

The United States in world history since the 1750s

IAN TYRRELL

Connections to global history were deeply embedded from early times in American experience. In the colonial era to 1776, the North American continent constituted a major theatre for the working out of imperial ambitions between France, Spain and Britain, and the various Amerindian tribes. Ultimately, the United States became the chief beneficiary of that continental struggle and itself became a variety of empire. The size, population and natural resources of the eventual territory that the American republic assumed by 1867 – the date of the Alaska Purchase – became such that it played an important role in world trade, migration and investment patterns. This occurred long before it was even partially integrated as a separate nation state into the European-dominated international state system. Geographically, US relations with the wider world were in the nineteenth century focused more on the North Atlantic, but the Asia-Pacific region was nevertheless an important field for engagement from the earliest stages of the American republic's growth. The breadth of US contacts with other peoples already approached the global.

World history is a broader and more ecumenical concept than 'globalisation', a term that has been criticised for its emphasis on contemporary history, and on unilinear and unidirectional change. Nevertheless, it can be argued that in the nineteenth century, the United States was deeply affected by, and implicated in what might be termed a 'Victorian' or 'imperial' phase of globalisation, reflecting in part the economic influence of the British Empire. Globalisation as used in this chapter is, however, seen as uneven, contingent, reversible and not purely economic in nature. This global entanglement can best be treated as a complex social formation of economic, political and cultural relations. In the nineteenth century the United States was in most respects an open society in which trade, migration and capital

flows integrated the nation into an emerging global economy. Civil society's cross-national involvement in broader currents of social and cultural change was correspondingly strong. Only in politics and diplomacy did the United States largely contradict this trend of integration, with policies of isolationism predominant, and then only in relation to Europe. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the United States along with other developed countries strengthen national borders and the institutions of the political state, and relate to other nations and peoples through the projection of power abroad in unilateral imperial contests for trade and resources. The succeeding decades to the middle of the twentieth century saw finely balanced struggles between forces of global integration and decoupling in the global economy and society during two world wars and depression. After the Second World War political and economic relations became more tightly aligned, when the growth of international economic integration resumed, accompanied by an internationalist trend in US politics, diplomacy and military affairs. Finally, in the 1970s, an intensified wave of global integration sometimes called 'new globalisation' deeply affected the economy, society and politics in ways still being worked out in the early twenty-first century.¹

Empire and revolution

A major theme in modern world history has been the spread of and conflict among imperial powers. The genesis of the US republic is best seen within this context: the contest of the various European empires for control over North America, the Caribbean and the Atlantic economy. Until the 1750s, the expansion of the Anglo colonies established in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was limited by the French and Indians to the West and Northwest on the mainland of North America and, on the southern borderlands, by Spain as well. In the 1750s, the Seven Years' War (or French and Indian Wars) pitted the

1 A key study of the global context of developments discussed in this chapter is Emily S. Rosenberg, ed., *A World Connecting, 1870–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012). For different schemata of globalisation, see A. G. Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in World History* (London: Pimlico Books, 2002); Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999); Bruce Mazlish and Ralph Buultjens, eds., *Conceptualizing Global History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993); Geoff Eley, 'Historicizing the global, politicizing capital: giving the present a name', *History Workshop Journal* 63:1 (2007), 154–188; Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). For a trenchant critique of globalisation, see Frederick Cooper, 'What is the concept of globalization good for? An African historian's perspective', *African Affairs* 100 (2001), 189–213.

British against the French in what has been seen by many as the first global war, fought in Europe, Asia and North America. The outcome upset the uneasy balance of power that was multilateral, between the French, the British and Indian tribes, some of whom, especially the Iroquois of the Great Lakes region, had been adept in maintaining territorial and economic integrity through manipulating differences between European rivals.² No longer were the expansionist ambitions of Anglo-American settlers limited by French–Indian alliances. No longer did the colonists need to rely on the British for adequate defence, but the British government expected them to pay for the security that the war gave them. Therein lay the origins of the financial and ideological conflict over taxation without representation that contributed to the Declaration of Independence and the American War of Independence (1775–1783).

The United States was born in an anti-colonial revolt that helped to spark a series of revolutions in the Atlantic world of 1776–1825, ending with independence of the former Portuguese and Spanish colonies in Latin America. Ideas of natural rights, and opposition to distant authority aired in the American Revolution, affected French debates over the heavily indebted absolute monarchy of Louis XVI. The idea of equality proclaimed in the American Revolution also fuelled calls for an end to the practice of slavery that had become the basis of the American economy in the southern colonies and the Atlantic economy through the slave trade. The idea of egalitarianism could not be easily corralled, and culminated not only in the abolition of slavery in the northern states of the new American union, but also, in reaction to the French Revolution of 1789, inspired the rebellion of free blacks and slaves in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, which produced an ultimately successful resistance against white oppression and the first independent republic born out of a slave colony, Haiti. This Haitian Revolution had reverberations in the new United States, and produced a hardening of attitudes towards slave revolt and resistance in the southern states. It reinforced the legal entrenchment of the slave system already achieved within the constitution of the new American republic a few years earlier, in 1787–1789.³

2 Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge University Press, 1991); Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001); James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (Oxford University Press, 1985); Timothy J. Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier* (New York: Viking, 2008).

3 David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (Oxford University Press, 1984) and *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975); Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004); Alfred N. Hunt,

From 1790 to 1815, the safety and prosperity of the American republic was highly dependent on the power struggles that ensued in the wake of the French Revolution. The rivalry between Britain and France drew the United States into conflict with Britain, especially with the rise of Napoleon from 1800 and the Napoleonic Wars that followed. American trade with Europe suffered, exacerbated by British impressment of sailors claiming to be Americans, taken from US ships on the high seas. The war of 1812 saw Britain and the United States fight over this and other issues, with British Canada (Upper Canada and Quebec) as the main battleground.⁴ With Spain a declining power as the Spanish colonies revolted against colonial rule, and the British contained by the war's stalemate, the United States could now fully realise its independence. Thereafter, no European power was strong enough to meddle seriously in US affairs, though the British still controlled Canada. No European empire could hold back further American westward expansion achieved at the expense of the Indian tribes. The balance of power on the North American continent had changed decidedly in favour of the Euro-Americans. Backing this increased continental security was the Monroe Doctrine warning against further European political interference in the western hemisphere, yet the 'doctrine' was dependent upon British naval power, and British diplomatic backing. It was as much British policy as American.⁵

Early national economy

Before 1776, the American colonies had traded extensively with Britain and Europe but, under the mercantilist system that strictly controlled trade, use of British ships and trade via British ports was required. The tobacco industry had powered the development of the eighteenth-century colonial economy, but had simultaneously seen southern planters increasingly indebted to British merchants, and the exhaustion of soils that by the early nineteenth century encouraged a shift to wheat cultivation,

Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); Eugene Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Vintage, 1979); R. R. Palmer, *Age of the Democratic Revolution*, 2 vols. (Princeton University Press, 1959–1964); Christopher Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

4 Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Knopf, 2010).

5 Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-century America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2011).

considered more virtuous and less dependent on either slave labour or foreign capital.⁶ Rice was extensively grown in South Carolina (with techniques probably brought by slaves from West Africa) and traded in Europe; and the forests of North America provided sites for the fur industry, as well as timber traded to Britain and used by the British Navy for shipbuilding.⁷

The United States was principally a maritime nation at the onset of this period and its foreign trade was vital to economic development. Apart from trade along the borderlands with Mexico and Canada, this cargo was necessarily carried by ship. Indeed, much trade with Canada was also carried by ship. From the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, river barges gave the produce of the expanding Midwestern area access to the Atlantic trade via the Great Lakes.⁸ All this gave the United States not merely an Atlantic commercial outlook but a global commercial vision, as the United States was, from the 1790s onwards, trading in all oceans and with a wide variety of the world's peoples. In this process, Americans tapped into the existing British imperial routes and profited from their experience and knowledge. This commerce spread from Massachusetts and its famous trading and whaling centres all the way to the South Pacific, India and China.⁹ Whale oil from the Pacific whaling fleet's catch was then highly prized as a fuel, and whale meat and whalebone were extensively traded, while the China trade provided tea, silk and porcelain. Opium purchased in Smyrna, ginseng from American forests and, though quickly exhausted, sandalwood and *bêche-de-mer* from Pacific islands went in the other direction.¹⁰

6 Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680–1800* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

7 John Brooke, 'Ecology', in Daniel Vickers, ed., *A Companion to Colonial America* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), p. 60; Robert G. Albion, *Forests and Sea Power: The Timber Problems of the Royal Navy, 1652–1862* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926); Judith A. Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2001).

8 Peter Bernstein, *Wedding of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation* (New York: Norton, 2005).

9 Gordon Greenwood, *Early American–Australian Relations: From the Arrival of the Spaniards in America to the Close of 1830* (Melbourne University Press, 1944); Rosemarie Zagari, 'The significance of the "global turn" for the early American republic: globalization in the age of nation-building', *Journal of the Early Republic* 31 (Spring 2011), 1–37; James R. Fichter, *So Great a Profit: How the East Indies Trade Transformed Anglo-American Capitalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

10 Yen-P'ing Hao, 'Chinese teas to America – a synopsis', in Ernest R. May and John K. Fairbank, eds., *America's China Trade in Historical Perspective: The Chinese and American Performance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 22.

Economic development in the United States was inextricably tied to the British industrialisation of the early nineteenth century that drove the nascent global economy. British manufacturing expanded with the rise of the cotton and woollen textile industries, and demanded raw materials that Americans could supply. The growing industrial cities of Britain also required food, and the expansion of American wheat and corn production became important for feeding the industrial populations of Europe. The same was true for clothing them. In the 1790s, the introduction of upland cotton, originally from Mexico (the only type that could be grown outside a narrow coastal belt) allowed southern planters to expand their potential agricultural area enormously when accompanied by federal government removal of the so-called 'five civilized tribes',¹¹ particularly after 1820, and the growing demand from Europe for cotton gave them the incentives to grow. The invention of the cotton gin in 1793 allowed the upland cotton to be conveniently harvested in a cost-effective manner, while southern slaves provided cheap labour.

From Europe, too, came large supplies of capital after 1815, especially from Britain. The United States benefited from sharing the language and the common law traditions of the British, circumstances that enhanced investment and business opportunities. The existence of English-speaking ties was particularly useful in the early nineteenth century, when Britons were also a major source of migrants, and when they invested in the state enterprises that built canals as the first effective form of transport infrastructure, enabling the produce of the expanding farms of the American West to reach European markets. Later, from the 1850s, railroads began to be important and the British contributed to these extensively from the 1870s. British investors also bought farms and cattle properties in the American West after the Civil War and contributed thereby to western land development.¹²

Slavery

Though state legislatures passed laws from 1780 to 1804 providing for the abolition of slavery in the northern states, and US participation in the

11 The Cherokee, Seminole, Creek, Choctaw and Chickasaw. See Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932); Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

12 James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford University Press, 2009); Mira Wilkins, *The History of Foreign Investment in the United States to 1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

international slave trade ended in 1808, the economy was essentially driven by cotton, and slavery was a key factor in that product's success. The slaves, numbering 1 million in 1810 and reaching nearly 4 million by the eve of the Civil War, were all either imported from Africa or, far more commonly, descended from Africans. Some 600,000 Africans had been imported into what became the United States from 1600 to 1808. (Unknown numbers of Caribbean and African-born slaves, possibly up to 50,000 may have entered illegally after that time.) This importation represented a tiny fraction of the perhaps 10–11 million brought to the Americas as a whole. Southern slavery was able to expand demographically because the sex ratio was relatively equal, allowing *de facto* slave families to be encouraged by planters, and because of the relatively less harsh nature of the agricultural work for cotton and tobacco compared to the case of sugar in the West Indies and Brazil. Diseases afflicting African-American slaves were also less prevalent than in the tropical colonies of the Caribbean. By 1825, 25 per cent of the descendants of slaves shipped from Africa lived in the United States, whereas only 6 per cent of slaves shipped had been sent to what became the United States. However US laws concerning slavery and slave manumission were harsher than in the West Indies and Latin America. The shortage of skilled labour in the latter cases and the absence of substantial migration of white families there meant that incentives needed to be given to slaves to gain skills, and those with skills could bargain over the conditions of their use, and for manumission. Thus North American slavery was paradoxically both more benign and harsher than in the Caribbean, but both Caribbean and North American slavery were harsher than were conditions across much of the African exporting areas. That was because, unlike in Africa, slavery in the Americas was not household slavery, and was not primarily for purposes of conspicuous consumption but for profit. 'New World' slavery was deeply enmeshed in the capitalist market of the Atlantic world for staples such as cotton and sugar.¹³

13 Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998); Philip D. Curtin, *The African Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); Stanley L. Engerman and Eugene Genovese, eds., *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies* (Princeton University Press, 1975); Paul Lovejoy, 'The volume of the Atlantic slave trade: a synthesis', *Journal of African History* 23:4 (1982), 473–501; David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge University Press, 2000). For global aspects, see Janet J. Ewald, 'Slavery in Africa and the slave trades from Africa', *American Historical Review* 97 (April 1992), 465–485.

Population/migration

The United States became closely tied to the world economy also in terms of free and indentured labour migration. From 1815 to the 1920s, the nation was linked to a global migration system centred partly upon the export of Europe's surplus population – to North and South America and Australasia. These were lands, sometimes called Neo-Europes, where disease and warfare reduced, eliminated or subjugated the indigenous peoples. From 1815 to 1860, 5 million immigrants, mostly from northwestern Europe, arrived in the United States. Major sources were German, Irish (after 1845) and British. In the 1850s Chinese became significant on the Pacific Coast gold fields, making up 50,000 or 8 per cent of the Californian population by 1870, and there were 100,000 across the United States. These waves of migration were part of distinct Atlantic and Pacific migration patterns. Among a number of factors, population pressures drove the Chinese out of Guandong into indentured labour abroad, while that region's decades-long connections with international trade gave Chinese knowledge of economic opportunities in North America. In Europe, skilled workers affected by mechanisation of industry, and excess rural people unable to make a living on farms, moved to cities, and across oceans. Migration from Ireland in the wake of the potato famine of 1845–1848 was typical of multilateral patterns. The Irish migrated not only directly to the United States, but also indirectly via Canada and Britain. Once in the United States most migrants remained in urban areas, often becoming the unskilled labour force. But Scandinavian migrants, in particular, went into the Midwest and took up farmland.¹⁴ Though the United States took about 65 per cent of all nineteenth-century migrants from Europe, significant percentages of Europe's outpouring went elsewhere, particularly before 1870. Moreover, 'Chinese emigration to America' represented 'only a trickle of the massive Chinese overseas migration'.¹⁵ In either case, the United States was not the only 'distant magnet', but for Europeans it was

14 Adam McKeown, 'Global migration, 1846–1940', *Journal of World History* (June 2004), 5, www.historycooperative.org/journals/jwh/15.2/mckeown.html, accessed 5 June 2005; Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, eds., *Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997); Yong Chen, 'The internal origins of Chinese emigration to California reconsidered', *Western Historical Quarterly* 28 (Winter 1997), 520–546; Maldwyn Jones, *American Immigration* (University of Chicago Press, 1959); Philip A. M. Taylor, *The Distant Magnet: European Emigration to the USA* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900–1936* (University of Chicago Press, 2001).

15 Yong Chen, 'Internal origins of Chinese emigration', 530.

the most convenient overseas destination in terms of ease and cost of travel.¹⁶

After the American Civil War (1861–1865), numbers swelled even more with 32 million arriving by 1924. This migration was mostly from south-eastern Europe and Eastern Europe from 1800 to 1914, and this migration was different in many ways. It was a more mobile workforce, often travelling back and forth across the Atlantic with rates for repatriation ranging from 25 to over 90 per cent by nationality.¹⁷ After 1882, Chinese immigration was almost completely closed off by the Chinese Exclusion Act. Japanese partly replaced the Chinese flow thereafter, until they too were largely excluded in 1908. From the 1890s, immigration restrictionists had tried to stop southern and Eastern European migration as well. Not until 1921–1924, however, was immigration from Europe effectively restricted. Quotas limited immigration by nationality, and with immigration from Asia prohibited, only that from the western hemisphere remained open.¹⁸

These migration patterns benefited both Europe and the United States. Europe disposed in many instances of surplus agricultural population, and got in return remittances from migrants and cheaper manufacturing goods produced in the United States with immigrant labour. The United States did not have to raise and educate these workers, and migrants tended to be willing and resourceful employees. Immigrants also brought human capital through knowledge and practical skills, and further added to capital inflows through money brought with them. Exchanges in the form of remittances also occurred in the case of China, though migration there was commonly indentured labour.

Rapid population increase was due to not only migration but also the youthfulness of the population in the early nineteenth century. Improved health conditions in infant mortality and high fertility rates in rural areas powered a high birth rate and contributed more to the population growth than immigration. The birth rate was about seven per family in 1800, though falling to six in 1860 to three and a half in 1900. Together,

¹⁶ Taylor, *Distant Magnet*.

¹⁷ Mark Wyman, *Round-Trip to America: The Immigrants Return to Europe, 1880–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1993); John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985).

¹⁸ Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882–1943* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton University Press, 2004).

immigration and natural increase catapulted the population from 3.9 million in 1790 to 31.4 million by 1860 and to 92.2 million in 1910. Thus the nation quickly exceeded the population of Britain as early as 1860 (Britain's was 8 million in 1790 and 23 million in 1860). This population growth fed speculative land acquisition and building booms in western states, and aided economic growth.¹⁹

Continental 'expansion'

The size of the American republic expanded in the 1803 Louisiana Purchase to cover the area between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. However, the future southwestern states remained as part of Spanish territory (from 1824 the Republic of Mexico, *Los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*) until the Mexican War of 1846. California and the New Mexico territory fell into American hands then, as did Washington and Oregon, as the result of negotiation with the British in the same year. Except for the purchase of Alaska from Russia (1867), the continental limits of the United States were virtually complete. Each of these stages represented deliberate efforts on the part of the US government to acquire, by negotiation or force, the entire central swathe of the North American continent under an 'expansionist' platform known from 1845 as Manifest Destiny.²⁰

The process of westward movement after 1800 had pitted rampant white settler society with superior technology against largely shifting agriculture and hunter-gatherer peoples in the East, and horse-empowered hunter-gatherers in the West. This territorial aggrandisement was supposedly different from other empires, but it did resemble the vigorous expansion of the Russian Empire into Siberia and Central Asia in the mid-nineteenth century and after, and Argentinean and Brazilian development in the 1870s and 1880s. In the US case, eastern Indians had been removed, some by force, to west of the Mississippi by the 1830s.²¹ Indians were considered outside of political society, which would be based on ownership of plots of land used for farming. Though Indians did farm, especially in the eastern states before

19 Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*; Daniel Scott Smith, 'Family limitation, sexual control, and domestic feminism in Victorian America', *Feminist Studies* 1:3/4, Special Double Issue: Women's History (Winter-Spring, 1973), 40–57.

20 Thomas Hietala, *Manifest Design: American Exceptionalism and Empire* (1985; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

21 See e.g. Anthony F. C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999).

the 1840s, the form of agriculture was shifting subsistence farming.²² White settler 'expansion' then came into further conflict with essentially nomadic, bison-hunting Indian tribes on the Great Plains. After the Civil War, the Plains Indian tribes continued to resist such US expansion through the 1880s. Indians had always traded with whites and willingly participated in the Eastern North American depletion of beaver stocks taken for furs on the world market. But, to a considerable extent, the final decline of the Plains Indians' major source of food, the bison, came at the hands of whites, proceeding with such a pace that it almost amounted to a mass extermination of a species. The American army wished to remove the Indians' ability to sustain themselves through hunting, and white hunters unwittingly achieved this aim when they took the bison skins for robes sold back East and in the world market. The bones were used for fertiliser. With the intensification of industrial growth back East, bison leather needed for industrial belts became an important, perhaps the most important, precipitating cause of the near extinction phase of bison hunting in the 1870s and 1880s. From that time almost all remaining Indians were herded onto reservations. In the southwest, Indian tribes had skilfully used the Mexican border to continue to harass American settlers, but they too succumbed by 1886.²³

This 'settler' growth in the West was not always state directed, but it was state facilitated, and the state through the US cavalry acted to police border conflicts, though not effectively the relations between whites and Indians due to the small size of the American army and the vast territory to be covered.²⁴ The pattern was one of raiding and skirmishes between nomads and settlers, followed by punitive reprisals by military forces of the state. This pattern was duplicated across the American West from the 1790s to the 1880s. Under the ideas of Thomas Jefferson, this 'expansion' was understood to be an empire of liberty. The assumption was that the territories incorporated and raised to statehood across the expanding US sovereignty would be incorporated in a republic in which the inhabitants were citizens possessed of full rights. This incorporation concluded with the movement of New Mexico and Arizona from territorial status to full statehood in 1912. The American empire was, in

22 William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1983).

23 Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); Pekka Hämmäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750–1920* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 130.

24 Stephen J. Rockwell, *Indian Affairs and the Administrative State in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

this sense, claimed to be different from European empires based on subjects rather than citizens. The Indians were, however, not citizens, except in the rare instance where they completely renounced rights to tribal government and land. Even where Indians farmed land, most did not become citizens until the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act.

Civil War

The expansion of the American West also led to conflict between North and South. Slave-owners wanted fresh lands to develop, and places to sell excess slaves. They favoured movement of slaves West, just as the exponents of free labour in the American North strongly resisted this aspiration. The disputes over the expansion of slavery into the new western territories after the Mexican War's conclusion in 1848 exacerbated tensions over slavery's place in US society, and helped to bring about the Civil War. The war in this sense was closely tied up with European industrial development, because it was the demands of Europe for food and for raw materials for textile production that created the huge demand for farm products through settlement of the West, over which slavery and anti-slavery forces struggled.

The war itself and the consequent abolition of slavery marked a major epoch in the history of the world.²⁵ Though slavery had already been abolished in the northern states, it was profitable and economically efficient in the South, and deeply entrenched in the constitution. Slavery had been abolished in the British West Indies in 1833 (though slaves had to serve as indentured labour until 1838) and in the French Empire in 1848. However, slavery remained viable in Brazil until 1888 and the Hispanic West Indies (until 1886 in Cuba), and in parts of Africa. The defeat of US slavery in the Civil War was a major blow, tipping the scale between the globally driven demands for cotton and moral and economic objections to the existence of slavery. The Civil War also altered the world economy. It encouraged the development of new sources of cotton, in Egypt and India for Britain and Central Asia for Russia, in the 1860s. Though American cotton continued to be economically important after the Civil War, it did not dominate the world market as before, and the foreign competition helped to undermine the strength of the southern economy, which was forced eventually to seek

25 Richard Carwardine and Jay Sexton, eds., *The Global Lincoln* (Oxford University Press, 2011); Stig Förster and Jorg Nagler, eds., *On the Road to Total War: The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, 1861–1871* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

development of manufacturing through the movement known as the New South (1880s–1910s).²⁶

Environmental change

The westward movement involved great environmental change through forest destruction; conversion of eastern forests for farmland occurred in waves, particularly from the 1750s to 1860. Long before European occupation, indigenous peoples altered the composition of the forests through firestick farming to improve hunting landscapes. But after the 1600s, the removal was more extensive and systemic. Over 90 per cent of the original eastern deciduous forests were gone by 1900 and half of the original forest cover across the entire nation.²⁷ While many tracts of forest remained, and while others regrew, the level of primeval forest had declined precipitously. From the 1880s, exploitation of forests shifted to the Upper Midwest, the Pacific Coast states and the South. Perhaps 80 per cent of clearing during westward expansion was for agriculture and often burnt rather than harvested. The nature of 'settler' expansion, with its low labour-to-land ratio, encouraged quick conversion of forest to farmland through wasteful practices such as girdling of trees and fires that released nitrogen to soils. But the railroads also consumed immense quantities of wood for railroad ties and even, before the 1860s, as fuel for engine furnaces. Wood that was harvested was often destined for the major cities such as Chicago for use as building materials for construction,²⁸ but West Coast wood was exported as far afield as Australia and the Philippines. Americans were far from unique in their forest destruction; similar processes were underway in nineteenth-century Canada, Russia and Australia, and, in British India, teak forests were being converted to tea plantations. But US forests, with an advantageous blend of hard and softwoods, and better transportation access through rivers, canals and, after the 1860s, railroads, were ripe for exploitation.

The removal of forests and development of farmland allowed massive energy inputs through burnt forest waste to fertilise farms and raise agricultural products that benefited eastern American and European consumers of

26 Sven Beckert, 'Emancipation and empire: reconstructing the worldwide web of cotton production in the age of the American Civil War', *American Historical Review* 109 (December 2004), 1405–1438.

27 Michael Williams, *Deforesting the Earth: From Prehistory to Global Crisis* (University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 322.

28 William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton, 1991).

food. The latter process was effectively an export of energy via calorific content to Europe. Like the economy as a whole, agriculture remained based on solar forms of energy, though fertiliser via guano had already been extensively imported to rehabilitate southern cotton and tobacco lands before 1860. The need to obtain so-called guano islands lay behind the US acquisition of certain minor uninhabited Pacific islands in the 1850s, the first US 'expansion' overseas.²⁹

The prodigious destruction of forests after the Civil War spurred the first feeble attempts at conservation laws, though little was accomplished until the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt (1901–1909). At that time, Europe was also concerned with conservation and US conservation attitudes and policies developed as part of a Euro-American concern over the loss of natural habitat for wildlife, and loss of natural resources, such as forests, for economic growth. The tension between the two ideas of preservation and conservation for efficiency was conspicuous in the American case.

Industrialisation

Earlier textile-based industrialisation had started in the northeastern states by the 1820s, often utilising waterpower, and consolidated after the international depression of the late 1830s and early 1840s. But not until 1880 did energy use tip from solar to fossil fuel sources to underpin decisive industrialization. Thereafter, an exponential increase in coal use occurred, mostly from the eastern states of Pennsylvania and West Virginia, supplemented with kerosene for lighting. With cheap coal and iron, the US industrialised across the Midwest and even parts of the South. The factories of the East and Midwest were closely linked by railroads with the mines of the West and the markets of the East, and from there to the world.

The increase in US productive capacity came from the availability of cheap raw materials, plentiful and relatively cheap labour from immigrants, and a capital-intensive production process to maximise profits.³⁰ Distribution through a national market and specialisation and rationalisation of

29 Dan O'Donnell, 'The Pacific guano islands: the stirring of American empire in the Pacific Ocean', *Pacific Studies* 16 (March 1993), 43–66; Christina Duffy Burnett, 'The edges of empire and the limits of sovereignty: American guano islands', *American Quarterly* 57:3 (2005), 779–803.

30 Gavin Wright, 'The origins of American industrial success, 1879–1940', *American Economic Review* 80:4 (September 1990), 651–668; Edward B. Barbier, *Scarcity and Frontiers: How Economies Have Developed through Natural Resource Exploitation* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 394–402.

production into larger-scale firms exploited this national market, and put demands on the US government to facilitate the opening of more markets overseas for the enormous surplus, through reciprocal trade diplomacy in the first instance, then financial pressure on regional governments and actual military intervention.³¹

Global economic power

Long before its global prominence, the United States had become an important factor in world trade. Throughout the nineteenth century, the nation continued to trade extensively with Europe, particularly Britain, while extending its imports from Asia and Latin America. The percentage of goods involved in foreign trade ranged from possibly as much as 15 per cent of production exported at the time of the early republic to 14 per cent of the GNP exports and imports in the late nineteenth century.³² At that time, the nation 'occupied a share of world trade disproportionately large'. It produced about 16 per cent of the world's exported primary products from 1880 to 1900. It also imported about 9 per cent of primary products generated in global trade. All this was well above the US population level, which stood at 4.7 per cent of the world total in 1900.³³

Though the United States had important global markets, the size of the American population (reaching 92 million by 1910) meant that it also had an immense domestic market. The adoption of extensive protective tariffs, under the Republican-dominated polity (except for 1913–1921) from 1860 to 1933, did not create but enhanced and exploited the home market, while complicating foreign and trade policies. The home market provided a platform for the economies of scale in production that could allow the exported proportion of American production to be highly competitive when sold on world markets.³⁴

31 Alfred Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977); Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963).

32 J. T. R. Hughes, *American Economic History*, 2nd edn (Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman, 1987), p. 365; Ben J. Wattenberg, ed., *Historical Statistics of the United States: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), p. 887; J. Potter, 'Atlantic economy, 1815–1860: the USA and the Industrial Revolution in Britain', in A. W. Coats and R. M. Robertson, eds., *Essays in American Economic History* (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), pp. 14–48.

33 Hughes, *American Economic History*, pp. 367–368.

34 Benjamin O. Fordham, 'Protectionist empire: trade, tariffs, and United States foreign policy, 1890–1914', unpublished paper, Cornell University, 2011.

Despite, or in some ways because of, the dynamic internal market, US economic growth remained closely linked to that of Europe after the Civil War through capital inflows and migration. Indeed, the nation was integrated into the increasingly synchronised fluctuations of the Atlantic world business cycle, as shown especially in the severe depressions of 1873–1877 and 1893–1896.³⁵ The United States was also from the 1860s closely connected to the emerging global communications systems, first through the successful laying of an Atlantic cable in 1866. Together with the transcontinental railway line (1869) and the US transcontinental cable of 1861, the Atlantic cable meant that quick and secure communications connected San Francisco to London; by 1872, the extension of the British-built cable services to India, Australia, Hong Kong and Japan efficiently created a global system. This was essential for the movement of gold specie (for settling trade accounts) and market intelligence.

Though increasingly linked to the European and world economies, the power balance within that relationship shifted gradually from the 1880s to 1920. By 1900, the United States was the world's largest economy. Its manufacturing industry was more efficient than those of European competitors, and its products flooded Europe, even stealing traditional British markets for industrial goods in the British Empire. As a result, after 1885–1886, the United States mostly had trade surpluses, and this trade supremacy, based on competitive exports and a highly protected domestic market, produced alarm in some European countries.³⁶

Only indebtedness to Europe in interest payments on capital,³⁷ insurance charges and the costs of a carrying trade conducted in mostly foreign vessels dented the favourable trade position. Once, the United States had possessed a substantial merchant marine carrying 90 per cent of US trade in the early republic. This gradually fell away after 1860 to less than 10 per cent by the First World War. But that war delivered a balance of payments surplus for the United States as well as the trade surplus. Already a net lender in Latin America before the First World War, the nation ceased being a debtor country, and became a creditor to Europe and the world. This economic supremacy spawned future problems for American and global economies.

35 Brinley Thomas, *Migration and Economic Growth: A Study of Great Britain and the Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge University Press, 1954) and *The Industrial Revolution and the Atlantic Economy: Selected Essays* (London: Routledge, 1993); O'Rourke and Williamson, *Globalization*.

36 Fred A. McKenzie, *The American Invaders* (1902; New York: Arno Press, 1976).

37 Mira Wilkins, *The History of Foreign Investment in the United States, 1914–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

There was an obvious imbalance between the productiveness of the American economy and its unwillingness to import reciprocally from Europe due to high tariff barriers.³⁸

Labour and the state

With concerns on both sides of the Atlantic over heightened international economic competition and the flows of workers across boundaries, the development of the state along bureaucratic lines intensified in the Atlantic world. European countries became more wary of allowing their workforce to emigrate. The need for men to fill the expanding armies of Europe reinforced this growing concern with national efficiency and international competition in an expanding European imperialist phase from 1890 to 1914. This trend included greater surveillance of workers and radical agitators, and passport controls were extensively introduced for the first time in a tightening of national borders. The United States was both a responder to this development and a leading participant as Americans became more aware of the social tensions that immigration brought.³⁹

At the same time, Americans began to develop a labour movement that ultimately influenced the shape of the state. Until the 1930s, trade unions were mostly restricted to skilled workers, but the United States had experienced extensive class conflict through bitter strikes, lockouts, violence and an increase after 1900 in socialist agitation. The Socialist Party of America was minor compared with its counterparts in Western Europe, but the presence of a working class, blue-collar population as a material force (though not a united class-conscious group), could not be ignored. Middle-class reformers strove to overcome the widening social divide, and from this conjuncture came the 'Progressive Movement', an attempt to apply ideas of social reform, often developed in Europe, for mitigating conditions of work and health. While the regulation of capitalism was part of this trend, US social reform measures to improve workers' lives occurred almost entirely at the level of state rather than federal governments until the 1930s.⁴⁰ The United States had not built a strong *central* state, and in this respect its federalist heritage made it distinct from many European countries in the patchwork nature of 'the state'

38 Fordham, 'Protectionist empire'.

39 John C. Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

40 Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).

as a whole.⁴¹ Only with the New Deal and the growth of a national security apparatus after the Second World War did a powerful national state consolidate.

Formal empire

A key contributor to the growth of the American state was the acquisition of a formal empire. In 1898, the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam were gained as a result of the Spanish–American War over Cuban independence. From that time on, the United States became a major power in the Caribbean basin, often intervening militarily or applying financial pressure to the small countries of the region, which became, like Haiti and Cuba until 1934, *de facto* American protectorates. The United States also became a Pacific power, annexing Hawai'i in 1898 and American Samoa in 1899, and the necessity of defending its sprawling reach of Pacific interests was a factor in the decision to support dissidents in the Panama province of Colombia to rebel in 1903. As a result, the United States gained from the Republic of Panama control of the territory on which to build the Panama Canal. From its 1914 opening, this waterway provided access to both oceans for the American fleet, and improved trading possibilities linking the United States and East Asia. After 1917, the United States refrained from acquiring further direct territories overseas, but continued its seaborne empire tradition, enhanced by bases and potential refuelling stations for an expanded navy. The nation also maintained the right to a base on Cuba, all this for protection of the sea lanes for American commerce. These bases presaged the much later American policy of an 'empire of bases' after the Second World War, though the latter had military rather than commercial objectives.⁴²

Mostly the United States relied on an informal empire where economic coercion and intimidation were used to maintain investments and access to raw materials in Central America. As early as 1900–1910, American demand

41 On the American state, see Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Richard Bense, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859–1877* (Cambridge University Press, 1990); Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877–1920* (Cambridge University Press, 1982); Brian Balogh, 'The state of the state among historians', *Social Science History* 27:3 (2003), 455–463.

42 Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009); Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (New York: Henry Holt, 2004).

for tropical products made such policies desirable, especially for coffee, bananas, other fruit and rubber. By the 1920s, a strong relationship had developed between the mass consumerism of American society of that decade and the 'degradation of the tropical world'.⁴³ The tropical world's resources were being converted into marketable commodities in ways that changed whole ecosystems and the livelihoods of people deprived of the resources of the land.

De-globalising tendencies and contradictions, 1920 to 1950s

The involvement of the United States in the First World War made the nation for the first time in a century embroiled in the politics of Europe. Although there was a reaction against this after 1919–1920, with the rejection of the Versailles Treaty and failure to join the League of Nations, the economic integration continued in modified form until 1929, when the nation became deeply affected by the global depression. The United States contributed to the coming of the depression by insisting on repayment of loans to European countries when the latter were owed reparations by the defeated First World War enemy, Germany. When the Great Depression hit, the United States at first adopted economic nationalist and protectionist policies, as did much of Europe, thus accentuating economic decline. The American response to the depression in terms of government spending was not as extensive as some, but, like other nations, the net effect was to strengthen the nation state, with sharp rises in Federal government spending and intervention in the economy and society.⁴⁴

The Great Depression and the Second World War that followed highlighted the uneven trajectory and effects of globalisation. From the 1920s to the 1950s, the US relationship to world history was marked by decreased engagement in terms of key issues of migration, capital flows and trade. The Immigration Act of 1924 was a crucial step in attempting to assert control over US demography. For thirty years thereafter, the population became more white, more native born and, in some measure, more insular. The percentage of US GDP in international trade dropped to a low of 10 per cent

43 Richard Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).

44 Jeffrey A. Frieden, *Global Capitalism: Its Fall and Rise in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Norton, 2006).

by 1930 and stayed there through the 1950s.⁴⁵ The depression saw repatriation of many US investments in Europe and disruption to US businesses upon the onset of Nazi power in Germany. Also, growing political isolationism emerged as a response to the looming war clouds, and bore fruit in the Neutrality Acts of 1935–1937 that aimed to keep the United States out of a future European war.

On the other hand, the nation became militarily engaged on a global scale when drawn into the Second World War, as a result of a clash with Japan over that nation's strategic objectives and US interest in preserving the territorial integrity of China. With American military forces fighting in Western Europe (mostly between 1943 and 1945), North Africa (1942) and the Pacific (1941–1945), the political isolationism of the interwar period soon gave way to internationalism and multilateral co-operation under US leadership. The subsequent moves for a United Nations gave substance to this internationalism, as did the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (1947). The United States sought through freer trade a stable, capitalist world and, with the onset of a threat to its ambitions from the Soviet Union by 1947, US military and financial aid to Western Europe increased. A significant US presence abroad that accompanied the military victory of the Allies in the Second World War became entrenched, with bases across Western Europe and East Asia; and collective security arrangements were concluded with countries in Europe (NATO); the Middle East (the short-lived CENTO Pact); and Southeast Asia (SEATO). The Korean War (1950–1953) expressed the commitment of the United States to containing communist power in East Asia. US investment grew in Latin America and many other locations, and American cultural impacts on these places expanded, with a corresponding rise of anti-American sentiment.

Energy and mass consumption

As part of the plan for the reconstruction of Western Europe and Japan, the United States encouraged modernisation of those economies, and investment in technology to promote domestic consumption. This included exporting to many countries in the 1950s the American solution to economic growth, mass consumerism. The system had already made headway in the United States several decades before. From 1914, the automated production system

⁴⁵ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*; Alfred Eckes, Jr and Thomas Zeiler, *Globalization and the American Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 109.

pioneered by Henry Ford had brought down the price of industrial goods, and this lay behind the 1920s expansion of the consumer base through acquisition of household items such as electrical goods, and private transportation on a mass scale. In Europe, a beachhead had been established in this period. American companies, especially Ford and General Motors, established branch plants and increased exports to Europe, and American advertising companies, notably J. Walter Thompson, promoted American goods there. But the market was restricted to the upper middle class.⁴⁶ After the Second World War, the idea of mass consumerism spread by advertising was increasingly diffused to Europe, the British Empire and Japan.

This mass consumerism was based on cheap energy. The United States ended the Second World War as the consumer of approximately 45–50 per cent of the world's energy. The availability of cheap energy since the 1920s through oil exploration both at home and abroad in Latin America had provided a platform for US economic growth and military superiority in the Second World War. Oil replaced coal for transport via private automobiles and, after the Second World War, for the transport of food and industrial goods. Oil also became important for the manufacture of plastics by the 1960s. A two-fold change in energy occurred as a result. Absolute US consumption grew rapidly as the consumer revolution intensified, but the US percentage of world energy use dropped as the rest of the developed world began to catch up when production recovered from Second World War destruction. By 1973 the percentage of world energy being taken by the United States was down to 37 per cent, and declined further to about 25 per cent by the end of the twentieth century. But with only 5 per cent of the world's population, US energy use remained disproportionately high on a global scale throughout the postwar years.

The absolute increase in the use of energy by the developed world increased pressure on oil reserves. American and foreign oil companies spread their searches to the far corners of the globe to diversify access. American Fordism no longer was able to supply its own needs for its most important source of energy since the 1920s, oil. American imports of oil accompanied increasing interest in the Middle East. Oil had been discovered there earlier but was developed in the 1950s and 1960s, cementing greater US strategic interest in the region at a time when domestic supplies of oil were dwindling. The political implications of US support for dictatorships in the

46 Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

Middle East, notably in Iran (from 1953 to 1979), and US backing for Israel, made the Middle East the most controversial site of American diplomacy and military intervention. The military and political complications of the nation's global reach in the 1960s and 1970s spelt grave economic and resource problems for the United States.

The political economic system that distributed resource inputs and outputs in the 1940s to 1960s was a combination of New Deal federal largesse towards special interests such as farmers and labour and military Keynesianism, through defence spending and space research. Both approaches spurred economic growth. Federal budget deficits, and rearmament after 1947 to fight the Cold War (and the hot war on the Korean peninsula, 1950–1953, and in Vietnam, 1963–1973) aided US economic growth, underpinning prosperity until the end of the 1960s. Externally the Bretton Woods Agreement of 1944 regulated the international monetary system until 1971 and made the dollar the *de facto* reserve currency of the world's financial system. This arrangement supplied relative economic prosperity for two decades under American military and political hegemony.

In the 1970s, however, a systemic economic crisis in world history occurred in which the United States was central.⁴⁷ The combination of the reliance on uncertain supplies of foreign oil to fuel economic growth and the inflationary effects of the Vietnam War-era military and social expenditure, combined with cyclical and regional shifts in the global economy as East Asia and Europe expanded. These pressures brought the US economy into an era of stagnation and high inflation as government spending and wage increases now exceeded the capacity of the economy's available goods and services to sustain a 'guns and butter' prosperity. When the international system's postwar settlement broke down as the American economy weakened, the United States joined Britain and other developed countries in moving towards economic and financial deregulation, reducing the power of the state. A quarter-century's respite from stagnation (1984 to 2008) followed, though growth was typically uneven, punctuated with two recessions, and heavily dependent on military Keynesianism and the computer revolution that reorganised the tertiary (white collar) sector of the economy. Meanwhile, blue-collar jobs shrank.

47 Daniel Sargent, 'The United States and globalization in the 1970s', in Niall Ferguson, Charles Maier, Erez Manela and Daniel Sargent, eds., *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), chapter 2.

‘New globalisation’

The period since the 1970s is called by some observers ‘new globalisation’ to reflect the greater interconnectivity of peoples in which the power of nation states has been compromised afresh by the rise of economic deregulation, freer trade, renewed mass migration from the developing world and the enhanced mobility of capital. The flow of goods and services across national boundaries increased, and US participation in world trade rose. Even though President Ronald Reagan (1981–1989) stressed American nationalism and geopolitical dominance, the American economy became more integrated with the world. Increasingly imports came from East Asia and Latin America as US industrial pre-eminence lessened, and jobs went offshore to take advantage of cheaper labour. Foreign trade rose from 10.8 per cent of GDP in 1970 to 20.5 per cent in 1980 and 26 per cent by 2000.⁴⁸

New globalisation also occurred through the proliferation of transnational non-governmental organisations, to form the embryo of a global civil society, especially in questions of human rights, popular culture and the environment.⁴⁹ New communications technologies aided this process through the satellites of the 1960s and 1970s, followed by the World Wide Web that provided the effective successor to the telegraphic cable system.

The Reagan era also saw a reassertion of American authority and vigour in the larger world, as the president worked to combat the influence of the Soviet Union in a renewed Cold War phase. Politically, the nation shored up its leading international role. Militarily the nation increased defence spending, and the collapse of the Soviet Union left the United States as the only remaining superpower from 1991.

But underlying problems remained for the nation’s hegemony: high consumption of and increasing dependence on foreign raw materials for industry joined declining economic competitiveness. From 1971 to 1972 the nation had a persistent balance of trade deficit and a balance of payments current account deficit beginning in 1985–1986. Globalisation certainly benefited the new technologies of the so-called third industrial revolution (the rationalisation of the tertiary sector through computers and other electronic devices), and buoyed economic growth through the 1990s. But simultaneously, economic de-industrialisation of parts of the United States intensified as older, less

48 Eckes and Zeiler, *Globalization and the American Century*, p. 209.

49 Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002); Mazlish and Buultjens, eds., *Conceptualizing Global History*.

competitive industries such as textiles (North and South Carolina) and steel (Midwest and Mid-Atlantic) wilted in the face of foreign competition. Regional shifts in economic growth gave political supremacy to the South and Southwest, thus illustrating how internal political and regional balances could be affected by new globalisation.⁵⁰

Single-power hegemon: 1991 and beyond

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 removed the nation's major geopolitical competitor, leaving the United States as the only remaining superpower. Politicians and opinion leaders believed the United States had 'won' the Cold War. At first the concept of an end to history as a struggle for liberty became fashionable through the ideas of Francis Fukuyama; in this reading, liberal democratic civilisation had triumphed leaving only pockets of resistance. The spread of the Internet underlined the idea that commerce had triumphed over ideology and that, with commerce, would come relative peace. The prosperous Clinton years of 1993–2001 were characterised by further integration into the world economy, with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) increasing regional transnational trade with Mexico and Canada. The stock market boomed and the American GDP expanded for an unprecedented period. But division and struggle could not be discounted on an international level. Old ethnic rivalries remained unsettled in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and religious intolerance threatened in many societies. The new world order of globalisation had begun to emerge, but its full implications for the American place in the world did not become clear immediately.

The 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center by al-Qaeda did not change the world. They merely intensified the processes of global connectivity in which the nation extended its formal 'empire of bases' approach to global hegemony through the acquisition of significant additional military facilities abroad in Central Asia, and prosecuted foreign wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁵¹ The American 'empire' remained the world's pre-eminent military power and, indeed, its economic and military role within the world was even more important than before. To be sure, by the end of the first decade of the new millennium, the rise of China challenged that empire. Economic power was shifting, and American power was eroding

50 Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969–1984* (University of Toronto Press, 2003).

51 Johnson, *Sorrows of Empire*.

slowly. But the crisis beginning in 2007, with the eddying effects of the subprime lending-induced financial crash, demonstrated how vital the health of the American economy remained for global growth and stability. Events and processes outside the United States continued to affect internal politics and economics, and vice versa. The United States and the rest of the world were interconnected, and disengagement was impossible.

Further reading

- Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. New York: Random House, 2014.
- Bender, Thomas. *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History*. New York: Hill & Wang, 2006.
- Bender, Thomas. ed. *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002.
- Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1983.
- Nature's Metropolis: *Chicago and the Great West*. New York: Norton, 1991.
- Davis, David B. *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975.
- de Grazia, Victoria. *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-century Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Eckes, Alfred, Jr, and Thomas Zeiler. *Globalization and the American Century*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Ellwood, David. *The Shock of America: Europe and the Challenge of the Century*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Förster, Stig, and Jorg Nagler, eds. *On the Road to Total War: The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, 1861–1871*. Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Howe, Daniel Walker. *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Iger, David. *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush*. Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Johnson, Benjamin H., and Andrew R. Graybill, eds. *Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Kennedy, David. *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945*. Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Lake, Marilyn, and Henry Reynolds. *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Logevall, Fredrik. *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam*. New York: Random House, 2012.
- McCoy, Alfred W., and Francisco A. Scarano, eds. *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009.

- Manela, Erez. *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*. Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Meinig, D. W. *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, Vol. 3: *Transcontinental America, 1850–1915*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Roberts, Timothy. *Distant Revolutions: 1848 and the Challenge to American Exceptionalism*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009.
- Rodgers, Daniel T. *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Rosenberg, Emily S., ed. *A World Connecting, 1870–1945* (A History of the World, general eds. Akira Iriye and Jorgen Osterhammel). Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Taylor, Alan. *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies*. New York: Knopf, 2010.
- Tucker, Richard. *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000.
- White, Ashli. *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.
- White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815*. Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Wilkins, Mira. *The History of Foreign Investment in the United States to 1914*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Williams, Michael. *Americans and their Forests: A Historical Geography*. University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Zolberg, Aristides. *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.