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Mohamed Kheider University – Biskra  
Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages  
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## Master Dissertation

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**Investigating the Notions of the Rise and the Decline of the American Hegemony: From  
the Roaring Twenties to the Era of War on Terror**

*A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master Degree in Civilization*

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**Submitted By:** Koudri Mohamed Rafik

**Supervised By:** Mme. Zerigui Naima

### Board of Examiners:

Mme. Amri-Chenini Boutheina      University of Biskra      Chairperson

Mme. Zerigui Naima      University of Biskra      Supervisor

Mme. Hamed Halima

Mr. Chemouri Mourad

June 2022



To my mother and my father,  
To all of my teachers,  
And to all of my loved ones.

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to present a brief analysis on the history and the current international situation of the United States of America. It attempts to give an analysis of the dichotomy with regard to the notions of the American hegemony: the 'Rise' versus the 'Decline' by tracing back Tracing the history of the United States from the emergence of immigration movements in Europe, the formation of the American identity and the independence, until the First and Second World Wars, then the Cold War and the formation of the unipolar world. This Dissertation attempts to present a brief analytical study of the international situation of the United States, and to give an understanding to the United States' notion and process of deteriorating, in a century of renewed conflicts and challenges. This research follows an analytical approach, grounded on the ideas and theories of many public intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky and Francis Fukuyama, and somewhat influenced by the theories and writings of Malik bin Nabi, Ibn Khaldun, without neglecting the theses of those who do not believe in the American decline, such as Samuel Huntington, and Michael Beckley. Finally, this research concludes that the United States of America is a country in decline, both externally and internally, and that it is on its way towards a collapse that is almost inevitable.

**Keywords:** The American Decline, The American Hegemony, Francis Fukuyama, Michael Beckley.

## الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تقديم دراسة موجزة عن تاريخ الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية وعن وضعها الدولي الراهن، متتبعًا تاريخ الولايات المتحدة منذ حركات الهجرة من أوروبا، وتشكل الهوية الأمريكية إلى الاستقلال، حتى الحربين العالميتين الأولى والثانية، ثم الحرب الباردة وتشكل العالم أحادي القطب. تحاول الأطروحة تقديم دراسة تحليلية موجزة للوضع العالمي للولايات المتحدة، وعملية تدهورها، في قرنٍ ينبض بالصراعات والتحديات المتجددة، إلى طرح قضية الانهيار الأمريكي. يتبع هذا البحث نهجًا تحليليًا، يركز على أفكار ونظريات العديد من المفكرين مثل نعوم تشومسكي وفرانسيس فوكوياما، ومستوحيا إلى حد ما من نظريات وكتابات مالك بن نبي، ابن خلدون، دون إهمال أطروحات أولئك الذين لا يؤمنون بالانهيار الأمريكي، مثل صموئيل هنتنغتون ومايكل بيكلي. أخيرًا، خلاص هذا البحث إلى أن الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية دولة في حالة تدهور داخليًا وخارجيًا، وأنها في طريقها نحو انهيارٍ شبه محتوم.

**كلمات مفتاحية:** الهجمة الأمريكي، التراجع الأمريكي، نعوم تشومسكي، فرانسيس فوكوياما، مايكل بيكلي

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## **General Introduction**

The History of the United States of America is remarkable. Unlike any other world power in modern history, The United States was able to gradually create and exercise a political, military, and technological dominance, over the rest of the world. It is quite profound and rare in world history for a state with isolationist tendencies to be the leading power, and then for its expansion to reach almost every part of the globe.

The United States is not an empire, even if the US Army was stretched to almost every corner of the globe, mainly the Middle East, Central Asia, Latin America, and Central Africa. The United States do not have colonies or dependent states as Great Britain formerly had. However, the stretch of the US influence, mainly in the countries of the global south, has always been quite remarkable, and has always been the tool in which the United States exercised its influence, preserved its interests, and made sure that its demands were to be implemented.

America's rise to power was mainly based on economics. During the world great wars, the US was able to manage its emergence as an economic superpower. Because the War devastated Europe, and was disastrous for both sides, the defeated, as well as the victorious. The belligerents could not afford the expenses of the two Great Wars, and the US, who did not partake massively in the first one, and despite losing 400.000 soldiers in the second one, was the less damaged among all belligerents (Fisher).

The damage of war and the large debts devastated the economies of the big countries, but the US was the exception. In fact, the US would emerge from both World Wars as the world's largest and leading creditor, the unofficial custodian of the gold standard (Frum). For the sake of elaborating, less give one example of the threads leading to this point, keeping in mind that these ideas are going to be further discussed and elaborated in the second chapter. During WWI, almost all of Britain's oil, more than a quarter of its engines, more than half of its



bullet casings, more than two-thirds of its grain, and almost all of its corn came from outside, with the US leading the list.

These acquisitions were financed by the United Kingdom and France, issuing larger and larger bond issues to American investors, which were denominated in dollars rather than pounds or francs. By the end of 1916, two billion dollars had been placed on an Entente victory by American investors.

The massive amount of Allied purchasing prompted something akin to a military mobilization in the United States (Fisher). To the US, the first world war was a war of production. American industry shifted to war manufacturing, while American farmers planted grain and fiber to feed and clothe Europe's troops. The economics of the US would experience a period of massive growth, mainly fueled by the exports. Exports from the United States increased in value from \$2.4 billion in 1913 to \$6.2 billion in 1917. The majority of it went to key Allied nations like the United Kingdom, France, and Russia, which hurried to get American cotton, wheat, brass, rubber, vehicles, equipment, wheat, and tens of thousands of other raw and finished items.

American manufacturers had produced 3.5 million rifles, 20 million artillery rounds, 633 million pounds of smokeless gunpowder, 376 million pounds of high explosives, 21,000 airplane engines, and enormous quantities of poison gas by the end of 1918. The influx of cash into the industrial sector from both domestic and international sources resulted in a welcome increase in job opportunities for Americans. The unemployment rate in the United States fell from 16.4% in 1914 to 6.3% in 1916 (Frum).

Manufacturing wages increased dramatically, from an average of \$11 per week in 1914 to \$22 per week in 1919 (Frum). This enhanced consumer spending power helped to revitalize the national economy in the last months of the war.

In the long term, World War I proved beneficial to the American economy (Frum). The United States was no longer a country on the periphery of international affairs; it was a cash-rich nation capable of shifting from debtor to creditor status. America had shown that it could manufacture and fund a war while simultaneously deploying a modern volunteer military. When the next global conflict erupted less than a quarter-century later, all of these factors would come into play.

During World War II, American planners understood that the United States would emerge from the conflict with overwhelming power. The Western Hemisphere, the Far East, the old British empire — including the critical Middle East oil deposits — and as much of Eurasia as feasible, or at the very least its main industrial sectors in Western Europe and the southern European nations, were all targeted for control. The latter were seen to be necessary for maintaining control over Middle Eastern oil supplies. Within these vast territories, the United States intended to retain unchallenged military and economic dominance, while limiting any expression of sovereignty by states that would interfere with its global plans.

Following the war, the plans were meticulously carried out. The United States emerged from the war as the world's richest country, with half of the world's wealth and unrivaled security. The United States was able to rebuild its internal institutions and rearrange most of its international contacts in such a way that ensured the preservation of its influence and interests, as well as the implementation of its demands in the future.

The Cold War then would prove that the US is able to contain the most dangerous threats, and even to overcome them on the long run. The Cold War allowed the two rival powers to accelerate their wheels of advancement, especially within the economic, military, and scientific fields. However, the US was far ahead of the competition. This fact was ultimately reflected in the two Gulf Wars, in which the technological advancements of the US military were revealed for the first time. In the first Gulf War, for example, the US military was able to

defeat the Iraqi military, which was heavily relying on Soviet equipment and armaments, within the span of six weeks.

The events of the two Gulf Wars were crucial to the course of the Cold War because, through them, US superiority was experienced for the first time. As a result, it did not last long until Soviet President Gorbachev announced the end of the Soviet Union, leaving the United States with a vast global architecture of military and diplomatic power that was suddenly unchallenged.

Today, however, after two decades of unceasing warfare in the Middle East and Central Asia, and following the chaotic withdrawal of the US army from Afghanistan, the US dominance and hegemony became heavily questionable. In fact, the question of the American decline was raised long ago by many thinkers and diplomats, with Noam Chomsky, public thinker and linguist, who even argues that the American decline started immediately after the second World War, and even argues that it is almost inevitable, being the most prominent and controversial of them all.

Other thinkers like Francis Fukuyama for example, who is famously known with his theory of “the end of history”, their thoughts on the regress of the American hegemony were never grounded on “the inevitable decline and collapse” to use Chomsky’s words, until after the Global Market Crash in 2008, and then the regress of the American economy, which officially became number two, after the Chinese economy, in 2014. However, after the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, starting in the late 2020, and ending in the first half of 2021, their views would become more explicit.

It is quite remarkable though, that, concerning the regress of the American hegemony, Fukuyama never really states about the “inevitable collapse”. To the contrary, he always asserts that the dynamics are prone to change, and the end of the dominance might come earlier than expected (The Economist, 2022), the ultimate collapse, however, is nowhere near. Verily, the

regress of the American hegemony, and the idea of the American collapse, are not the same. While the Hegemony can be restored, within a few decades, if the right conditions were met, the ultimate decline is almost never peaceful, and “almost” always destructive and disastrous, and most of the times, can only be delayed. Because within the realm of decline, to use Malik ben Nabi theory (Bennabi), there are certain conditions, norms, and certain “systems of thought” that fuel the process of failure, diminishing, and decline, and does not allow for contrary movements to push the wheel the other way, and starts constructing, instead of sitting and fatuously watching the waves of civilization pass over those who were destined to drown. It is within this thread that Chomsky and Fukuyama hold somewhat not so similar perceptions and views.

While Francis Fukuyama perceives the previous-mentioned events, the stock market crash, the Chinese rise, and the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, as the process of regression of the American hegemonic structure, Noam Chomsky perceives these threads as something like flash-forward manifestations of the great and inevitable collapse. To Chomsky, the nature and the realm that produced these events, is fertile ground for the great collapse, a collapse that can only be countered with massive governmental and societal stimulus, a stimulus that not only requires time that the US don't have, it requires a quality that the current US officials don't acquire (Chomsky, “American Decline: Causes and Consequences”).

Contrary to the notion of declinism, there is the notion which views the contemporary issues as a ground for a process of renewal. Samuel Huntington, an American political scientist, best known for his work “Clash of Civilizations”, tends to hold this view, and prefers to abide by this notion. According to him, in his well-known research titled: “The U.S.: Decline or Renewal?”, argues that the US is in fact in a process of renewal (Huntington, 1988), where these contemporary issues are all a part of a transitional phase, which countries and civilizations usually go through, and it becomes their process of re-establishing their values and institutions

(Huntington). This can be perceived as a miniature procession of Ibn Khaldun's theory on the cycle of civilization (Khaldun); where hard times and severe issues can produce well-articulated men with very critical and creative solutions and decisions. But within the American context, most of contemporary intellectuals tend to disagree with this view and notion.

Other contemporary writers and researchers like Michael Beckley, who is professor of international relations at Tufts University and best known for his book *Why the United States Is the Only Superpower?*, Holds the view that the US is nowhere near the decline, and even rejects the claim that China is in its way to overtake the US. In his book, he made use of dozens of graphs and statistics that proves that the United States will preserve its global supremacy until at least the end of the twenty-first century (Beckley, 72). he argues not only that U.S. preeminence is safer than most contemporary commentary would have one believe, but also that it is more resilient: "Unipolarity is not guaranteed to endure," he concludes, "but present trends strongly suggest that it will last for many decades." Beckley mentions that the United States, whose population does not exceed 5% of the world's population, accounts for 25% of the world's wealth and 35% of global development, and is home to 600 companies among the two thousand highest profitable companies in the world (Beckley, 72). A brief showcase of his book will be presented in the final chapter.

The theory of decline, as well as whether it is relative or absolute, has been a subject of controversy. This thesis follows an analytical approach, attempts to delve into this thorny and controversial topic, rooted in the depths of history. The outline of this paper attempts to adopt the Khaldunian approach, which a process of gathering information; analyzing them, reaching the conclusions, and then presenting the topic in a chronological order; starting from the history of the formation of the United States of America, to its journey of creating the American power, the powerful American hegemony, and the mighty influence, which the globalized American

way of life has generated. Then, from this perception, it delves into the theories of regression, fall and dispersion, taking from different sources and schools of thought in an attempt to address the story of the rise and the issues of the decline of the American hegemony.

## **Chapter One:**

### **A Brief History of the United States**

#### **1. Introduction**

The History of the United States is long, deep, and well rooted. The United States is one of a few civilizations who managed to evolve as a country and civilization from an isolationist state to a leading one, acting as the preacher for its own values, the western values, of democracy, liberalism, and capitalism. This chapter attempts to give a brief history of the United States, starting from the migration period, to the forming of the states, to the Two Great Wars, Cold War, and then to status of dominance, arguably imperialism, and ending with the US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

#### **1.1 The Native and the European Migration and the Establishment of the Colonies**

Migration is the theme of the early history of the United States, starting with the migration of the native people, which suggestively took place 50.000 years ago, to the European migration, mainly the Anglo-phone, Franco-phone, and the Spaniards (Remini 1).

There are many interesting questions surrounding the people and discovery of the western hemisphere, but one theory suggests that ancient people first traveled to the New World by crossing a land bridge that once existed between what is now Siberia and Alaska, a bridge that later vanished due to permafrost melt and is now covered by water and known as the Bering Strait.

These ancient people settled every habitable area they could access over time, extending as far south as the most southerly region and even dwelling on the various islands off the coast, especially on the eastern coast. These people developed a diverse range of civilizations, many of which were affected by the locations where they permanently lived, and they spoke at least 300 different languages. Tribes or countries were made up of individual clans, and their governments were frequently made up of an elder council and clan leaders chosen by the elders.

The tribe's top governing member was the principle chief, who was chosen from one of the major clans. Many government tasks, on the other hand, were historically performed by a single clan or family.

The economy in the north was mostly agrarian, i.e. hunting and gathering. However, because they had not created the wheel or had vital domesticated animals such as the horse and cow, their options were restricted. Apart from pounding sheet copper to manufacture crude tools and gold and silver for personal decorations, they had not learnt metallurgical skills (Remini 2).

There was no alphabet or written language among the hundreds of tribes. They used pictographs instead of writing to record major events, and sign language and smoke signals to communicate across large distances.

In the south a more culturally advanced society emerged among the Aztec and Inca tribes. The Aztecs were literate. Their colossal stone temples towered above the cities and villages in which they were built. The cultural level of the southern tribe in the ninth century after Christ was thought to be higher than that of any Western European kingdom (Remini 2). Scholars, however, are not able to find a satisfactory answer to the question of why their civilization came to a full stop and never advanced.

This is not the only mystery, though. Vikings were blown off course while sailing west from Iceland to Greenland in AD 1000, according to Norse sagas, and landed in the New World. It is unclear where they sought safety; Leif Eriksson and his group retraced their ways and think they reached in modern-day Newfoundland or somewhere along the coast of modern-day New England a few years later. They pitched their tents and journeyed across the nation, most likely passing through territory that would ultimately become part of the United States. During their journey down the St. Lawrence River, other Vikings may have followed them.



In any regard, the Vikings never developed permanent colonies in the New World, and their discoveries were lost. Many more centuries passed before Western Europe began to undergo substantial societal changes that would lead to the migration of many of its residents to the New World.

In the Middle ages, The Crusades were significant in precipitating many of these transformations (Remini 4). Pope Urban II issued a call to Christians in 1095, urging them to liberate the Holy Land from Muslim dominion. Thousands of Europeans responded by going to the East, where they were exposed to a new and exotic culture and a way of life that piqued their attention. They came home with new preferences, ideas, interests, and desires for commodities and things they had encountered in the East, such as spices, cotton, and silk fabric.

Trade channels were quickly established to provide these items to a demanding market. Existing cities thrived, while new ones sprung up. This urban expansion drew a wide range of craftspeople, who honed their abilities and helped to bring in a technological revolution. The printing press increased the availability of books and fostered study. It also made it easier to construct institutions in a number of places. The introduction of the compass and astrolabe made sea travel safer and spurred mariners to seek out new routes and worlds beyond those currently known. Moreover, Marco Polo's account of his extended travels and life in China, which was published in the thirteenth century, heightened their demand for Eastern goods. Polo's tales of gold and silver, as well as spices and silk garments, excited European interest.

Once the astrolabe was introduced in Europe, daring explorers travelled further down the coast of Africa. This new tool allowed navigators to calculate the longitude of their ships at sea by measuring the angle between the sun and the horizon. Prince Henry of Portugal, widely known as Henry the Navigator, supported voyages that traveled the length of Africa and reached the equator. Vasco da Gama circled the Cape of Good Hope, traversed the Indian Ocean, and arrived in India in 1498, where he reported his arrival to the locals (Remini, 5).

For many sailors and seamen, journeying to the East the quickest way possible and coming back home with riches, jewels, medicines, and other exotic goods became a perilous adventure. Christopher Columbus, an Italian navigator, felt that sailing directly west instead of around Africa would allow him to reach the Orient faster. Isabella, the Catholic queen of Castile, consented to fund the voyage over the protests of her advisors. On August 3, 1492, three ships, the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria, sailed from Palos, Spain, to the Canary Islands off the coast of Africa, staffed by around ninety sailors. On October 12, Columbus and his men arrived in the Bahamas and christened the island San Salvador (later Watlings Island).

Columbus discovered a much bigger island, Hispaniola, and labeled the natives who met him Indians, believing he had arrived in India and that China was only a short distance west. He came home to a hero's welcome and visited the New World three more times, but he never found the treasures and spices he was looking for, and he died believing he had landed in Asia.

Upon Christopher Columbus' voyage to the New World, numerous ships traveled west to establish new colonies, and colonization had officially begun by the 17th century. New colonies and commercial centers were built by European migrants, and the Spaniards began to construct their American empire.

France established new colonies in the eastern north of America as part of its expansion. After Portugal colonized Brazil, English colonists, together with a considerably smaller number of Dutch and Swedes, established the first successful English colony, known as Jamestown, on the James River in Virginia, in 1607.

Colonists discovered the value of tobacco, which the Indians had smoked for ages, and a fresh wave of immigrants came in the late 17th century. And the rising demand gave the settlers a cash crop they sorely needed to live. The trade's importance attracted an increasing

number of English settlers to America. As a result, vast plantations sprung up to cultivate the plant, and Virginia grew into a prosperous colony (Remini 11).

The immigrants who arrived to America were not all hunting for gold or other means of wealth. A big number of people arrived in pursuit of religious freedom. In the early 17th century, following the Protestant Reformation and theological fights between numerous sects and creeds, it became normal practice to persecute opponents of opposing religious ideologies. The Anglican Church was founded in England by the crown to combat the Roman Catholic church, although Anglicanism maintained many Catholic rites and customs. As a result, many Protestants, known as Puritans, thought that the Church of England needed to be cleaned of such adornments. Others, who held more radical views, felt compelled to abandon the Anglican church totally.

Although there were significant military confrontations between Native Americans and English immigrants, the colonies were able to grow swiftly, and more and more people migrated in each of the 13 American colonies.

The American colonies were quickly expanding during the 18th century, thanks to low mortality rates and vast land and food resources. This drew a large number of immigrants. Planters were able to acquire African slaves for work from the British colonies in the West Indies thanks to the tobacco and rice plantations; by the 1770s, African slaves made about a fifth of the American population.

Each of the thirteen American colonies had its own government; in fact, each colony was governed by a governor selected from London. This governor was in charge of the government and relied on locally elected legislators to pass taxes and legislation.

The administrations of these British colonies differed in certain respects depending on whether they were royal, corporate, or private, but they shared some characteristics. Each colony had a governor who was in charge of implementing all English laws enacted by

Parliament as well as policies created by the Privy Council, the monarch's advisory body. In strictly local matters, the governors had extensive authority. They were given advice by local landowners who had been nominated to the job. Local laws were made by elected assemblies or legislatures, but their authority was theoretically restricted because the governor or royal authorities might overrule their decisions in England.

In reality, these elected bodies had considerable influence. Because they had formed local levies, they had the power of the purse, which they used to compel the governor to agree with their requests. They may, for example, take away his income or the compensation of his assistants. He could dismiss them and call new elections, but he could not make them pass legislation that they did not like (Remini 17).

However, the British royal government in London failed to offer consistent supervision to the colonies in North America, and as the settlers moved west, they encountered challenges that required immediate attention. Because Native Americans and encroaching French from Canada battled English advance in the western area, the colonists were obliged to cope with such issues on their own, without outside supervision, teaching, or disagreement. As a result, nations had to rely on their own legislatures to deal with their problems and adopt the necessary legislation.

## **1.2 The Revolution and the Establishment of the United States**

The question of independence from Britain, however, did not arise as long as the colonies needed British military support against the French and Spanish powers. The French and Indian war was an event created by the political development of the colonies; it was also part of the larger seven-year war. The rivalry for empire between England and France had already developed into a hundred years of warfare, starting in the late seventeenth century, in both Europe and America. Britain defeated France, and the latter lost their colonies and territories in Canada and Louisiana.

The war was expensive, and Britain needed finances. The British parliament passed the Stamp Act of 1765, imposing taxes on the colonies, without going through the colonial legislatures.

The question was raised: Does parliament have the authority to tax unrepresented Americans? The people proclaimed, "No taxation without representation," and refused to pay the taxes. The Boston Tea Party in 1773 was regarded as the beginnings of the revolution as tensions rose in the late 1760s and early 1770s. It occurred in Boston as a form of protest against the increased tea tax. The next year, Parliament retaliated with forceful measures, depriving Massachusetts of its ancient right of self-government and placing it under army authority, igniting fury and resistance across the 13 colonies.

Leaders from all 13 colonies met and formed the first continental conference to coordinate their resistance. The congress called for a boycott of British goods and produced a list of rights and complaints that they petitioned King George III to remedy. Because it was not about independence at the time, this argument had minimal impact. As a result, in 1775, the second Continental Congress was organized to plan the colonies' defense against British soldiers. The 13 colonies revolted against British rule in 1775, and the United States of America was founded in 1776. The Americans captured the British invading force at Saratoga in 1777, securing the northeast and prompting the French to form a military alliance with the United States during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783).

Because Britain had no allies, France drew in Spain and the Netherlands, balancing the military and naval strength along both sides. The American Revolution was a triumph, and the Treaty of Paris in 1783 acknowledged the country's independence.

The westward expansion began, including the native regions west of the Appalachian Mountains, due to the fact that the previous colonies acquired more than expected. President Thomas Jefferson of the United States struck a bargain in 1803. He bought the Louisiana area

from France. The first ambassadors sent to France were given the choice of investing up to ten million dollars on New Orleans and, if feasible, the west bank of the Mississippi River. The French administration, on the other hand, pledged to sell all of Louisiana's land for \$5 million extra. The president signed the deal, and the United States grew by half its original size. In the middle of the nineteenth century, certain sessions took place, and Texas became a state in 1845. And after the war against the Mexican empire the United states gained important lands and expanded even further.

Following the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1861, the Confederacy, a group of southern states, began an attack on the rest of the country. The enslavement of black people in the south was the spark for the revolution. In 1860, the United States, led by Abraham Lincoln, pushed for emancipation in all of its possessions. In April 1861, when rebel forces attacked Fort Sumter in South Carolina, war broke out. After four years of fighting, the Union triumphed, and the Confederates were vanquished. National unity was gradually restored, and the power of the national government was strengthened.

After independence, the first part of the nineteenth century was an era of economic growth, and infrastructure was pushed to the forefront as new industries were developed. However, the conflict was not yet done, and in 1898, the American-Spanish War began. In the near term, the Americans won several battles, and the Treaty of Paris granted them the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam.

### **1.3 The United States in the Twentieth Century (WWI & II, the Cold War)**

At the turn of the twentieth century, World War I began. Despite being neutral, the US joined the Allies in response to German attacks on American ships and intentions to get Mexico to support the Allies against the US. Following this event, the economy flourished smoothly until 1929, when the Great Depression struck. This incident rocked the world and laid the groundwork for the start of World War II. After the Japanese empire bombed Pearl Harbor on

December 7th, 1941, the United States sought to remain neutral once more, but eventually joined the allies.

In Europe, the Americans conducted a distant war, supporting the Soviets with armored cars, motorized equipment, food, and other supplies. Winning battle after battle in the Pacific and advancing closer to the Japanese mainland, the Americans were able to have a large influence and offer considerable support to the Allies following D-day in Europe in 1944. The war concluded in 1945, with Germany surrendering in May and Japan surrendering in September following the dropping of two nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Harry Truman gave his first address as President to a joint session of Congress just before World War II ended, promising to protect Franklin D. Roosevelt's values and put an end to "Hitler's ghastly threat to dominate the world." (Remini 249) Shortly after, Italian partisans arrested Mussolini and hanged him, while Hitler shot himself in his Berlin bunker.

The Allies had eliminated fascism, but communism remained a threat. Fear of communism and its probable expansion into the free world rose in the United States during the following several decades. It became the most important issue in both domestic and international policy decisions.

The United States, as the leader of the "free world," positioned itself as a counterweight to the Soviet Union in order to prevent communism from spreading. The Cold War was the theme of a post-World War II world; it was an open but restricted conflict between the US and the Soviet Union, as well as their respective allies. The Cold War was characterized by an arms race, as well as proxy wars and propaganda campaigns across the world, and most notably the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. In a 1945 article, the English writer George Orwell used the phrase to describe what he thought would be a nuclear standoff between «two or three monster super-states, each possession of a weapon capable of killing millions in a few seconds.» (*Britannica*).

Tensions in the Cold War lessened marginally after the death of longstanding Soviet ruler Joseph Stalin in 1953, but the stalemate remained. The Warsaw Pact, a unified military organization of Soviet-bloc countries, was established in 1955, and West Germany joined NATO the following year. The Cold War was at its height in 1958–62. The Soviet Union began smuggling missiles into Cuba in 1962, with the intention of using them to conduct nuclear strikes on American cities. This sparked the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, which brought the two countries dangerously close to war until a deal on missiles could be reached.

Because of the threat of reprisal from the other, neither the US nor the Soviet Union were willing to deploy nuclear weapons during the Cuban missile crisis (and thus of mutual atomic annihilation). The two countries swiftly signed the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty of 1963, which forbade above-ground nuclear weapons testing. The crisis, on the other hand, solidified the Soviets' determination to never again be humiliated by their military inferiority, and they launched a buildup of both conventional and strategic forces that the US was forced to equal for the next 25 years.

During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union avoided open military engagement in Europe, instead they engaged in proxy wars, and engaged military with the aim of protecting their ideologies abroad. To uphold communist power, the Soviet Union sent troops to East Germany (1953), Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968), and Afghanistan (1979). The US, for its part, helped remove a left-wing government in Guatemala in 1954, supported an abortive invasion of Cuba in 1961, attacked the Dominican Republic (1965) and Grenada (1983), and sought but failed to prevent communist North Vietnam from capturing South Vietnam (1964–75).

In the 1960s and 1970s, when the globe was no longer split into two strongly opposed factions, the bipolar conflict between the Soviet and American coalitions began to give way to a more complicated dimension of global relations. In 1960, a huge schism developed between



the Soviet Union and China, which worsened over time, eroding the communist bloc's stability. Meanwhile, Western Europe and Japan saw tremendous economic progress in the 1950s and 1960s, reducing their relative inferiority to the United States.

In the early 1980s, the two superpowers maintained their enormous military buildups and battled for influence in the Third World, rekindling Cold War tensions. In the late 1980s, however, the Cold War began to break down under the leadership of Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev. He spearheaded efforts to democratize the Soviet political system by eliminating the Soviet regime's totalitarian elements.

In 1989–90, Gorbachev consented to the fall of communist governments in the Soviet-bloc countries of Eastern Europe. The rise to power of democratic governments in East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia was quickly followed by the reunification of West and East Germany under NATO auspices, once again with Soviet approval.

The collapse of the Soviet Union ended the Cold War, leaving 15 newly independent governments in its aftermath, including Russia. The latter would become governed by Boris Yeltsin, a democratically elected anticommunist president.

#### **1.4 The War on Terror**

In recent years, the United States has concentrated on contemporary Middle Eastern crises. The proclamation of "War on Terror" by George W. Bush at the start of the twenty-first century was in reaction to al-September Qaeda's 11th assaults in 2001. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan came after it in terms of scale, money, and impact.

The war against terrorism was a multidimensional undertaking with an almost limitless scope. The military dimension included major wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, covert operations in Yemen and elsewhere, large-scale military assistance programs for collaborating governments, and considerable increases in military budget.

Its intelligence dimension included a global campaign of capturing terrorist suspects and interning them at Guantánamo Bay, greater collaboration with foreign intelligence agencies, and the tracking and interception of terrorist funds.

Its diplomatic dimension includes ongoing attempts to establish and maintain a worldwide coalition of partner governments and organizations, as well as a broad public diplomacy campaign to combat anti-Americanism in the Middle East.

The domestic dimension of the U.S. war on terrorism entailed new antiterrorism legislation, such as the USA Patriot Act; new security institutions, such as the Department of Homeland Security; the preventive detainment of thousands of suspects; surveillance and intelligence-gathering programs by the National Security Agency (NSA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and local authorities; the strengthening of emergency-response procedures; and increased security measures for airports, borders, and public events.

By the last years of Bush's administration, public opinion on the Iraq War and other national security issues had shifted dramatically against him. This resentment facilitated Barack Obama's election in 2008, as an outspoken opponent of Bush's foreign policies.

The phrase "war on terror," which was still intimately connected with Bush policies, swiftly vanished from official communications under the new government. Obama made the rejection explicit in a 2013 address, stating that the US will eschew a broad, ill-defined "global war on terrorism" in favor of more targeted efforts against specific hostile groups. The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan were gradually tapered down under Obama's administration, while US forces remained in both countries at the end of his administration in 2016 (*Britannica*).

During the administration of former president Donald Trump, the US negotiated a withdrawal agreement with the Taliban that excluded the Afghan government, freed 5,000 imprisoned Taliban soldiers, and set a date certain of May 1, 2021, for the final withdrawal.

In his election campaigns, Donald Trump was eager for the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq. While former president Donald Trump managed to extract troops from Syria during his presidency, the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan was only executed in the presidency of Joe Biden. The latter, in his remarks concerning the withdrawal from Afghanistan: “The events we’re seeing now are sadly proof that no amount of military force would ever deliver a stable, united, and secure Afghanistan — as known in history as the ‘graveyard of empires’ (*The White House*).

### **1.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the history of the United States beginning with the migration then reaching the peak of imperial power, is a history of a non-ordinary state. The influence of the US on the rest of the globe is massive, and, in many regions, is deeply rooted.

Even though the US has been withdrawing from many regions in the last decade, it is quite early to conclude that the impact which this country had on these regions is diminishing. The US’ influence on the world, and especially on the regions where the US troops were deployed in the recent decades, mentioning Iraq, Afghanistan, and Central Africa, will be deeply ingrained, at least for few more decades. Because the expenditures of the US over these regions were the backbone of US’ imperialism, hence, US’ global power and dominance.

## **Chapter Two:**

### **The United States' Path Towards Global Dominance**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

As discussed in the first chapter, the French and Indian War was a key moment in how America's borders became the way they are today. Keeping in mind that so much of America's power comes from its size, it is one of the largest countries on Earth by population and area, and is rich in natural resources and human capital. The war ended with France giving up its vast territory on the continent to Britain and Spain. Napoleon would reclaim Louisiana and sell it to the US in 1803, but New France was lost forever. With the Spanish Empire already declining, the continent was left open to conquest from the British Empire and its successor, the United States.

Of fact, when European explorers and settlers landed, North America was not an empty waste land, rather, there were long-established communities. They could have become sovereign nation-states if the US had not decided to drive them from their homelands, deny them self-rule, and forcefully integrate them into their country once they had been reduced to a minority. These actions laid the groundwork for American dominance in North America, and thus for American global power.

In the decades after World War II, it became clear that the United States had chosen to become a European-style imperial state. The conflict with Spain was a watershed point in the United States' rise to worldwide dominance. The Spanish empire had been decaying for a century, and there had been a heated dispute with the United States over whether America should try to replace it as an imperial power. Anti-imperialists desired to encourage Cuban independence, while pro-imperialists wanted to buy or acquire Cuba from Spain (with the goal of turning it into a new slave state before 1861) (Fisher).

Cuban activists started a fight of independence from Spain in 1898, with the support of the United States. Anti-imperialists in the United States prevented the United States from annexing Cuba when the war ended in Spanish defeat, but pro-imperialists succeeded in putting it under a quasi-imperialist sphere of influence; the US base at Guantanamo Bay is a legacy of this arrangement (Fisher). At the end of the war, the United States captured three additional Spanish colonies: Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, a big and populous island nation in the Pacific. The United States had matured into an imperial power akin to that of Europe. While the colonial effort was short-lived and divisive at home, it marked the start of America's rise to prominence as a worldwide force.

## **2.1 The US as a Global Power Emerged from the World's Two Great Wars**

World War I and II devastated Europe and Asia — but not the US. In fact, the US has emerged from the two Great Wars as an economic superpower. The foundation of war is economy, the foundation of peace and prosperity is economy is well, US officials understood that the most.

American Officials understood that the United States would emerge from the conflicts with overwhelming power. The United States emerged from the war as the world's richest country, with half of the world's wealth and unrivaled security. The United States was able to rebuild its internal institutions and rearrange most of its international relations in such a way that ensured the preservation of its influence and interests, as well as the fulfillment of its demands.

For centuries, the world has been divided among several competing global powers. Within such an order, no single country could aspire to become the sole global superpower. World War I was the beginning of the end of that era.

It is evident that the two world wars amount to an inception of a new history, marked by the beginning of the twentieth century, the American century, which began not in 1945 but in 1916, the year U.S. output overtook that of the entire British empire.

Within the old world order, the world's great powers were competing for power and dominance. Most of them were crumbling. World War I marked the end of their declining process. The Ottoman Empire, the world's seventh major power, was completely destroyed as a result of the conflict. For a long time, China, arguably another great power, has been in decline. Germany was no exception, and even France, despite being part of the victorious alliance, suffered from the war on the political, economic, cultural, and even societal level. As a result, the damage of war and the large debts devastated the economies of the big countries, with the exception of the United States and the still-mighty British Empire.

The power balance was clearly shifting from Europe to America. The belligerents couldn't afford the expenses of aggressive war any longer. Germany, cut off from the rest of the world, dug down into a defensive siege, focusing its attacks on weak foes like Romania. The Western allies, particularly the United Kingdom, equipped their armies by making greater and larger war orders with the US.

In 1916, Britain purchased virtually all of its oil, more than a quarter of its engines, more than half of its shell casings, more than two-thirds of its grain, and nearly all of its corn from foreign sources, with the United States topping the list. The United Kingdom and France funded these acquisitions by selling larger and larger bond issues to American investors, which were denominated in dollars rather than pounds or francs. By the end of 1916, American investors had staked two billion dollars on an Entente triumph (Frum).

The massive amount of Allied purchasing prompted something akin to a military mobilization in the United States. To the US, the first world war was a war of production. World War I was the first modern mechanized war, necessitating large amounts of money to equip and

supply massive armies with the necessary armaments. According to historians, the shooting war was reliant on a parallel "war of production" that kept the military machine operating.

During the first two and a half years of warfare, the United States was a neutral party, and economic development was mostly sustained by exports. The value of American exports climbed from \$2.4 billion in 1913 to \$6.2 billion in 1917 (Frum). The vast bulk of it went to crucial Allied nations like as the United Kingdom, France, and Russia, which rushed to get American cotton, wheat, brass, rubber, automobiles, equipment, wheat, and tens of thousands of other raw and finished goods.

Metal, machine, and vehicle exports increased from \$480 million in 1913 to \$1.6 billion in 1916, according to a 1917 study; food exports increased from \$190 million to \$510 million over the same era. In 1914, gunpowder cost 33 cents per pound; by 1916, it had risen to 83 cents per pound.

By the end of 1918, American companies had manufactured 3.5 million rifles, 20 million artillery rounds, 633 million pounds of smokeless gunpowder, 376 million pounds of high explosives, 21,000 aircraft engines, and massive amounts of poison gas.

The influx of cash into the industrial sector from both domestic and international sources resulted in a welcome increase in job opportunities for Americans. The unemployment rate in the United States fell from 16.4% in 1914 to 6.3% in 1916 (Frum).

This decrease in unemployment reflected a decreasing labor pool as well as an increase in available jobs. The number of immigrants fell from 1.2 million in 1914 to 300,000 in 1916, and then to 140,000 in 1919.

Manufacturing earnings soared, rising from an average of \$11 per week in 1914 to \$22 per week in 1919 (Frum). In the closing phases of the war, this increased consumer purchasing power served to revive the national economy.

On November 11, 1918, the war ended, and America's economic boom faded swiftly. In the summer of 1918, factories began to reduce production lines, resulting in employment losses and fewer opportunities for returning troops. This resulted in a brief recession in 1918–19, which was followed by a more severe one in 1920–21.

Every other World War I participant had renounced the gold standard right at the start of the conflict. They recognized that their currency would decline against gold as part of their war financing. The losers' currencies declined far more than the winners'; among the winners, Italy's currency sank more than France's, while France's currency depreciated more than Britain's. Despite this, the strong pound lost over a quarter of its value against gold. At the end of the war, each country's government had to determine whether or not to return to the gold standard. World War I made the U.S. the world's leading creditor and the unofficial custodian of the gold standard.

World War I was a net gain for the American economy in the long run. The United States was no longer a country on the margins of the global arena; it was a cash-rich country capable of transitioning from a debtor to a global creditor. America had demonstrated that it could wage a manufacturing and finance war while also fielding a modern volunteer armed force. All of these elements would come into play less than a quarter-century later when the next global battle broke out.

And then, from the fog of the Great War, a new world order emerged, and a second great war erupted. Although it is difficult to properly encapsulate the toll of WWII in a single statistic, the astounding numbers of military deaths can serve as a revealing shorthand. While the war was devastating for everyone involved, the Axis powers—Germany and Japan—as well as the Soviets and Chinese, as well as smaller nations in Eastern Europe and East Asia caught in the crossfire—bear a disproportionate share of the human toll. These military deaths are a drop in



the bucket compared to the much greater death toll resulting from conflict, famine, and genocide, as well as economic and environmental devastation on both continents.

While Americans paid a high price as well, losing 400,000 military members, the US emerged from the war significantly stronger as a virtue of everyone else's collapse. After World War II, Europe recovered substantially as a result of American aid; the countries that had lost the least from the war contributed the most to rebuilding. But not only that, the end of WWII also marked the collapse of the European imperial system for good.

The aftermath of the fall of European imperialism is fascinating. In just a few years after World War II, the centuries-long project of European colonialism disintegrated almost entirely. The reasons for this were many: the rise of independence movements in Latin America, then in Africa and Asia; the collapse of European economies that drew them back home; and, with postwar colonial misadventures like the 1956 Suez Crisis, a sense that the new world order was not going to tolerate colonialism anymore. In any case, the world was left with two enormous land empires that happened to have European roots: the United States and the Soviet Union (Fisher).

The rebuilding phase in Europe relied heavily on debt allocated from the US. This fact would change the dynamic of world order, and will pave the way to America's dominance and hegemony, as all world powers were in need of finance to reconstruct their homelands. The situation of the US was overwhelmingly the opposite. Take, for example, France, which suffered more materially than any other belligerent in World War I or II. In 1914, war and German occupation had decimated northeastern France, the country's biggest industrialized area. Millions of young men were killed or disabled. On top of that, the government was badly in debt, owing billions to the US and even more to the United Kingdom. France had also been a lender during the battle, but the majority of its loans were to Russia, which had renounced all

of its foreign obligations during the 1917 Revolution. The French answer was to demand that Germany pay reparations.

The United Kingdom was ready to lower its demands on France. However, it owed the US considerably more than France did. It could not hope to pay its American debts unless it collected from France, Italy, and all the other smaller adversaries.

The United States' response to World War II was the world's most astounding mobilization of an idle economy. 17 million new civilian jobs were generated during the war, industrial productivity grew by 96%, and corporation earnings after taxes quadrupled (Fisher). Government spending aided in the resuscitation of the economy that had defied the New Deal. Over one-third of industry's production was consumed directly by war requirements, but increased productivity provided a phenomenal supply of consumer products for the people as well. Despite wartime rationing, only America witnessed an increase in consumer goods (Fisher). Real weekly wages before taxes in manufacturing were 50 percent greater in 1944 than in 1939 as a consequence of wage increases and overtime compensation. The war also resulted in the development of whole new technologies, industries, and human abilities.

The conflict culminated in full employment and a more equitable distribution of wealth. For the first time, blacks and women entered the workforce. Wages and savings both grew. The conflict resulted in the union's strength being consolidated, as well as far-reaching reforms in agricultural life. Housing was in better shape than it had been previously.

By 1943, before the aerial bombardment ramped up, overall American output had surpassed that of the Third Reich by nearly four times.

## **2.2 A Might Military Strength Emerged from the Cold War**

Following the two world wars and the end of colonialism, the international order was left to only two rival powers: The United States and the Soviet Union. Both had opposing ideologies, conflicting European and Asian interests, and a fundamental mutual distrust. While

this would ordinarily have resulted in war, the terrifying force of nuclear weapons prevented them from fighting. Instead, the United States and the Soviet Union fought for global dominance.

The Americans and the Soviets never engaged in direct battles. However, they both launched coups, supported rebellions, backed dictators, and participated in proxy wars in nearly every corner of the world. Both built up systems of alliances, offshore bases, and powerful militaries that allowed each to project power across the globe (History.com Editors). The term 'cold war' first appeared in a 1945 essay by the English writer George Orwell called 'You and the Atomic Bomb.'

Most American officials agreed that the best defense against the Soviet threat was a strategy called "containment." In his famous "Long Telegram," the diplomat George Kennan (1904-2005) explained the policy: The Soviet Union, he wrote, was "a political force committed fanatically to the belief that with the U.S. there can be no permanent modus vivendi [agreement between parties that disagree]." As a result, America's only choice was the "long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies." "It must be the policy of the United States," he declared before Congress in 1947, "to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation...by outside pressures." For the next four decades, American foreign policy would be shaped by this mindset (History.com Editors).

The containment strategy provided the rationale foundation and justification for an enormous armament buildup. In 1950, the National Security Council Report NSC-68 reaffirmed Truman's advice that the US employ military action to stop communist expansionism wherever it appeared to be taking place. The research recommended a four-fold increase in the defense budget to achieve this goal.

Officials in the United States, in particular, urged the development of atomic bombs similar to those used to end World War II. As a result, a deadly arms race ensued. The Soviet

Union tested an atomic weapon in 1949. President Truman responded by announcing that the US would develop an even more destructive atomic weapon: the hydrogen bomb, or superbomb.

By the 1960s, the strategy of containment had reached another dramatic arena; space. Sputnik, the world's first artificial satellite and the first man-made object to be sent into Earth's orbit, was launched on October 4, 1957, by a Soviet R-7 intercontinental ballistic missile. Most Americans were taken aback by Sputnik's launch. As a response, in 1958, the U.S. launched its own satellite, Explorer I, designed by the U.S. Army under the direction of rocket scientist Wernher von Braun, and what came to be known as the Space Race was underway. President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a public order establishing the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), a federal organization committed to space research, as well as many initiatives aimed at utilizing space's military capabilities. Despite this, the Soviets were one step ahead of the competition, sending the first man into space in April 1961 (History.com Editors).

As the Cold War heated all the way through the 70s and 80s, American leaders believed that the spread of communism anywhere was a threat to freedom everywhere. Thus, they worked to provide financial and military aid to anticommunist governments and insurgencies around the world. This policy was implemented in Central America, the South of Africa, as well as in Asia. Take the case of the Taliban in Afghanistan, who received a massive military and logistical support from the US intelligence and military, with the aim of dismantling the communist expansion in Central Asia.

While this fierce and deadly competition allowed the two rival powers to accelerate their wheels of advancement, especially within the economic, military, and scientific fields, the US was far ahead of the competition. This fact was ultimately reflected in the two Gulf Wars, in which the technological advancements of the US military were revealed for the first time. In the first Gulf War, for example, the US military was able to defeat the Iraqi military, which was

heavily relying on Soviet equipment and armaments, within the span of six weeks. The US military made use of its latest military technology, including stealth bombers, cruise missiles, and so-called smart bombs equipped with laser guidance systems, as well as infrared night bombardments.

The events of the two Gulf Wars were crucial to the course of the Cold War because, through them, US superiority was experienced for the first time. As a result, it did not last long until Soviet President Gorbachev announced the end of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, along with many of its trappings of global power, disintegrated—leaving the United States with a vast global architecture of military and diplomatic power that was suddenly unchallenged.

### **2.3 A Huge Military Power Sourced from NATO**

Following WWII, the United States emerged as an indisputable superpower, with a powerful military, a flourishing economy, and unmistakable moral leadership for the postwar period. The United States had sought to promote internationalism on the world stage a generation previously, during the First World War, but had eventually succumbed to an isolationist attitude, a notion that long had been a strand in the American fabric (STAFF, 2022).

NATO, was the United States' first peacetime military alliance outside of the Western Hemisphere, and it signified a change from the country's isolationist posture before to World War II (STAFF, 2022).

NATO was formed in the early stages of the Cold War to fill the vacuum left by America's withdrawal from Europe's power struggles and conflicts after World War I. In contrast to the Senate's rejection to accept the League of Nations Treaty, America aspired to create a new and durable international architecture following World War II. The United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (the precursor to the World Trade Organization), and a slew of security treaties and alliances, including NATO, were among them.

Presidents and Congresses of both parties embraced this American-made architecture, beginning with President Harry S. Truman and continuing through the Cold War, which helped the United States achieve prosperity, expand freedom around the world, and avoid a devastating nuclear war with an expansionist Soviet Union.

In 1948, the Soviet Union erected a wall separating Berlin from the rest of Germany. The next year, Western European governments joined the United States and Canada to form the North Atlantic Organization, which was intended to discourage Soviet aggression and counterbalance the Soviet Union in Europe. During the Cold War, it grew to encompass nearly every European country west of the Soviet bloc. By declaring that the US would protect any member as if it were its own soil, the US may have avoided another war in Europe. It also left Western Europe, which had previously been a jumble of autonomous nations competing with one another and with the US, united against a shared danger — and headed by its most powerful member, the US (Fisher).

After the Cold War ended, that dynamic remained largely unchanged. NATO grew, gaining new members in Central and Eastern Europe, where Russia remained a threat. NATO supports Europe's peace and security, but at a price: Europe's states have become reliant on, and hence yoked to, American dominance.

This dynamic can be seen all over the world— South Korea and Japan, for example, are equally linked to the US through security accords and American military facilities—but it is most prominent in Europe. As a result, the US military budget is larger than the next 12 largest military budgets on Earth, combined.

This is partially a remnant of the Cold War, but it's also a reflection of the US's new role as global security and international order guarantor. For example, the United States has made it its military policy since 1979 to secure oil supplies out of the Persian Gulf, which helps the whole globe (Lloyd and M. Freeman).

Other powers, on the other hand, are quickly expanding their military. China and Russia, in particular, are quickly upgrading and increasing their military capabilities, tacitly threatening US supremacy and the US-led system. For that, the importance of the nearly 70-year-old organization to America is profound.

The alliance has guaranteed peace and stability in Europe since it was founded in 1949. The past 70 years have seen an unprecedented period of prosperity in Europe and North America.

NATO allies provide the United States a military boost. Nearly 2 million active duty service members in Europe have cutting-edge skills. In Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, European allies are deployed. They collaborate with the US in anti-piracy activities and the maintenance of marine lines of communication and airways (Lloyd and M. Freeman).

In a speech at the Heritage Foundation, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that: “NATO is the foundation for that prosperity”. “Europe and North America together represent half of the world’s economic output,” he added. “And while we now have our disagreements over tariffs, it does not change the fact that Europe and North America are each other’s biggest trading partners.” And asserted that: “France and the United Kingdom contribute 30 percent of NATO’s nuclear ballistic-missile submarine fleet,” he said. “America’s NATO allies also maintain dual-capable aircraft for nuclear delivery to enhance our deterrence and keep the peace.”

NATO partners have comprehensive and efficient intelligence networks that collaborate with American professionals. From tracking submariners in the Arctic to detecting terrorists, the alliance information sharing covers a wide range of capabilities.

NATO allies also hosts 28 American main operating bases across Europe. These European locations provide a significant strategic advantage in the battle against terrorism and

other challenges by allowing the US to project military might throughout the greater Middle East and Africa (Wemer).

NATO fosters European peace and deters major US enemies from waging large-scale conventional warfare. The alliance also acts as a force multiplier, providing the United States with more military tools than it could get on its own. Non-US NATO members have 1,857,000 active duty service members and 1,232,290 reservists (Lloyd and M. Freeman). The seven largest non-US NATO member armies have the same number of active duty troops as the United States (1.3 million). Non-US NATO members can deploy 6,983 battle tanks, 34,000 armored vehicles, 2,600 combat aircraft, 382 attack helicopters, 252 major naval craft (including submarines), and 1,582 patrol and surface combatants.

NATO allies contributed thousands of troops to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, including 38,000 in 2011, saving the United States an estimated \$49 billion that year. The operation in Afghanistan was the first and only time NATO's mutual defense commitment was invoked.

Additionally, NATO supports and protects the economies of Europe, which are critical to the health of the US economy. Only because of security and stability provided by the alliance, US commerce with the European Union able to reach \$699 billion in 2015 (Lloyd and M. Freeman). Non-US NATO members rely heavily on the US defense industry to supply their forces. Currently, European members are planning to purchase as many as 500 new F-35s from the United States. US exports to the former Communist NATO member states (not including East Germany) grew from \$0.9 billion in 1989 to \$9.4 billion in 2016.

And then Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg concluded: "NATO continues to be relevant and effective in the Defeat-ISIS coalition and in deterring Russia. For nearly seven decades, the United States has been able to call upon its close allies and friends in NATO, no other power can match that. No other power in the world has so many friends and allies."



## **2.4 Conclusion**

It is evident that the power the US and NATO have acquired over the decades is unmatched. The power of states and civilizations is usually measured by their military might, economic strength, and the durability and effectiveness of their social institutions. The US have enjoyed a military might that was almost unmatched over the decades; yet, it was unable to achieve many of its declared goals in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa. Intellectuals are keen to draw the attention to the dynamics on which the US Army and government are grounded. And they tend to view them as inefficient. For the success of the logistics is governed by many dynamics. Noam Chomsky tackled this issue, as well as many other intellectuals and diplomats.

## **Chapter Three:**

### **The Notion of the American Decline**

#### **3. Introduction**

The concept that the US's influence is diminishing geopolitically, militarily, economically, and culturally, is known as the theory of the American decline. The amount of the decline, as well as whether it is relative or absolute, has been a subject of controversy.

According to some researchers, the idea of decline, or declinism, has long been a part of American society. In a study of 1,019 Americans conducted in 2021, 79 percent of individuals polled stated that America is "breaking apart (Robitzski)." Simultaneously, a comparable percentage of poll respondents said they were "proud to be an American." (Castronuovo).

“declinism”— as argued by many—is the idea that something is fundamentally wrong with the U.S. economy and until it is fixed, America will neither compete effectively in global markets nor provide an adequate standard of living for its citizens. declinists contend that the present confluence of domestic dysfunction and external challenges is uniquely challenging. However, most researchers tend to go beyond the insecurity of the US economic infrastructure, to the “relative” causes of this insecurity. Grand scale wars, proxy wars, the highly expensive process of forming alliances abroad, backing dictators...etc. are all considered to be accumulations to the notion of decline. The aim of this chapter is to display, explore, and elaborate this stance.

#### **3.1 Noam Chomsky Perspective on the American Decline**

It has become "a common theme" that the United States, which was regarded only a few years ago as a colossus with unrivaled might and unmatched appeal, is in decline, ominously facing the threat of eventual collapse. According to American public intellectual Noam Chomsky, the deterioration has been ongoing since the peak of US strength just after WWII,

and the triumphalist rhetoric of the 1990s was primarily a self-delusion (Chomsky, “American Decline: Causes and Consequences”). He, however, rejects the common assumption that power will shift to China and India, and considers it to be highly dubious. The reason for that, according to Chomsky, is that China and India are poor countries, with “severe internal problems.” And he asserts that the world is becoming more diverse, but despite America’s decline, in “the foreseeable future”, there is no true competitor for global hegemonic power (Chomsky, “American Decline: Causes and Consequences”).

In his article, “*American Decline: Causes and Consequences*”, Noam Chomsky explains that “During World War II, US planners recognized that the US would emerge from the war in a position of overwhelming power”, Chomsky writes, “Plans were developed to control what was called a Grand Area, a region encompassing the Western Hemisphere, the Far East, the former British empire”. Including the crucial Middle East oil reserves and as much of Eurasia as possible, or at the very least its core industrial regions in Western Europe and the southern European states (Chomsky, “American Decline: Causes and Consequences”). The latter are seen as necessary for maintaining control over Middle Eastern oil reserves. The US was to retain “unquestioned power” with “military and economic supremacy” inside these vast territories, while assuring the “limitation of any exercise of sovereignty” by governments that would interfere with its global designs. “The doctrines still prevail,” Chomsky writes, “though their reach has declined.”

The plans were carefully implemented after the war. As the US emerged from the war as the richest country in the world, it had half the world’s wealth and unmatched security. The US was able to reconstruct its internal institutions, and to reorganize much of its foreign relations in an order that guarantees the preservation of its influence and interests, and the implementation of its demands. And then “Each region of the Grand Area was assigned its ‘function’ within the global system”. “But decline was inevitable”, Chomsky states, “as the

industrial world reconstructed and decolonization pursued its agonizing course". By 1970, the United States' share of global wealth had dropped to around 25%, still enormous but significantly diminished. The industrial world was becoming 'tripolar," with major centers in the United States, Europe, and Asia—then concentrated on Japan—already establishing themselves as the most dynamic region.

After the collapse of the USSR, the Bush I administration declared that the policies of the Cold War would remain unchanged, but under different pretexts (Mark L). The large military structure would be retained, but not to defend against the Russians, but to face third-world states' technological sophistication. Similarly, they reasoned, maintaining the defense industrial base would be important. Later on, the Clinton administration would declare that the US has the unilateral right to use military intervention to ensure uninhibited access to key markets, energy supplies, and strategic resources (Mark L).

It also declared that military forces must be "forward deployed" in Europe and Asia "in order to shape people's opinions about us," and "to shape events that will affect our livelihood and our security." (Mark L). Instead of being reduced or eliminated, as propaganda would have led one to expect, NATO was expanded to the East (Chomsky, "American Decline: Causes and Consequences"). This, according to Chomsky and many public intellectuals, was in violation of verbal pledges to Mikhail Gorbachev when he agreed to allow a unified Germany to join NATO.

Today, NATO has become a global intervention force under US command, with the official task of controlling the international energy system, sea lanes, pipelines, and whatever else the hegemonic power determines (Chomsky, "American Decline: Causes and Consequences").

According to Chomsky, there was indeed a period of euphoria after the collapse of the superpower enemy (Chomsky, "American Decline: Causes and Consequences"). Prominent

intellectuals declared the onset of a “noble phase”, as for the first time in history a nation was guided by “altruism” and dedicated to “principles and ” and nothing stood in the way of the “idealistic New World bent on ending inhumanity,” which could at last carry forward unhindered the emerging international norm of humanitarian intervention(Mark L) . But not everyone was enthralled, Chomsky asserts. “The traditional victims, the Global South, bitterly condemned “the so-called ‘right’ of humanitarian intervention,” recognizing it to be just the old “right” of imperial domination”, he adds. And for much of the globe, the US was "becoming the rogue superpower," regarded "the single greatest external threat to their countries," and as “the primary rogue state” (Chomsky, “American Decline: Causes and Consequences”).

Bush’s administration was extremely hostile toward the Arab world. Obama’s administration was not different, and Obama’s approval rating was even worse than that of Bush, after the extremely reckless drone strikes in Afghanistan, Yemen, and Latin America. The US, in that regard, lost the propaganda war, a war that other rivalries, such as China and Russia, were able to take its advantages.

It became clear, especially after the Bush-Obama wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, that after two decades of unceasing warfare in the Middle East and Central Asia, the US hegemony is in a process of regression, and at home, US society appears to be on the edge of the abyss.

The United States relied mainly on the economy in its leadership of the world, but the American economy began to undergo many problems as a result of its military ventures and failures around the world in a way that weighed heavily on the American economy. For example, both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars have cost the American economy a trillion dollars. Furthermore, the rise in the American defense budget to 700 billion dollars annually, in addition to the economic stagnation that the American economy went through from 2007 to 2009, which led to the disintegration of more than 14 banks. One of the statistics indicates that the United States is no longer able to live on its own economic activity, as it receives external support

amounting to 1400 million dollars per day in the form of purchases of Treasury bonds so that it can maintain its consumption level, and if the situation continues like this, America will depend on the world more. Then there is the long-term debt crisis. In a span of a few decades, the US turned from the world's leading creditor to the world's leading debtor. These issues have resulted in internal resentment as the rate of unemployment is gradually increasing, which has led to an increase in anti-federal movements and created a sense of internal instability.

### **3.2 Challenges on the Economic, Cultural, and Military Levels**

According to Jeet Heer, U.S. hegemony has always been supported by three pillars: "economic strength, military might, and the soft power of cultural dominance." (Heer) Well, the economic strength of the US has long been challenged, and the economic infrastructure is being dismantled in many areas, in the aftermath of the Bush-Obama wars, and the long-term debt crisis, which hit a record level and exceeded \$27.8 trillion in the fourth quarter of 2020. Furthermore, American economic supremacy, at least by one economic measure (Arends), has officially come to an end, in 2014.

There are many studies that confirm that China will overtake the United States economically. In an annual report published in the last week of 2020 by the Center for Economics and Business Research (CEBR), experts said that the Corona pandemic and its economic repercussions made the competition between the two giants "certainly tilts in favor of China." According to the report, China expects average economic growth of 5.7% annually between 2021 and 2025, before slowing to 4.5% annually from 2026 to 2030. As for the United States, its growth will slow, according to expectations, to 1.9% annually between 2022 and 2024, and then to 1.6%. This means that China will overtake the United States to become the world's largest economy in 2028, five years earlier than expected.

As for the military might of the United States of America, according to a report by the National Defense Strategy Commission, which was carefully presented and explained in article

by Eric Schmitt, and published in the New York Times “America’s longstanding military advantages have diminished.” “Doubts about America's ability to deter and, if necessary, defeat opponents and honor its global commitments have proliferated.” The report cited "political dysfunction" and "budget caps" as factors restraining the government from keeping pace with threats in what the report described as "a crisis of national security." (Schmitt).

The report said that, to neutralize American strength, China and Russia were trying to achieve "regional hegemony" and were developing "aggressive military buildups" (Schmitt). The US Army still by some margins, ahead of its competitors, but according to military officials, the gap is dramatically shrinking, as Air Force General Frank Gorenc said that the United States airpower advantage over Russia and China was receding.

On the cultural level, media outlets in recent times have been spotting the lights on a new world that is emerging and slowly taking shape in Asia, and that is China. In his book, “*The Future of Fear*” Syrian writer and intellectual Ahmad Dadouch argued that “one documentary about China’s infrastructure is enough to completely change the world’s view about the country”. The world tends to view China as that poor communist country that manufactures counterfeit products. But today, after only two decades, the world is realizing that it needs the advanced Chinese industries more than ever (Dadouch, 168).

In 2013, Napoleon Bonaparte’s prophecy of the awakening of the “Chinese Giant” was fulfilled, as China launched its “Silk Road” initiative, which is estimated to be the largest infrastructure project in history, with more than a hundred countries joining it in a few years. In the face of this new reality, the world is seeing many predictions about a new and more ambitious globalization system than what the Communist pole offered to the world many decades ago.

### **3.3 Francis Fukuyama on the End of American Hegemony**

In an article “*The End of American Hegemony*”, published in the Economist last year, public intellectual and thinker Francis Fukuyama, famous with his theory of the end of history, was keen to claim that the end of American hegemony had come, and that it came earlier than expected. His article was written right after the withdrawal of the US army from Afghanistan. Francis Fukuyama writes: “The truth of the matter is that the end of the American era had come much earlier. The long-term sources of American weakness and decline are more domestic than international.” And then he asserted that: “The country will remain a great power for many years, but just how influential it will be dependent on its ability to fix its internal problems, rather than its foreign policy.” (The Economist).

Francis Fukuyama sees that the foundational problem is not a result of the ventures which the US recklessly carried abroad; rather, he sees the problem to be within American society, and that it can only be solved within the country’s institutions. He writes: “The much bigger challenge to America’s global standing is domestic: American society is deeply polarized, and has found it difficult to find consensus on virtually anything.” He adds: “This polarization started over conventional policy issues like taxes and abortion, but since then has metastasized into a bitter fight over cultural identity.” The issue here has been a source of controversy for many years. The strife within American society has been widening deeper and deeper. In fact, much of Chomsky’s literature and writings have focused on how the political, economic, and social structures of American society much of the time marginalize vast groups and classes in society, while benefiting a small group of oligarchies, whom Chomsky calls the elite.

It is very easy to notice that amid social and economic crises, ones like the COVID pandemic, for example, Francis Fukuyama wrote on that matter, saying: “The COVID-19 crisis served rather to deepen America's divisions, with social distancing, mask-wearing, and now vaccinations being seen not as public-health measures but as political markers.”



Many analysts have connected rising economic inequality and economic loss in the United States and other nations to political division. According to David Leonhardt, in his article "*What Americans Don't Understand About China's Power*": "For much of the population in the United States, earnings, wealth, and life expectancy have remained stagnant, contributing to an angry national mood and increasing political tensions. As a result, the government is semi-dysfunctional, undermining several of the country's biggest advantages over China." (Leonhardt)

According to a report by Oxford researchers including sociologist Philip N. Howard, computational propaganda—"the use of automation, algorithms, and big-data analytics to manipulate public life"—such as the spread of fake news and conspiracy theories, social media played a major role in political polarization in the United States (Bamberger 92). The researchers emphasized the Russian Internet Research Agency's involvement in attempting to undermine democracy in the United States and aggravate existing political tensions, according to the academics. Influence operation activity rose following, but was not restricted to, the 2016 election (Bamberger, 31).

Fukuyama sees that these divisions have permeated all sectors of society, from sports to the brands of commercial goods Americans purchase. "In the post-civil rights period", Fukuyama writes, "the civic or the national identity that took pride in America as a multiracial democracy has been supplanted by competing narratives over whether the country was founded on slavery or the fight for freedom. This disagreement extends to the distinct realities that each side believes".

Fukuyama argues that the impact of polarization on US's foreign policy was massive, and lethal as well. "During the Obama administration", he writes, "Republicans took a hawkish stance and castigated the Democrats for the Russian "reset" and alleged naïveté regarding President Putin. Former President Trump turned the tables by openly embracing Mr. Putin, and

today roughly half of Republicans believe that the Democrats constitute a bigger threat to the American way of life than does Russia.” Moreover, Fukuyama believes that polarization has already damaged America’s global influence. He states that the “soft power” of the US, which for a long time has been able to attract people from around the world to invest and believe in the American institutions and society, has been greatly diminished.

Francis Fukuyama concludes his article by stating that the United States' ability to regain its hegemonic status is unlikely. What the US' should aim and aspire to achieve, however, is a world order “friendly to democratic values.”

It is essential to note that Francis Fukuyama, unlike Chomsky, is not concerned with the American Collapse, nor is he a declinist. Francis Fukuyama’s approach and recent literature only tackled the regress, or the end, of the American Hegemony. The American status, however, or the American Idol, should we say, is still alive and well, and will be alive and well for at least a few more decades or even centuries. For Fukuyama, the American hegemony can be restored overtime, but the decline is nowhere near. For Chomsky however, the decline itself is almost inevitable, and it can only be delayed, and if countered, the process of countering it requires a massive governmental and economical and societal stimulus, a stimulus that requires time, which the US, according to Chomsky, doesn't have (Chomsky, “American Decline: Causes and Consequences”).

### **3.4 Criticisms to the Notions of Decline**

On the other hand, with all the expectations circulated by experts in favor of the rise of China, there are still those who doubt its ability to overtake the United States. In late 2018, professor of international relations at Tufts University, Michael Beckley, published a controversial book titled "*Why the United States Is the Only Superpower?*", in which he tried to convince his readers - using dozens of graphs and statistics - that Uncle Sam's country will preserve its global supremacy until at least the end of the twenty-first century (Beckley, 19). he

argues not only that U.S. preeminence is safer than most contemporary commentary would have one believe, but also that it is more resilient: “Unipolarity is not guaranteed to endure,” he concludes, “but present trends strongly suggest that it will last for many decades.” Beckley mentions that the United States, whose population does not exceed 5% of the world’s population, accounts for 25% of the world’s wealth and 35% of global development, and is home to 600 companies among the two thousand highest profitable companies in the world (Beckley, 19).

One of the most important points that came in the book is that the prevailing idea of China's expected progress soon in the economic race contains two fallacies. The first: that the approved economic indicators measure the gross domestic product without deducting the expenses incurred by governments to protect their people and provide services to them, which leads to an overestimation of the economic capabilities of relatively poor and densely populated countries such as India and China. Keeping the remaining resources after subtracting costs into account, puts the United States far ahead of China, Japan and the rest of the major countries - rather, Beckley asserts that the gap between the United States and China is increasing every year by trillions of dollars in America's favor.

A very similar view to that of Chomsky. As mentioned above, Chomsky believes that the American decline is inevitable unless a major government stimulus would be put to work, he doesn't perceive, however, China as the power who would replace the American hegemony. Moreover, taking the debt crisis into account, and the massive military spending, which ultimately resulted in the crisis of deficit spending, makes Beckley's stance prone to controversy.

Beckley supports his argument with a remarkable amount and variety of evidence. Workers in the United States, for example, “generate roughly seven times the output of Chinese workers on average.” China's total factor productivity growth rate, meanwhile, “has actually

turned negative in recent years, meaning that China is producing less output per unit of input each year,” and “roughly one-third of China's industrial production goes to waste.” In addition, “China would need to outspend the United States by substantial margins in the decades ahead just to start closing the gap in recently accumulated military capital,” and “at least 35 percent of China's military budget goes to homeland security operations.” (Beckley, 68).

The second fallacy—according to Beckley—is the widespread belief of the inevitability of the collapse of empires, an idea attributed to many philosophers and historians such as Ibn Khaldun and the German Oswald Spengler, which Beckley strongly rejects, considering that the laws of history do not apply to the world of today. The United States is not the first Globally, in terms of the volume of resources and natural resources, it is even behind many welfare states - such as the Scandinavian countries, Singapore, and New Zealand - in indicators of happiness, education, and health, but it's ahead of all countries by a huge difference in indicators of economic strength and military strength. (Beckley, 69).

Beckley also argues that while the Soviet technology was on par with U.S. technology in many militarily-relevant sectors, the Chinese military technology, some pockets of excellence aside (e.g. missiles, quantum computing), generally lags far behind U.S. standards (Beckley). He also argues that the Soviet Union outspent the US on defense and developed a vast army capable of overrunning central Europe, but China now spends several times less on military than the US and is, probably, incapable of taking Taiwan, much less overrun East Asia. Beckley even contend that China today is much weaker relative to the United States than the Soviet Union was during the Cold War (Beckley110-117).

Beckley also argues that given that the United States already dominates the industries that make up the Fourth Industrial Revolution, accounting for 3 to 6 times China's share of value-added in artificial intelligence, computing, data analytics, robotics, biotechnology, nanotechnology, alternative energy, medical technology, and aerospace, among others, the

Fourth Industrial Revolution appears unlikely to disadvantage the United States (“Roundtable on 'Unrivaled: Why America Will Remain the World’s Sole Superpower’”).

Beckley also declares that he is doubtful that political decay would erode the United States' relative strength, not because the US political system is in good form, but because China's political system is so much worse. “China is an oligarchy governed by a dictator for life, whereas the United States is a flawed democracy”, Beckley states, “while special interests may stifle economic efficiency in the United States, the Chinese Communist Party consistently compromises economic efficiency in order to retain political power” (“Roundtable on 'Unrivaled: Why America Will Remain the World’s Sole Superpower’”).

It is worth noting that Michael Beckley denies that American control is an inevitable and everlasting destiny, and since he wrote his book during Trump’s administration, he did not rule out that the seizure of power by the corrupt, the rise of racial strife, and the reckless military adventures would lead to the deterioration of the country and its internal erosion (Beckley, 246).

He also did not rule out the emergence of an alliance among other powers against the United States, not to necessarily overtake its dominance but at least to isolate it.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Verily, the dynamics of global dominance are grounded over the economic strength, the military might, and the effectiveness of the social institutions. Whether the researcher is concerned with decline or the renewal, to use Samuel Huntington phrase, he’ll discover a baseline of ideas that are always rounded up over these three sections, the economic strength, the military might, and the effectiveness of the social institutions.

However, even if the data which backs the claim of the American renewal is overwhelming, the facts which dismantles all these data, starting from the fragility of the US expansion overseas, which proved to be tragic, with the examples of Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and even all the way back to Vietnam, ending with the collapse of the social institutions, that

used to play the role of mediator between the different social classes and the different sections of the government, the researcher will discover that even if the “American Decline” is nowhere near, the end of the American hegemony has ultimately arrived, and the process of its restoration can be very long and, in a new world of different power structures emerging, can be prone to failure.

## General Conclusion

Many contemporary scholars and intellectuals tend to highlight the similarities between the state of imperial Great Britain on its deathbed, and the state of the United States today. Britain suffered from “imperial overstretch” as said by Paul Kennedy, a historian at Yale university. Great Britain also endured a terrible pandemic, the Spanish influenza, in 1918-1919, as the US today is enduring the terrible impacts of Covid-19. Great Britain’s economic landscape was also exhausted from heavy mountains of debt, as it is the USA today. And through these crises Great Britain was gradually losing its unrivalled role, just as the US today. This is the premise on which intellectuals like Noam Chomsky, Fukuyama, Niall Ferguson and many more, ground their concerns and convictions, each with his own degree.

The United States was able to develop its dominant role within the new world order, the world of post WWI & WWII, but as it seems today, taking all the crises into consideration, this role is likely to fade away. It is important to note, however, that the US today is still a great power, a world power, and it likely to still enjoy its leadership on many parts of the globe for at least a few decades to come. But it is evident today that the dynamics have changed, and the unipolar world order has become obsolete.

As seen by Chomsky, the United States can counter the decline only with a massive governmental and societal stimulus, but, as argued by Chomsky as well, the decline, and then the ultimate collapse, is inevitable, as the established political class within the American institutions has preferred to ignore the deteriorating of the international situation of their country.

This research, based on the previous mentioned premises by Chomsky, and Fukuyama, adopting the analytical approach to both premises, concludes that the global statues of the US today is crumbling, and most of the settlements to counter the contemporary crises and their

impact on the social level will benefit in nothing more than delaying the ultimate collapse for a few more decades.

It is evident with this realm of thought, that certain situations produce certain systems of thought, as argued by Malek ben Nabi, with that in mind, it is crystal clear that the possibility of resurrection is almost impossible. It is evident that within the US political system of today, there is no real and valuable solutions to the contemporary issues that the American institutions are bombarded with today. In fact, following the same theory of Malek ben Nabi, solutions themselves would become prosthetic solutions in situations like these. And remarkable enough, this is the same premise that Noam Chomsky offered in his book, *“Who Rules the World?”*.

If there are conditions and bases for a nation’s possession of global dominance, then there are requirements to maintain that dominance. These requirements can be abridged in the good and wise use of that dominance. The reckless policies which were conducted by the US during the last two decades have led to the antagonism of the United States to most of the international forces competing with it. They also created a sense of international resentment towards the unilateral policy of the United States. In addition to internal resentment of the many wars and the high rate of unemployment; This led to an increase in anti-federal movements and created a sense of internal instability.

The implications of the continued American decline on the international system are still, in a way, obscure. America’s decline is “relatively” faster than that of the Soviet Union before its collapse. And although the United States is still at the top in the economic and military fields, its role in the international system has begun to erode relatively. This is due to the US uncalculated, and even chaotic, military expansion, it is also due to the changing the factors that allow countries to impose their dominance, from traditional military power to other factors such as economic power and scientific leadership, in addition to using soft power to impose



dominion as an alternative to military campaigns which usual cost and weigh heavily on the state's economy.

All these events indicate that for a few years we have been living in a chaotic and unstable system in the absence of American power as an international player that maintains the security and stability of the international system, and that we are going through a transitional phase that may be the process of "restructuring the international system." All these events prove that the era of unipolarity is over.

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