

The United States and International Crises

From the Cold War to 9/11

WORKSHEETS

How do the international crises involving the United States from the Cold War to September 11, 2001, reflect the evolution of the American power in the world?

LESSON 1 – The United States as a Superpower (1945–1960s)

Watch the video “The Cols War in 5 minutes” : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhOz5I3y93k>

1. **Think–Pair–Share:**

→ What makes a country a *superpower*? (3 criteria)

2. **Timeline:**

1. Match each date with the correct historical event:

→ 1973	→ Invasion of Iraq
→ 2003	→ Tet Offensive shocks US public opinion
→ 1968	→ Geneva Accords divide Vietnam in two
→ 1954	→ September 11 terrorist attacks in the US
→ 1964	→ US Congress passes the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
→ 2001	→ US signs Paris Peace Accords and withdraws troops from Vietnam

2. Build a timeline of major U.S. crises (Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, 9/11).

3. **Oral summary:**

→ Present one crisis in 2 minutes: *What happened? Why was it important?*

LESSON 2 – The Vietnam War: A Challenge to American Power (1964–1975)

Lyndon B. Johnson, *Remarks in Memorial Hall, Akron University*, October 21, 1964

(<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-memorial-hall-akron-university>)

In Asia we face an ambitious and aggressive China, but we have the will and we have the strength to help our Asian friends resist that ambition. Sometimes our folks get a little impatient. Sometimes they rattle their rockets some, and they bluff about their bombs. But we are not about to send American boys 9 or 10,000 miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves. [...]

We have been doing that for 10 long years under three Presidents. We have now some 18,000 men in Viet-Nam, officers and men, advising, counseling, leading them. We have a good deal of material that we have sent there, very costly to our taxpayers each month. The reports that come in are gloomy from day to day.

But we have a choice. We can seek a wider war. China is there on the border with 700 million men, with over 200 million in their army. And we could get tied down in a land war in Asia very quickly if we sought to throw our weight around. Or we could retreat and pull out and say "Goodbye" to the rest of the world, that we are going to live on our own shores, and we would let Asia go to other people. [...]

We are going to continue to try to make these people more effective and more efficient, and do our best to resolve that situation where the aggressors will leave their neighbors alone, and they will finally learn to live together in peace as they have in other parts of the world. [...]

Napalm Girl photo (Nick Ut, 1972)



“Ride of the Valkyries” helicopter attack sequence : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZ_zNUm8fM
Apocalypse Now, directed by Francis Ford Coppola, 1979.

Each group studies one document:

1. **Group A:** Political document
2. **Group B:** Media document
3. **Group C:** Cinematographic document

Step 1 – Basic Identification

Information	Your notes (in English)
Kind of document ?	
Author/source ?	
Date / context ?	
Main topic ?	

Step 2 – Description

Guiding questions	Your notes (in English)
What elements, actions, or words are presented?	
Who are the main characters or figures?	
What emotions or atmosphere can you feel?	
What historical situation is shown or described?	

Step 3 – Interpretation

Guiding questions	Your notes (in English)
What is the author's / creator's purpose?	
What opinion or criticism is expressed?	
What symbols or key words show this message?	
How does this document reflect the U.S. position or doubts during the Vietnam War?	

Step 4 – Link with U.S. Power and Society

Question	Your ideas (in English)
How does this document challenge the idea of American power?	
Does it show internal divisions in the U.S.? (between government, people, media...)	
How does it affect the image of the U.S. abroad?	

Step 5 – Personal Reaction

(Prepare to present your conclusions orally to the class.)

Guiding prompts	Notes / Key sentences
What did you learn from this document?	
What sentence best summarizes its meaning?	
One word or expression that represents the document's message:	
Personal opinion: <i>Do you think this document was powerful or influential? Why?</i>	

Useful Vocabulary for your Presentation

Function	Expressions
Description	"The document shows / presents / illustrates..."
Interpretation	"It suggests that / It denounces / It questions the idea of..."
Connection	"This document is linked to the idea that..." / "It shows how the U.S. was challenged..."
Reaction	"In my opinion / I was surprised by / I found that..."

Step 6 - Debate

Was the Vietnam War a military or moral defeat for the United States?

LESSON 3 – The Civil Rights Movement and the American Model (1954–1968)

Speech extract: Martin Luther King Jr., “I Have a Dream” (1963)

Let us not wallow in the valley of despair, I say to you today, my friends.
So even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

(source: National Archives)

Photograph, Civil Rights March on Washington, DC, August 28, 1963 . Miscellaneous Subjects, Staff and Stringer Photographs

National Archives, Records of the U.S. Information Agency, Record Group 306 (National Archives Identifier [542045](#))



Step 1 – Warm-up

Brainstorm:

What do you know about the *Civil Rights Movement*?

List 3 names, 3 events, or 3 ideas.

Then read this quote on the board:

“How can America fight for freedom abroad while denying it at home?”

→ Discuss briefly in pairs.

Step 2 – Group analysis

Group analysis:

Each group works on one document.

Document	Guiding question
MLK speech	What is King’s vision of America and equality?
March photo	What does the image symbolize about U.S. democracy?

Step 3 – Oral restitution

Each group presents its document (2–3 minutes).

Then, answer the question:

How did the Civil Rights Movement expose contradictions in U.S. democracy?

Step 4 – Mini-writing or Oral task

Choose one of the following:

Writing option:

In about 100 words, explain how the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War both challenged the image of American power.

Oral option:

Imagine you are a journalist in 1968. Record a short radio commentary:

“How can the U.S. claim to lead the Free World while struggling for freedom at home?”

LESSON 4 – The End of the Cold War and the “Hyperpower” (1991–2001)

George H. W. Bush, *Address before a Joint Session of Congress on the Persian Gulf Crisis*, September 11, 1990. (<https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/2217>)

We stand today at a unique and extraordinary moment. The crisis in the Persian Gulf, as grave as it is, also offers a rare opportunity to move toward an historic period of cooperation. Out of these troubled times, our fifth objective -- a new world order -- can emerge: a new era -- freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace. An era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony. A hundred generations have searched for this elusive path to peace, while a thousand wars raged across the span of human endeavor. Today that new world is struggling to be born, a world quite different from the one we've known. A world where the rule of law supplants the rule of the jungle. A world in which nations recognize the shared responsibility for freedom and justice. A world where the strong respect the rights of the weak. This is the vision that I shared with President Gorbachev in Helsinki. He and other leaders from Europe, the Gulf, and around the world understand that how we manage this crisis today could shape the future for generations to come.

Bill Clinton, Remarks on United States Foreign Policy in San Francisco, February 26, 1999
(<https://www.originalsources.com/Document.aspx?DocID=G56BPB1YABCQS9K&H=1>)

Over the last 6 years, we have been striving to renew those arrangements and to create new ones for the challenges of the next 50 years. We have made progress, but there is so very much more to do. We cannot assume today that globalization alone will wash away the forces of destruction at the dawn of the 21st century, any more than it did at the dawn of the 20th century. We cannot assume it will bring freedom and prosperity to ordinary citizens around the world who long for them. We cannot assume it will avoid environmental and public health disasters. We cannot assume that because we are now secure, we Americans do not need military strength or alliances or that because we are prosperous, we are not vulnerable to financial turmoil half a world away.

The world we want to leave our children and grandchildren requires us to make the right choices, and some of them will be difficult. America has always risen to great causes, yet we have a tendency, still, to believe that we can go back to minding our own business when we're done. Today we must embrace the inexorable logic of globalization, that everything, from the strength of our economy to the safety of our cities to the health of our people, depends on events not only within our borders but half a world away. We must see the opportunities and the dangers of the interdependent world in which we are clearly fated to live.

There is still the potential for major regional wars that would threaten our security. The arms race between India and Pakistan reminds us that the next big war could still be nuclear. There is a risk that our former adversaries will not succeed in their transitions to freedom and free markets. There is a danger that deadly weapons will fall into the hands of a terrorist group or an outlaw nation and that those weapons could be chemical or biological. There is a danger of deadly alliances among terrorists, narcotraffickers, and organized criminal groups. There is a danger of global environmental crises and the spread of deadly diseases. There is a danger that global financial turmoil will undermine open markets, overwhelm open societies, and undercut our own prosperity.

1. **Document analysis:** highlight words linked to power and cooperation.
2. **Mindmap:** *From Superpower to Hyperpower.*
3. **Mini oral:** "Which aspect of U.S. power was most important in the 1990s?"

LESSON 5 – 9/11 and the “War on Terror”: A Turning Point

George W. Bush, **Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation, (Sept. 11, 2001)**
<https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html#:~:text=THE%20PRESIDENT%3A%20Good%20evening.,and%20dads%2C%20friends%20and%20neighbors.>

Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes, or in their offices; secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers; moms and dads, friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror.

The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing, have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger. These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed; our country is strong.

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Late Edition
New York, Monday, Sept. 11, 2001
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U.S. ATTACKED

HIJACKED JETS DESTROY TWIN TOWERS AND HIT PENTAGON IN DAY OF TERROR

A CREEPING HORROR

Buildings Burn and Fall as Onlookers Search for Elusive Safety

By N. KLEINFELDER
It kept getting worse.
The horror arrived in episodic bursts of chilling disbelief, signaled first by trembling floors, sharp raps, cracks and shudders. There was the actual unbearable realization of a gaping, flaming hole in first one of the twin towers, and then the same thing all over again in its twin. There was the horrific sight of bodies helplessly tumbling out, some of them in flames.
Finally, the mighty towers themselves were reduced to nothing. Dense plumes of smoke raced through the downtown streets, coursing between the buildings, shaped like tornadoes on their sides.
Every sound was cause for alarm. A plane roared overhead. Was it another one coming? No, it was lighter or jet. But was it friend or enemy? People scrambled for their homes; they didn't know where to go. Should they go north, south, east, west? They looked outside, gasping. People had been cut and each other. Some contemplated jumping into the river.
For those trying to find the very essence of the collapsing World Trade Center towers, the most heard thought of all finally dawned on them.
For several points-on-the-hour towers yesterday morning, people on Lower Manhattan knew that the unthinkable, the incomprehensible, the unthinkable, "I don't know where the game of hell took place, but it's got to be for the sake of the world," said John Mahoney, a security director for an interest firm in the trade center. "It's a combat veteran, Vietnam, and I never saw anything like this."
The first warnings were small ones. Blocks away, Jim Farmer, a film composer, was having breakfast at a small restaurant on 7th Avenue when he heard the sound of a jet. An odd-sound — too loud, it seemed, to be
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President Vows to Exact Punishment for 'Evil'

By SERGE SCHMEMMANN
Hijackers rammed jetliners into each of New York's World Trade Center towers yesterday, toppling both in a hellish storm of ash, glass, smoke and burning victims, while a third jetliner crashed into the Pentagon in Virginia. There was no official count, but President Bush said thousands had perished, and in the immediate aftermath the calamity was already being ranked the worst and most audacious terror attack in American history.
The attacks seemed carefully coordinated. The hijacked planes were spaced within an hour and 40 minutes. The first, *American Airlines Flight 11*, a Boeing 767 out of Boston for Los Angeles, crashed into the north tower at 8:46 a.m. Eighteen minutes later, *United Airlines Flight 175*, also headed from Boston to Los Angeles, plowed into the south tower.
Then an American Airlines Boeing 757, *Flight 77*, left Washington's Dulles International Airport bound for Los Angeles, but instead hit the western part of the Pentagon, the military headquarters where 24,000 people work, at 9:49 a.m. Finally, *United Airlines Flight 93*, a Boeing 737 flying from Newark to San Francisco, crashed near Pittsburgh, raising the possibility that its hijackers had failed in whatever their mission was.
There were indications that the hijackers on all four of the planes were armed with knives. Attorney General John Ashcroft told reporters in the evening that the suspects on *Flight 11* were armed that way. And Barbara Olson, a television commentator who was traveling on *American Flight 77*, managed to reach her husband, Solicitor General Theodore Olson, by cell phone and to tell him that the hijackers were armed with knives and a box cutter.
In all, 261 people perished in the four planes and several more were known dead elsewhere. Numerous firefighters, police officers and other rescue workers who responded to the initial disaster in Lower Manhattan were killed or injured when the buildings collapsed. Hundreds were treated for cuts, broken bones, burns and smoke inhalation.
But the real carnage was concealed for some by the twisted, smoking, ash-choked carcasses of the twin towers, in which thousands of people used to work on a weekday. The collapse of the towers caused another World Trade Center building to fall 7 hours later, and several
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A Somber Bush Says Terrorism Cannot Prevail

By ELIZABETH BENMILLER
with DAVID E. SANGER
WASHINGTON, Sept. 11 — President Bush vowed tonight to fight terrorism against those responsible for today's attacks on New York and Washington, declaring that he would "make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them."
"These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat, but they have failed," the president said in his first speech to the nation from the Oval Office. "Our country is strong. Terrorism acts can shake the foundation of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America."
His speech came after a day of trauma that served to define his presidency. Seeking to do more than calm the nation and declare his determination to exact retribution, he told a country reeling by repeated scenes of carnage that "these acts shivered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve."
Mr. Bush spoke only hours after returning from a night of meetings in Florida, as his Secret Service and military security teams moved him from Ft. Belvoir, where he woke up this morning reporting to press for his scheduled talk to troops in Louisiana and Nebraska before it was determined the attacks had probably ended and he could safely return to the capital.
It was a sign of the catastrophic
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Awaiting the Aftershocks

Washington and Nation Plunge Into Fight With Enemy Hard to Identify and Punish
By R.W. APPLE JR.
WASHINGTON, Sept. 11 — Toppling a devastating and astonishingly well-orchestrated attack on the World Trade Center towers in New York and on the Pentagon outside Washington plunged the nation into a struggle with an enemy that will be hard to identify with certainty and hard to punish with precision.
The whole nation — to a degree the whole world — shows an hijacked plane plunging into buildings that symbolize the financial and military might of the United States. The sense of security and self-confidence that Americans take in their homeland suffered a grievous blow, from which recovery will be slow. The aftershocks will be nearly as bad, as hundreds and possibly thousands of people discover that friends or relatives died nearby, fiery deaths.
Some of chaos and destruction in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, with smoke and debris blowing out the sun, were caused by hijacked buses and workplanes across the nation. Echoing crashes in Boston, where a jetliner struck on Pearl Harbor as the *George E. Pataki* of New York, a Republican, spoke of "an incredible outrage" and Senator Charles E. Schumer of New York, a Democrat, spoke of "a disaster attack."
But more work was inadequate vessels to contain the sense of shock and horror that people felt.
As Washington struggled to regain
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CRISIS CAFÉ

Goal: Express different viewpoints about major U.S. crises (Vietnam or 9/11).

Step 1 – Role cards (distributed by the teacher):

- U.S. President
- Soldier or veteran
- Civilian or protester
- Journalist
- Student or historian

Each student prepares 3–4 sentences about their opinion on the crisis, using the frame:

“From my point of view... / I believe that... / This crisis showed that...”

Step 2 – Café discussions:

Students rotate every 7 minutes to a new table with a new “crisis” and meet other roles.

Step 3 – Reporting back:

Each group summarizes the main ideas discussed

LESSON 6 – Comparing the Two Crises: From Vietnam to 9/11

PRESS ROOM SIMULATION – “The Day After 9/11”

Step 1 – Press groups:

Each group represents a different newspaper:

- *The New York Times*
- *The Washington Post*
- *The Guardian*
- *Le Monde (International Edition)*

Step 2 – Your task:

Choose your edition: *The Vietnam Years (1970)* OR *Post-9/11 (2001)*, including:

- A main headline (10–12 words)
- A short article (60–80 words)
- A photo or drawing
- A short *editorial quote* expressing opinion or emotion

Step 3 – Oral presentation (3–4 min per group):

Each group presents its front page to the class:

Comparative conclusion

Criteria	Vietnam War	9/11 & War on Terror
Context		
Nature of the crisis		
U.S. reaction		
Global perception		
Consequences on power		

LESSONS 7-8 – Oral Exam Practice (Type Bac)

Activities

1. **Simulation:** 20 minutes prep + 10 minutes oral per pair.
2. **Feedback:** peers note pronunciation, clarity, vocabulary, and structure.
3. **Oral coaching:** repeat and improve your introduction or conclusion using connectors.

Useful sentences

Introduce	"This document deals with..." / "It was published in..."
Describe	"It shows..." / "In the foreground..." / "The main idea is..."
Analyze	"It suggests that..." / "It questions the idea of..."
Conclude	"To conclude, this crisis illustrates the evolution of U.S. power."

WORD BOXES

LESSON 1 – The United States as a Superpower (1945–1960s)

Word	Example in context
superpower	The U.S. and the USSR were rival superpowers.
containment	U.S. policy aimed to contain communism.
Cold War	A period of ideological and political tension.
arms race	The arms race increased fear of nuclear war.
deterrence	Nuclear deterrence prevented direct conflict.
alliance	NATO was a Western military alliance.
propaganda	Both sides used propaganda to influence people.
influence	The U.S. used culture and media to spread influence.
foreign policy	U.S. foreign policy focused on global leadership.

LESSON 2 – The Vietnam War: A Challenge to American Power (1964–1975)

Word	Example in context
draft	Many young men protested against the draft.
protest movement	Students led massive protest movements.
to withdraw	The U.S. withdrew from Vietnam in 1973.
casualties	The war caused heavy casualties on both sides.
defeat	It was seen as a moral and political defeat.
credibility	The war damaged America’s global credibility.
guerrilla warfare	The Viet Cong used guerrilla tactics.
public opinion	Public opinion turned against the war.
trauma	Vietnam left a deep trauma in American society.

LESSON 3 – The Civil Rights Movement and the American Model (1954–1968)

Word	Example in context
segregation	Racial segregation existed in the South.
civil rights	The movement fought for civil rights.
equality	They demanded legal and social equality.
discrimination	Laws were passed to end discrimination.
to march / a march	The March on Washington gathered 250,000 people.
to protest	They protested peacefully for justice.
speech	Martin Luther King gave his famous speech in 1963.
to challenge	The movement challenged America’s moral image.

LESSON 4 – The End of the Cold War and the “Hyperpower” (1991–2001)

Word	Example in context
hyperpower	After 1991, the U.S. became the only hyperpower.
globalization	Globalization spread American influence.
cooperation	Bush called for international cooperation.
multilateralism	Clinton promoted multilateral action.
unilateralism	Sometimes the U.S. acted alone.
diplomacy	Diplomacy was used to build alliances.
leadership	The U.S. assumed world leadership after 1991.
human rights	The U.S. promoted human rights abroad.

LESSON 5 – 9/11 and the “War on Terror”: A Turning Point

Word	Example in context
turning point	9/11 was a turning point in U.S. history.
continuity	There are continuities in U.S. foreign policy.
hard power	The U.S. used hard power in both wars.
soft power	Culture and diplomacy represent soft power.
legitimacy	Some interventions were criticized as illegitimate.
national interest	The U.S. acts to defend its national interests.
public opinion	Public opinion plays a crucial role.
ideology	Each war reflected an ideological struggle.
image abroad	The crises shaped America’s image in the world.