



# Modernity and Power: A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century

*Frank Ninkovich*

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**Modernity and Power: A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century** Frank Ninkovich *Modernity and Power* provides a fresh conceptual overview of twentieth-century United States foreign policy, from the Roosevelt and Taft administrations through the presidencies of Kennedy and Johnson. Beginning with Woodrow Wilson, American leaders gradually abandoned the idea of international relations as a game of geopolitical interplays, basing their diplomacy instead on a symbolic opposition between "world public opinion" and the forces of destruction and chaos. Frank Ninkovich provocatively links this policy shift to the rise of a distinctly modernist view of history.

To emphasize the central role of symbolism and ideological assumptions in twentieth-century American statesmanship, Ninkovich focuses on the domino theory—a theory that departed radically from classic principles of political realism by sanctioning intervention in world regions with few financial or geographic claims on the national interest. Ninkovich insightfully traces the development of this global strategy from its first appearance early in the century through the Vietnam war.

Throughout the book, Ninkovich draws on primary sources to recover the worldview of the policy makers. He carefully assesses the coherence of their views rather than judge their actions against "objective" realities. Offering a new alternative to realpolitic and economic explanations of foreign policy, *Modernity and Power* will change the way we think about the history of U.S. international relations.

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