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# Mission Failure: America And The World In The Post-Cold War Era

**MICHAEL  
MANDELBAUM**



## **MISSION FAILURE**

America and the World in  
the Post-Cold War Era

Read by Bill Thatcher | Unabridged



## Synopsis

In *Mission Failure*, Michael Mandelbaum, one of America's leading foreign policy thinkers, provides an original, provocative, and definitive account of the ambitious but deeply flawed post-Cold War efforts to promote American values and American institutions throughout the world. In the decades before the Cold War ended, the United States used its military power to defend against threats to important American international interests or to the American homeland itself. When the Cold War concluded, however, it embarked on military interventions in places where American interests were not at stake. Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo had no strategic or economic importance for the United States, yet the US intervened in all of them for purely humanitarian reasons. Each such intervention led to efforts to transform the local political and economic systems. The invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq turned into similar missions of transformation. None of them achieved its aims. *Mission Failure* describes and explains how such missions came to be central to America's post-Cold War foreign policy, even in relations with China and Russia in the early 1990s and in American diplomacy in the Middle East, and how they all failed. Mandelbaum shows how American efforts to bring peace, national unity, democracy, and free-market economies to poor, disorderly countries ran afoul of ethnic and sectarian loyalties and hatreds as well as foundered on the absence of the historical experiences and political habits, skills, and values that Western institutions require. The history of American foreign policy in the years after the fall of the Berlin Wall is, he writes, "the story of good, sometimes noble, and thoroughly American intentions coming up against the deeply embedded, often harsh, and profoundly un-American realities of places far from the United States. In this encounter the realities prevailed."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When it comes to providing wise, trenchant critiques of American statecraft, Michael Mandelbaum has no equal. Read *Mission Failure*, and you'll understand why he has come to be regarded as the country's foremost authority on American foreign policy. This is not a partisan account, a point worth making since we are now in our silly season of mudslinging and bombast. Republican and Democratic administrations alike take their lumps in this brilliant, evenhanded, and beautifully written assessment of America's role in the post-Cold War world.

I'm not an historian, actually little more than an average reader, and I've never before submitted a review through , but I simply must say something about the importance of this book. I've found so much vital background information in this cogent presentation. I'm pleased to have read it at this time because of the nonpartisan clarification it offers on critical issues before us in this election year. I'm hoping many more people will read this before making final assessments of 2016 candidates and their wide-ranging statements on future foreign policy. Voter opinions must be based on facts and the facts are here for the taking. I consider this book one of the most valuable books I've read in a long time. It deserves wide readership.

An extraordinarily lucid, incisive, objective and authoritative book which expert and the general public will find enlightening and indispensable. Surely one of the best current events/history books in recent years.

The title says it all. America's post-Cold-War foreign policy has largely failed. Looking through the recent decades, despite pockets of successes, American influence in the world has created lots of negative perceptions more than ever. In spite of the reputation of being the world's sole superpower, there are limits to what America can do to or for other nation states. Whether it is military interventions or economic embargoes, one wonders if America has gone far beyond what it is called to do. Has the country over-exerted itself in its foreign policy? Has it interfered in the domestic politics and policies of countries of lesser economic strength? Has it overstepped its moral or legal boundaries to what it needs to do? In a nutshell, for a post-Cold-War era, how can a nation that

claims to want to do good for the world ends up creating more problems instead? These and many more questions are examined and answered in a very insightful book about American foreign policy after the Cold War, and especially after September 11. The author looks back at the history of American foreign policy and lists four distinct periods. Period 1 (1789-1889): Inward focus; American Civil War (1861-1865) Period 2 (1898-1945): Outward focus Period 3 (1945-1992): WWII aftermath and the Cold War Period 4 (1993-2014): America's Post-Cold-War era This book is about Period 4, and how America's foreign policy had shifted: From Controlling external behaviour of other countries to Internal Governance From containment to interference From Military Defense to Ideology Expansion From Self-Interest to Humanitarian From political practices to political values (eg human rights) Not everything have changed. The US is still largely driven by its DNA of religious heritage and piety. Parroting GK Chesterton's observation of the US as "a country with the soul of a church," America is exporting its values (gospel) like a messenger (missionary). The failure is also dramatic. Afghanistan and Iraq are not any more tolerant than before. The Middle East is far from being peaceful. The world is not necessarily a safer place now. It is one thing for America to flourish in its brand of democracy and economic strategies. It is yet another to export them to other countries. In fact, many countries that had attempted to emulate America had also failed miserably. In general, I find this book rather depressing about US foreign policies. There are more bad news than anything else. Sometimes, it appears as if that whatever the US touches will turn rotten. I believe that is not the intent of Mandelbaum. This book is essentially his personal view and suggestion of the mis-steps done by the existing and past few US administrations in the hope that the next President and US foreign policy will be better. With the US elections to be held toward the end of 2016, this book may probably be a good resource to learn, to adapt, and hopefully, turn for the better. The comparison between British foreign policy and US foreign policy is one of the best I have read. Rating: 4.25 stars of 5. conrade This book is provided to me courtesy of Oxford University Press and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. All opinions offered above are mine unless otherwise stated or implied.

Michael Mandelbaum has written a well thought out book on the failure of American interventions during the presidencies of Bush I, Clinton, Bush II and Obama which commenced after the end of the Cold War. In summary, Mandelbaum states that all of the failed interventions in the Balkans, Somalia, the Middle East and Afghanistan has been the result of people who NEVER had a understanding of democratic government and that they adhered to clannish leadership and cultures that are not conducive to governmental systems that worked well in the West. Mandelbaum did well

to be non-partisan in his criticism of administrations of both parties. He called out Bill Clinton for his interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo which were constitutional questionable and the positive results of his actions were minimal at best. Those parts of the world still have high unemployment and corrupt governments. Bush II of course made his invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan go beyond what was warranted in their initial intentions. Instead of merely ousting the governments of Saddam Hussein and the Taliban, Bush engaged in nation-building which resulted in utter failure and a lost to our country of trillions of dollars. Obama also fell into the trap of humanitarian intervention by ousting Ghadaffi in Libya on the grounds that civilians were going to be slaughtered which turned out not to be true. In fact, the fiasco has led to terror being spread into Mali and weapons being shipped to ISIS forces in Syria. Mandelbaum also brought up the rise of China and the resurgence of Russia as a rejuvenated power player. Clinton's unwise expansion of NATO alarmed the Russians to the point that their people grew suspicious of the West with their eastward push. China with their economic power is now gaining influence in the South China Sea which has put nations like the Philippines and Indonesia on alert. With the economic crisis of 2008, the United States' hegemony in dictating world affairs came to an end in Mandelbaum's opinion. The author also discusses the Israel-Arab conflict and it seemed that he took the Israelis side a bit too much. Nonetheless, this is a very important book that tells the stone cold fact that America cannot save the world any longer and in fact should not do so. Four Stars..

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