



## Exploring the Global Influence of the United States: A Brief Insight

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Vol. VI, No. II (Spring 2023)

Pages: 87 – 93

DOI: 10.31703/gfpr.2023(VI-II).09

**Citation:** Sawal, J. N., & Mangal, M. (2023). Exploring the Global Influence of the United States: A Brief Insight. *Global Foreign Policies Review*, VI(II), 87-93. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gfpr.2023\(VI-II\).09](https://doi.org/10.31703/gfpr.2023(VI-II).09)

**Abstract:** *In the aftermath of WWII, the United States emerged as a predominant global power and exerted its influence in various domains including politics, economics, and security. This paper provides an overview of the United States' ascent to global prominence, examining key events such as establishing the Bretton Woods system, forming international institutions like the United Nations, and implementing the Marshall Plan. By analyzing these historical milestones, it is aimed to shed light on how the United States shaped the post-World War II global order. Through a concise and informative lens, this paper explores the far-reaching impact of American policies, alliances, and cultural exports on the international stage. The significance of this paper is contributed by the comprehensive understanding of the historical events that propelled the United States to become the influential power it is today.*

**Key Words:** United States, WWII, Global Influence, American Policies, International Institutions

### Introduction

After the end of World War II, the previous Multi-polar world order was replaced by a bipolar system where the US and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) were the two states that emerged as world major powers. Following WWII the two states having two opposite ideologies i.e. USSR advocating communism and the US supporting capitalism led to the confrontation between the two which was also referred to as the Cold War era (1945 to 1991). The Cold War, which began following WWII, was a period of an indirect war between the US and USSR and their respective allies, the Western bloc, and the Eastern bloc. Thus it was a period of greater

tensions and a continuous confrontation for global influence. According to the timeline of events in the Cold War period, several events during the period took place such as the Vietnam War 1955-1975, the Korean War 1950-1953, the Cuban Missile Crisis 1962, the Berlin Blockade 1948-1949, Marshall Plan 1948, and formation of NATO in 1949 and WARSAW Pact in 1955 to contain each other. Such conflicts and tense events further intensified the Cold War between US and the USSR (Valentino & Lebow, 2009).

Following, the post-Cold war era the US emerged as a global power which is one of the great realities of our age. Being a global power in military, economics, technology, western culture, and political contexts the

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US adopted hegemonic designs to influence the world order. In international politics, when a state's military, economic and political powers are enhanced it widens its foreign policy agenda and interactions in world politics. The same argument can be proved correct in the US foreign policy behavior as claimed by structural realists. Never before has one state been so powerful to shape the world order according to its interests. And thus, became the producer of the world order. The new world order was characterized by a Uni-polar system where the US was the most powerful state of all. Over the decades, it has fashioned the distinctive rule-based international order. What is important to note here is that rather than having more opponents the US in her era of Uni-polarity had more supporters with whom the new world order was built (Ikenberry, [2005](#)). Most notably are European and East Asian partners establishing US-sponsored international organizations like; World Bank (1944), International Monetary Fund (1945), World Trade Organization (1995), and a military alliance North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949.

Furthermore, the post-Cold War order also provided for promoting democracy and thus provided a foundation for modern world politics. Following the USSR's disintegration in 1991 US emerged as a superpower and has been a hegemonic state for a long period.

### **Post-Cold War era at a Glance**

Two world wars have been fought in international history where countries were divided into two zones. To be specific, starting from WWII (1939-1945) where the world was divided into two camps referred to as Allies including; France, the UK, US USSR, and to a lesser extent China, whereas the Axis included; Germany, Japan, and Italy. Following Germany's defeat in the

WWII and consequently Axis power lose their strength in war. In the aftermath, the US emerged as one of great military and economic power. The multi-polar world soon begins to change into a bi-polar system when the US and USSR emerged as the only two superpowers on the world stage. But the era of wars didn't come to an end when the two superpowers confronted each other based on having opposite ideologies and influenced the world on their ideological stances (Weinberg, [2014](#)).

Following the end of WWII, the world encountered the cold war (1945-1991). This indirect war of ideologies between the two sides produced not only opposition among the political systems but also the historians of the era who attributed its causality either to the US or to the USSR. Thereby, for almost fifty years the global order was being restructured by two superpowers as per diverging ideologies, and national interests. By the time the global order consisted of solely two superpowers to drive global politics. Ergurtuna ([2018](#)) writes that the cold war era during the time brought continuous tensions and uncertainty to the international system. Yet it was a period where bloody regional wars took place around the globe from Europe to Far East countries. Thus, it became desirable for historians to blame any actor for the war's happenings. In this connection, western scholars Thomas Bailey and Herbert Feis put the cold war responsibility for USSR, where Stalin's expansionist policies over Eastern Europe sprung up the cold war. Winston Churchill in his words about the Soviet's approach to the western world says that "They (the Soviet Officials) fear the friendship of the West more than its hostility" (Ergurtuna, [2018](#)).

Besides USSR's role in the cold war, some historians such as; W.A. Williams and Daniel Yergin have a different approach. According to the Revisionist's view, the US

policy of prioritizing an open market system and democratic norms led the USSR's leaders to challenge them. Such a tussle led to almost fifty years of global unrest. Unsurprisingly, the war of ideological supremacy came to an end with the largely peaceful collapse of communist ideology in 1989 in Eastern Europe, the reunification of Germany in 1990, and the Soviet disintegration in 1991 signifying the end of the cold war period which had dominated the global system for almost forty-five years.

Yilmaz (2008) discussed the post-Cold War developments and the emerging world order of that era where basic trend characteristics of the international system and threats in the international system have been addressed. The end of the Cold War had dual impacts on the international system, on one hand, it allowed setting the trend of promoting democracy at an international level, and secondly, significant progress was seen in resolving conflicts that had been prolonged during the Cold War. Thirdly, interstate conflicts among eastern and western countries decreased to a great extent. Fourthly, the nature of the Cold War is indirect, and no use of armaments, but to dominate each other through various tactics and policies. Such strategies led to disarmament and a decrease in defense budgets., on the other side, the Cold War's impacts contributed to several unpleasant events as well; including, the emergence of conflicts in the USSR like; the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh and fighting in Chechnya. Such conflicts not only occurred in the countries but also took place in different parts of the world where superpowers had been involved for instance; the Former USSR invasion of Afghanistan (1979) and the US-led war on terror (2001).

Summing up the post-Cold War era it is of utmost significance to highlight the global

order where the bi-polar system disappeared and reshaped into Unipolarity under the supremacy of the US. Speaking in military and political contexts the American Empire soon attempted to operate in the Persian Gulf, Iraq, and Middle Eastern regions and deployed its forces at bases to establish a semi-permanent foothold to keep an eye on Syria, Iran, and other potential enemies to the US. As discussed earlier in the US-led world order several developments took place under the leadership of the US.

### **American-Driven Global Order**

The US emerged following the end of the Cold war era as the world's only superpower. The global order structured as a Uni-polar world where the US economic, military, and technological power grew faster than European Union and Japan, where all other countries like China and Russia remained as to be regional powers. The US soon adopted the hegemonic designs and established its new world order with the agenda to establish international institutions, promoting its capitalist ideology and democratic political system. It was when for the first time in international history that the world entered into the age of US Uni-polarity, and an era where the world's most powerful state could fearlessly operate (Ikenberry, 2005). The Uni-polar order was a moment where the US gained influence over the world since there was no other challenging superpower.

Since 1945, the US has pursued its global interests by creating and maintaining economic and military international organizations such as NATO. Moreover, the US has attempted to create bilateral and regional security organizations, pacts, and treaties and adopted liberal political norms such as ordering mechanisms referred to as the US-led world order (Cevallos et al., 2016). In this connection US approach to the

global world order includes the following main themes:

1. A rules-based open market system
2. Creating strong alliances and sufficient military capabilities for deterrence
3. Multi-lateral cooperation among countries and international law for the solution of international problems (such as; non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction)
4. Promotion of democracy

According to Oezel, (2015) after the Soviet's disintegration, the US experienced her sole power and became a global policeman. It was the only leading country in the world that could impose its own will on other countries and could fulfill its interests by any means. The US soon gained the title of "Super Power" and attempted to establish its international organizations to dominate the world in one way or the other. Thereby, US international influence includes;

- Founding member of the United Nations (1945)
- US is one of the (P5) five permanent members of the Security Council along with the UK, Russia, China, and France.
- Founder of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Which is a military alliance founded in 1949 to contain USSR. But is still actively working with its 30 member countries.
- Sponsoring/funding as a dominant member of international organizations like; IMF, World Bank, WTO, and trailblazer of Bretton Woods System
- One of the influential members of G8 and G20 countries to develop closer economic ties for expansion in trade and development and crisis management.

In short, the US is the leading country in international organizations, which shows its significance in many areas ranging from economic to political scenarios of the world. Apart from US hegemony, it is important to note that in the world of power politics, Countries are in a continuous struggle to dominate one another on the world stage, and therefore no state of the world remains as hegemon sole for a decade or two such as the US. For this, history is witness to the fact that the 9/11 attacks however revealed the US vulnerability. The subsequent reactions to the 9/11 attacks put the US Uni-polar world order and hegemony at risk. Although in the present time it is still a powerful state, on the other hand, such attacks put US hegemony in question of how it is possible to destroy the US World Trade Center and Pentagon leading to numerous casualties, economic hits, and much more. Adding to this, theorists like Robert Cox also believe that the world order may change in the coming future and expressed his views in the words "My hope is for a more plural world" (Schouten, 2009). Many regional powers are emerging as major economies of the world and are a threat to US hegemony. The assumptions include that the world in the coming future will become multi-polar and that a new world order is yet to be built. In this connection, the rise of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) is of great significance (Oezel, 2015). Despite, the potency of BRICS countries it is found that BRICS is not in a position to mount the international efforts to cope with the crisis at a larger scale. Given that, several factors contribute to the vulnerability of BRICS (Jash, 2017). This might be a matter of concern for the global community how the trends of multilateralism will work out, especially in such a global order where the US is a dominant member. Moreover, it is found that in the post-World War II era, multilateralism has widely been American-

centric, and presently countries like BRICS started to question this arrangement to cement their position in the changing world order. It is argued that since the BRICS emergence the US hegemony has been remarkably declining but this may prove as a lofty goal for BRICS (Ikenberry, [2005](#)). The collective effort of member countries to curb the US hegemony needs a series of requirements including convergence in the foreign policy preferences, well-defended ideological and political unification, and a clear vision for a multilateral world order of member countries. However, the internal split and the divergence of interests imply that the BRICS group does not look optimistic about recording a high score comprehensively (Willy, [2018](#)).

### **Global Position of the US Economy and A Way Forward**

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The United States has long been seen as the world's strongest economy and a major global influencer. However, there are discussions about China's potential rise as a superpower. The US's status as a hegemon is influenced by factors like its stable economic growth, representation in international organizations, and impact on global events. This impact can be seen in countries like the Czech Republic, where the "Americanization" of society is often mentioned. The US trade flows, particularly imports, have a significant impact on domestic producers. These imports give the US economy control over the competitiveness of domestic businesses. From the early 19th century to the 1910s, the United States primarily exported agricultural products to Europe (Davis & Hernandez, [2019](#)). This was due to the expansion of agricultural land and the decrease in transportation costs, which led to an increase in exports and even influenced migration from Europe. The global market's size and openness allowed

the US to capitalize on its comparative advantages, leading to a higher demand for American agricultural exports. From 1909 to 1970, the US economy experienced substantial growth in the manufacturing sector, making it highly competitive. The period from 1958 to 1980 witnessed a significant expansion of economic competition (Shepherd, [1982](#)). When examining the US's recent history, it can be observed that international trade played a significant role in European economies, contributing a substantial part to their GDP. However, this was not initially the case for the US economy due to the size of its domestic market. Looking at the long-term perspective, the US economy remains stable and continues to grow. It is recognized that investing in inventory, particularly durable goods, can help reduce economic volatility. Additionally, technology investments are crucial for sustained economic growth and competitiveness. This is exemplified by China's significant investments in science and research, coming close to the United States investment in recent years. By considering factors beyond performance statistics, such as power dynamics and politics, we can gain a broader understanding of how the global economy functions and the distribution of authority within it (Strange & Smith, [1998](#)). It is important to note that political authority does not always align with territorial borders where sovereign jurisdiction is exercised. Since 1989, the Czech Republic has embraced an open economy, benefiting from international exchange and comparative advantages. When it comes to protectionism versus free trade, it has been found that the costs of protectionism usually outweigh the benefits and are generally not profitable for the economy. The level of protectionism in global trade is closely tied to barriers to foreign trade, which, especially when supported by political consensus, play

a crucial role in determining trade policies and their level of openness. Despite efforts to reduce barriers, such as tariffs, non-tariff barriers have actually increased for many countries and products between 1997 and 2015, indicating a persistence of protectionist measures (Niu, [2018](#)). The US economy has long been a dominant force in the global arena. With its robust GDP, technological advancements, and highly skilled workforce, the US has played a pivotal role in shaping the global economic landscape. Its influence can be seen in various sectors such as finance, technology, and innovation.

However, the US economy also faces challenges. Income inequality remains a pressing issue, with a significant wealth gap between the rich and the poor. Additionally, trade imbalances and protectionist policies have led to tensions with other countries, affecting global trade dynamics. To strengthen the global position of the US economy, a way forward involves several key strategies. First, addressing income inequality through policies that promote equitable wealth distribution, such as progressive taxation and social welfare programs, can help create a more inclusive economy. Second, fostering innovation and investing in research and development can enhance the US economy's competitiveness. This can be achieved through increased funding for scientific research, incentivizing entrepreneurship, and supporting emerging industries. Third, promoting international cooperation and free trade can create opportunities for economic growth.

Collaborative efforts to reduce trade barriers, negotiate fair trade agreements, and resolve disputes can help restore trust and stability in global markets. Lastly, investing in education and workforce development is crucial. By equipping individuals with the skills needed for the jobs of the future, the US can maintain its competitive edge and ensure sustainable economic growth (Abboushi, [2010](#)).

## **Conclusion**

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In conclusion, we have explored the profound influence of the United States on the global stage, examining its impact across political, economic, and cultural realms since the post-WWII era. Through an analysis of major developments as a hegemonic power, we have gained insights into the United States' role in shaping international relations and global norms. However, it is important to acknowledge the challenges and threats that the United States faces in maintaining its supremacy, including emerging powers, geopolitical shifts, and economic competition. Looking ahead, it is crucial for the United States to navigate these complexities by adapting to new power dynamics, engaging in diplomacy, fostering international cooperation, and addressing domestic challenges. However, by addressing income inequality, fostering innovation, promoting international cooperation, and investing in education, the US can strengthen its global position, by doing so, the United States can continue to play a significant role in shaping the global landscape.

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