

History chapter 2

The American hyperpower since 1991.

Introduction – 1989/1991= a major turning point.

Collapse of communism in Europe + collapse of the USSR + end of the Cold War. Positive role of M. Gorbachev. **Causes**: economic problems (state controlled economy) + lack of democracy (military coup in 1991) + rise of nationalities + failure of all reforms.

1989: end of communism in Europe + end of the Cold War (cf. Malta Summit between M. Gorbachev and R. Reagan)

1991: end of the USSR -> CIS

1. New prospects for peace in the early 1990s.

1 a. A new geopolitical balance of power/ Towards a New World Order



A weak but power-assertive post Communist Russia (since 1991): transition towards a free market economy and a more liberal democratic regime under B. Yeltsin (1991-1999). A new era of Detente (disarmament talks cf START 1). A huge potential + a key role in the UN (as a permanent member of the Security Council) + main influence on the CIS community + a military power (cf. war in Chechnya)

A new European “soft power” on the world stage. Cf EU driving forces since 1992 (new institutions, enlargement, CFSP, + weaknesses -> European security relies on the NATO)



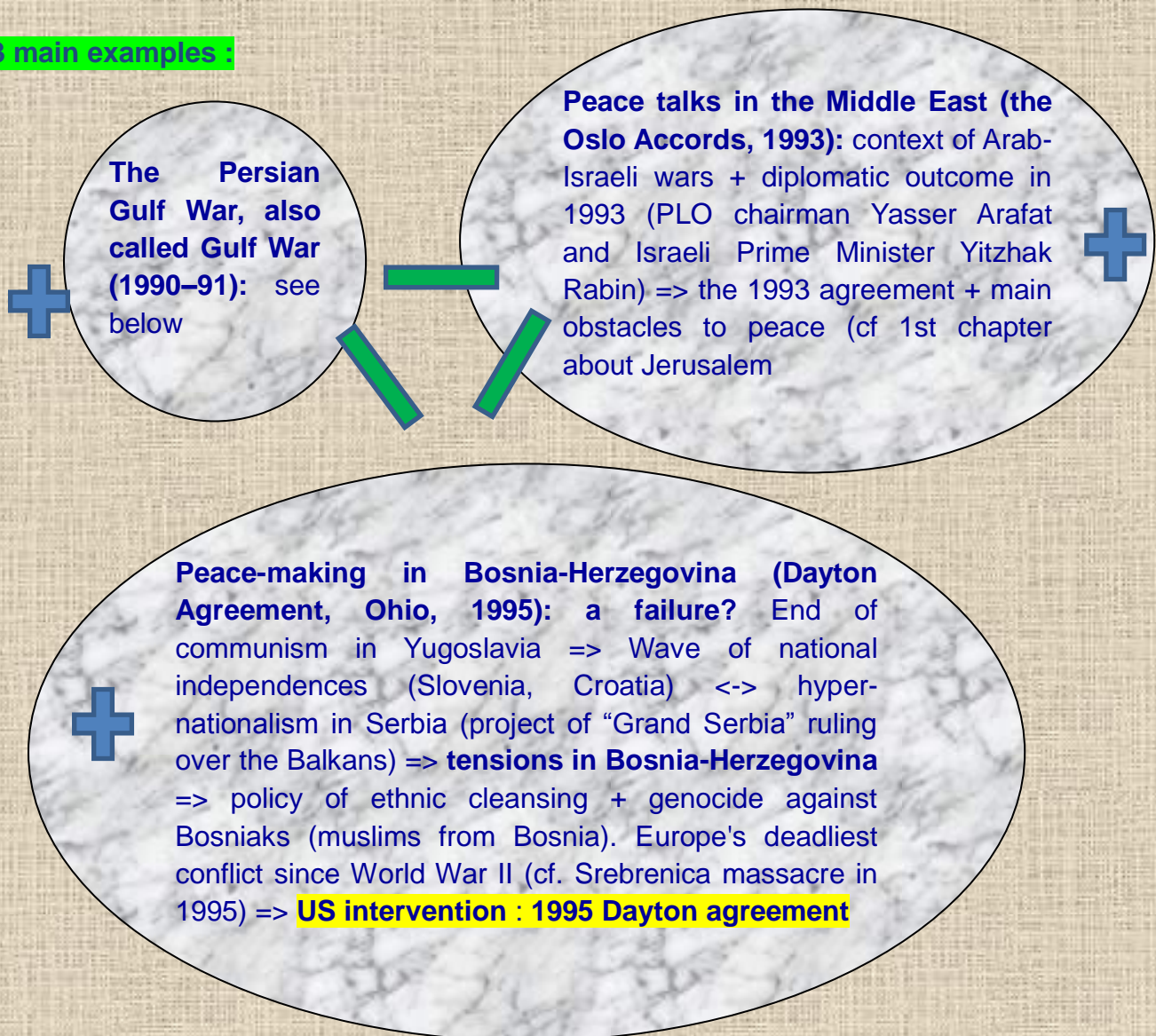
The UN: looking for a new role (since 1989). Organisation (Security Council) – the Blue Helmets as world peace- keeping forces – criticisms & limitations



The USA as the sole superpower/hyperpower (since 1991). Cf its role in globalisation (part 1 b): the US economic power - a major centre for international trade - an influential financial centre - A global decision-making centre - America is the world leader in manufacturing production - US agriculture is both modern and productive + military power => **a new leadership as the sole world's policeman. Multilateral options in order to enforce peace and international rules.**

1 b. American worldwide commitment to peace. = examples of the US commitment to peace!

3 main examples :



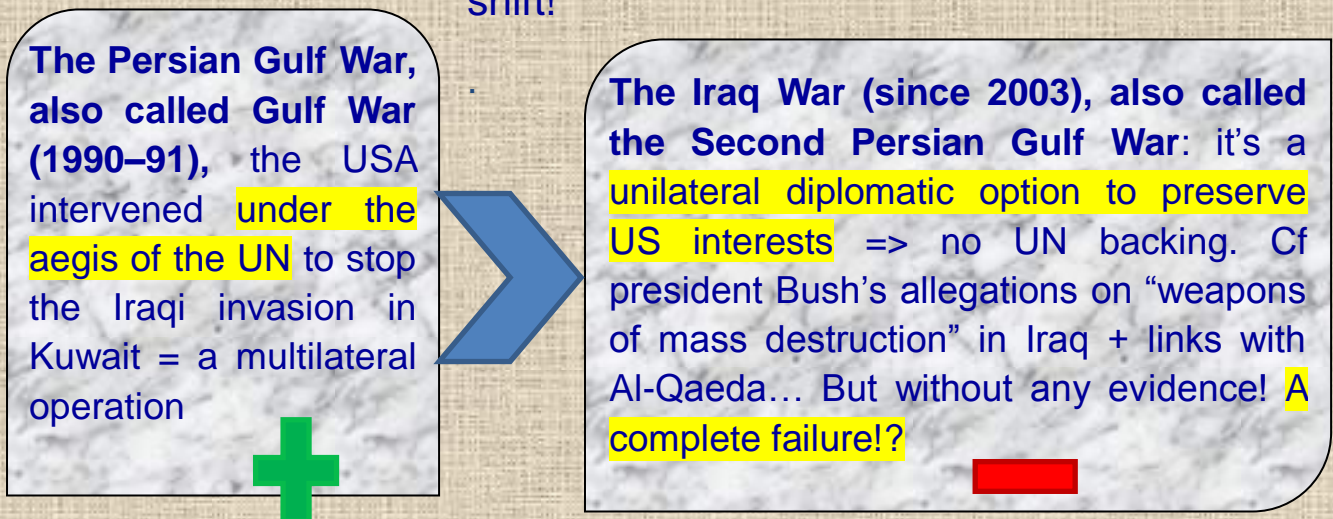
2 other minor examples: "coercitive diplomacy" in Haïti (1993-1994) + humanitarian intervention in Somalia (1992-1994)

Transition. Hopes for a peaceful international order quickly vanished, blown away by the multiplication of conflicts on a regional or national scale. The rise of nationalism, border tensions, or identity-based conflicts put an end to what seemed to be a universal desire for peace and democracy...

2. The USA as the “world’s policeman?” => a shift from multilateralism towards more unilateral options in the US Foreign Policy.

2a. Managing new conflicts in the Middle East: the power to make unilateral decisions

The Gulf Wars (1990-1991+ 2003-2012?): a good example of that shift!

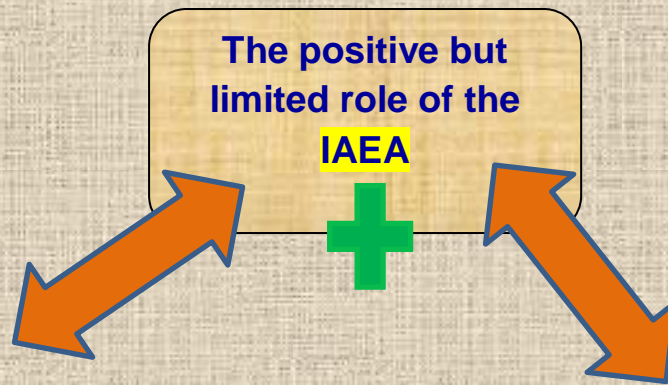


Palestine struggling for peace? Review the main obstacles to peace + insist on the strong alliance between the USA and Israel, mainly to promote US interests in the region (facing Syria or Iran). **The USA = unable to ensure compliance with the 1993 Oslo accords!**

2 c. Africa torn apart by civil wars: some examples of the limits encountered by the US diplomacy in the world (cf. Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan).

3. US limited power : new threats at the beginning of the new milenium.

3 a. The risk of the proliferation of nuclear weapons.



Iran seeking to build nuclear weapons => a major threat especially towards Israel, or countries where shiites make up large majorities (as in Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.)

North Korean nuclear threat: A fully nuclear North Korea could trigger an East Asian arms race, as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, for instance, consider whether to go nuclear as well.

3 b. The threat of Islamic terrorism.

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism: ideology (cf. sharia) - origins - geography - diversity (*Muslim Brothers* - *Salafists* - *Jihadist groups*)

Al-Qaeda: a worldwide terrorist threat:

- ✓ a terrorist network/haze
- ✓ links with the Talibans (in Afghanistan)

Conclusion. The 1990s revealed how difficult it would be to design a global structure of peace that was based on institutions and values shared by all the leading powers and capable of imposition upon the lesser ones. This post Cold War **“international disorder”** affected each continent, but particularly Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

