relation to American power by utilizing Michael Mann’s valuable four-stranded model of social power, which focuses on ideological, economic, military and political power (the IEMP model) (Mann,

1986: 22–8; Mann, 1993: 6–10, chs 2 and 3; cf. M. Mann, 2012). Ideological power derives from the organization and control of meaning, which can include both sources of ‘ultimate meaning’ such as religion, or norms of social interaction. Economic power ‘comprises the circuits of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption’ (Mann, 1986: 25). Military power concerns the organization of violence for whatever ends (e.g. for the usefulness of aggression or defense and protection of life, i.e. security). Finally, political power ‘derives from the usefulness of centralized, institutionalized, territorialized regulations of many aspects of social relations’ (Mann, 1986: 26). Political power is therefore organized in the state, but the function of the state varies in terms of its overall purpose and the relationship with other networks of power. The book uses Mann’s four sources of power as a way of analytically separating different strands of US power, as a means to better understand the role each plays and how they interact. While a separate chapter will be devoted to military, economic, and ideological power, the American state forms the core of American political power, and discussion of its role will be woven in and out of all of the chapters that follow.

Chapter 1, ‘The Rise of American Power’, situates the US state in the context of power, charting the overall rise and expansion of US state power from the beginning of the Republic up until the present day, in order to get a better sense of where the core institutions of American power have come from, how they have changed over time, and how they influence the present. The chapter hinges upon a longer reflection on the key moment for contemporary American power: the post-World War II expansion of state power and the rise of the ‘national security state’. The purpose of the chapter is to demonstrate how important the expansion of state power – both territorially and institutionally – has been for the American experience, and to argue that we cannot properly understand the potential for international power projection without examining domestic developments.

Chapter 2, ‘American Power and International Relations’, complements the discussion in the first chapter by using the introductory history as a means to examine the international role of the United States. It first provides a bridge to the previous chapter by analysing a number of core concepts that emerged in Chapter 1 – such as isolationism and internationalism – and relating them more clearly to the debates on power. The chapter continues by providing

an extended discussion of how to conceive of power in international relations, in order to get a clearer sense of the scope of the debates around the concept of power, and why they are important for understanding American power. Drawing on the work of Barnett and Duvall (2005), the chapter utilizes a four-fold distinction of how power operates, in order to clarify the core arguments about power made in the book. The chapter then provides a discussion of different theories about the role of American power in the world, examining the ways in which approaches to international relations relate to the power debates. Tying the argument together is the contested concept of legitimacy, which has become core to thinking about the problems and possibilities of the future of American power. Finally, the chapter examines the ways in which we can conceive of power using the four sources employed by Mann.

Chapter 3, 'State Power and the Foreign Policy Process', surveys the domestic dynamics of state power, and starts off the analysis of different sources of power by focusing on the political. The chapter first examines the structures of the American state, and puts forward an outline of a theory of the American state, in order to provide a context for understanding American power. It then moves on to a deeper examination of the diffusion of political power within the American state, examining the contest for control over American power through foreign policy. The chapter details the restraints on the presidency by examining the politics of foreign policy in a number of areas: congressional oversight (both formal and informal), the role of interest and pressure groups, the role of the media, and cultural and institutional legacies. The key insight of the chapter is that the foreign policy-making process is highly circumscribed by societal factors, and especially the historical legacy of foreign policy-making within the federal government, and conceptions of the role of the US in the world.

Chapter 4, 'The Evolution of Military Power: An American Way of War?', examines the role of military power in the American state. Having the largest military spending of any country in the world, as well as the most technologically advanced armed forces, has been important for America's role in the world, and its global reach. The evolution of military power from the founding of the Republic to the present is used in the chapter as a way of framing past and present concerns about militarism in American political life. The use of force internationally is also analysed, especially in terms of direct interventions that have been important for considering US power projec-

tion, but also in terms of the institutional and structural power of the military globally. These insights are further utilized to explore the idea of a distinct ‘American way of war’, which examines both American military policy, and civil–military relations and the role of the military in society. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the efficacy of military power in the contemporary world, considering the problems the US has had in recent years in using military power as a solution to international problems. The core argument of the chapter is that since the beginning of the Cold War the US has had a difficult relation with military power, seeing military power as fundamental to expressions of power in international relations, but also being subject to an increasing militarization of its international power projection and domestic life.

Chapter 5, ‘The Rise (and Fall?) of American Economic Power’, examines the role of the US economy in power projection. The main aim of the chapter is to clarify the role of economic power within the broader contours of American power: the US remains a highly dynamic capitalist state, and the relationship of civil society and the state and economy is an essential part of understanding the future of American power. Here, the examination of the different types of power is crucial, in that much of the debate about American economic decline is premised on just looking at forms of ‘power over’, and often overlooking the continued institutional and structural power the US holds in the international political economy. The chapter looks at the historical background of economic power; the relationship between national political economy and the national interest, noting real divides within the economy and their effects on how the state acts in terms of economic interest; the importance of American leadership in the world economy, and how it has managed to maintain structural power over such a long period; and finally the major problems of the American economy, from the 2007/08 crisis to the future of the dollar as the international reserve currency. The chapter argues that economic power has been fundamental to US primacy and hegemony, and that the key challenge is less to do with peer ‘competitors’ and contingencies that emanate from the openness and interdependence of US-led capitalism, and more with the current fragility of the US domestic economy, which is becoming increasingly affected by public debt and the inability of the political system to deal with structural problems.

All of the previous chapters emphasize in different ways the role of values in framing the exercise of power, from the means by which the

US was shaped by both anti-militarism and anti-statism, to the role of liberal individualism and the US as a 'market' society. These ideas are expanded upon in Chapter 6, 'The Power of American Values: Ideology and Identity in American Foreign Policy', which starts by demonstrating the importance of values (expressed as a form of ideology) in US foreign policy formation. The chapter then examines the scope and content of 'American exceptionalism', and how exceptionalism provides a framework for thinking about US foreign policy and its relation to American identity. The final section examines how the US has actively used exceptionalist values to shape international relations more generally, noting two important ideas. The first is that exceptionalism does not lead to uniform policies, as it has both shifted over time (along with the role and power of the state), and only provides a blueprint for action and understanding, rather than a specific set of policies. Second, the extent to which American ideology is a core part of the international system, providing legitimacy for the expression of American power, also demonstrates ways in which such power might be undermined: either through states that are opposed to the American ideology, or through the US acting in ways that undermine that legitimacy.

Chapter 7, 'Responses to American Power', considers global responses to American power by looking back at the debates on power discussed in Chapter 2 (and utilized throughout the book), as a means of discussing the possibility and potentials (and desirability) of resisting power, which has been a prominent theme in contemporary debates on the future of international relations. The chapter argues that we can see these challenges more clearly by embedding them in the power debates and by referring back to the four sources of power.

The conclusion brings all of the strands together in order to demonstrate the analytic purchase of the discussion of American power, and revisits the debates about American decline.

Chapter 1

The Rise of American Power

In 1783, after the Treaty of Paris concluded the Revolutionary War against Britain, the ‘US state’ consisted of about a third of the territory of the current continental United States. This included the original thirteen states with the addition of territory to the west that was conceded by Great Britain at the end of the American Revolution. Until the ratification of the Constitution in 1788, the United States were held together in a loose confederation, and were still very much a collection of quasi-independent states. In 1803 a vast swathe of the center of the continent was purchased from France. Westward expansion continued throughout the first half of the nineteenth century until 1848, when, with the Mexican Cession, the United States had filled territorially what we now think of as the continental United States (if not yet formally being composed of all the states existing today). While historians have long been interested in this westward expansion, what role does it play in thinking about US power and foreign policy?

A core contention of this book is that the domestic politics and power resources of states (and the US in particular) are crucial for understanding both foreign policy and the dynamics of power in international relations more generally. The power of the US and its role in international relations changed dramatically over the course of two centuries, from the creation of the republic on the eastern seaboard of the North American continent, through westward expansion and moves towards empire in the nineteenth century, to the rise of the US as a ‘superpower’ in the twentieth. Core to the development of the power of the modern state is its expression geographically: Max Weber (2009a) famously defined the state in terms of its territorial manifestation and it is important we see the development of the American state in this light as well. The western expansion of the United States is central for understanding not only the growing power and territorial reach of the American state, but also the intersection of foreign policy and state power. The chapter

therefore details the rise of US power from the founding to the present in terms of both the expansion of state power and key expressions of international power, thereby examining the influence of both the international and domestic realms in this expansion, as well as the development of key institutions through history (Chapter 2 will follow this by bringing the historical discussion forward to a conceptual and analytic overview of how we can understand US power theoretically). Overall, I will argue that the rise of American state power is a crucial facet of US power in general, and integral to its international role both past and present.

In terms of the founding ideology of the US, the rising power of the American state was a paradox. The US was established on the basis of a very limited form of federal government, necessary in bringing together the thirteen states against foreign encroachment. In fact, some of the most fascinating rationales for the creation of the national government by the authors of *The Federalist* clearly surround the issue of national defense (e.g. Madison et al., 1987: n 23). This was also related to the problems created by the limited government formed through the Articles of Federation in 1781, which, as Herring describes, ‘proved at best an imperfect instrument for waging war and negotiating peace’ (Herring, 2009: 25). The debates within the early Republic were framed in terms of the expansion of state power, the scope of federal or national power, but also as to whether or not to expand the geographical size of the state (e.g. Madison et al., 1987: n 51; cf. Stephanson, 1995: 17). But the United States was always different from other states in terms of where power lay: while relying on military power for its expansion, it was influenced by the dynamism and independence of its civil society, and from its origins in a revolution against aristocratic modes of government, and as such its democratic form was very important to its foreign policy (Mead, 2002: ch. 2).

The chapter provides a narrative of the rise of American power through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, drawing on these themes but also focusing attention on a pivotal moment for US state-building: post-World War II and the early Cold War. Since we can see state power very broadly in terms of its administrative capacity, its geographical extension, and in terms of its overall reach into civil society, it is important to contemplate the rise of US power in the paradoxical context of the overall anti-statism within the US (an ideological tendency that still survives to the present day), and the post-war moment is an essential shift in US power and our under-

standing of that power. The chapter contends that over time the US state built up a very particular capacity for the institutionalization of power, which drew on its distinctive traditions, which is important for understanding both US foreign policy and power projection.

The state, power and foreign policy: 1776–1945

Many accounts of American power and US foreign policy start with World War II and after, logically seeing this period as the beginning of American hegemony and a pronounced internationalism, and they tend to draw the main lessons about both the expression and logic of American power from this time frame. Following a number of recent authors (e.g. Kagan, 2006; Mead, 2002), I will stress the importance of embedding our understanding of American power in a much longer continuity. While the discussion of some 200 years of history of the US will be necessarily brief, schematic and thematic, an understanding of US power today is heightened by getting a better sense of the past. This becomes very clear looking at the development of state power, and the traditions from which US power has derived. The present section will look at this history focusing on two broad eras: the nineteenth-century expansion of US state power, and the early twentieth century rise of the US as a great power.

The making of a great power

The US state went through a number of phases in the nineteenth century, starting from a very limited government focused on internal improvement, to an expansionist power, ever moving westwards, through the Civil War period, which unified the states in a much firmer fashion, and finally, by the end of the century engaging in out-and-out imperialist adventures, especially seen in its war with Spain. These shifts in American foreign policy tend to revolve around a number of core issues: the limits of the power of the state; debates about the ideal size of the US; and the virtues of expansion and engagement with the world. From the start, the US saw itself as a virtuous republic that would be a beacon of freedom, detached from the problems of Europe. What this meant in practice became more difficult to define, as various presidents stressed different roles for the US, and, as the state grew geographically, different explanations were given for expansion. While there is not space to deal comprehensively with all of these debates, a number of key administrations

are chosen to highlight the dilemmas of foreign policy and power in the nineteenth century.

The foreign policy of the early republic was based on ideas that came from the revolutionary experience, well articulated by the first president (and Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army in the War of Independence), George Washington. The character of Washington's foreign policy (and that of the early republic) is well accounted for in his Farewell Address of 1796 (a published letter to the American people, in part written by Alexander Hamilton, explaining Washington's reasons for declining to take up a further presidential term of office) (Gilbert, 1970). In the Farewell Address, Washington discussed numerous issues pertinent to the future of the union (especially his view that Americans need to avoid the factions and partisanship that come with political parties), and it is particularly famous for its discussion of foreign policy. He stated that 'The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connexion as possible', and 'it is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world, so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it' (Viotti, 2005: 151). However, while this can sometimes be taken as a bold isolationism, it is one that is also connected to America as a peculiarly moral nation. As he states earlier in the Address:

Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct; and can it be, that good policy does not equally enjoin it – It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and at no distant period, a great nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. (Viotti, 2005: 150)

This view of foreign policy became the basis for the foreign policy of the Federalist Party (followed by Washington's presidential successor John Adams and staunch federalist Alexander Hamilton), which charted a mid-point between a more revolutionary foreign policy and a more peaceful one.

While the Farewell Address is often seen as the beginnings of an American tendency to isolationism, this reading is misleading. First, the Farewell Address needs to be seen in its historical context. After managing all the problems that came with the 1778 alliance with

France (necessitated by the need for support in the war against the British), including much interference in American domestic affairs, there was a recognition by Washington from his experiences that such alliances were not viable if the US was to become truly independent. France was furthermore attempting to interfere in the 1796 election, insinuating that the signing of the Jay Treaty (with Great Britain) and the re-election of Washington for a third term would be the path to war with France. The French thought it much better for Americans to support the Democratic-Republican candidate Thomas Jefferson, whose party was far more amenable to France and French interests. On one level, the Farewell Address was an intervention into the election itself. Having decided not to run for another term, Washington wanted to promote the Federalist Party, but also note that parties had become a means of foreign influence on American interests domestically through Congress (Bemis, 1937; Herring, 2009; Perkins, 1993).

The Farewell Address was also situated in a time where the power of the US was much attenuated, and the only suitable course was a pragmatic one, as McDougall notes, more akin to 'unilateralism'. As he states, 'neutrality was the only moral *and* pragmatic course for the new nation. Entangling alliances would only invite corruption at home and danger abroad, while neutrality could not but serve Liberty and national growth' (McDougall, 1997: 42). The lack of isolationist sentiments in the Address has been noted by numerous scholars, but is worth stressing (e.g. Bemis, 1937; Herring, 2009; Mead, 2002; McDougall, 1997; Perkins, 1993). Not only is there no mention of 'isolationism' (a concept that only became popular in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries), but the pragmatism of the policy is also made clear in Washington's reference to the need for 'temporary alliances'. Additionally, as Herring notes, Washington also 'vigorously advocated commercial expansion' (Herring, 2009: 83), which highlights how much emphasis is on *political* independence, rather than shutting America off from the world. Regardless of the misinterpretations, there is an important sense that the Farewell Address did become a blueprint for American foreign policy (and American power). As argued many years ago by Bemis, 'for over a hundred years no responsible American statesman ever gainsaid it. It became so firmly established as American policy as still to stand, even in our days in a vastly altered world' (Bemis, 1937: 110).

In this light the 'Model Treaty' or 'Plan of 1776' is also of great interest. With the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the

Continental Congress sought to have a set of general principles for setting up relations with other states (and was also meant to be the starting basis for a treaty with France). The Model Treaty (designed by a committee, but mainly written by John Adams) was set up as an ideal, a treaty of 'amity and commerce' that would have two core sets of principles: the first the firm principle of shunning political connections with trading partners, thus avoiding entangling alliances; the second a set of rather daring liberal commercial principles. The key ideas of commerce mainly revolved around shipping, which was of course crucial for commercial trading (and dominated in the Americas by Britain and its naval power); and especially important were the principles of 'free ships, free goods', as well as a set of essentially anti-mercantilist principles against tariffs and for the promotion of neutral trading during wartime. All were principles aimed at the undermining of British commercial power. As Herring notes, the Model Treaty was 'breath-taking in some of its assumptions and principles' (Herring, 2009: 17), as the common practice in the global economy was towards mercantilism, and 'the Americans thus entered European diplomacy as heralds of a new age' (Herring, 2009: 17). As Perkins summarizes, 'in commerce, in short, there would be no nationality; all the civilized world, at least all those who accepted the American scheme, would trade as equals' (Perkins, 1993: 24).

Although the principles could not hold entirely in the need for a relationship with France, as the French demanded (and received) some limited political guarantees in its recognition of American independence, France also did concede in a limited way to some of the principles of 'amity and commerce' set out in the Model Treaty, especially conceding trading on a 'most favored nation' status and limited maritime neutrality. The origins of American power in the world were therefore pragmatic, but also linked from the outset to firm principles of commerce and politics, which did have an important legacy for American diplomacy and power projection more generally. As Bemis has pointed out, the Model Treaty 'has exerted a profound influence on the history of American diplomacy because it crystallized the policy which the United States has generally pursued throughout its history in regards to certain fundamental concepts of maritime law and neutral rights' (Bemis, 1937: 25).

With the election of Thomas Jefferson as president in 1800, there was a shift in emphasis in foreign policy matters. Whereas the Hamiltonian Federalist Party (followed by both Washington and his

successor, John Adams) had stressed trade, industrial development and a more 'realist' foreign policy (and were much more sympathetic with Britain), Jefferson and the Democratic-Republican Party (usually seen as the forerunner of the modern Democratic Party) were much more focused on the (re)development of 'republican virtue' at home, mainly found in the promotion of yeoman farmers, and building a space for the 'empire of liberty' to flourish (Stephanson, 1995: 22). These considerations played an important role in both the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 (which doubled the geographic size of the US), and the War of 1812 against the British (though Jefferson was no longer president, his party's successor, James Madison, carried on these traditions). However, the role of the federal state at this point was still quite small, and overly focused on the maintenance of states' rights.

The first real shift in US foreign policy in terms of expansion began to occur under the presidency of James Monroe (1817–25), along with his Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams. Although a member of Jefferson's party, Monroe moved towards more expansionist practices of US foreign policy. Adams especially has been seen as not only one of the most successful Secretaries of State, but one who managed to secure America's interests without giving up core principles, thus setting a framework for American foreign policy for the long term (see e.g. Bemis, 1949; Gaddis, 2004). Whatever the long-term judgement, it is clear that Adams vigorously believed in and pushed for American continental expansion. The United States, he had written, was destined to be 'coextensive with the North American continent, destined by God and nature to be the most populous and powerful people ever combined under one social contract' (cited in: Perkins, 1993: 4). Part of this was to be achieved through territorial expansion, also backed up by commercial expansion abroad. As Herring notes, 'sensitive to the needs of the shipping and mercantile interests of his native New England, he viewed free trade as the basis for a new global economic order' (Herring: 2009: 139). Monroe and Adams attempted (with limited success) to do this by expanding US diplomatic missions abroad, but also by enacting reciprocal trading agreements, in an attempt to abolish mercantilist principles.

In practice, two areas of expansion and assertion were hugely important. First, the annexation of Florida in 1819 by a treaty with Spain both secured the territory of the US across the Eastern continent and established US territorial claims all the way to the Pacific (although north of the present border with Texas). The treaty was

accomplished through adept diplomacy, but also through coercion, primarily the belligerency of General Andrew Jackson, who extended orders to ‘pacify’ the indigenous Seminole population of Western Florida, using this as an excuse to invade Florida. While the move invoked much controversy at home and abroad, it was also used skilfully by Monroe and Adams as a means of incorporating the Floridas into the US (Herring, 2009: 148).

The expression of the ‘Monroe Doctrine’ of 1823 further demonstrated US desire to expand its influence in the Americas, or to keep the influence of the Europeans out. In the context of the recognition of newly independent states of Central and South America (formerly Spanish and Portuguese colonies), Monroe gave his 1823 Annual Address to Congress dealing with the problems of colonial interference in the hemisphere. What came to be known as the ‘Monroe Doctrine’ mainly concerned European (and other) powers not interfering with the newly independent colonies (while refraining to comment on those that were already established). The key message was that ‘the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintained, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers’ (Viotti, 2005: 154). Additionally, the message carried on the principles of non-intervention and ‘isolation’, or at least the sense that the US would also remain aloof from conflicts in Europe (and in this context, the contemporaneous Greek struggle with the Ottoman Empire was mainly in the thoughts of many Americans). It was in essence a theory of ‘two spheres’: one the new world of republican governance, the other the old world of Europe, and the two should no longer meet (Herring, 2009: 155–6).

Many European leaders reacted with disdain, and saw in it the roots of an American radicalism (especially noted in the reaction of Austrian Chancellor, Prince Metternich) (Perkins, 1993: 166). However, the immediate legacy in the US was much less muted than the weight often placed on this doctrine would seem, and it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that it would be resurrected as a core guiding principle for the US (Perkins, 1993: 167–8). But as Herring notes, despite its immediately limited influence, it was ‘by no means a hollow statement’: ‘it publically reaffirmed the continental vision Adams had already privately shared with the British and Russians: “Keep what is yours but leave the rest of the continent to us”’ (Herring, 2009: 157). Indeed, Bemis (1937: 209) sees the Monroe Doctrine rather as a ‘capstone’ to what had successfully come before