

As humans, we have a natural tendency to see history as a massive bundle of big stories, events, and narratives. History is very diverse and everyone interprets it differently. Two key authors that create and show some of the most important arguments for interpreting United States history are Howard Zinn and John Faragher. Howard Zinn interprets United States history as being extremely chaotic and filled with conflict. Zinn also argues that nations are not communities or families, and that pretending they are only hides the deep-rooted problems within them. Zinn goes on to make the moral argument that historians should write history from the perspective of “victims” rather than “executioners”¹. Faragher believes that the United States is extremely strong and has been able to rise to such significance *because* of how diverse it is, yet he stays neutral as much as he can. Faragher leans towards Zinn when he writes that communities are more important than leaders and that they represent both harmony and conflict however Faragher also assents with Schweikart & Allen when he argues that American diversity is possible because everyone is committed to the founding documents which were written by leaders². Both of these authors' views of the United States are important in my opinion for the study of United States history. However, when compared to my narrative, it is in the middle of both authors, however other times my narrative does not match up with a key author because history is a messy slope and it is near impossible to follow the exact views as someone else. History is a mess and it has had many turning points that are both positive and negative. To illustrate this point, I will discuss my interpretation of United States history since 1865 using the history of the Supreme Court, the U.S. Press, and Foreign policy.

One of the biggest contributors in United States history is the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is a division in the judicial branch of the government with it being the final stop

¹ Robert Fuller, "Our Key Authors," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

² Robert Fuller, "Our Key Authors," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

for all court cases. “Established by the Constitution and the Judiciary Act of 1789,” The Supreme Court is largely responsible for impactful decisions made in this country in many ways, arguably both good and bad.³

Before we can dissect how the Supreme Court has changed the United States, we first have to know how it works and the people behind it. Supreme Court justices serve for life and go through a process of being nominated. First, the president has to select the justice and then the Senate has to approve of the justice. Afterwards, the Justices are sworn in for life. This process, in my opinion, leaves the opportunity for a lot of corruption or unfairness. For instance, many qualified Justices have been skipped over because of the President that has nominated them. This also allows for a president to pack the court full of people that support his agenda or a particular political party which can, and has, caused mass harm for the country. Another important point of the Supreme Court is the fact that there is no definite number of seats established. This allows for the option for presidents to pack the court. For instance, President Roosevelt attempted to pack the court and had 15 justices in the court in an effort to get the new deal passed; however, his attempt did not succeed. Overall, the supreme court is a vital structure in this country but leaves a lot of space for its power to be abused.⁴

The Supreme Court has had many lead justices which has helped dictate the decisions and how the court functions. This allowed for a lot of different outcomes over the years and allowed for a lot of different opinions to rain over the judicial branch. For instance, the first major court was the Chase Court which oversaw reconstruction and the impeachment of Andrew

³ Robert Fuller, "The Supreme Court since 1865," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

⁴ Robert Fuller, "The Supreme Court since 1865," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

Johnson. This period was both a political and societal turning point which solidified how the country started to reshape. After the Chase court, we had the Waite court which is most notable for getting rid of public forms of discrimination; however, it did not speak on the private forms of discrimination. Consequently, this allowed for many divides in the country which created issues throughout and allowed for an uprising to come to help reform the country in the future over civil rights. The Waite court is also notable for separation of church and state which helped shape many laws in today's world; a notable example of this is the debate about abortion. The next major court holding was the Fuller court. The Fuller court is responsible for "separate but equal." This is a step in the civil rights movement, but primarily didn't help change the country or any of its massive problems in social injustice. After the Fuller court, the White court started which essentially shot the workers class in the foot by rolling back workers rights and protections, causing many difficulties and strikes, but also helped shape all the entitled employees today. The next major player was Taft. Taft's court is notable for "Buck v. Bell (1927): The Court ruled 8-1 that the forced sterilization of the 'feeble minded' and unfit did not violate the Constitution". This allowed for the dog-eat-dog world to continue and helped strengthen the workforce in this country. However, this was achieved in some harsh ways which did not play out well in the years following. The next court was the Hughes court. This court was a defining moment because it had the first instance of court packing with FDR. Even with the efforts, it didn't pass but helped lay out a foundation of what can be achievable by future presidents. This played a role in current history because every election people are scared about presidents packing the court to support and overturn laws that the president sees fit. The next two in line were the Stone court and the Vinson court which made little to no decisions and therefore nothing important happened. The next important Court was the Warren Court. This was the most

liberal court in history today and has helped change some policies and laws and set precedent for many cases today. It did this through its most notable cases of “Brown v. Board of Education (1954): Overturned “separate but equal”, Engel v. Vitale (1962): Ended official school prayers, Heart of Atlanta Motel v. United States (1964): Banned racial discrimination in public accommodations like hotels, New York Times v. Sullivan (1964): Strengthened freedom of the press, Miranda v. Arizona (1966): Police must inform citizens of their rights, Loving v. Virginia (1967): Legalized interracial marriage in all states, and Brandenburg v. Ohio (1969): Protected free speech, even for the KKK”. All of these court cases have shaped many ways the law is interpreted and has made many social and quality of life changes that we still see in today’s society. Most notable for leaving abortion up to the mother in the Burger court. However, today, some states have reversed this case. It also left the question open for when does human life begin and when does it turn to murder. The next in line is the Rehnquist court which basically started to give the power to the states instead of the federal government and was a mostly conservative court. This has allowed for many states to come up with and change laws to their liking which has had some consequences but overall has allowed for a better present and hopefully a better future with so much reliance on the federal government. The last and most present court is the Roberts court. The Roberts court is most notable for extending freedom of speech to corporations and allowing same sex marriage. This has allowed for the LGBTQ+ movement to take form, legalizing marriage and making discrimination based on sexuality a crime. The corporations have not taken much advantage of free speech, however. Overall, all the court eras have allowed for the current state of the country and have given and taken many aspects in the right direction and the wrong direction.⁵

⁵ Robert Fuller, "The Supreme Court since 1865," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

The Press of the United States has been a powerful entity in American society for a major part of the United States. The press was started after the Civil War in 1865 and has had many different forms. For instance, newspapers, digital media, 24 hour news cycles etc... However, all of these changes have had many effects on politics and the psyche of the American people. Over the years the press has had many changes over its existence and many effects on people.

With the technological advances starting in the early 1900s, the media began to become more factual and not as opinion-based. This change occurred due to the technological advances that started in the early 1900s. The revolution started with the rise of the telegram, which allowed for communication and news to be more widespread and get to larger audiences. Then shortly after the rise of the telegram, the radio followed in its footsteps. In “1920, KDKA, Pittsburgh, the first radio station was produced⁶”. With radio exploding all over the country as a new household staple, news and information was able to be disseminated to the public freely. Also, with the radio becoming more popular, people were able to listen from their homes or anywhere the radio would receive the signals. All of this technology allowed for the U.S. press to get their messages out to more people in a more timely manner. Another invention that helped the grip of the U.S. press is the Television. The television took the United States by storm and ended up being in almost every household, even to this day. The U.S. press took this new technology and used it to show a more visual perspective on the news and allowed for viewers to be able to see what was occurring. An example of this is , “Following WWII, politicians had less control over reporting. (FDR compared to Nixon), 1960, Kennedy-Nixon presidential debate, and Graphic reporting on the Vietnam War fueled anti-war protests⁷”. This technology allowed the press to convey their

⁶ Robert Fuller, "The American Press since 1865," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

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images and their opinions all over the United States and helped them fuel their own interests and to help spread their opinions. This was used during the Watergate scandal, a scandal that ended up with President Nixon stepping down in office, and also used over election periods to help promote certain candidates.

News is still shown over television all these years later and is still one of the primary sources for information to the public. However, now news has its own stations and channels; even social media now serves as an outlet for news. These channels first started in the 1980s after “Deregulation allow(ed) FOX and CNN to join the ‘Big Three’. (CBS, ABC, and NBC)⁸”. These news sources have had a major impact on the citizens of the United States through the U.S. press with news being available almost any hour of the day. The “Big Three” use their platforms to get ongoing and current events out to the public, however these forms of press allow for opinions and agendas to be imbued within it as well. For instance, *Fox* is credited to be a far right wing network due to its takes on presidential debates and the biased information it gives out to the public. Overall, the television has helped the U.S. press increase its interconnectedness and also allowed for anything, and anyone, to reach the masses. Another form of media –perhaps the most prominent and influential– that has helped the U.S. press expand is the Internet. The Internet is connected to everyone in recent times and has allowed for the press to be available 24/7 on platforms that are not even intended to disseminate news. Everyone can write and post on the Internet, primarily through social media such as Reddit, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Forums, etc... This has allowed for everyone's opinion to be heard but has also hurt the spread of information through misinformation, fake news, and malicious news. When you give the power for everyone to give their opinion, it doesn't allow for the facts to be facts – or

⁸ Robert Fuller, "The American Press since 1865," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

rather, the line between personal belief and fact becomes blurred. Everyone can make up a fact or interpret a fact in their own way, even if subconsciously, like subliminal messaging. Overall, this has helped the U.S. press diversify and allow for everyone to be heard.

The United States attitude and execution of foreign policy has changed vastly over the years and is largely dependent on the president and the state of the world at the time. Foreign policy is described as one's objectives and activities in relation to its interactions with other states, unions, and other political entities, whether bilaterally or through multilateral platforms. Foreign policy is controlled by the president, the state department, the department of defense and the intelligence community in the United States. With all these changes in power over time, there have consequently been a lot of changes and incidents throughout the years.

The history of foreign policy since 1865 has taken many forms. However, before we dive into it, we should discuss who has the power and who is in control of the actions taken using foreign policy. The Constitution gives the President the power to carry out foreign policy negotiations and, with this, Congress and the Supreme court have some say in foreign policy through checks and balances. There are two main policy ideals in the United States Foreign Policy. These ideals are known as Unilateral Isolationism and Multilateral Internationalism⁹. With this in mind, let's talk about the history of Foreign Policy since 1865.

Foreign Policy in the United States started back during our fight for independence. The first instance was our alliance with the French to help defeat Great Britain to allow for this country to be the way it is today. This essentially started our country and thus, the United States Foreign Policy. Shortly thereafter, the Monroe Doctrine was passed in 1823, which added a tick to the Foreign Policy and allowed for the United States west to be claimed as their own and off

⁹ Robert Fuller, "U.S. Foreign Policy since 1865," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

limits to any foreign entity. With this, western expansion started and The Mexican-American War began. This war was triggered by the Monroe Doctrine and had mass casualties on both sides with the United States ultimately coming out on top. In the aftermath, The United States began to isolate itself from the rest of the world and started to become self-sufficient, allowing it to flourish. After the Civil War, the next major use of Foreign Policy was for the purchase of Alaska from Russia. Secretary of State William Seward negotiated the \$7.2 million purchase. However, after the purchase, it was mocked as “Seward’s Folly” and the “polar bear garden” until gold was discovered in the 1890s.¹⁰ After this event, the next significant event of Foreign Policy was the annexation of the Kingdom of Hawaii in 1898. This event happened due to the death of the King and the uprising of the Queen who wanted to rewrite the constitution and change the way of life in Hawaii. The aftermath of this occurrence was the annexation of Hawaii and allowed for United States fruit companies to continue business as usual. The next use of Foreign Policy was due to genuine concern for the Cuban people. Concentration camps were established by the Spanish, which fueled the Spanish-American War – which was broadcasted by the United States press. In four months of combat, the United States Navy beat Spain, which led to the United States to gain control of Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. With these acquisitions, Cuba was granted independence in 1902 and Guam and Puerto Rico became U.S. territories. All of these occurrences happened in a period of time known as Unilateral Isolationism in Foreign Policy. Unilateral Isolationism is an approach in international relations in which states act without regard to the interests of other states or without their support¹¹. The next period of Foreign Policy was known as Multilateral internationalism, which spanned from

¹⁰ Robert Fuller, "U.S. Foreign Policy since 1865," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

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1918-2001. The first use of Foreign policy in this period occurred during 1916 while WWI was raging and the United States stayed neutral. With this being said, we eventually joined the fight due to Germany's resumption of submarine attacks on passenger and merchant ships in 1917; this became the primary motivation behind Wilson's decision to lead the United States into World War I. This changed our perspective on Foreign Policy and started the era of Multilateral Internationalism, where we cooperated with international efforts in order to spread peace, democracy, and self-determination. Following WWI, Wilson issued his "14 Points" for settling the peace, and in the process, established an international vision of self-determination, democracy, capitalism, and governing international organizations. Congress also refused to join the world court because of fears that it would destroy U.S. sovereignty. With this, Foreign Policy expanded in the United States and started our international affairs. A few decades after WWI, the world saw WWII. On December 7, 1941 Pearl Harbor was attacked. FDR learned from Wilson's mistakes in WWI. Using Foreign Policy, FDR ramped up war production and instituted the draft over a year before the U.S. declared war. Rather than issuing loans, he instituted the Lend-Lease Program. In carrying out the war, he worked closely with both foreign allies like Winston Churchill of Great Britain as well as his Republican rivals¹². Post WWII, the U.S. was raised as a military powerhouse and remained virtually undamaged. The U.S. Foreign Policy was increased by joining the United Nations as a member of the "Security Council" along with Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and China, and each country each possessed veto power. Also in the events following WWII, the U.S. entered the Cold War with the Soviet Union. The Foreign Policy changed to three major entities. These entities were day taunt, containment and rollback. Day taunt was cooperation and a working relationship with the Soviet Union. Containment was

¹² Robert Fuller, "U.S. Foreign Policy since 1865," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

stopping the spread of communism. Rollback was actively working to overthrow communist regimes and install pro-democracy / pro-capitalist regimes. These policies allowed for the United States to start a space race as well as an armed race, causing tensions between the two nations to rise exponentially quickly. The Cold War eventually began to slow down and ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Foreign Policy stayed the same for the years after the Cold War. The era of Multilateral Internationalism came to an end with 9/11. 9/11 was a terror attack on the United States which ended the era of multilateral internationalism and the United States adopted a new Foreign Policy, which was a mix of multilateral internationalism and unilateral isolationism. This is the Foreign Policy the U.S. still has today. 9/11 started “A war against all those who seek to export terror, and a war against those governments that support or shelter them(President Bush)”. This was a retaliation war and put us in the world's main line of sight. The Foreign Policy stayed the same and gave power to the government to do as it sees fit. Foreign Policy today switches with issues such as terrorism and climate change, but generally speaking, the United States goes back and forth between unilateral and multilateral approaches. Today, the Foreign policy flips between unilateral and multilateral approaches on issues such as international trade, wars in other countries, alliances and defense.¹³ In my opinion, this is an amazing feat in our country and without this, we would be in a world of trouble and turmoil.

Exceptionalism is defined as the belief that a nation or group inherently unique and either possesses characteristics that others do not or are not affected by laws and trends that affect other groups¹⁴. Hodgson views both the positive and negative sides of history. Hodgson also hopes the United States will be a positive force when it has leadership roles in the world. stung by

¹³ Robert Fuller, "U.S. Foreign Policy since 1865," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

¹⁴ Robert Fuller, "The United States & Its Big Stories" lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

terrorism and armed with the world's most powerful military, will allow its pride to get the best of it and become a bully. Rodger's views are that Americans are not exceptional in thinking they are exceptional. Rodgers calls exceptionalist narratives the "engines of national self-consciousness." Zagari believes the "global turn" (looking at history in a global context) will place the United States in a larger, comparative context and will correct our positive and negative narratives of exceptionalism¹⁵. I believe that these authors would not agree with what I have stated above because history is messy and there is no one thought that goes into history. There are two sides to every story and everything in history is interpreted differently by every person.

In my first reflection paper I believed that the United States had both a good and bad side and it was reflected in its history. I feel today that the United States history hasn't changed for me and I still feel that it has its good and its bad. I now, however, have a better understanding of why I feel this way through the lessons I have learned and the research I did for this class. I believe that there is not just one narrative that can encompass history as a whole because at the end of the day history is subjective and everyone is entitled to their own opinion. I believe that we should treat people with different perspectives or opinions with respect and be able to share thoughts and opinions freely with each other because that is how we would grow as a society and how we can learn on how others think. The story of the United States is messy and overall a hard one to have just one view on. For this reason history is messy. We need to be able to communicate as a society so we are capable of continuing the future and allowing our history to grow alongside it.

¹⁵ Robert Fuller, "Our Key Authors," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

