

### Foreign Policy In the United States

The United States attitude and execution of foreign policy has changed vastly over the years. 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 players in this topic there have been a lot of changes and incidents throughout the years.

The history of foreign policy since 1865 has taken many changes and 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 Internationalism<sup>1</sup>. 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. Our 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 started our country and 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 limits to any foreign entity. With this western expansion started and The Mexican-American War started. This war was over the Monroe Doctrine and had mass casualties on both sides with the United States eventually coming out on top. With this The United States began to isolate itself from the rest of the world and started to become self sufficient and allow for growth to occur. 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.<sup>2</sup> After this event the next major 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. For

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Fuller, "U.S. Foreign Policy since 1865," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

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instance concentration camps were established by the Spanish. This eventually ended up in the Spanish-American War which was boosted by the United States press. In four months of this war the United States Navy beat Spain which led to the United States to get control of Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. With these Cuba was granted independence in 1902 and Guam and Puerto Rico are both 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 support<sup>3</sup>. The next period of Foreign Policy was known as Multilateral internationalism which spanned from 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 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 and started cooperating with international efforts for spreading 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 expansion 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 rivals<sup>4</sup>. Post WWII the U.S. was raised as a military powerhouse and remained 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. 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 stopping the spread of communism. And rollback was actively working to overthrow communist regimes and install pro-democracy / pro-capitalist

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Fuller, "U.S. Foreign Policy since 1865," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.

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regimes. These policies allowed for the United States to start a space race and an armed race and tensions between the two nations were rising exponentially. The cold war began to slow down and eventually 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 eyes. 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, the United States has gone 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.<sup>5</sup>

In conclusion, The United States Foreign policy has switched between unilateral and multilateral approaches throughout the years to where it is today. Overall my essay does not follow any key author due to history being extremely messy. It will be very interesting to see how the United States Foreign Policy will change throughout the years and throughout my lifetime.

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Fuller, "U.S. Foreign Policy since 1865," lecture at Arizona State University, Spring 2023.