# Introduction

This book examines US foreign policy from Thomas Jefferson's purchase of Louisiana expanse to the Korean War. That period of one hundred and fifty years corresponded with the rise of US might from fledgling republic to transcontinental giant with overseas reach: empire. By mid-twentieth century, the US gross national product, exports as a percentage of world exports, and nuclear delivery systems dwarfed those of all competitors or other powers, including Great Britain, China, France, Germany, Japan, and the USSR.[1]

This study serves as a companion to my earlier *Wars and Peace: The Future Americans Envisioned, 1861–1991*. I reviewed in it how a broad range of Americans during security crises conceptualized future world orders. I did so with a conviction that political imagination is not an exclusive property of the policymaking elite: Americans of diverse political stripes have always flavored public discourse with their versions of truth and solutions to problems. Thus I scrutinized the views of nonconformists, civil rights activists, feminists, and scholars. I drew connections between this eclectic crowd and the ideas – plus decisions – of policymakers in Washington. In effect, I sought to reacquaint readers with prominent, often controversial, thinkers whose eloquence, passion, and even wrongheadedness gave texture to the debates of their times.[2]

My analytical concern here is more restricted than in *Wars and Peace*. The focus is on dissenters within the responsible class, coextensive with members of Congress, high-ranking soldiers, ambassadors, and cabinet officers. This category of humanity, carrying the stamp of official duty, is by definition not estranged from power.[3] Such people choose to live in this medium, divided between functions of policy conceptualizing (congressmen, cabinet ministers) and implementing (soldiers, diplomats). These persons derive pride, meaning, and occasionally comfort in manipulating types of power in public trust.

People intimately involved in the affairs of state have a perspective on events different from critics living outside the zone of authority. Failure in

the responsible class can lead to national disaster. Hence the ethic of responsibility – Max Weber's terminology – supersedes its philosophical rivals: pure principle or the best solution. Their full expression is invariably inhibited by the logic of prudence and shifting contingency. Edmund Burke's observation on the distinction between scholars and statesmen is apt: "A statesman differs from a professor in a university; the latter has only the general view of society; the former, the statesman, has a number of circumstances to combine with those general ideas, and to take into his consideration . . . A statesman, never losing sight of principles, is to be guided by circumstances; and judging contrary to the exigencies of the moment, he may ruin his country forever."[4] Such appreciation caused Immanuel Kant to admit that the governing class often sneers at advice given by schoolmen, who, unburdened by cares of consequential decision beyond classroom or study, can indulge varieties of fancy: "The practical politician tends to look down with great complacency upon the political theorist as a mere academic . . . the state must be founded upon principles of experience; it thus seems safe to let him fire off his broadside, and the *worldly-wise* statesman need not turn a hair."[5] Philosophers, historians, and erudite pundits must content themselves in that faith consoling to economist John Maynard Keynes: the views of practitioners are derived from scribblers of previous generations.[6]

Properly exercised, power entails discipline in moderation and upholds pragmatic virtues. An outright dissenter in exalted office is by definition an "impossible thing," as A. J. P. Taylor shrewdly noted.[7] Yet insofar as the history of US foreign affairs can be framed as a series of debates, unorthodox viewpoints in lofty places are apparent. They have challenged the line emanating from the White House, the main expositor of official policy at any given time.[8] The spectrum of discontent has run from strenuous disagreement to mere skepticism. Implicit across gradations of contention has been the impulse to shape in contrary ways, sometimes to subvert, the prevailing policy.

Dissent within the US government has constituted a distinctive realm at odds with the mentality of "team spirit." Impatient, suspicious, frequently saturated in partisanship, dissent has tended toward the overthrow of existing policy by either pressing it toward greater energy or else reduced activity. Dissenters have often preferred that peculiar satisfaction enjoyed by contrarians opposed to majority wisdom and complacency. Such people, their pleasing attributes and foibles, have been examined by various writers – memorably by Taylor in his merry reading of British dissenters (*The Trouble Makers*) and by John F. Kennedy (*Profiles in Courage*).[9] My purpose here is not to add to or endorse this literature of intellectual–political heroism. Rather, I wish to explore the alternative

history implied in those arguments waged at senior levels in Washington. This angle of approach does not lend itself to identifying heroes or villains, though they and ordinary mortals are treated here, but allows for better understanding of the choices made at turning points in US history. This approach yields another benefit – countering homogenizing brands of historiography that portray the emergence of US power as a succession of victories born of consensus about national purpose.[10] The record is neither bland nor compatible with claims to collective self-exoneration. American history has nothing to do with power produced in "immaculate conception."[11] Bitter controversies, unintended results, mishaps, and partial triumphs litter the chronicle.

Of the responsible class's four components, the legislative has always enjoyed most latitude in resisting the White House line. Constitutional provisions on Congress codify and dignify dissent as the republic's lifeblood. Politics in the absence of dissent would amount to ratification of the status quo or, phrased differently, sabotage of the US regime. Within Congress's province resides the authority to declare war, ratify treaties, fund operations abroad, and otherwise support or disrupt initiatives by the chief executive. Unsurprisingly, the majority of dissenters treated in this book have come from the Senate and House of Representatives.

Senator Timothy Pickering, examined in the first chapter, voted against the treaty transferring Louisiana territory from France to the United States. The next chapter includes Representative Josiah Quincy, one of the signers of the 1812 minority report that questioned the merits of James Madison's war against Great Britain.[12] Subsequent chapters feature the following: Representative Edward Everett brooded over the unwillingness of Washington officialdom to help Greek nationalists in the 1820s as they fought to wrest their homeland from Ottoman control. Senator Theodore Frelinghuysen opposed Andrew Jackson's expulsion of Native Americans to the Mississippi's western shore, authorized by the 1830 Indian Removal Act. Representative Joshua Giddings condemned the Mexican war of 1846–1848 as an odious venture to expand the slavery zone. Senator John C. Calhoun tried to curtail the nation's territorial appetite in the same war; he feared that new acquisitions would aggravate north–south friction. Neither did the 1867 transfer of Russian America (Alaska) to the United States in the Civil War's aftermath win universal support in Congress. Feisty objection came from such men as Representative Benjamin Butler. Senators Preston Plumb and Henry Moore Teller contested central parts of policy toward Native America in the 1870s–1880s. George Frisbie Hoar, a commanding figure in the Senate in the late nineteenth century, excoriated US policy in the Philippines. Senators William Borah, Robert La Follette, Henry Cabot

Lodge, and George Norris feared that the proposed League of Nations in 1919 would ensnare the United States in endless European imbroglios. Representative Jeanette Rankin voted against declarations of war in 1917 and 1941. Senator Robert Taft condemned the Nuremberg trial after World War II as an exercise in specious justice.

In most of these cases, what stood for congressional conscience was formed by varying parts of authentic conviction, self-interest, and party needs. Complicating this mix, congressmen had to resolve the dilemma created when the popular will, or what passes for it, conflicts with the legislator's own judgment.

The American military conscience subsumes the warrior and chivalric codes in solemn creed ("duty, honor, country" in West Point maxim). It gives the least margin for dissent and stresses obedience to civilian superiors. Yet discontent has percolated within the armed forces' upper echelons. The most spectacular instance occurred in 1951, when General Douglas MacArthur pressed Harry Truman to widen the war in Korea and thereby precipitated a constitutional crisis. Its resolution was decided in a race between the officer who contemplated resignation as a means of undermining a beleaguered president or his firing the soldier first. "The son of a bitch isn't going to resign on me," Truman vowed.[13] Less dramatic moments of military discontent have included General John Ellis Wool's unhappiness in the 1830s with removing the Cherokees from their ancestral homelands in the southeast. Later, Generals William Sherman and Philip Sheridan, who opposed President Grant's Peace Policy, urged alternative means of dealing with Native American tribes. General Nelson Miles became an object of President Theodore Roosevelt's scorn when he publicized the extent of army misdeeds in the Philippines during the early years of US occupation.

Between the extremes of military subordination to civilian authority and Congress's autonomy lies that area occupied by top diplomats and cabinet officers. Both groups serve at the pleasure of the president. They are creatures of the executive branch. Yet they are not circumscribed by imperatives of such strict obedience as apply to people serving in uniform. The ambassador as an instrument of policy is necessarily more subtle than the soldier and tries to advance national interests by measures short of violence. In times of war, diplomats concentrate their attention upon the post-hostilities era and tailor policy according to their understanding of future distributions of world power. The ambassadorial service has produced some of the scrappier dissenters in US history, even as diplomats have been disparaged in popular culture as effete or effeminate. Nicholas Philip Trist disobeyed direct orders from Washington in 1848 to end negotiations with Mexico. His persistence resulted in the treaty of

Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending hostilities and transferring vast territories to the United States. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau (senior), to cite another example, tried valiantly to stir Washington into meaningful action on behalf of Armenia in 1915, when by Ottoman decree it was vacated and murdered. Ambassadors Nelson Johnson in China and William Bullitt in France argued before Pearl Harbor for direct US involvement on the side of countries resisting Axis invasion.

Dissent within the cabinet has been infrequent. Heads of departments, notably those charged with diplomacy or security, have been among the primary architects of foreign policy. Usually, and rightly, they have been implicated with the achievements or failures of a given president. But even here striking instances have arisen of deviation from the main line, resulting in resignation or dismissal. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan left Woodrow Wilson's cabinet in 1915 to protest the president's German policy. Truman fired Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace in 1946 when he insisted that common ground could be established with Stalin's USSR and the Cold War impasse broken.

Not every disgruntled cabinet officer has lost the debate or felt obliged to depart. Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin rued Congress's decision in 1812 to declare against Great Britain. But he stayed in the government; he worked doggedly to end a war damaging to the United States. Secretary of State William Seward in April 1861 sought de facto to replace Abraham Lincoln as chief executive in the crisis of disunion. Lincoln forgave his subordinate. He stayed on to become one of the more celebrated foreign ministers in US history. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau (junior) brought about a crucial reversal in 1944. He galvanized FDR's policy of rescuing persecuted European Jewry, in which action the administration had hitherto been feckless.

Dissent as vocation has never been especially pleasant, despite safeguards to protect free expression. Even members of Congress, insulated from cruder types of executive retaliation by the status of elected office and rights accorded a loyal opposition, have been reluctant to defy presidents on major initiatives. Soldiers, diplomats, and cabinet officers out of step have risked forfeiting their commissions while living in discouragement or isolation.

* * *

Four strands of dissent are discernible amid the personalities, competing ideas, and rival interests that shaped debate on foreign affairs from Louisiana to Korea. These strands can be labeled as prophetic, republican, nationalist, and cosmopolitan. They interlaced even as they wove

through the deeper fabrics of American society and polity: capitalist economy, technological change, population growth, racial-ethnic-religious diversity, class stratification, party competition, and regional tugging.

The prophetic is the most venerable of the four strands. It was nourished by the religious temper and puritan core of the colonial/early independence period. More precisely, this orientation originated in the outlook of seventeenth-century New England theocrats such as John Winthrop. Themselves dissenters – from Anglican ecclesiolatry – they feared God's wrath at creatures who strayed from His edicts or purpose.[14] Pronounced still in the nineteenth century, before the popular success of Charles Darwin's biology, the prophetic strand stemmed from belief in God (often depicted in anthropomorphic terms) who judges nations no less than individual souls. A number of dissenters, mainly reared in Protestant tradition, accepted in earnest this idea once expressed by the religiously unconventional Jefferson. This deist said (referring to slavery): "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever."[15] From such anxiety, resolve could follow to put matters right, evident in voices opposed to enlarging the slave zone via the Louisiana acquisition, evicting Native Americans from their lands, or attacking Mexico in 1846. The idea that God reflexively enlisted on America's side constituted theological error – blasphemy – for the prophetically minded recusant.

The republican strand sprang from the country's democratic ethos and distrust of empire, inherited from the 1776 rebellion. This strand of dissent has manifested most frequently and vividly. It gained rhetorical power and influence from America's being a self-conscious republic – fed by the idea, as self-evident, that representative institutions and liberal values were superior to, also incompatible with, overweening power. In this case, the United States should not substitute the sham of imperium for estimable virtues. Possession of immense power was thought to be disorienting, even disabling. Americans must not lose their way in hubris or worship of imperial idols, against which the 1776 generation had properly mutinied. Republican-minded dissenters thus objected to Louisiana empire, the 1848 Mexican cession, the buying of Alaska, Filipino occupation after the Spanish–American war, and subsequent bids for hegemony. This preference did not recommend national introversion and eschewed sulky isolationism; republican dissenters emphasized instead the power of US example – accountable government, domestic tranquillity – as guarantor of Washington's influence abroad.

The nationalist strand, in tension with the first two, is related to the realpolitik school of thought and flows from colonial/pioneer anxieties

about survival in a harsh environment, unforgiving of weakness and unrelieved by reliable allies. One should not explain or make excuses for the cultivation of power in this dangerous world. Therein feeble people perish. Energetic and fit ones survive in a ceaseless contest of all against all – Thomas Hobbes's state of nature writ large. By this standard, one should take confident steps to tame the Indian west. One should not surrender vital parts of sovereignty to a League of Nations or other internationally pretentious organizations. One should not be passive before adversaries, whether in Axis or Sino-Soviet garb, but act boldly to preserve security and economic well-being. This nationalist approach, properly understood, eschewed jingoism and chauvinism while insisting on the dignity of US interests defined in terms of power.[16] As realpolitik has dominated American practice, its adherents have only infrequently found themselves in a dissenting or minority position.

The cosmopolitan strand is connected to the extroverted and voluble quality of the citizenry, to the diversity of its religious–national origins, and to convictions (vaguely Kantian) about right international conduct. Moreover, this cosmopolitan strand – tending against the nationalist strand and sometimes reinforcing the prophetic and republican – arose from the notion that US power did not exist as an end in itself. Correctly conceived, American power in economic–military form should serve humanitarian aims on behalf, for instance, of persecuted minorities: Greeks and Armenians in the Ottoman empire, Polish subjects of czarist Russia in 1863, Jews in Nazi-controlled Europe. Such an attitude did not seek or justify eternal wars of intervention on behalf of humane causes. Yet the United States, Abraham Lincoln's "best hope of earth," was enjoined by ethical progress and universal principles to discharge duty whenever possible beyond political frontiers.[17] Embedded in this notion is a rejection of unvarnished empire in favor of that viewpoint which discerns states and peoples existing in a maturing society of norms, laws, and reciprocal obligations.[18]

The prophetic strand surfaces in chapters 4 (Removals) and 5 (Mexico) of this book. The republican is salient in chapters 1 (Louisiana) and 2 (1812). It shares space with the prophetic in chapter 5, reappears in chapter 6 (Russia), and occupies portions of chapters 8 (Philippines), 9 (Armageddon), 10 (Axis), and 11 (Containment). The nationalist strand twists through chapter 7 (Reservations) and controls bits of chapters 9, 10, and 11. The cosmopolitan strand runs through chapter 3 (Greece) and important parts of chapters 6, 9, and 10. All four strands of dissent, whether conspicuous in the substantive chapters or making only cameos, are treated as a bundle in chapter 12 (Dissenters) and refined upon individually.

Essentially, these strands are useful shorthand to distinguish among different individuals and philosophical positions. I am wary of getting too distracted by definitions, or applying them rigidly, and flagging every flash of one or other strand. When I have had to err between belaboring or gently touching upon, I have preferred the latter for stylistic reasons, even at the cost (slight, I hope) of analytical stringency. No schema can adequately account for the range of dissenting voices presented in this volume; the strands should be seen as kinds of leitmotivs.

* * *

This volume is divided into three sections. The first covers the period of continental expansion that began with the Louisiana acquisition and culminated in the eviction of Indians from the heart of US territory. The second section concerns land acquisition by primarily military means, beginning with the 1846 war against Mexico and ending with subjugation of the Philippines. By the early twentieth century, the United States constituted a sprawling empire built upon purchases, declarations of intent (e.g., the Monroe Doctrine), expulsion or containment of presumptive undesirables, invasions, and ocean routes that connected the mainland via the navy to Pacific provinces (Hawaii, Philippines). The book's third section considers those debates that flared as the United States emerged as the premier security state in the twentieth century, amid two world wars, totalitarianism, and Cold War conducted beneath the nuclear shadow.

Not every instance of dissent in high places has been treated in this book. I have been selective, not encyclopedic. I have chosen several cases (e.g., policy toward Native America, Armenia in World War One, Nuremberg) with an eye to how they intersect with current debates about US foreign policy (e.g., imperialism, genocide, status of international law). And I have approached familiar questions – say, on the Monroe Doctrine or the 1898 war – from an angle just off to the side of the conventional picture, thereby creating greater space for dissenters and their ideas than is found in standard narratives of diplomatic history. Together, I believe, my cases do illustrate the shape, feeling, and variety of dissent. My examples also promote this theme: the creation and maintenance of US power have taken place not only at the level of economic-military tectonics, but also upon the field of colliding ideas and uneasy conscience. Additionally, the requirements of national security have not always crushed other concerns that sustain an open society. The imperial republic, Raymond Aron's designation, has become more imperial than republican over the decades.[19] But as the history of dissent in high office

demonstrates, the career of US power has benefited from the clash of interpretations. Policy has been improved, thought quickened. Neither has the democratic instinct been vanquished, albeit sorely tested.

* * *

The chapters in all three sections contain the following elements and adhere to this structure. First, I outline the main questions and give an exegesis of government policy. Then I switch focus to the response by establishment dissenters – their critiques, varying intensity of purpose, and preferred ideas (not always well-polished, especially when pegged to contradictory programs as in post-1865 policies toward the western tribes). An evaluation of consequences and implications concludes each chapter.

Only the book's final chapter departs from prototype. That chapter blends epilogue, synopsis of US foreign actions from Eisenhower's era to the second Iraq war, with rumination on dissenters and their vocation. One of their preoccupations since the Cold War has centered on the problem raised by America's possessing immense power – the resentments it arouses abroad, the temptation to use it casually. Such dissenters are in line with sentiments captured in Burke's 1793 injunction: "Among precautions against ambition, it may not be amiss to take one precaution against our *own*. I must fairly say, I dread our *own* power, and our *own* ambition; I dread our being too much dreaded."[20]

*Part I*

# Expansion