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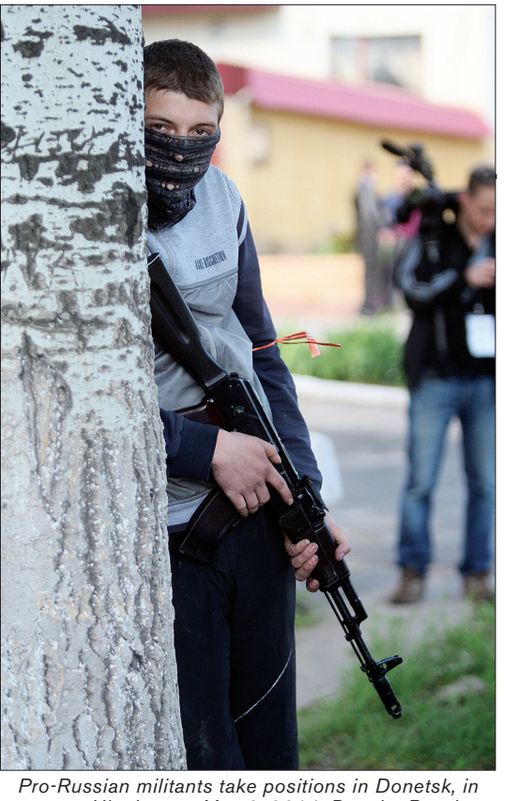
U.S. Global Engagement

Should America be more assertive on the world stage?

As concern grows about Russia's intentions in Ukraine and the civil war in Syria continues unabated, the United States faces increasing pressure from hawks to intervene militarily — though not with boots on the ground. But in the wake of the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, most Americans oppose involving U.S. troops in military actions abroad. Mindful of the potential for escalation and intent on shifting resources to domestic needs, the Obama administration has been using diplomacy and economic sanctions rather than bullets to assert American power. It has refused military aid to Ukraine but imposed economic sanctions in an attempt to stem what many view as an effort by Russian President Vladimir Putin to bring Ukraine under Moscow's control. Last year President Obama stopped short of bombing Syria after it used chemical weapons, instead sending aid for refugees of the war. Some U.S. allies applaud the administration's restraint, but others want to see more American muscle.



Pro-Russian militants take positions in Donetsk, in eastern Ukraine, on May 6, 2014. Despite Russian President Vladimir Putin's annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, President Obama has refused military aid to Ukraine, instead imposing economic sanctions. Most Americans oppose military intervention in Ukraine and other international hotspots.

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U.S. Global Engagement

BY PETER KATEL

THE ISSUES

In May, yet another foreign official came to Washington to act out a time-honored ritual: pleading for help in overthrowing a hated dictatorship.

This time the supplicant was Munzer Akbik, chief of staff in the Opposition Coalition seeking to depose Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Although the rebels have received some U.S. weapons, they want more. [1]

"There is a wide range of sophisticated weaponry that can make a difference on the ground, [such as] missiles, the anti-aircraft, antitank missiles and maybe some kind of guided weaponry and heavy artillery," Akbik said. [2] (*See "Current Situation," p. 446.*)

In the 1980s, Afghans fighting a Soviet invasion, Nicaraguans opposing a left-wing government and Bosnians facing assault by Serbian forces all came to Washington with similar requests. [3] Four decades earlier, as Nazi Germany bombed London, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was unable to visit Washington personally, but he still pleaded successfully for help getting U.S. weapons, despite Americans' resistance to entering World War II prior to Japan's 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. [4]

Akbik came to Washington at a time of multiple foreign crises: Pro-Russian separatists are fighting Ukrainians over territory; a rapidly militarizing China is asserting claims to lands held by neighbors; and the U.S. and several other nations are attempting to limit Iran's nuclear development.

As the world's economic and military superpower, the United States engages overseas in those regions and others in many ways — diplomatically, economically, militarily — and does so for many reasons, including opposing its foes, supporting its allies, protecting its economic self-interest and providing humanitarian assistance. But Americans are increasingly unhappy at the prospect of more U.S. involvement in foreign crises.

A *Wall Street Journal*/NBC poll in April found that nearly half (47 percent) of respondents want the United States to be less active internationally — a much higher share than in previous years. The Pew Research Center, in a survey released late last year, found "the most lopsided balance in favor of the U.S. 'minding its own business' " since the question was first asked in 1964 — 52 percent of respondents. [5] (*See graph, p. 437.*)

AFP/Getty Images/Zein al-Rifai

A girl is carried to safety in Aleppo, Syria, after being wounded by a reported barrel bomb dropped by government forces on April 27, 2014. At least 150,000 people – one-third of them civilians – have been killed in the three years of fighting between government forces and the rebels seeking to unseat President Bashar al-Assad. President Obama backed off military action against Assad after he agreed to destroy his chemical weapons.

Some foreign-policy experts welcome the public skepticism. It matches their own rejection of the doctrine of American "exceptionalism" as justification for intervention. "What nation doesn't think it is exceptional?," asks Melvin Goodman, a former CIA and State Department analyst of Soviet affairs who now directs the National Security Project at the liberal Center for International Policy in Washington. "We've carried too much of the international burden."

Other, more hawkish, experts argue that the public, though understandably wary after more than a decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, should be persuaded to support some actions overseas. "Americans are gun-shy about military action," says James F. Jeffrey, a former U.S. ambassador to Iraq in the Obama administration, who also served in the National Security Council in the George W. Bush administration. "But I don't think anybody recently has done a good job of explaining to the American public why it is that the Russia action in Crimea matters," says Jeffrey, now a distinguished visiting fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "There is a serious public education case to be done here."

In fact, the administration is also wary of the public mood as it confronts pressure to intervene, treaty responsibilities to allies, humanitarian obligations and its own caution about military action. "America must not succumb to the temptation to turn inward," Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said in a speech in Chicago in early May, likening public opinion now to antiwar sentiment before World

Unrest Spreads in Ukraine

Ukrainian troops and pro-Russian protesters have clashed in eastern and southwest Ukraine. Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula in southern Ukraine in March.

War II. "We are a great nation because we engage in the world." [6]

Still, the Obama administration has generally emphasized diplomacy. The United States and some allies eased sanctions on Iran last year to encourage negotiations with its longtime foe. The negotiations — which included Russia and China — are continuing. They aim to ensure that Iran develops nuclear capabilities for peaceful purposes only. But President Obama's Iran diplomacy faces constant, deep-seated skepticism by a key U.S. ally, Israel. That attitude was reflected in March when overwhelming bipartisan majorities in the House (394 members) and Senate (83) signed letters demanding crippling sanctions against Iran if the negotiations fail. [7] (Secretary of State John F. Kerry's most recent attempt to broker peace between Israel and the Palestinians collapsed in late April. [8])

The administration also avails itself of harder-edged forms of overseas engagement. Asian allies' worries over China's military expansion — its military budget is due to grow by 12.2 percent this year — have sparked U.S. plans to send additional forces to the region. [9] To deal with the crisis in Ukraine, the administration has imposed selective sanctions against some Russian oligarchs and companies. (*See "Current Situation," p. 447.*)

Engagement can also include small-scale intervention. In early May, Obama sent U.S. law enforcement and military experts to Nigeria to help find almost 300 Nigerian schoolgirls kidnapped by a brutal Islamist militia, Boko Haram. [10]

Neither that action nor the others has aroused U.S. public opposition. What Americans do clearly oppose is major military action. The problem is "intervention fatigue," say two staff members at the Council on Foreign Relations, a New York-based think tank stemming from the Iraq and Afghan wars. [11]

Obama cited that factor in pushing back against critics who call his foreign policy too timid. "Most of the foreign policy commentators that have questioned our policies would go headlong into a bunch of military adventures that the American people had no interest in participating in and would not advance our core security interests," he told reporters during an April tour of Asia. [12]

Obama himself saw his attempt at limited military action in the Middle East turn out badly. American airstrikes in 2011 were critical to toppling Moammar Gadhafi, a move that Obama justified at the time as a moral imperative, saying he refused "to wait for images of slaughter and mass graves." But jockeying for power after the U.S.-aided overthrow of the Libyan dictator left al Qaeda-influenced militias in a strong position — strong enough to attack the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi and kill Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three security guards. [13] (*See "Background," p. 446.*)

Last year, after having warned the Syrian regime not to cross a "red line" by using chemical weapons, Obama considered and then rejected a Syria airstrike, following what U.S. and United Nations officials in August 2013 called convincing evidence of a chemical attack that the United States said killed more than 1,400 people, including children. All told, at least 150,000 people have been killed in the Syrian War. [14]

In the wake of that chastening experience, Obama not only turned away from military action against the Syrian government but then teamed up with Russia to try to solve at least the chemical-weapons element of the Syrian crisis. Although Russia is Syria's major ally and single biggest arms supplier, it agreed with the United States in September that Syria should surrender all its chemical weapons for destruction. [15]

Some critics say that Obama's retreat from military action in Syria amounted to giving Russian President Vladimir V. Putin a green light in Ukraine. David Adesnik, a visiting scholar at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, a Washington think tank, argues a modified version of that critique, noting that Russia had behaved aggressively under Obama's predecessor George W. Bush, and that Obama had tried for a "reset" to prompt warmer relations with Russia. [16] "That was a big mistake," he says, but "Syria didn't have a salutary effect"

on Putin's calculations of U.S. steadfastness.

The Ukraine crisis has America's Eastern European allies growing increasingly nervous about Russia's territorial intentions.

In a show of strength aimed at Russia, 600 U.S. paratroopers have begun training with Eastern European forces, and a dozen F-16 fighter jets have been deployed to Poland. The military exercises involve fellow members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a military alliance the United States helped form at the start of the Cold War to deter Soviet aggression in Europe. [17]

Ukraine, a former Soviet republic that has been an independent nation since 1991, borders Russia. Since last year, Ukraine has been torn between Ukrainians who want to deepen ties to Europe and those who want to solidify ties with Russia. This spring, Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula. The country's east has become a battleground for pro-Russian separatists, at least some of them Soviet or Russian military veterans, and the Western-oriented government. [18]

Those who fear a revival of Soviet territorial ambition have been wary ever since Putin first became Russia's president in 2000. A former Soviet intelligence officer, he has never retracted what many interpret as a sign of nostalgia for the days of Soviet power — his often-quoted view, in a 2005 speech, that "the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century." [19]

Historical echoes are sounding in the United States as well. The top Republican interventionist, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., calls for supplying weapons to Ukraine. (*See "At Issue," p. 449.*) And he has denounced the administration policy on Syria, demanding military action, but short of "boots on the ground." McCain argued, "Our policies should be determined by the realities of the moment, not by today's isolationism dictated by the past." [20]

Most Want U.S. to "Mind Its Own Business"

Fifty-two percent of Americans agree that the U.S. should "mind its own business internationally." The proportion of Americans favoring less involvement in other countries' foreign affairs has grown by 22 percentage points since 2002.

Source: "America's Place in the World 2013," Pew Research Center, Dec. 3, 2013, p. 107, http://tinyurl.com/lz3mb2y (The September 2001 survey was conducted before the 9/11 attacks.)

As foreign-policy experts watch the latest developments in Ukraine, Syria, Asia and elsewhere, these are some of the issues they are debating:

Should the U.S. military intervene in Ukraine?

With its Cold War echoes, the U.S.-Russia confrontation over Ukraine may offer the clearest test of Americans' attitudes toward U.S. intervention in international crises, and whether economic and diplomatic approaches are sufficient, or military engagement is called for. In confronting Russia, the United States is opposing the former command center of the old Soviet empire, and at the same time trying to reassure Eastern European allies that once were ruled by Soviet puppet governments.

Since the 1990s and early 2000s, those countries, including Ukraine's biggest neighbor to the west, Poland, have been members of NATO, which was born in the Cold War, and pledged to the mutual defense of any member that comes under attack. [21] American forces are participating in NATO exercises in Poland and other ex-Soviet neighbors. The Obama administration so far has drawn the line at supplying arms to Ukraine or taking direct military action. [22]

But the administration, in addition to leveling sanctions at some Russians, has agreed to provide $1 billion in loan guarantees to Ukraine. [23] Those are in addition to a $17 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, of which the United States is a major member, and $15 billion in other financing from the United States and other sources. [24]

The aid bolsters pro-Western Ukrainians in their demands for closer ties to Europe — demands that led them to oust elected President Viktor Yanukovych early this year. He had rejected a previously agreed upon trade agreement with the European Union that would have oriented Ukraine's economy toward Europe rather than Russia. [25] Protesters also called for better government and denounced corruption by Yanukovych and his cronies. [26]

After Yanukovych vacated the presidency, Putin supported efforts in Crimea (part of Russia until 1954) to secede from Ukraine. He then promoted annexation of Crimea. [27]

Then the Crimea scenario appeared to start replaying in eastern Ukraine, where ties to Russia are believed strong. Talks in Geneva between U.S. Secretary of State Kerry, Russian Foreign Minister

Sergey Lavrov and representatives of Ukraine and the European Union yielded an agreement to de-escalate, but pro-Western and pro-Russian groups struggling in the streets of Ukraine ignored the deal. [28]

In early May, Obama made clear that he rejects any military intervention in Ukraine. "We want to see a diplomatic resolution to the situation in Ukraine," he said at a White House press conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. "But we've also been clear that if the Russian leadership does not change course, it will face increasing costs as well as growing isolation — diplomatic and economic." [29]

Andrew J. Bacevich, a professor of international relations and security studies at Boston University who is a West Point graduate and retired Army colonel, says the administration's measured approach properly reflects the importance of the current Ukraine clash to U.S. national-security priorities. "The classic definition of a vital interest is: Is it a place or an issue you are willing to die for?," he says. "I think the American people would probably have some doubts there."

Adesnik at the American Enterprise Institute argues that survey data about U.S. public opinion on global engagement show more nuance than skeptics acknowledge. "There's a lot of contradictory evidence," he says, acknowledging the support for the go-it-alone approach but pointing out that Americans also want their country to remain a superpower. He cites Pew survey numbers that show 56 percent of respondents believe the United States should remain the sole military superpower while 72 percent support a shared global leadership role for the United States. [30]

Adesnik also acknowledges that the public opposes military action that would place troops at risk. "But the best way to stay out of war is to indicate you're not afraid of war," he adds. "American behavior — always reaching out to your enemies — did contribute to Putin's behavior. It led him to think that Obama is always going to resort to that."

But Stephen F. Cohen, a historian of the Soviet Union and emeritus professor at Princeton and New York University, argues that debates among foreign-policy specialists over Obama's approach to the Ukraine crisis fail to take into account details of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, including the ouster of elected president Yanukovych. "The government in Kiev hasn't got a shred of legitimacy," he says. "It came to power by overthrowing a constitutionally elected president, though he may have been a very bad guy."

Between the toppling of a pro-Russian president and the expansion of NATO in Russia's neighborhood beginning in the 1990s, Cohen argues, Putin has a case for worrying about encirclement. Between that Russian case and U.S. fears of Russian aggression toward NATO allies, Cohen says, "That is where you sit down and negotiate."

If the U.S. reduces its global involvement, will China and Russia step in?

Behind demands or pleas for a more aggressive, military-oriented response to the crises in Ukraine and Syria — and whatever future conflicts may emerge — is concern that the United States may lose the superpower status it has held since World War II and the preeminent global position it has occupied since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Russia's actions in Ukraine, its key roles in the Syria chemical-weapons deal and Iran nuclear negotiations, as well as China's economic might and its recent territorial aggressiveness, are amplifying concerns about U.S. global strength.

Putin is likely to continue to resist a geopolitical order in which U.S.-dominated NATO extends to Russia's borders. In 2007, he said in what observers interpreted as a jab at the United States: "There are those who would like to build a unipolar world, who would themselves like to rule all of humanity." [31]

Significantly, given Moscow's insistence on dangers to ethnic Russians in Ukraine, in his 2005 speech calling the Soviet collapse disastrous, Putin said that when the empire fell, "Tens of millions of our co-citizens and compatriots found themselves outside Russian territory." [32]

By April of this year, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov picked up the theme, warning that Russian citizens would treat any attack on Russian-speakers in Eastern Ukraine as an attack on Russia. [33]

At that time, Obama was beginning a tour of Asia that grew out of his policy of shoring up U.S. allies over what is seen as a long-term military and political challenge by China. "There's a widely held view in the region that the U.S.-China relationship is tipping toward being much more confrontational," Bonnie S. Glaser, a senior adviser for Asia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told Bloomberg News. [34]

The confluence of the Russia and Asia events underlined the concerns of some experts that a diminishing U.S. presence in global affairs would be replaced by China or Russia or the two together.

But even some of those most alarmed at what they see as U.S. disengagement draw clear distinctions between Russia and China and their potential for expanding their presence. "Russia is not really interested in or really integrated into the outside world," says former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Jeffrey of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "China is different — very integrated into the outside world." But Russia, otherwise economically disconnected, is a vital supplier of petroleum to Europe.

China may be connected, but it is not indispensable, because its economy centers on manufacturing, which can be done elsewhere, argues Bruce Jones, director of the International Order and Strategy Project at the centrist Brookings Institution think tank. "The threat to American leadership is greatly exaggerated," he says. "In the next 10 or

15 years, the Chinese economy will be as large as the United States' but not as influential."

As for Russia, Jones says, it arouses no global allegiance, especially among its fellow members of the so-called BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa). "The notion that Russia is leading some anti-American coalition in the BRICS is facile," he says. "China is not about to be led; India is not about to be led."

But other global-engagement partisans argue that possible new threats from old Cold War foes have more to do with U.S. withdrawal than with Russian or Chinese muscle-flexing. "There is more danger that there will be no leader," says Adesnik of the American Enterprise Institute. "Imagine what the sanctions effort on Iran would be without the United States to take the lead. Other countries only get convinced to sign up when the United States says, 'We are going to lead.'"

Adesnik does agree with the skeptics who question the leadership capabilities of America's two big rivals. "No one wants to be led by China and Russia," he says. "They are not at the forefront of solving problems."

But Goodman at the Center for International Policy argues that the Obama administration's "pivot" to Asia amounts to a direct challenge to China in the form of Cold War-style containment. "That is what China fears. We have more subtle reminders available than to announce a pivot."

Still, Goodman says, little chance exists of a Russia-China alliance against the United States. "There is too much mutual suspicion along that 6,000-kilometer border." [35]

Is the post-Cold War vision of the U.S. as the "indispensable nation" still valid?

As secretary of State in the Clinton administration, Madeleine Albright in 1998 coined what has become a favored description among global engagement partisans of America's place in the world: the "indispensable nation."

At the time, the administration was preparing for possible military action against Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, to enforce a United Nations resolution that he relinquish weapons of mass destruction. Asked by host Matt Lauer on the NBC "Today" show what she would tell the parents of U.S. military personnel "being asked to clean up a mess for the rest of the world," Albright said:

"But if we have to use force, it is because we are America; we are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future, and we see the danger here to all of us. I know that the American men and women in uniform are always prepared to sacrifice for freedom, democracy and the American way of life." [36]

When she spoke, the Soviet Union's collapse had ended the Cold War, NATO had begun expanding to countries of the former Soviet empire, the administration had intervened in Bosnia and was about to press for NATO airstrikes on Serbia. The United States had also grappled with issues of post-Cold War engagement in other parts of the world. In 1990-91, President George H. W. Bush had assembled a multinational alliance to reverse an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, a key world oil supplier. But in 1994, the United States took no action to stop the genocide in Rwanda, a moral failure for which President Bill Clinton eventually took responsibility.

In 2003, just months after the start of the Iraq War, President George W. Bush lauded the United States as the exemplar of democratic government: "It is no accident that the rise of so many democracies took place in a time when the world's most influential nation was itself a democracy." [37]

But in 2011, when Obama was announcing the downshifting of the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan, he captured what seemed to be the public mood after years of war: "America, it is time to focus on nation-building here at home." [38]

The otherwise hawkish former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Jeffrey summarizes that mood, shared by Obama, Americans in general, and himself: "Never, ever try to change the internal situation in a country by putting thousands of ground troops in."

However, he contends, the reality is that the United States is indeed indispensable. Americans should understand that the nation's seemingly inexhaustible supply of cheap imported goods grows out of U.S. power. "We're the world's reserve currency; people pour money into this country," he says. "These things all flow from the U.S. position in the world."

Ted Galen Carpenter, a senior fellow for defense and foreign policy studies at the conservative-libertarian Cato Institute, responds that U.S. economic power is being eroded by the very military strength that "indispensability" advocates champion. "We're in severe danger of draining the strength of the economy to preserve all of these commitments in the world," he says.

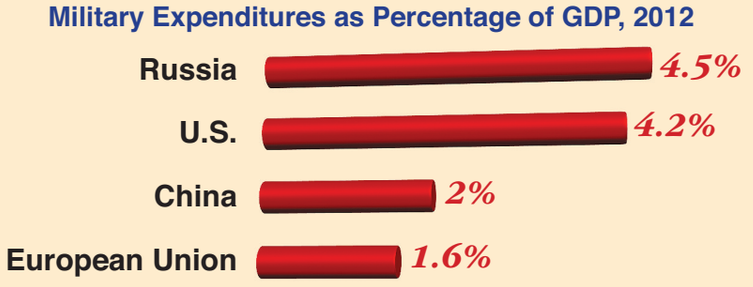
In any event, Carpenter argues, the entire indispensability concept amounts to "national narcissism." The reality, he says, is that the idea of one indispensable nation no longer fits global reality. "The world is becoming more multipolar economically and militarily," he says, "and this notion of the indispensable nation is becoming obsolete."

But Jones at Brookings argues that the growing power of other nations doesn't change the fact that "we have far greater power and influence than any actor out there." Those who reject this view "underestimate American power and overestimate the challenge posed by rising powers," he says.

Still, historian Cohen says, the indispensability doctrine is so deeply ingrained in the diplomatic corps, and in the schools that train Foreign Service officers, that it may be ineradicable. "That is the orthodoxy," he says, "An alternative point of view hasn't existed, so far in my adult lifetime, partly because of the Cold War,

Russia, U.S. Are Biggest Military Spenders

Russia spent 4.5 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on its military in 2012, while U.S. expenditures were slightly lower. In total, however, the $645.7 billion U.S. military budget that year was 11 times Russia's and six times China's.



Source: "Military expenditure (% of GDP)," World Bank, http://tinyurl.com/mckxvjq

when you could argue that America was indispensable."

The American Enterprise Institute's Adesnik says that despite assumptions that Americans are now deeply anti-interventionist, "Public opinion rides the roller coaster of events."

Citizens now may not be in favor of intervention, he says, but, "Americans will respond much more vigorously when the perception of a threat is clear, and they have leaders who hold that America must take a leading role." ■

BACKGROUND

Isolationism Defeated

The United States grew slowly into its global superpower role. President Thomas Jefferson, in his 1801 inaugural speech, famously called for "honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none." Nonetheless, the young nation expanded across the continent, and later into the Caribbean and Pacific, claiming Puerto Rico and the Philippines as possessions in 1898. [39]

But World War I, which began in 1914, called for judgments far more complicated than those involved in claiming new territory. On one side, Britain and France had deep ties to the United States. But sympathy for Germany ran strong among German-Americans and Irish-Americans (the latter because Germany was fighting arch-enemy Britain). American public opinion turned against Germany with publication of the "Zimmermann telegram," in which a German diplomat proposed returning formerly Mexican U.S. territory to Mexico in return for Mexico backing Germany. [40] The U.S. entered the war in 1917.

Twenty years after World War I ended in 1918, Americans were again debating whether to intervene in Europe. The period leading up to the forced U.S. entry into World War II in 1941 was marked by a fierce fight between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and anti-interventionists from right and left. Roosevelt himself took pains to avoid publicly declaring himself in favor of intervention until the war in Europe was well under way. [41]

U.S. debate intensified after Germany began the war by invading Poland in 1939, prompting Britain and France — allies of Poland — to declare war on Germany.

About two months later, a *Fortune* magazine poll of Americans found only 20 percent of respondents favored aid to European democracies.

An especially vocal group, the America First Committee, called for U.S. neutrality. America First's star spokesman was Charles Lindbergh, the aviator who had made the first solo trans-Atlantic flight. He was one of the country's best-known and most admired figures. He was also an open admirer of Nazi Germany and its anti-Semitism.

America First was resolutely anti-communist. But the U.S. Communist Party also opposed intervention, in obedience to orders from Moscow. Soviet Premier Josef Stalin and German Chancellor and Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler had signed a non-aggression pact in 1939, under which Germany and the Soviet Union divided Poland and the Soviet Union took over the Baltic states. [42] Hitler was able to go to war with Poland, France and Great Britain without having to worry — for the time being — about fighting the Soviet Union, too.

Between April and June 1940, Germany invaded and occupied France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark. Seeing German aggression as likely to erode isolationist sentiment, Roosevelt unveiled his interventionist intentions. It was a "delusion," he said in a 1940 speech, to believe that the United States could be "a lone island in a world dominated by the philosophy of force." [43]

The war took a turn when Germany betrayed its nonaggression pact and invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. In the United States, Communist opposition to intervention ended immediately, and party members became the fiercest of hawks. The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, ended debate among the other anti-interventionists. Isolationism became a discredited, fringe ideology.

Cold War

The post-World War II era was marked by a bipartisan consensus among U.S. and allied leaders that U.S. action on behalf of friendly governments or against unfriendly ones was a good thing. [44]

Friendly governments were those that sided with the United States against the Soviet Union. A third category of "nonaligned" countries, including India, maintained ties with both sides. [45] Because the big Cold War players all had nuclear weapons that could destroy one another, they did not battle directly — a restraining mechanism called "mutual assured destruction." [46]

A U.S. doctrine called "containment" also shaped Cold War policy. It called for "counterforce" against the Soviet Union in the form of diplomacy and covert action, instead of war. The doctrine was formulated, though not under that name, in 1946 by George F. Kennan, then the No. 2 diplomat in the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. "If situations are properly handled," Kennan wrote, "there need be no prestige-engaging showdowns." [47]

Instead, the opposing sides faced off in proxy wars and coups in smaller countries. Soviet dictator Stalin had started off after World War II by installing puppet regimes throughout Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the eastern half of Germany. These moves followed tacit recognition of Soviet preeminence in that region in the closing months of the war by the three major wartime allies, the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. Roosevelt, Stalin and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill sealed that pact during a historic meeting at the Crimean resort of Yalta. [48]

By 1949, relations between the Soviet Union and the West had deteriorated to the point that the United States and 11 major allies formed NATO to resist Soviet expansion. The Soviet bloc in turn formalized its military and political ties through the 1955 Warsaw Pact. [49]

From the U.S. side, much of the early Cold War involved secret operations by the then-new Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), formed in 1947. These operations included:

• The 1953 overthrow of Iran's elected prime minister, Mohammed Mossadeq, on the ground that he could pave the way for a Soviet takeover of the oil-rich country. [50]

• The 1954 toppling of the elected government of President Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala, whom the United States considered a communist sympathizer.

• Involvement in the overthrow and execution of the elected prime minister of Congo, Patrice Lumumba, whom the United States considered a communist dupe.

• A failed 1961 attempt to overthrow Cuba's Soviet-allied prime minister, Fidel Castro, which ended in defeat at the island's Bay of Pigs.

In the same year as the Cuba disaster, the Soviet-allied government of East Germany — then a separate country — erected a concrete wall separating the eastern and western sectors of Berlin. The Berlin Wall became a symbol of East-West hostility. [51]

The most dangerous moment in the Cold War came in 1962, after the United States learned that Soviet nuclear missiles had been shipped to Cuba. Negotiations between President John F. Kennedy and Soviet leader Nikita S. Khrushchev averted catastrophic nuclear conflict. [52]

Meanwhile, U.S. military advisers had been working with the government of South Vietnam since 1955 in an effort to strengthen South Vietnam, then a separate nation, against North Vietnam, a communist ally of the Soviet Union and China. U.S. involvement was based on what President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1954 called the " 'falling domino' principle" — that North Vietnamese victory would lead to communist victories elsewhere in Southeast Asia. [53]

In 1964, a confrontation between U.S. warships and North Vietnamese vessels in the Tonkin Gulf led President Lyndon B. Johnson to order U.S. combat forces into Vietnam. By the time U.S. military operations ceased in 1973, 2.7 million U.S. military personnel had served in Vietnam. [54]

The war polarized the United States for the rest of the 1960s and the early '70s, and its effects arguably still influence America's global stance. There were huge anti-war demonstrations, a wave of resistance to the military draft and a political debate that tore apart the Democratic Party in 1968. Among those marked by the conflict were Sen. McCain, a Navy pilot held prisoner by North Vietnam for more than five years, and Secretary of State Kerry, a Navy veteran who became a leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. [55]

In 1973, following years of U.S. negotiations with the North Vietnamese, the United States withdrew military forces. Two years later, North Vietnam defeated the U.S.-allied government. The war had cost the lives of more than 58,000 American military personnel and between 1.5 million and 3.8 million Vietnamese troops and civilians. [56]

Beginning in 1979, a series of upheavals in the Middle East and Latin America opened a new era of U.S. engagement. The Iranian revolution of 1979 toppled Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, a longtime U.S. ally. An Islamist government hostile to the West in general and the United States in particular took power.

That same year, the Soviet Union invaded neighboring Afghanistan to prop up a friendly government, and Nicaraguan revolutionaries aided by Cuba overthrew President Anastasio Somoza, recently abandoned as a U.S. ally. The revolutionary government in turn eventually was opposed by right-wing guerrillas, known as contras. In neighboring El Salvador, a war between the government and a left-wing guerrilla army soon intensified. [57]

With the Cold War still very much in progress, the Reagan administration (1981-89) responded to these events both openly and covertly with military and intelligence operations. In Afghanistan, the administration expanded a Carter administration CIA program to aid guerrilla forces opposing the Soviet invaders. (The Soviets withdrew in defeat in 1989.) Meanwhile, the CIA aided the contras,

and U.S. military advisers assisted the Salvadoran army.

Intense political debate over Nicaragua led to a congressional ban on assistance to the contras. But U.S. Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North, a National Security Council staffer, helped devise a plan in which the United States sold weapons to Iran in return for the release of U.S. hostages held by pro-Iranian forces in Lebanon. Then, profit from the arms deal was funneled to the contras. [58]

The scheme, known as Iran-Contra, blew up into the Reagan administration's worst scandal. North was indicted for lying to Congress and trying to destroy evidence. He was convicted on three counts in 1989 and sentenced to two years probation. [59]

AFP/Getty Images/Gerard Malie

West Berliners watch East German border guards demolishing a section of the Berlin Wall on Nov. 11, 1989, to open a link between East and West Berlin. Erected in 1961 by communist East Germany, the wall became a symbol of Cold War hostility between the East and West. The dramatic tear-down of the wall by Berliners from both East and West Berlin presaged the implosion of the Soviet Union two years later.

Soviet Collapse

The Soviet empire began imploding in the late 1980s. The dramatic tear-down of the Berlin Wall by Berliners from both east and west in 1989 symbolized the process. Germany was reunited the following year. [60] The Soviet Union formally dissolved in 1991.

The end of the Cold War, which had defined U.S. foreign policy for decades, led to a search for a new guiding principle. President George H. W. Bush in 1990 and 1991 laid out a vision of a "new world order" in which "the rule of the law, not the law of the jungle, governs the conduct of nations." [61]

Despite hopes, the end of the Cold War did not bring global peace. [62]

Shortly before the Soviet collapse, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in 1990 invaded the tiny oil kingdom of Kuwait. In response — and to protect world oil power Saudi Arabia — Bush assembled a 670,000-strong military alliance of 39 countries dominated by the United States, which contributed 425,000 personnel. [63]

The Persian Gulf War lasted less than three months. Because the war was brief, and because the United States was not acting alone and was fighting a tyrant, no major antiwar movement developed. The war ended with the rout of Iraqi troops from Kuwait, but Bush did not try to topple Hussein. The United States encouraged Shiite and Kurdish Iraqis who rose up against Hussein at war's end, but they got no U.S. aid, and many were slaughtered or fled Iraq. [64]

A subsequent crisis in Europe provoked intense debate about the extent of U.S. involvement overseas. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia (which had been made up of modern-day Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia) disintegrated. The region fell into war and what was called "ethnic cleansing" — the removal, accompanied by massacres, of ethnic or religious minorities from areas claimed by a majority population.

The conflict centered on Bosnia. In 1992 Muslim Bosnians and Croats voted for independence, but Serbia wanted to keep Bosnia. Bosnian Serbs besieged Sarajevo, a historic city defended by Muslims. Serb artillery attacks, sniper killings and a food blockade drew world attention and prompted some U.S. public figures to denounce U.S. inaction.

The U.N. sent a protective force, which set up so-called safe havens for Muslims, including one in the Bosnian village of Srebrenica. But in 1995, Serb forces overran the village, after U.N. troops were overwhelmed. More than 7,000 Muslim men were massacred. No slaughter on such a scale had taken place in Europe since World War II.

U.S. experience engaging — or not — in other nations influenced the American reaction. Srebrenica followed the horrific 1994 genocide in Rwanda, which the United States and other nations didn't try to stop; members of the Hutu ethnic majority slaughtered hundreds of thousands of members of the Tutsi ethnic group. [65] Clinton later acknowledged his administration's non-reaction to Rwanda as a failure. [66]

Among the reasons analysts have pointed to for the Clinton administration's failure to intervene in Rwanda was a 1993 military catastrophe during a raid by U.S. special-operations forces during a humanitarian mission to Somalia. [67] The mission, chronicled in the book and film "Black Hawk Down," ended in 18

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Chronology

1939-1962

World War II is followed by decades-long Cold War.

1939
World War II begins in Europe; only 20 percent of Americans favor aiding European democracies.

1941
United States enters World War II after Japan bombs Pearl Harbor; war lasts until 1945.

1949
United States joins 11 other countries to form North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

1961
CIA-sponsored invasion of Cuba at Bay of Pigs aimed at toppling regime of Fidel Castro turns into debacle. . . . Soviet satellite East Germany erects Berlin Wall.

1962
Conflict over Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba leads United States and Soviet Union to brink of nuclear war.

1964-1985

U.S. divided over military involvement in Vietnam; upheaval shakes Middle East, Latin America.

1964
President Lyndon Johnson orders U.S. combat forces into South Vietnam.

1973
Peace talks with North Vietnam lead to U.S. military withdrawal. . . . Chilean military, encouraged by CIA, overthrows left-leaning president.

1979
Iranian revolution topples U.S.-backed Shah and installs religious regime hostile to United States. . . . Soviet Union invades Afghanistan. . . . Leftist Nicaraguan rebels overthrow government.

1985
Reagan administration aides begin scheme known as Iran-Contra to sell arms to Iran in return for freeing of U.S. hostages held in Lebanon, with profit to be used for U.S. aid to Nicaraguan rebels fighting left-wing government.

1989-1999

Soviet Union falls, ending Cold War and touching off new round of global conflicts.

1989
East Germany scraps travel restrictions on its citizens, leading to fall of Berlin Wall.

1991
Soviet Union dissolves.

1992
Yugoslavia falls apart along ethnic and religious lines, sparking armed conflict over Serbian attempt to hold onto breakaway Bosnia.

1995
NATO intervenes in Bosnia; peace talks held in Dayton, Ohio, end conflict.

1997
Three former Soviet Bloc members including Poland join NATO, a move Russia sees as hostile.

1999
Prompted by United States, NATO launches air campaign against Serbia over its actions in breakaway Kosovo province.

2001-Present

Terrorists attack United States; turmoil wracks Middle East, Eastern Europe.

2001
Sept. 11 terrorist attacks prompt calls for aggressive U.S. response.

2003
George W. Bush administration launches war to overthrow Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

2011
Syrian revolt begins . . . Libyan uprising begins. . . . President Obama orders airstrikes against Libyan government, aiding rebel victory.

2012
U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three embassy staffers killed by armed militants in Benghazi, Libya. . . . Obama declares that Syrian government use of chemical weapons would mark a "red line."

2013
Syria uses chemical weapons against civilians; Obama backs off military action. . . . Administration makes deal with Russia to remove chemical arms from Syria. . . . Ukrainian citizens protest President's Viktor Yanukovych's rejection of European Union trade deal.

2014
Ukrainian uprising topples president. . . . Russia supports Crimea secession from Ukraine, then annexes Crimea. . . . U.S. contributes troops to NATO exercises to reassure Russia's Eastern European neighbors. . . . Obama administration begins supplying some Syrian rebels with weapons. . . . Pro-Russian separatists effectively take over much of eastern Ukraine.

U.S. Weighs Interests of Allies

Saudis speak out about Syria; Europeans worry about Ukraine.

Managing international friends and allies may be harder than being commander in chief of the world's biggest military machine.

Take Saudi Arabia, a major American ally. Twenty-four years ago, the United States assembled an enormous multinational military force, in large part to protect Saudi Arabia — successfully — from attack by Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, who had invaded neighboring Kuwait.

But last year, the Saudi monarchy was so furious at the United States and other world powers for not intervening in Syria that the kingdom refused a seat on the United Nations Security Council. "Allowing the ruling regime in Syria to kill and burn its people by the chemical weapons, while the world stands idly . . . is also irrefutable evidence and proof of the inability of the Security Council to carry out its duties and responsibilities," the Saudi government said in announcing its move. [1]

The Saudis are both a world oil power and a center of the majority Sunni branch of Islam. Fellow Sunnis are the bulk of the rebel militias fighting the Syrian government, which is controlled by members of the minority Alawite Muslim sect, a splinter group of the Shiite branch of Islam.

If the Saudis were trying to make sure that President Obama got the message to step up aid to the Syrian rebels, they succeeded. In March, Obama traveled to Riyadh, the Saudi capital, where he personally told Saudi King Abdullah that the United States remained determined to back non-jihadist forces among the Syrian rebels. [2]

Weeks later, Harakat Hazm ("Movement of Steadfastness"), a Syrian rebel formation of 5,000 fighters that the United States considers moderate, received the first shipment of U.S. BGM-71 antitank missiles. [3]

While the Syrian civil war forces the administration to weigh the dangers of supplying advanced weaponry that could fall into the hands of anti-Western extremists against the need to maintain ties with Saudi Arabia, Obama faces equally tough choices involving America's European allies in the Ukraine crisis.

For one thing, the European Union (EU) is divided over how aggressively to hit back at Russia over its actions in Ukraine. Consequently, EU sanctions have been more limited than American measures. In Germany, Europe's economic powerhouse, the business establishment is openly opposing tougher EU sanctions.

Germany has more companies doing business with Russia — about 6,200 firms — than the rest of the EU combined, and it depends on Russia for about one-third of its gas and oil. [4] All in all, the 28 EU countries did 267.5 billion euros ($371.8 billion) worth of trade with Russia in 2012, the latest figures available. European countries import 84 percent of Russia's oil exports and about 76 percent of Russia's natural gas. They export 123 billion euros ($192.7 billion) worth of goods to Russia. [5]

"There's no question that Germany's economic interests would be best served by avoiding sanctions," Klaus-Jürgen Gern, an economist at a German think tank, the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, told *The Wall Street Journal*. [6]

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, appearing in Washington with Obama in early May, has so far maintained unity with Obama while delaying stronger economic measures against Russia. At a joint press conference, she said that if Russia disrupts a Ukrainian election scheduled for May 25, "We will not have a choice but to move forward with additional, more severe sanctions." [7]

She added that among EU countries "some are more vulnerable than others to potential Russia retaliation." [8]

Poland, a fellow EU member, also gets about 30 percent of its gas from Russia, but it takes a tougher line toward the Russians. "Russia needs our money more than we need its gas," Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski told *The Washington Post*. [9]

Poland, whose history as a Soviet satellite is still fresh in the minds of Sikorski and other leaders, played a major part in demanding and receiving U.S. military reassurance in the form of NATO military exercises on Polish soil that began in April. Poland had sent troops to back the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq, Sikorski reminded *Foreign Policy* magazine. "Now we feel it's payback time." [10]

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American deaths. Video of a dead American being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu seemed to illustrate the dangers of humanitarian operations in violent environments. [68] But Samantha Power, then a journalist and now the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., rejected this reasoning in a detailed, scathing account of the U.S. failure to act in Rwanda. [69]

Finally jolted into action by the Srebrenica massacre, the Clinton administration helped launch a NATO bombing campaign against Serb forces. After Clinton pressured Serbia to sign a peace deal, in late 1995 he ordered 20,000 U.S. troops to Bosnia to join a NATO peacekeeping force. To do so, he overcame strong congressional resistance, especially but not exclusively among Republicans. Opponents questioned the U.S. national interest in bringing peace to the Balkans. [70]

In 1999, another phase of the Balkan crisis erupted over Kosovo, a Serbian province with an ethnic Albanian majority population. NATO, dominated by its senior member, the United States, began an air campaign of more than five months against Serbian forces, including bombing the Serbian capital, Belgrade.

The United States also took military action in 1998 with cruise missile attacks in Afghanistan and Sudan. The targets were said to be linked to terrorist leader Osama bin Laden, who had just orchestrated deadly bombings of U.S.

In Asia, Obama is carrying out another balancing act — protecting the interests of friendly and allied countries while not alarming the region's giant, China. "We're not interested in containing China," Obama said in April. He was on a trip promoting the administration's "pivot to Asia" — reassurances to Asian countries worried about signs of Chinese expansionism, such as claims to non-Chinese territory as well as to sovereignty in air and coastal zones. [11]

To reassure China's neighbors, Obama signed a pact with the Philippines allowing greater access to its military bases by U.S. troops, ships and aircraft. Previously, the administration began deploying 2,500 Marines to Australia. And the first of four new U.S. coastal warships assigned to patrol Pacific waters near China has begun its mission. [12]

Although the deployments send a clear message of support for Asian allies dealing with territorial disputes, Obama added that the message isn't meant provocatively. "My hope is, is that at some point we're going to be able to work cooperatively with China as well," he said in Manila, "because our goal here is simply to make sure that everybody is operating in a peaceful, responsible fashion." [13]

— Peter Katel

Getty Images/Alex Wong

President Obama and German Chancellor Angela Merkel hold a news conference at the White House on May 2, 2014. Merkel said if Russia disrupts a Ukrainian election scheduled for May 25, Germany would impose"more servere sanctions."

[1] Quoted in Robert F. Worth, "Saudi Arabia Rejects U.N. Security Council Seat in Protest Move," *The New York Times*, Oct. 18, 2013, http://tinyurl.com/m2rkubz.

[2] Michael D. Shear and Michael R. Gordon, "Obama Offers Assurance to Saudis on Syria Stance," *The New York Times*, March 28, 2014, http://tinyurl.com/ll3augt.

[3] Liz Sly, "Syrian rebels who received first U.S. missiles of war see shipment as 'an important first step,' " *The Washington Post*, April 27, 2014, http://tinyurl.com/ljavuxj.

[4] Matthew Karnitschnig, "German Businesses Urge Halt on Sanctions Against Russia," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 1, 2014, http://tinyurl.com/khedgms.

[5] "Russia's trade ties with Europe," BBC, March 4, 2014, http://tinyurl.com/mlw8ddl; "Russia, trade," European Commission, updated Nov. 19, 2013, http://tinyurl.com/oufrlx7.

[6] Quoted in Karnitschnig, *op. cit.*

[7] "Full Transcript: Obama, Merkel Press Conference," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 2, 2014, http://tinyurl.com/l6nzk82.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Lally Weymouth, "Talking with Poland's foreign minister about the Ukraine crisis and Russia's next moves," *The Washington Post*, April 18, 2014, http://tinyurl.com/kqmk9kd.

[10] Quoted in Michael Weiss, "Can Radek Sikorski Save Europe?" *Foreign Policy*, April 30, 2014, http://tinyurl.com/mk3nk28.

[11] Quoted in Mark Landler, "On a Trip That Avoids Beijing, Obama Keeps His Eye on China," *The New York Times*, April 26, 2014, http://tinyurl.com/mzcv753; Ian Johnson, "The China Challenge," *New York Review of Books*, May 8, 2014, http://tinyurl.com/q7cymxu.

[12] Matt Siegel, "As Part of Pact, U.S. Marines Arrive in Australia, in China's Strategic Backyard," *The New York Times*, April 4, 2012, http://tinyurl.com/879fnxs; Kirk Spitzer, "New Warship Gives U.S. Pivot Some Punch," *Time*, March 21, 2013, http://tinyurl.com/nz72fq7. For background, see Reed Karaim, "China Today," *CQ Researcher*, April 4, 2014, pp. 289-312.

[13] "Remarks by President Obama and President Benigno Aquino III," transcript, The White House, April 28, 2014, http://tinyurl.com/qg75rpo.

embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. His network, al Qaeda, had not yet become universally known. [71]

Major Wars

The Sept. 11 attacks on the United States by al Qaeda operatives opened a period in which the United States moved beyond small-scale, limited military operations to full-fledged global war against Muslim jihadists.

But unlike the short Persian Gulf War, the wars in Afghanistan (2001 to the present) and Iraq (2003-2011) ran long and cost thousands of lives. More than 4,400 American and civilian defense employees died in Iraq, and more than 2,317 in Afghanistan and nearby countries. [72]

The United States originally went to war in Afghanistan to topple the Muslim fundamentalist Taliban government, which was hosting al Qaeda — a move that enjoyed widespread post-9/11 public support. The war in Iraq was launched to overthrow Hussein and seize what were said to be his nuclear and chemical weapons. After these weapons were determined not to exist, the war became a campaign to establish a democratic government — a development that President George W. Bush said would encourage democracy throughout the Middle East. [73]

As casualties mounted, so did opposition, though not to anti-Vietnam War

Probable GOP Candidates Debate Intervention

"The most interesting debate is in the Republican Party."

Foreign policy arguments among potential candidates in the 2016 Republican presidential primary largely amount to feints and jabs, with no full-scale fights. But the debate among Republicans concerning interventionism overshadows any foreign policy argument among Democrats, at least so far.

Republicans all express varying degrees of opposition to the Democratic Obama administration's foreign policy. Arizona Sen. John McCain, the most outspoken critic, has charged the administration with running "a feckless foreign policy where nobody believes in America's strength anymore." And Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina called Obama a "weak and indecisive president that invites aggression." [1]

Nevertheless, McCain already lost a presidential election in 2008, and Graham is not on any list of expected Republican presidential contenders. Among potential candidates, Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul stands in the middle of the Republican foreign policy argument. The political heir to his libertarian father, former Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, the younger Paul does not embrace McCain-Graham style hawkishness. But he also has been trying to distance himself somewhat from his father's hardline stand against involvement in almost any foreign conflict.

Notably, in an opinion piece in *The Washington Post* in April, Paul sought to explain a 2012 vote of his concerning Iran. Paul had cast the lone vote against a Senate resolution opposing "any United States policy that would rely on efforts to contain a nuclear weapons-capable Iran." That is, the resolution opposed any U.S. acceptance of Iran possessing or being able to make nuclear weapons. [2]

In his op-ed, he wrote, "I am not for containment in Iran." He added that his 2012 vote had been misunderstood. "It is . . . dumb, dangerous and foolhardy to announce in advance how we would react to any nation that obtains nuclear weapons. Real foreign policy is made in the middle, with nuance; in the gray area of diplomacy, engagement and reluctantly, if necessary, military action." [3]

The Republican often mentioned as Paul's opposite on foreign affairs, Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, criticizes the Obama administration for, in effect, overdoing nuance and diplomacy. "One lesson we should take from the current crisis in Ukraine is that when authoritarian regimes sense weakness and opportunity they will exploit it," Rubio wrote in *Foreign Policy* magazine. [4]

Between Rubio and Paul, some conservative foreign policy strategists leave no doubt whom they favor. "On one hand you have Rubio, who embraces the model of American leadership that has sustained global peace," Danielle Pletka, vice president of foreign and defense studies at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, told *National Journal*. "And then you have Rand Paul who wants to spend less money to do less with the world. I see this as a genuine competition of ideas." [5]

Pletka is a member of the Committee on the Present Danger, an advocacy group from the Republican neoconservative wing that was founded in the Cold War and now is devoted to promoting antiterrorism policy. [6]

Paul has derided the neoconservatives, who provided much of the ideological and bureaucratic thrust for the post-Sept. 11 campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. [7] In Paul's words: "To this crowd, anyone who doesn't clamor first for the military option is somehow an isolationist. The irony is that the crowd that claims they want to engage often opposes diplomatic engagement." [8]

Veteran public opinion analyst Andrew Kohut, founding director of the Pew Research Center, has argued that the public is not demanding foreign policy aggressiveness. "The GOP's difficulty with exploiting public discontent with Obama's handling of foreign policy," he wrote, "is that the president's unwillingness to be more assertive in Syria or Ukraine reflects the public's mood — including Republicans." [9]

James F. Jeffrey, a former ambassador in the Obama administration who also served in President George W. Bush's National Security Council, argued that Republicans still need "a policy

levels. One reason may have been that young men did not face the military draft, which had been abolished in 1973. [74] Nonetheless, ending the Iraq war was one of the major planks in Obama's successful 2008 presidential campaign.

After the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, conflict between the country's Shiite-majority government, established with U.S. help, and members of the Sunni minority, including jihadists, intensified. The Shiites and the Sunnis are the two major branches of Islam, and relations between them remain contentious in the Middle East. [75]

The Afghan War, which began first, did not yield a definitive victory over the Taliban, which became a guerrilla army after it was removed from the government. Jihadist attacks elsewhere continued, and al Qaeda remains a feared terrorist network. [76] Indeed, Muslim extremists now have a new field of battle in Syria.

During the ensuing pro-democracy surge in the Middle East known as the "Arab Spring," Libyans rose up in 2011 against the 42-year dictatorship of Moammar Gadhafi. [77] Obama, urged on by Libyan and American supporters of the revolt, and acting under authority of a U.N. resolution, ordered a U.S. air campaign that established a no-fly zone over Libya — grounding its air force — and attacked some government forces. "Operation Odyssey Dawn" assured the revolution's success eight months after it began. [78]

Although the Libya operation seemed at first to show the positive results of small-scale intervention, it was followed by a jihadist attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi in 2012 that killed Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans. [79] ■

of activism that doesn't immediately default to the neocons," who held sway during the Bush administration. He added, "Between George W. Bush and Rand Paul, more and more Republicans are saying Rand Paul."

Writing in early 2013, before Rand Paul had made much of an impression, Daniel W. Drezner, a professor of international politics at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, argued even more strongly that the neoconservatives had done major damage to the GOP. "Since the knee-jerk Republican response has been to call for military action anywhere and everywhere trouble breaks out," he wrote, "the American people have tuned out the GOP's alarmist rhetoric." [10]

On the Democratic side, the top potential nominee so far is also the leader in foreign policy experience among presidential hopefuls in both parties. Former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has been characterized by some left-liberals as a hawk, having supported stepping up the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan, using airstrikes in Syria and intervening in Libya.

Foreign policy expert Stephen F. Cohen, a historian of the Soviet Union and an emeritus professor at New York and Princeton universities, points to a lack of diplomacy in a recent statement by Clinton likening Russian President Vladimir V. Putin's insistence on protecting the rights of ethnic Russians in other countries to Adolf Hitler's pre-World War II strategy of using the defense of ethnic Germans as a pretext for war. [11]

"She says he's like Hitler," Cohen says, asking how Clinton would able to meet with Putin after a comment so insulting.

Still, Cohen says, "The most interesting debate is in the Republican Party, with Rand Paul trying to move into the mainstream with his less interventionist perspective."

— Peter Katel

[1] Michael Hirsh, "The GOP's Foreign Policy Problem," *National Journal*, March 6, 2014, http://tinyurl.com/kvj4qeg.

Getty Images/CQ-Roll Call/Bill Clark

Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., left, has distanced himself from hardline stands against foreign involvement. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., at right, claims the Obama administration is overdoing nuance and diplomacy.

[2] Ben Brumfield and Ted Barrett, "U.S. Senate votes to fund the federal government, strengthens resolve on Iran," CNN, Sept. 22, 2012, http://tinyurl.com/loklnps.

[3] Rand Paul, "Where I stand on containing Iran," *The Washington Post*, April 15, 2014, http://tinyurl.com/nh8f8yq.

[4] Marco Rubio, "I Come Bearing . . . Reassurance," *Foreign Policy*, April 24, 2014, http://tinyurl.com/lfuvny9.

[5] Beth Reinhard and Ben Terris, "The GOP's Identity Crisis: Marco Rubio Versus Rand Paul," *National Journal*, March 15, 2013, http://tinyurl.com/pyapllr.

[6] "Committee on the Present Danger," http://tinyurl.com/m68l9r5.

[7] James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (2004).

[8] David Adesnik, "Rand Paul bravely attacks a battalion of straw-men," American Enterprise Institute, Jan. 17, 2014, http://tinyurl.com/ozpabbv.

[9] Andrew Kohut, "Is Attacking Obama's Foreign Policy a Winning Strategy?," *Politico*, April 29, 2014, http://tinyurl.com/oldw6ke.

[10] Daniel W. Drezner, "Rebooting Republican Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 2013, www.cfr.org/world/rebooting-republican-foreign-policy/p29717.

[11] Philip Rucker, "Hillary Clinton's Putin-Hitler comments draw rebukes as she wades into Ukraine conflict," *The Washington Post*, March 5, 2014, www.washingtonpost.com/politics/hillary-clintons-putin-hitler-comments-draw-rebukes-as-she-wades-into-ukraine-conflict/2014/03/05/31a748d8-a486-11e3-84d4-e59b1709222c_story.html.

CURRENT SITUATION

Sanctioning Putin

Eastern Ukrainian cities remain a battleground between pro-Russia and pro-Ukrainian government forces. But with events moving at a dizzying pace, Ukrainians and foreign observers alike are trying to decode statements by Russian President Putin that seem to indicate a willingness to tamp down the potential for all-out war.

In early May, Putin announced that he would pull back an invasion-ready force of 40,000 Russian troops, plus warplanes, that had been stationed on the Russian side of the border. NATO and officials of the provisional Ukrainian government in Kiev were not taking the statement at face value. [80]

Nevertheless, Putin did strike a tone different from his previous belligerence. "I simply believe that if we want to find a long-term solution to the crisis in Ukraine, open, honest and equal dialogue is the only possible option," he said at a Kremlin press conference. [81]

One immediate question was the practical effect of a May 11 referendum in two eastern Ukrainian provinces, which pro-Russians announced as showing overwhelming support for autonomy from the Ukrainian government in Kiev. Another was whether the Kiev government would be able to hold a nationwide presidential election on May 25. [82]

While debate continues on whether the United States and its allies should intervene militarily, the Obama administration and the European Union are expanding the list of individuals and companies targeted by economic sanctions. [83] "The goal is to change [Putin's] calculus with respect to how the current actions that he's engaging in in Ukraine could have an adverse impact on the Russian economy over the long haul," Obama said in late April. [84] The United States has frozen assets, banned commerce and imposed other sanctions against numerous Russian politicians, companies and business figures.

Whatever the long-range effect of sanctions, so far they seem of no consequence on the ground in eastern Ukraine. Pro-Russia separatists have taken over a series of towns and cities, and the country's acting president acknowledged in late April that the provisional government's security services have been "helpless" against these groups, which U.S. officials say are controlled by Russian special forces. [85]

Sanctions by the European Union have been kept minimal, to avoid hurting some of its members' considerable business ties with Russia, including imports of Russian oil and natural gas. [86] (*See sidebar, p. 444.*) The EU in March and April imposed visa bans and asset freezes on 48 Russian politicians and military commanders.

EU sanctions haven't included business figures or companies. "Some EU countries may have been reluctant to do so given the important economic ties many EU countries have with such persons and institutions," the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service reported in March. [87]

Speaking more bluntly, an unnamed senior European official told *The Wall Street Journal*: "There's still a lot of nervousness in Europe about heading in that direction. They don't want to burn bridges with the Kremlin." [88]

From the Russian side, Putin and his officials shrugged off the punitive actions. "Sanctions are not effective in the contemporary world and are not bringing the desired outcome," Putin said in April. [89]

U.S. political debate on sanctions has been sparse so far. In April, some Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee expressed skepticism to Kerry about the measures' effectiveness. "They mocked our last set of sanctions," said Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis. [90]

Kerry disputed that, adding, "I think it's clear that we have huge capacity to have an impact. . . . [Russians] are not incapable of analyzing America's capacity here with respect to banking and finance and movement of people." [91]

Meanwhile, McCain was the only committee member to advocate arming the Ukrainians. (*See "At Issue," p. 449.*)

Obama appears committed to managing the crisis so that it doesn't lead to full-scale confrontation. *The New York Times* reported that the president has told visitors privately that Ukraine is not a big issue for most Americans. [92]

A late-April survey by Pew and *USA Today* found that 53 percent of respondents supported stepping up economic and diplomatic sanctions against Russia. But 62 percent opposed sending arms to the Ukrainian government. [93]

Syria: Ballots and Bombs

With war ravaging his country, Syrian President Assad is preparing for a June 3 election — or something resembling an election — that he is universally expected to win overwhelmingly.

When he stood for election to his second term in 2007, Assad was the sole candidate. Official results showed him winning 97.29 percent of the vote. He first became president after his father, Hafez Assad, died in 2000. Between father and son, the Assads have ruled Syria since 1979. [94]

This time, Assad will be one of seven contenders, but none of the others is believed to stand a chance. Election law requires candidates to have lived in Syria continuously for 10 years, effectively barring exiled oppositionists. [95]

As the election nears, the Obama administration has stepped up its controlled efforts to aid some of the rebels fighting the Assad government. Obama has in recent months defined Syria policy in humanitarian terms as "helping the Syrian people" facing the "repressive regime" of Assad. [96]

Nevertheless, Obama has not backed off his refusal to send in U.S. troops or take other direct military action. "America is not the world's policeman," he said in September. "Terrible things happen across the globe, and it is beyond our means to right every wrong." [97]

Together with Saudi Arabia, the administration has shipped a small number of advanced anti-tank missiles to rebel militias deemed "moderate," *The Wall Street Journal* reported in April. In the context of the Syrian war, moderate means not commanded by Islamist extremists. [98]

The new arms reportedly represent a test to determine whether the recipients can be trusted with anti-aircraft weapons, which they have long demanded. American officials have been reluctant, because of the potential danger to civilian aircraft. But events such as the bombing of a school by Syrian government aircraft in the city of Aleppo — killing at least 17 students and two teachers — have ratcheted up the pressure on the administration. [99]

Speaking early last year, before the chemical weapons deal with Russia, Obama cited the practical and even moral "limitations" on U.S. action. "What offers the best prospect of a stable post-Assad regime?" he asked. "And how do I weigh tens of thousands who've been killed in Syria versus the tens of thousands who are currently being killed in the Congo?" [100]

Decades of civil war in Congo have cost millions of lives. Last year, the U.N. formed its first offensive military force, allied with the Congolese government military, to fight rebels. [101]

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At Issue:

Is the Obama administration responding effectively to the Ukraine crisis?

JOHN KERRY
SECRETARY OF STATE

EXCERPTED FROM SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE HEARING, APRIL 8, 2014

YES

What we see from Russia is an illegal and illegitimate effort to destabilize a sovereign state and create a contrived crisis with paid operatives across an international boundary.

Our preference, and the preference of our friends and allies, is de-escalation and a diplomatic solution. But Russia should not for a single solitary second mistake the expression of that preference as an unwillingness to do what is necessary to stop any violation of the international order.

At NATO last week, and in all of my conversations of the past weeks, it is clear that the United States and our closest partners are united in this effort, despite the costs, and willing to put in effect tough new sanctions on those orchestrating this action and on key sectors of the Russian economy in energy, banking, mining. They are all on the table. And President Obama has already signed an executive order to implement these actions if Russia does not end its pressure and aggression on Ukraine.

It must be the reality that the United States and our allies will not hesitate to use 21st century tools to hold Russia accountable for 19th century behavior. It doesn't have to be this way. But it will be this way if Russia continues down this provocative path.

We have made it clear that Russia needs to take concrete steps to disavow separatist actions in eastern Ukraine, pull back its forces outside the country, which they say they have begun to do with the movement of one battalion, and demonstrate that they are prepared to come to these discussions, to do what is necessary to de-escalate.

So, Russia has a choice: to work with the international community to help build an independent Ukraine that could be a bridge between East and West, not the object of a tug of war, that could meet the hopes and aspirations of all Ukrainians. Or, they could face greater isolation and pay the costs for their failure, to see that the world is not a zero-sum game.

His [Putin's] oligarchs are not able to travel to various places. They're losing money. The ruble has gone down 7 percent. There's an impact in Europe. I think [Putin has] had a massive change in public opinion in Ukraine. People who once felt better about Russia don't today. He has united many Ukrainians, even those who are Russian-speaking, against Russia.

SEN. JOHN MCCAIN, R-ARIZ.
MEMBER, SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

EXCERPTED FROM SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE HEARING, APRIL 8, 2014

NO

My hero, Teddy Roosevelt, used to say talk softly, but carry a big stick. What [the Obama administration is] doing is talking strongly and carrying a very small stick, in fact, a twig.

What has been done so far as a result of the Russian dismemberment of Ukraine in violation of a treaty that they signed in return for the nuclear inventory of Ukraine, which was then the third largest nuclear power? Some individual sanctions, some diplomatic sanctions, a suspension — not removal from the G-8. And, now, more threats to come.

I predicted that Putin would go into Crimea because he couldn't bear to give up Sevastopol, because he is what he is.

And I am now very concerned, because of our lack of response, whether he will foment discontent in the manner which he is now, which will then demand autonomy for parts of eastern Ukraine.

And when a foreign minister of Russia lies to your face, once, twice, three, four times, I would be reluctant to take his word for anything.

So, here we are with Ukraine being destabilized, a part of it dismembered, and we won't give them defensive weapons.

We don't want to provoke? We don't want to provoke Vladimir Putin by giving these people the ability to defend themselves after their country has been dismembered and there is provocations going on? That, I say to you, is the logic of appeasement.

I want to know, and I think the American people should know, and maybe most importantly, the people of Ukraine should know why won't we give them some defensive weapons when they're facing another invasion, not the first, but another invasion of their country. It is just beyond logic.

When we don't give people assistance to defend themselves, then it — just as the Syrian decision — it reverberates throughout the entire world. I would like to know why it is not at least under serious consideration to give them some defensive weapons.

[The administration's] view of what the Ukrainians need is vastly different from what the Ukrainians think they need, which is a sovereign right to try to defend themselves, which is something that we have done historically, helping people who are struggling against overwhelming odds.

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The Syrian civil war began more than three years ago, after Assad ordered his military to crush anti-government demonstrations. By now, the armed opposition reportedly consists of as many as 1,000 groups of varied sizes, made up of an estimated 100,000 fighters, representing a wide variety of religious and political views. [102]

Complications involved in determining which opposition groups the United States should support begin with the presence of a strong religious aspect to the Syrian war. Assad and his top supporters belong to the Alawite religious minority, an Islamic sect with an ancestral tie to Shiism. Sunnis, the majority sect of Islam, make up the backbone of the anti-Assad forces. [103]

Some rebels are supported by Sunni militants and al Qaeda-linked extremists who represent an extremist Sunni fringe. The government in turn is relying in part on the highly organized and combat-ready Hezbollah ("Party of God") militia from Lebanon. The Iranian-supported Shiite force has fought two wars with Israel, previously its main enemy. [104]

In addition, Assad government forces receive weapons and fighters directly from Iran, the target of longstanding U.S. and international efforts to curb its nuclear-development program. These are shipped by aircraft that pass through Iraqi airspace. To complicate the situation further, Iraq's Shiite-majority government, which has extensive ties to Iran, was installed with the help of the U.S. government during the war to topple Sunni dictator Saddam Hussein. Speaking to *The New Yorker* magazine, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki defined the Syrian war as a conflict between Assad and al Qaeda, with the former preferable to the latter. "There is no more moderate opposition in Syria," he said. [105]

The administration, though cautious about which groups to aid, does not agree. Nevertheless, a persistent criticism of the administration's Syria policy is that there was a missed chance to help rebels early in the war. "We had an opportunity before the fundamentalists," says former CIA and State Department analyst Goodman. "We had a humanitarian obligation from the outset."

However, he acknowledges, there was no public support. Referring to Obama's cancellation of airstrikes in favor of negotiating the chemical-weapons deal, Goodman said the president "marched right up to the brink and looked behind him and there was no one behind him." ■

OUTLOOK

Cautious Posture

The future of Ukraine and of relations with Russia, the outcome of the Syrian civil war, and the possibility of a definitive Iranian nuclear agreement remain highly uncertain, but some analysts argue that Americans' aversion to major military operations abroad is likely to continue.

"The American public, because of Iraq and Afghanistan, has been shocked into an isolationist mentality," says former ambassador Jeffrey.

But others say the American public is not categorically opposed to U.S. involvement in global affairs. "As frustrated as the public is with foreign policy, it isn't ready to abandon internationalism or to embrace unilateralism," said a Council on Foreign Relations analysis that accompanies the 2013 Pew survey. [106]

The analysis cited 72 percent support for shared world leadership, and 56 percent approval of the United States maintaining military supremacy. Nevertheless, Pew found support for going alone (38 percent) higher than at any time in nearly 50 years, except for 2009, when 44 percent supported that view. [107]

A major unknown is how the public would respond to a major attack against the United States or against U.S. interests abroad. The overwhelming support for a military response after the Sept. 11 attacks points to one possibility.

Sudden, catastrophic events aside, how public officials analyze the present can affect the course they set for U.S. policy. Carpenter of the Cato Institute, for one, argues that politicians ignore the strength of anti-interventionist public opinion at their peril. "If you continue to defy public opinion in the long term, that is likely to have political consequences," he says, adding, "In this case I think the public is correct."

Some argue that public caution about interventionism is well-founded. "This is the hundredth anniversary of World War I," says Bacevich of Boston University, pointing to a conflict that participants thought would be over in a matter of months. "The lesson of that is that once control is lost, it is difficult to restore order."

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