AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY OVERVIEW

◼ TEXT SUMMARY

For its first 150 years, U.S. foreign policy was based on isolationism. In 1823 the Monroe Doctrine stated that the United States would keep itself out of European affairs as well as that European nations should stay out of the affairs of North and South America.

THE BIG IDEA

Although the United States originally followed an isolationist policy, it later became a leader in world affairs.

The United States was active in the Western Hemisphere, however. In the 1800s it began expanding its territory. By winning the Spanish-American War in 1898, the United States gained colonial territories and began to emerge as a world power.

In the early 1900s, the United States began forming more international relationships, such as that with China. World War II brought a final end to U.S. isolationism. Most nations at that point turned to the principle of **collective security,** by which they agreed to act together against any nation that threatened the peace. The United States also took up a policy of **deterrence**—building military strength to discourage attack. This policy began during the **cold war**—more than 40 years

of hostile relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

During the cold war, the United States supported a policy of **containment,** which said that if communism could be contained within its existing boundaries, it would collapse under the weight of its internal weaknesses. As the United States withdrew from the Vietnam War, it began a policy of **détente**—"a relaxation of tensions"—that improved relations with the Soviet Union and China.

The end of the cold war began when Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union. U.S.-Soviet relations had improved significantly by the time the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. Since then, some key events shaping U.S. foreign policy have occurred in the Middle East.
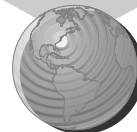
◼ GRAPHIC SUMMARY: *The Changing Course of U.S. Foreign Policy*

Isolationist

- Territorial expansion helps establish the United States as a world power.
- World War II ends isolationism and encourages a policy of collective security.
- The cold war brings about the policies of deterrence, containment, and finally détente.

World Leader

Certain events and policies have changed the United States from an isolationist nation into a leader in world events.

◼ REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was the goal of deterrence?

2. Diagram Skills What was the effect of U.S. territorial expansion?