

As President Bush's term comes to a close, the United States has the world's largest economy and its most powerful military. Yet its global influence is in decline.

The United States emerged from the Cold War a solitary superpower whose political and economic leverage often enabled it to impose its will on others. Now, America usually needs to build alliances -- and often finds that other powers aren't willing to go along. In the 1990s, America exerted leadership in all the remote corners of the globe, from the southern cone of South America to Central Asia. Now, the United States has largely left the field in many regions, leaving others to step forward.

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