Ch. 19 – Foreign Policy: Setting a Course of Expansion/EQ: Was American Foreign Policy during the 1800s motivated by realism or idealism?

19.1 – Introduction

- On July 8, 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry led a small fleet of American warships into Edo Bay, in Japan. Edo is now called Tokyo.
- Perry had come to open up Japan to American shipping and trade.
- For over 200 years, Japan had been almost a closed country.
- The United States had tried, but failed, to open up Japan before.
- This time, however, the United States had sent one of its top naval officers, Commodore Perry, with a letter from President Millard Fillmore addressed to the Japanese emperor.
- The letter was an offer of peace and friendship, but the warships were a sign that the United States might be willing to use force in the future.
- This treaty paved the way for an 1858 treaty that opened Japan to trade with the United States.
- These treaties with Japan were part of a broader effort to advance American interests in Asia.
- They were key victories for American foreign policy.
- Foreign policy is the set of goals, principles, and practices that guide a nation in its relations with other countries.

19.2 – Early Developments in U.S. Foreign Policy

- Washington’s Farewell Address, it was not delivered as a speech but instead appeared in newspapers.
- While Washington focused mainly on domestic issues, he ended with a discussion of foreign affairs.
- "It is our true policy," he said, "to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world."
- These words would shape American foreign policy for more than a century to come.

Fundamentals of U.S. Foreign Policy

- From Washington’s time to the present, the president has led the way in formulating the nation's foreign policy.
- Presidents have a variety of tools to use in pursuing foreign policy goals.
- One is diplomacy, the art of conducting negotiations with other nations.
  - Diplomacy may lead to informal agreements as well as treaties.
  - A second tool is financial aid in the form of grants or loans. Such aid can be used to support friendly nations or influence their policies.
  - A third tool is the threat or the use of armed force.
- Over the past two centuries, two schools of thought, known as realism and idealism, have shaped U.S. foreign policy.
  - Realism is based on the belief that relations with other countries should be guided by national self-interest. From this perspective, foreign policy should pursue practical objectives that benefit the American people. Such objectives might include national security, increased trade with other nations, and access to overseas resources.
  - Idealism in foreign policy is based on the belief that values and ideals should influence how countries relate to one another. From this point of view, foreign policy should be used to promote America’s founding ideals—particularly democracy, liberty, and rights—to ensure a better world not just for Americans, but for all people.

Washington Advocates Neutrality and Unilateralism

- George Washington established two key principles of U.S. foreign policy.
  - The first, neutrality, was a response to the outbreak of war between France and Great Britain in 1793. Neutrality is the policy of refusing to take sides among warring nations.
  - Convinced that war would be disastrous for the young nation, Washington issued a proclamation of neutrality.
  - This advice was translated by the presidents who followed Washington into a policy of unilateralism.
Under this policy, the United States "went it alone" in its relations with other countries. It did not seek either military or political alliances with foreign powers.

**Defending Neutrality: The War of 1812**
- The seemingly endless war in Europe tested Americans' commitment to neutrality.
- Presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson used every foreign policy tool short of war to defend the right of American ships to trade freely without being attacked.
- Neither had much success.
- In 1809, President James Madison took up the challenge of defending neutrality.
- For a time, he seemed to be making some progress with France.
- When the British still refused to end attacks on neutral ships, Madison asked Congress for a declaration of war.
- The War of 1812 lasted more than two years. With no victory in sight, peace talks began in Ghent, Belgium, in mid-1814.
- The Treaty of Ghent called for "a firm and universal Peace between His Britannic Majesty and the United States."
- But it left the issues that caused the war unresolved.
- Still, the young nation had stood up to Britain.
- "Not one inch of territory ceded or lost" boasted Americans as the war drew to a close.

**The Monroe Doctrine Bans Colonization**
- These twin policies of non-colonization and non-interference in the Western Hemisphere became known as the Monroe Doctrine.

19.3 – The U.S Pursues a Policy of Territorial Expansion
- In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson arranged for American diplomats to attempt to buy New Orleans, a port city at the mouth of the Mississippi River.
  - At the time, New Orleans was part of the French colony of Louisiana. Jefferson feared that French control of the port would pose a threat to American trade flowing down the Mississippi.
  - Much to Jefferson's surprise, the French offered to sell all of Louisiana.
  - For the price of $15 million, less than 3 cents an acre, the United States could double its territory. Jefferson agreed to the offer.
  - Senate approval of the Louisiana Purchase Treaty late that year signaled a new goal for U.S. foreign policy: expansionism.

**Expansion Through Diplomacy**
- The new policy of territorial expansion was motivated by both idealism and realism.
  - Idealists were inspired by the idea of manifest destiny—the belief that the United States was meant to spread its founding ideals and democratic way of life across the continent and beyond.
  - Realists believed that expansion made the nation more secure by removing foreign threats on its borders.
- Diplomacy worked well in some cases.
  - In 1819, U.S. diplomats persuaded Spain to cede Florida to the United States.
  - Unwilling to go to war over Oregon, Britain signed a treaty in 1846 dividing the region at the 49th parallel.
  - The United States now stretched to the Pacific Ocean.
  - Diplomacy also brought about the purchase of Alaska in 1867.
  - Faced with the choice of pouring money into Alaska to defend it or of making money by selling it, Russia decided to offer this huge region to the United States.
  - Secretary of State William Seward jumped at the chance, negotiating a price of $7.2 million and signing a treaty early the next day.
  - Many Americans made fun of "Seward's Icebox," but later it became clear that Alaska had vast natural resources, including gold.
The Annexation of Texas

- Diplomacy did not work as smoothly when Americans looked south to Texas.
- As their numbers grew, tensions between the Americans and the Mexican government began to rise.
- Early in 1836, they declared Texas to be an independent country and named Sam Houston as their commander in chief.
- After a 13-day siege, the Mexicans overran the Alamo and executed all of the defenders who had survived the assault.
- Two weeks later, a force of three or four hundred Texan volunteers led by James Fannin was captured by Mexican troops near Goliad.
- A few weeks later, the Texans had their revenge. After luring Santa Anna deep into Texas, Sam Houston sprung a trap beside the San Jacinto River.
- Shouting, "Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!" as their war cry, the Texas volunteers overran the Mexican army.
- Now an independent country, Texas became known as the Lone Star Republic because of the single star on its flag.
- Most Texans and many Americans wanted Texas to become part of the United States.
- The issue was complicated, however, by the fact that Texas allowed slavery.
- Polk then decided to provoke a clash with Mexico.

Polk Provokes a War with Mexico

- The annexation of Texas by the United States angered Mexico, which had never accepted the loss of this territory.
- Polk then decided to provoke a clash with Mexico.
- The Mexican army fought bravely, but it had little success.
- The Mexican War finally ended after Americans captured Mexico City in 1847.
- In 1848, the United States and Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.
- Mexico formally recognized the annexation of Texas, with the Rio Grande as its border.
- It also ceded a huge region stretching from Texas to California to the United States. In return for the Mexican Cession, the United States paid Mexico $15 million.

The Beginnings of Imperialism

- Business leaders were eager to open up new markets for American goods across the Pacific in China and Japan.
- The question was how best to do this.
- Many European nations, they observed, were expanding their overseas markets by acquiring colonies in Africa and Asia.
- This new wave of colonization was inspired by a policy known as imperialism, or empire building.
- The colonies acquired by the imperialist powers supplied resources for their industries and served as markets for their manufactured goods.
- While some Americans were reluctant to join this rush for empire, many were happy to acquire islands that could serve as supply stations for U.S. ships in the Pacific.
- A protectorate—a nation protected and controlled by a stronger nation.
Summary

During the 1800s, U.S. foreign policy was guided by two goals. The first was to keep the United States free of foreign alliances and out of foreign conflicts. The second was to expand the United States across the North American continent. As Americans began to look outward in the late 1800s, they debated the nation's proper role in world affairs.

Realism and idealism U.S. foreign policy is generally a blend of realism and idealism. With realism, the focus is on practical concerns and national self-interest. With idealism, the focus is on moral values and the spread of American ideals.

Neutrality and unilateralism Following the advice given by Washington in his Farewell Address, the United States tried to stay neutral in foreign wars and avoid alliances with other countries. The War of 1812 was fought in part to defend American rights as a neutral nation.

The Monroe Doctrine The Monroe Doctrine warned European powers that the United States would view efforts to establish colonies in the Americas or interfere with new Latin American republics as hostile to its interests.

Continental expansion Following a policy of expansion through diplomacy, the United States acquired the Louisiana Territory, Florida, Oregon Territory, and Alaska. By winning the Mexican War, it gained vast lands in the Southwest.

Overseas expansion In the late 1800s, the United States began to look overseas for new territory and influence. At the same time, Americans began to debate the role and value of overseas expansion.