CHAPTER 14

Freedom as Ideology

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To coerce a man is to deprive him of freedom—freedom from what?

—ISAIAH BERLIN, "TWO CONCEPTS OF LIBERTY"

In every era, U.S. leaders have claimed that their foreign policies promote freedom abroad as they also protect it at home. Eric Foner has written that "freedom" is *the* keyword of American history, and that holds equally true for American interactions with the wider world. Americans have always justified their possession and deployment of power and argued about it with reference to claims about freedom. There can be no legitimate power in American society without a connection—no matter how tenuous—to being "free."[1]

The centrality of freedom to the American language of politics and society makes it a highly contested concept—argued about and redefined by every generation in new ways. Foner reminds us: "The meaning of freedom has been constructed not only in congressional debates and political treatises but on plantations and picket lines, in parlors and bedrooms."[2] We might add on foreign battlefields and in diplomatic negotiations, international exchange programs, and postcolonial spaces to this capacious list.

Different figures and contexts have stretched the concept in various directions, often producing very "unfree" outcomes, but that only reaffirms how important American assumptions and imaginations of freedom have remained. Frequently, American obsessions with particular conceptions of freedom have blinded citizens and leaders to the repressive consequences of their actions. At other moments, American assumptions about freedom have justified inaction, even in the face of genocide and ethnic cleansing.

The pursuit of freedom does not necessarily elicit results that match intentions, and American intentions have often been deeply self-serving. The historian Edmund Morgan famously observed that from its early days the American pursuit of freedom made others unfree, particularly slaves, Indigenous peoples, and those who thwarted American ambitions.[3]

The United States, like other nations, has always pursued its own interests. In widely varying circumstances, those interests have reflected how particular leaders defined freedom, its subjects, and its pursuit. Although this observation does not make the United States necessarily exceptional (or humble), it distinguishes American policy making from other states that are not driven by similar conceptual obsessions. Countries whose survival is more consistency imperiled—Poland, Israel, and the Koreas, for example—emphasize their national sustenance above all. Island regimes with largely homogenous populations—Japan is the prime example—tend to prioritize racial and cultural purity. And societies with self-conscious histories of civilizational glory that long precede nationhood—China, India, and Persia are three of many—rarely make policy around a concept so modern in its formulation. Every society cares about freedom in one form or another, but American policy makers have obsessed about it in ways that are distinctive, enduring, and often quite problematic.

Obsession does not prevent dissembling; it might even encourage it. Donald Trump's presidency, filled with flagrant dishonesty, raises questions about whether American leaders really care about freedom—or is it just a convenient rationalization? The word *freedom* is used and abused frequently, but it is not the honesty or dishonesty of its invocation that matters. The fact that freedom is a necessary point of reference for all policy—that all uses of U.S. power must be justified in its terms—makes the concept central to American ideologies. U.S. leaders legitimize their power by claiming to enhance freedom. Uses of power that make the most persuasive claims about freedom endure, whereas uses of power with weak claims about freedom quickly lose popular support. Ideas of freedom encourage larger promises from leaders when they explain their actions. Realpolitik is never sufficient for the American polity.[4]

In this essay, I analyze some of the continuities and phase shifts in the invocation of freedom for foreign policy purposes. I examine how policy makers have used the concept, what they have meant, how meanings have changed over time, and how changed meanings have helped shape U.S. actions abroad. Ideas are tied to context, and in the case of U.S. foreign

policy, the conceptions of freedom animating expressions of power have evolved in recognizable ways to address different historical moments in the nation's history and in the history of the wider world. The main point here is not to deconstruct the fine grains of policy making in any particular period but to understand and analyze how changing ideological climates have defined what freedom meant to U.S. policy makers and how those meanings in turn influenced policy. Many other motivations contribute to policy making, and many other factors determine outcomes on the ground. The concepts of freedom that have mattered for U.S. foreign policy have anchored a wider complex of influences.

Freedom is an unstable ideology because it is not prima facia. One group's freedom is another group's imprisonment. Both Morgan and Foner make this point: the freedom of many eighteenth-century white Americans required the enslavement of millions of Black bodies. Assumptions about whose freedom counts, and how it is defined, reflect wider debates about race, justice, and belonging. These are arguments about more than interest. They are questions of value: Who and what counts? Analyzing freedom as a shifting ideology behind foreign policy enables us to see how much the international projection of U.S. power has built upon and contributed to these fundamental questions. When the United States deploys its power, it also deploys changing ideas about what it means to be free. The foreign responses to American ideas push them in new directions back home.

If foreign policy is a complex cocktail of ingredients, ideas of freedom constitute a base alcohol for Americans that changes over time, mixing well with certain additives in some moments, but not in others. The final color and taste of the U.S. foreign policy cocktail is, in fact, often hard to predict. The leaders empowered as bartenders are constantly mixing the inherited ingredients in new ways.

Isaiah Berlin, a frequent consumer of cocktails himself, famously elucidated two political concepts of liberty: *negative* (freedom from) and *positive* (freedom for). In his famous essay on the subject, he argued that negative freedom was more individualistic and limiting, positive freedom more communal and expansive. He observed that the former tended to restrict government power, whereas the latter required government action on behalf of worthy goals. Free societies needed both conceptions, according to Berlin, and excess in pursuit of either could cause deprivation and tyranny. As in all things, Berlin sought balance and moderation. As a Russian émigré writing in the shadow of Soviet tyranny, he was especially wary of positivistic

conceptions of freedom that justified state violence to change human behavior. The correct balance of negative and positive liberty—what some have called Berlin's "liberal" sensibility—was crucial in his eyes for preserving a just society. He perceived policy makers in Western Europe and the United States as struggling to find this correct balance after World War II.[5]

For the longer history of U.S. foreign policy and the intellectual roots behind it, Berlin's framework is a good start, but too narrow. The American language of freedom has a wider range beyond the negative and positive polarities articulated by Berlin. A growing, diverse country has more ways to think about freedom. Changes in capabilities, threats, and other circumstances make the pursuit of a liberal balance, as Berlin defined it, more multidimensional.

A layered historical understanding of freedom (less a balance of polarities and more an unstable mix) works better for analyzing the main currents in U.S. foreign policy. We can periodize U.S. foreign policy around three evolving conceptual frames that expand on Berlin's observations. Instead of negative and positive liberty, we can identify *restrictive* (freedom from), *expansive* (freedom for), and *hegemonic* (freedom over) conceptions that were present in all periods of U.S. history but alternated in their weight over policy making. The changing mix of these three concepts, in different periods, reflects the ongoing debate about what freedom meant to Americans, and the evolving circumstances of the country. The growing power of the American state, and rising expectations for the state in foreign policy, pushed thinking about freedom away from the early restrictive anchors to ever-more expansive and then hegemonic assumptions.

We can map this process in three historical phases. In each phase, an evolving discussion of freedom contributed to new foreign policies. Attention to freedom as an evolving ideology explains key shifts in U.S. power.

Restrictive Freedom

The first serious statement of American foreign policy doctrine was President George Washington's Farewell Address on February 22, 1796. Felix Gilbert has shown how this document—written in parts by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and the president himself—drew on a rich reading of Renaissance and Enlightenment thinking about freedom. The address was a self-conscious testament, designed to frame how citizens understood

democratic freedoms and how leaders had to behave. Ceding power and articulating a vision for his successors, Washington liberated the nation from traditions of personalist and hereditary power. He replaced them with reasoned expectations about restrictions on how long and to what effect power could be used.[6]

Washington wanted the nascent United States to be a free society, which meant a society free from tyranny, war, and other impediments on community life. Early American republicanism emphasized community strongly, believing that the United States was a pluralistic collection of localities pursuing their distinctive traditions. People were free because they could work and pray in their communities. The Union represented the loose but vital connections the federal government provided to enhance communities in their chosen forms.[7]

For Washington, freedom grew from a trinity of basic order at home, trade with the wider world, and resistance to foreign coercion:

> If we remain one people under an efficient government, the period is not far off when we may defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel.[8]

Washington's Farewell Address called for a free society to pursue a foreign policy of caution, commerce, and disinterest ("neutrality") toward the political conflicts of other societies. The president emphasized protecting freedom at home, and he warned against trying to spread it abroad. The United States needed freedom from interference by others. Power served freedom by ensuring independence for communities within the new nation.

These ideas echoed Machiavellian concerns, according to J. G. A. Pocock, of a limited state for a dynamic society. For Washington, the sources that restricted freedom were excess, uniformity, and domination—all of which he warned against in the making of foreign policy. He did not want the United States to become a traditional diplomatic actor with aristocratic ambassadors playing the game of alliances for imperial acquisition.[9]

The first president defined a free society as one that self-consciously restricted its own uses of power to prevent the military excesses that would

tempt policy makers in the short run but limit independence over time. Freedom meant security not just from foreign threats but also from foreign entanglements. To be free was to be cautious, separate, and humble. Washington associated freedom with commercial growth but with limited government power, a small military, and citizen diplomats.[10]

Washington's vision of freedom and foreign policy guided the United States for the nation's first century because it was so widely shared. His ideas matched the experiences and aspirations of literate elites in various communities. Washington's ideas also matched the conditions of a large landed nation, rich with resources, far from foreign threats, and lacking in established military and diplomatic institutions. His words made sense to Americans, and they used that sensibility to think about foreign policy.

One of the clearest manifestations of Washington's influence was the Monroe Doctrine, articulated by President James Monroe on December 2, 1823. As former Spanish and Portuguese colonies throughout South America successfully threw off foreign rule in the early nineteenth century, the United States faced a series of policy choices: actively defend the independence of these new states, negotiate with the European powers (particularly Britain and Spain) who sought to maintain influence in the region, or remain neutral.

Although widespread American sentiment favored the Latin American revolutionaries, the first option of offering active defense was impractical. The United States possessed limited naval capabilities, and conflict with a European power could spill back onto the North American continent. Americans remained traumatized by their military failures in the War of 1812 with Great Britain, and the burning of the Executive Mansion in particular. Even the most ardent American defenders of the South American revolutions wanted to remain free from war with the European powers—at almost all costs.

The British pushed for a negotiated alternative that would expand London's influence in the region and benefit from American support. The British offer made sense for traditional practitioners of diplomacy because it promised to give the larger powers, including the United States, more influence over the region as it also limited conflict. The American secretary of state John Quincy Adams seriously considered this option, but he ultimately rejected it. Adams recognized that Americans wanted the Western Hemisphere to remain free from expanded British power, even at the cost of American influence over the newly independent South American states. The United States had to avoid going forward alone "in search of monsters to destroy," but it also had to stop foreign imperialists from doing the same.[11]

Neutrality was not an option simply because the stakes were so large. If the South American revolutions were crushed by the Holy Alliance of conservative European monarchies, including Spain, the future of the American experiment would be imperiled by powerful hostile forces near North America. If the British inserted themselves on the South American continent, the United States would be stuck in a subordinate position to British trade and other influences throughout the Western Hemisphere. American freedom would suffer in both scenarios.

The language of the Monroe Doctrine, largely written by Adams, brought the wisdom of George Washington's Farewell Address to the problem. The United States remained free of alliances. It encouraged increased trade and other forms of commerce across the newly independent states and old imperial regimes. What the United States promised was that it would use its economic influences, short of war, to help newly independent states survive and resist the return of imperial powers defeated in their former colonies. The United States would neither join revolutionary struggles nor ally with their oppressors; it would support independence, once achieved, and it would act cautiously.

Above all, Monroe and Adams wanted freedom from colonial wars. They were convinced that South American societies were moving away from colonialism, and they supported that cause. They accepted incremental change that would limit war and remove repression over time. Adams, in particular, believed that a common hemispheric project of seeking freedom from European controls would establish American leadership, if wars and alliances could be avoided. This was a policy that reflected the first president's emphasis on commerce, independence, and restraint for limited objectives.[12]

The Monroe Doctrine became the classic assertion of American freedom from new European colonialism:

> With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the Governments who have declared their independence and maintain it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States.[13]

American freedom meant a new American role in the Western Hemisphere as supporter of independence when possible and as a self-proclaimed leader of free peoples. The United States did not have the capabilities or the ambition to control the entire region, but it committed itself to freeing the hemisphere from potential challengers. American anticolonialism, therefore, was not concerned primarily with the content of other former colonized peoples' freedoms but was obsessed with removing threats to American freedoms.

Washington's Farewell Address, the Monroe Doctrine, and other major acts of foreign policy in the first U.S. century reflected restrained efforts to free American communities from foreign intruders. Restrictive American conceptions of freedom aimed at excluding those who defined freedom in monarchical, imperial, or other terms. When South American revolutionaries adopted their own radical alternatives to American capitalist and republican freedoms, they also elicited American opposition. The pursuit of freedom against threatening alternatives, as defined by American leaders, made the United States a restrained but still sometime aggressive unilateralist, as South American critics of the Monroe Doctrine would contend in later decades. The same was true at home, especially for slaves, Indigenous peoples, and other excluded groups.[14]

Expansive Freedom

The end of American slavery after a horrific Civil War expanded the vision of American freedom enormously, although stubborn limits surrounding economics, race, gender, and other categories remained strong—and were, in some ways, redoubled. The party of Abraham Lincoln (the Republican Party) defined American freedom as more than freedom from foreign interference.[15]

The Republican position was that freedom meant access to opportunity, defined largely through new land, capital, and other resources. The quintessential Lincoln policies, pursued with more consistency than slave abolition, included expedited westward settlement (the Homestead Act), increased higher education access (the Morrill Land Grant Act), and the spread of industry through massive federal railroad subsidies. "Free men," according to Republicans, required fertile "soil" and paid "labor," especially for white male citizens.[16]

Increased access to resources encouraged an expansive foreign policy. Americans had moved across the continent in prior decades with the

assumption of continued freedom from "old world" entanglements. After the Civil War those assumptions began to change, beginning with secretary of state William Henry Seward's acquisition of Alaska and the Midway Islands in 1867. These acquisitions were unpopular among many citizens who still adhered to a more limited vision of foreign policy, and they were nearly rejected by Congress. Nonetheless, they were the first steps in a cohesive Republican policy of connecting expanded American freedoms at home with control over foreign areas. Democrats remained more attached to a restrictive vision of domestic and international freedoms, but they were the less powerful national party—largely because of the Civil War—for the next half century.[17]

Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson inherited this legacy, and they made their political careers as exponents of expansive definitions of American freedom, and the presidency, although for different purposes. Roosevelt advocated the freedom to acquire resources for the United States to become a leading industrial power—a world capitalist leader. "The history of America," Roosevelt explained in 1910, "is now the central feature of the history of the world; for the world has set its face hopefully toward our democracy." In the worldwide competition among nations, Roosevelt argued, Americans needed a strong government and a forceful executive to bring citizens together, breakup corrupt "trusts," and push into foreign markets. "The American people," he asserted,

> are right in demanding that New Nationalism, without which we cannot hope to deal with new problems. The New Nationalism puts the national need before sectional or personal advantage. It is impatient of the utter confusion that results from local legislatures attempting to treat national issues as local issues. It is still more impatient of the impotence which springs from over division of governmental powers, the impotence which makes it possible for local selfishness or for legal cunning, hired by wealthy special interests, to bring national activities to a deadlock. This New Nationalism regards the executive power as the steward of the public welfare.[18]

The "impotence" that Roosevelt criticized was the restrained vision of freedom that Washington, Adams, and others had defended in their formulation of American foreign policy goals before the Civil War. Now, in a rapidly industrializing nation, Roosevelt turned the nationalism of the Union cause

into a "New Nationalism" of aggressive expansion that asserted American freedom to access resources far from the North American continent.[19]

What became known as the Roosevelt Corollary revised the Monroe Doctrine in these terms. In his Fourth Annual Message to Congress, on December 6, 1904, Roosevelt proclaimed:

> Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.[20]

To protect freedom within the United States, Roosevelt argued that the president had to act as a policeman, particularly in the Caribbean and other areas close to North America. The dangers of "chronic wrongdoing," including violent instability and financial mismanagement, threatened an industrializing United States, in Roosevelt's view. His predecessors' restraint was part of the dangerous "impotence" he condemned in his statement.[21]

Roosevelt's rival, Woodrow Wilson, condemned the New Yorker's emphasis on centralized power and militarism, but he shared Roosevelt's expansive conceptualization of American freedom. Wilson, in fact, intervened more frequently in Latin American societies to combat perceived threats to the United States. When Wilson reluctantly brought the country into World War I, he contended that the "world must be made safe for democracy." Echoing Roosevelt, he explained: "We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind."[22]

Both Roosevelt and Wilson conceived of the United States as more than a continental power with limited interests. Now a world power with a growing industrial economy, they had ambitious domestic and foreign agendas for the promotion of freedom. They saw an unavoidable connection. They believed they had to bring American freedom to the wider family of nations to protect its progress at home. Wilson's Fourteen Points, written in the dual shadow of World War I and the Russian Revolution, sought to avert what Frank Ninkovich has identified as the president's nightmare

of a world suffocating freedom. Wilson did not want the United States to dominate the globe, but he sought to ensure that it could spread key ideas and institutions.[23]

The trajectory of American political economy in the half century after the Civil War widened the range of ambitions attached to the American discourse of freedom. To be free meant to own land, earn a wage, get an education, and attain respect abroad. These attributes were still restricted to the most privileged, and denied to many, but they powerfully influenced how journalists, academics, and politicians talked about the United States. If Lincoln's America was dominated by debates about freedom and slavery, Roosevelt and Wilson's America was pervaded with debates about freedom and national power. A growing industrial country needed freedom to expand across the oceans and into foreign lands. Those assumptions guided unprecedented U.S. decisions to acquire foreign territory, enter a world war, and then try to redesign the international system.[24]

Hegemonic Freedom

An expanding America was not hegemonic before World War II. For all its growth, the United States remained detached from many international developments, particularly the rise of fascism. American economic and cultural influences spread widely, but the military capabilities of the United States were small, and American diplomats had a limited presence outside the Western Hemisphere.

World War II brought a sea change. Shaken by the worldwide devastation of the Great Depression, the militant rise of fascism, and the genocidal violence across the globe, American leaders believed they had no alternative but to make people free and prevent a return to the recent past. "Never again" referred to the nightmarish experience of the last decade and the inherited assumptions of American restraint and separation. The United States now had to lead, not just expand; it had to plant its vision of freedom abroad and eradicate the proven threats from fascism and communism. George Washington's warnings against foreign entanglements seemed terribly outdated, and opposition to American dominance in war-devastated areas appeared naïve, even treasonous.[25]

Woodrow Wilson had proclaimed that "the world must be made safe for democracy" to justify temporary participation—as an "associate power" (not

a permanent ally)—in a war far from American borders. Franklin Roosevelt stretched Wilson's ideas much further to define American freedom after depression and world war as international hegemony. Roosevelt started to make this case on January 6, 1941, when he spoke to Congress about the overwhelming need to respond to a "foreign peril." Calling for measures to defeat the roots of fascism, Roosevelt looked "to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms." The United States would take the lead in promoting its conception of free speech, freedom of religion, "freedom from want," and "freedom from fear," without obvious geographic limits. "That is no vision of a distant millennium," Roosevelt explained. "It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation. . . . Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain those rights or keep them."[26]

The Atlantic Charter, imposed by Roosevelt on British prime minister Winston Churchill in August 1941 (before the United States had entered the military conflict), stamped this conceptualization of freedom on the allied effort. In return for Lend-Lease and other aid from the United States, Roosevelt forced the British empire, and later the Soviet Union, to embrace an American vision of freedom. The Atlantic Charter included:

- "the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live" with "sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them;"
- "enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity;"
- "collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security;" and
- "a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want."[27]

Roosevelt wrote these words to define American war aims, the conditions for American support, and the expectations for the postwar world. The United States would now join alliances unprecedented in its history. And the White House would lead the "free world," enforcing its conception of freedom as a guarantee for peace and prosperity.[28]

George Kennan's influential "Long Telegram" from Moscow in February 1946 sought to discipline this new American ambition, focusing on the containment of Soviet advances. As the first State Department director of policy planning, Kennan contributed to what was still a breathtaking and hegemonic agenda. Through the Marshall Plan and the Reverse Course in Japan, Washington funded the reconstruction of postwar Europe and East Asia, largely on American terms. Through the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency, the United States influenced foreign elections, particularly in Italy, encouraging the rise of pro-American "Christian Democracy" across Western Europe. And through the Truman Doctrine, Washington gave aid to anticommunist groups in Greece and Turkey, as well as to communist dissident leaders in Yugoslavia—a country of particular fascination for Kennan.[29]

Although he opposed the militarization of American foreign policy—including the development of thermonuclear weapons and the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)—Kennan's presumption that the United States had to dominate the "core" areas of military-industrial power encouraged the continual spread of anticommunist efforts. American leaders and citizens came to see the emergence of communism anywhere as a threat to their freedoms. The United States acted to impose its capitalist freedoms, often by supporting undemocratic regimes with force, to prevent the worse perceived danger of communist expansion. Freedom over foreign societies—from South Korea to Vietnam and Chile, among others—meant defeating communist sympathizers at all costs. Kennan later condemned these excesses, but they shared many of the same assumptions about freedom and American power that he articulated at the beginning of what became the Cold War.[30]

The National Security Act of 1947, supported by Kennan, institutionalized the hegemonic aspirations of American freedom. Breaking with inherited assumptions against a large standing military, Americans essentially rewrote the Constitution to create a permanent military-industrial complex, designed to promote American freedoms on a global scale. This mission included the spread of markets, the containment of communism, and the armed support for trusted leaders and parties abroad. The militarization and globalization of U.S. foreign policy grew from a boundless American-centered definition of freedom, more expansive than ever before.[31]

Despite recurring criticisms of American foreign policy for overreach and harm to democracy, assumptions of global hegemony became embedded in the basic definition of freedom for many Americans. When the

Soviet Union disintegrated and the Cold War ended, American policy makers could not imagine a "free world" that did not include American dominance—everywhere. Few leaders invested in a careful examination of U.S. national interests; the presumption was that the United States had to lead everywhere if the world was to remain peaceful, prosperous, and free.

This was the "end of history" with permanent hegemony for American freedom, according to one popular author. The remaining challenge was to defend free civilization in its "clash" with unfree civilizations, another famous author wrote. Continued American hegemony looked like the necessary, and inevitable, antidote.[32]

Epilogue: Freedom Exaggerated, Overturned, and Renewed

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States redoubled American commitments to hegemonic freedom and an "end of history." President George W. Bush contended that the terrorists targeted America because they hated freedom. The only solution was for the United States to make unfree lands free—"ending tyranny in our world." In his second inaugural address, President Bush preached "confidence because freedom is the permanent hope of mankind, the hunger in dark places, the longing of the soul." Bush announced: "We are ready for the greatest achievements in the history of freedom."[33]

This was the false prophecy at the root of the Global War on Terror. Drawing on a long tradition of difficult American nation-building efforts, with mixed results, the Bush administration promised messianic possibilities for the spread of freedom with overwhelming American military force. They would reap the whirlwind. Defeating the Taliban in Afghanistan and then overthrowing Saddam Hussein in Iraq were going to be the first, easy steps—a "cakewalk," one official bragged. Then would come coerced change in Iran and North Korea—the other pieces of what President Bush called the "axis of evil." The president believed American ideas of freedom were now so hegemonic that they could create their own power, turning the slow work of nation-building into hypertransformation through shock and awe.[34]

American failures in Iraq, combined with the global financial crisis of 2007–08, unmasked the shallowness of the Bush administration's conceptualization. The president and his "neoconservative" advisors had grossly

exaggerated the power and appeal of hegemonic claims about American freedom, and their actions motivated mass resentments at home and abroad. The decline in goodwill toward the U.S. government was precipitous, and resistance to American claims about freedom multiplied globally. Leaders in Russia and China, in particular, took advantage of the circumstances to diminish the image advantage the United States had long maintained as a "free society." American freedom now looked militaristic, destructive, and self-defeating. Even some Americans agreed.[35]

The future of U.S. foreign policy will depend on a redefinition of American freedom, as in past eras. The United States will not be able to reconstruct its discredited hegemonic claims; it will need an ideological alternative. Americans will have to author a more persuasive narrative for what freedom means and how it should be pursued. The history of past adjustments is valuable because it shows why this is necessary and how it is possible.

That was Isaiah Berlin's point when he wrote about positive and negative freedoms. They are not static, and they are not self-contained. American uses of power gain legitimacy from conceptions of freedom that speak to a historical context—its aspirations and its capabilities. Those are the stakes in contemporary debates about what constitutes freedom at home and abroad. The course of these debates over ideas will drive the evolution of U.S. power.

Notes

1. Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: Norton, 1998).
2. Foner, *Story of American Freedom*, xv.
3. See Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975).
4. This observation is the point of departure for this classic work: Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987).
5. Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty." See also Michael Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (New York: Metropolitan, 1998).
6. Felix Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961).
7. Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address*. See also Gordon S. Wood, *The Idea of America: Reflections on the Birth of the United States* (New York: Penguin, 2011), esp. 231–50.
8. "George Washington's Farewell Address," February 22, 1796, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp.

9. See J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975); Don Higginbotham, *George Washington and the American Military Tradition* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985); Jeremi Suri, *The Impossible Presidency: The Rise and Fall of America's Highest Office* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), chap. 2.
10. See Suri, *The Impossible Presidency*, chap. 2.
11. See Charles N. Edel, *Nation-Builder: John Quincy Adams and the Grand Strategy of the Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 107–84. See also the classic account in Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Union* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1956).
12. The best recent account of the Monroe Doctrine is Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011).
13. President James Monroe's Annual Message to Congress, December 2, 1823, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/monroe.asp.
14. On this point, see, among many others, Lars Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy Toward Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), esp. 59–124.
15. See Matthew Karp, *The Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).
16. See, among many others, James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).
17. See Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2019), esp. 46–153.
18. Theodore Roosevelt, "New Nationalism," August 31, 1910, https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/new-nationalism-speech/.
19. On this point, see Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956).
20. Theodore Roosevelt, "Fourth Annual Message to Congress," December 6, 1904, https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/roosevelt-corollary-to-monroe-doctrine/.
21. On the influence of Alfred Thayer Mahan's advocacy for a strong navy to promote American freedom, see David Milne, *Worldmaking: The Art and Science of American Diplomacy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2015), 21–68.
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