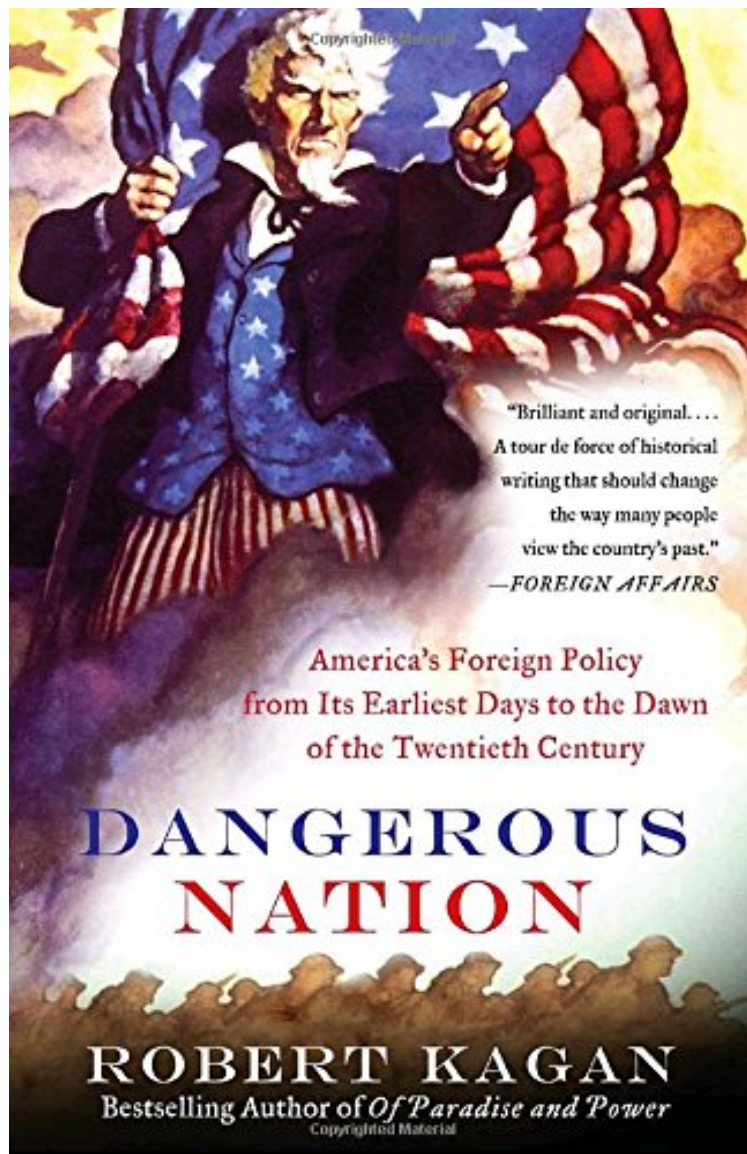


(Free read ebook) Dangerous Nation: America's Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century

Dangerous Nation: America's Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century

Robert Kagan

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Robert Kagan : Dangerous Nation: America's Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dangerous Nation: America's Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Sweeping, Iconoclastic History of American Foreign Policy By Joshua Rosenblum
Sweeping, Iconoclastic History of American Foreign Policy In "Dangerous Nation," historian Robert Kagan delivers up a sweeping, and somewhat iconoclastic, history of American foreign policy from before the Founding right up to the outbreak of the Spanish American War. (This is the first, in a two-volume set. The second volume presumably covering the Spanish American War to the present day.) Many histories of U.S. Foreign policy have been written. Where Kagan does an invaluable service is in providing contrary evidence to the now standard claim that the United States was, for the first 150 years, an essentially isolationist nation removed from world affairs. This was never the case, unless one were to conclude that America's interactions with European nations and new Latin American republics during our continental expansion were somehow "domestic" policy. Kagan also does an excellent job of demolishing the myth that idealism in U.S. Foreign policy is some sort of new idea that began with the neo-conservative "takeover" of the Bush administration. In fact, for good or for ill, U.S. foreign policy has always been largely, perhaps even primarily motivated by concern for the spread of our republican political system and the universalist principles concerning Liberty set forth in the Declaration of Independence. This often came at the expense of more prosaic concerns to the chagrin and utter confusion of the European powers with which we dueled throughout the 19th century. Kagan maintains that the driving force behind much of U.S. foreign policy throughout the early to mid-19th century was concerned with checking the forces of reaction in Europe, as absolutist monarchs, horrified by the spread of republicanism, consolidated their power and sought to expand their influence in the new world. To the extent that the U.S. did maintain a hands off approach to foreign policy in the early to mid 19th century, Kagan argues this was largely due to the domestic political question of slavery. It has become fashionable for the public to dismiss slavery as a secondary cause of the civil war in favor of other material issues (northern desire to economically dominate the south, federalism/state's rights, etc.) Nothing could be farther from the case. Throughout the 19th century, slavery was *the* dominant issue leading up to the Civil War. Kagan provides important insight into how the slavery question deformed every important political decision during that time period, both in foreign and domestic policy. To some extent, the U.S. did curtail its pursuit of the expansion of the "American System" because the dominant political culture of the South feared a stronger federal government that could limit and eventually abolish slavery. Although the South did favor expansion into the Caribbean or Mexico in order to create a "slave empire," for the most part, Southern fears of the "American System" (in which, they realized, lay the seeds of the destruction of their way of life) worked to block any move away from the status quo. Northerners blocked expansion into Cuba and Santa Domingo because they feared the expansion of slavery. Southerners blocked settlement on the issues of Oregon, California and the Nebraska territories for the opposite reasons. Texas became an independent republic, not because they didn't want to join the Union, but rather because the Union couldn't figure out how to assimilate it. Settlement of even the original Louisiana purchase was fraught with peril because every question that arose had to be answered in the light of the one issue no one could solve. For the insights on the slavery issue alone and how it deformed American politics from 1820 to 1860, "Dangerous Nation" is worth reading. But more so readers will enjoy the large scope of Kagan's work and, more importantly, gain a critical understanding of just how Americans' view of themselves in the world (as the main proponents of republicanism and Liberty, the "...last, best hope of Man.") has influenced our relations with the outside world from the very beginning of the Republic.

7 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A very different review of U.S. foreign policy By Shawn S. Sullivan
Dangerous Nation, by Robert Kagan, has a brilliant premise, namely that, rightly or wrongly, the United States has always had an expansionist policy - in spite of our own belief that we are essentially isolationists, or even have been so at times. Kagan sums it up best.

"Americans have cherished an image of themselves as by nature inward-looking and aloof, only sporadically and spasmodically venturing forth into the world. This self image survives, despite four hundred years of steady expansion and an every-deepening involvement in world affairs, and despite innumerable wars, interventions, and prolonged fate. Even as the United States has risen to a position of global hegemony, expanding its reach and purview and involvement across the continent and then across the oceans, Americans still believe their nation's natural tendencies are toward passivity, indifference, and insularity. (But Americans) have not anticipated, therefore, the way their natural expansiveness could provoke reactions, and sometimes violent reactions, against them." Kagan makes some great points about U.S. expansion despite our national belief of the opposite. His writing in this volume (which ends at the Spanish-American War, with a second to follow on the 20th Century) is erudite. Often, however, the reader is led astray and wonders where the author is going - and the answer is really nowhere, simply making sometimes quite long winded comments that are off message. In essence, Kagan is a brilliant thinker, has a very sustainable premise but is only an adequate writer. A book for those highly interested in a fairly radical view of American foreign policy, over a long period of time.

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. spellbinding By Robert W. Smith
Robert Kagan's book, "Dangerous Nation" is a superbly written re-interpretation of American (Foreign) Policy from the earliest days of our colonial mindset through the 20th century. I found this to be a true page turner. Kagan appears to back up his revisionist tendencies with facts of the day. Certainly, Kagan has had the benefit of 100 + years of history from which he was able to use to reformulate much of American foreign policy history, most accurately and with astute clarity. I cannot wait for Kagan to write a second book on US foreign policy during the 20th century and, perhaps even a third

book looking at the first 15 years of the 21st century. Trained as a journalist, he writes in a superb style. It is full of mesmerizing detail. If I were to change things about the book, I would - include a chapter on the development of thought (e.g., Locke, Hume, Magna Charta, British revolution of 1689 that contributed to the empowering of individualistic tendencies of Americans in the 18th century and beyond; I'd focus in greater detail on the events to which the USA responded / intervened with perspectives of other individuals and nations; while slavery clearly shaped foreign policies tremendously, the focus ought to have always been kept on the effects of it upon US foreign policies - he gets a little tangential on this topic which, in itself, merits scores of books to be written about it properly). Once in a while, Kagan seems to ramble. In a book in which he presents probably 16,000 different facts or thoughts, I found about 10 repetitions and very few minor errors. Overall, this is an outstanding book that comes highly recommended. I give Kagan an A+ for this work, reserved for only the finest books that I've read!

Most Americans believe the United States had been an isolationist power until the twentieth century. This is wrong. In a riveting and brilliantly revisionist work of history, Robert Kagan, bestselling author of *Of Paradise and Power*, shows how Americans have in fact steadily been increasing their global power and influence from the beginning. Driven by commercial, territorial, and idealistic ambitions, the United States has always perceived itself, and been seen by other nations, as an international force. This is a book of great importance to our understanding of our nation's history and its role in the global community.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . One of America's great myths, says Kagan, is that the U.S. has always been isolationist, only rarely flexing its muscles beyond its borders. Not so: in the first half of a two-volume study of American foreign policy, Washington Post columnist and bestselling author Kagan (*Of Paradise and Power*) argues that even in the colonial era Americans restlessly pushed westward. At every turn, Kagan shows how a policy of aggressive expansion was inextricably linked with liberal democracy. Political leaders of the early republic developed expansionist policies in part because they worried that if they didn't respond to their clamoring constituents farmers who wanted access to western land, for example the people might rebel or secede. Also provocative is Kagan's reading of the Civil War as America's "first experiment in ideological conquest" and nation building in conquered territory. He then follows American expansion through the 19th century, as the U.S. increased its dominance in the western hemisphere and sought, in President Garfield's phrase, to become "the arbiter" of the Pacific. Kagan may overstate the extent to which contemporary Americans imagine U.S. history to be thoroughly isolationist; it's a straw man that this powerfully persuasive, sophisticated book hardly needs. 75,000 first printing. (Oct. 12) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Kagan's last book, *Of Paradise and Power* (2003), caused a stir by arguing, with eloquence and historical rigor, that Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus. His latest, the first of a two-volume treatise on the history of American foreign policy, is a forceful, sophisticated challenge to the idea that isolationism is America's heritage. From its first stirrings, Kagan argues, America has always been an expansionist power, fueled by desire for land and a perceived need to ensure internal stability by engaging itself abroad. Here, he celebrates the long nineteenth century, which saw America transformed from a vulnerable, spirited underdog to a muscular contender capable of taking down a major European power (Spain). The Civil War was a key turning point, the first expression of an ideological foreign policy aimed at regime change and reconstruction. Premised on a profound exuberance for America as a force of creative destruction-- a geopolitical Shiva the Destroyer--and clearly intended to reinvigorate support for aggressive foreign policy in the twenty-first century, this book will surely prompt debate. Kagan's polished and assertive prose likewise resembles a force of nature, and will ensure broad readership. Brendan Driscoll Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Brilliant and original. . . . A tour de force of historical writing that should change the way many people view the country's past. . . a landmark. Foreign Affairs The most important reassessment of early United States foreign policy to appear in over half a century. Compellingly written and provocatively argued, it goes far toward explaining -- to the world but also to ourselves -- who we Americans are today, and where we may be going. John Lewis Gaddis, author of *The Cold War* A first-rate work of history, based on prodigious reading and enlivened by a powerful prose style. . . . Helps bring long-dead diplomatic history to life. The Economist Provocative and deeply absorbing. . . . [Kagan] shows how America was always a player, and often a ruthless one, in the great game of nations. The New York Times Book