



FIGURE 17.1 In this image, the U.S. Navy hospital ship *Mercy* sails in formation with rapid troop and equipment transport *Brunswick* and Canadian warship *Vancouver*. The United States can project power and influence far beyond its borders through a complex web of diplomatic efforts, trade and monetary policy, sanctions, foreign aid, alliances, and military strength. (credit: U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kelsey L. Adams/Flickr. Public Domain.)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- 17.1** Defining Foreign Policy
- 17.2** Foreign Policy Instruments
- 17.3** Institutional Relations in Foreign Policy
- 17.4** Approaches to Foreign Policy

INTRODUCTION The U.S. government interacts with a large number of international actors, from other governments to private organizations, to fight global problems like terrorism and human trafficking, and to meet many other national foreign policy goals such as encouraging trade, responding to natural disasters, and protecting the environment. As discussed earlier, the United States invests very heavily -- far more than every other nation -- in its military. The President, as the Commander-in-Chief, has significant impact on military missions. The President can manifest policy priorities related to national security, political influence, and overall attitudes toward nations or even regions through choices on how and where to deploy. An aircraft carrier, which is usually accompanied by dozens of other warships, can be an intimidating and effective reminder of the United States' capability to control the seas and skies around the globe. But the U.S. Navy frequently conducts humanitarian missions, bringing food aid, medical treatment, and other services to areas in need. ([Figure 17.1](#)).

While the president is the country's foreign policy leader, Congress also has many foreign policy responsibilities, including approving treaties and agreements, allocating funding, making war, and confirming ambassadors. The two branches of government are not always aligned, because Representatives and Senators often have local considerations to consider, such as their state's major industries, exports, geography, and political leanings. These and various other activities constitute the patchwork quilt that is U.S. foreign policy.

How are foreign and domestic policymaking different, and how are they linked? What are the main foreign policy goals of the United States? How do the president and Congress interact in the foreign policy realm? In what different ways might foreign policy be pursued? This chapter will delve into these and other issues to present an overview U.S. foreign policy.

17.1 Defining Foreign Policy

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain what foreign policy is and how it differs from domestic policy
- Identify the objectives of U.S. foreign policy
- Describe the different types of foreign policy
- Identify the U.S. government's main challenges in the foreign policy realm

When we consider policy as our chapter focus, we are looking broadly at the actions the U.S. government carries out for particular purposes. In the case of foreign policy, that purpose is to manage its relationships with other nations of the world. Another distinction is that policy results from a course of action or a pattern of actions over time, rather than from a single action or decision. For example, U.S. foreign policy with **Russia** has been forged by several presidents, as well as by cabinet secretaries, House and Senate members, and foreign policy agency bureaucrats. Policy is also purposive, or intended to do something; that is, policymaking is not random. When the United States enters into an international agreement with other countries on aims such as free trade or nuclear disarmament, it does so for specific reasons. With that general definition of policy established, we shall now dig deeper into the specific domain of U.S. foreign policy.

FOREIGN POLICY BASICS

What is **foreign policy**? We can think of it on several levels, as “the goals that a state's officials seek to attain abroad, the values that give rise to those objectives, and the means or instruments used to pursue them.”¹ This definition highlights some of the key topics in U.S. foreign policy, such as national goals abroad and the manner in which the United States tries to achieve them. Note too that we distinguish foreign policy, which is externally focused, from domestic policy, which sets strategies internal to the United States, though the two types of policies can become quite intertwined. So, for example, one might talk about **Latino politics** as a domestic issue when considering educational policies designed to increase the number of Hispanic Americans who attend and graduate from a U.S. college or university.² However, as demonstrated in the primary debates leading up to the 2016 election, Latino politics can quickly become a foreign policy matter when considering topics such as immigration from and foreign trade with countries in Central America and South America ([Figure 17.2](#)).³



FIGURE 17.2 Domestic issues can sometimes become international ones when it comes to such topics as foreign trade. Here, President George W. Bush shakes hands with legislators and administration officials after signing the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) Implementation Act on August 2, 2005.

What are the objectives of U.S. foreign policy? While the goals of a nation's foreign policy are always open to debate and revision, there are nonetheless four main goals to which we can attribute much of what the U.S. government does in the foreign policy realm: (1) the protection of the U.S. and its citizens, (2) the maintenance of access to key resources and markets, (3) the preservation of a balance of power in the world, and (4) the protection of human rights and democracy.

The first goal is the protection of the United States and the lives of its citizens, both while they are in the United States and when they travel abroad. Related to this security goal is the aim of protecting the country's allies, or countries with which the United States is friendly and mutually supportive. In the international sphere, threats and dangers can take several forms, including military threats from other nations or terrorist groups and economic threats from boycotts and high tariffs on trade. An **economic sanction** occurs when a country or multiple countries suspend trade or other financial relationships with another country in order to signal their displeasure with the behavior of the other country.

In an economic boycott, the United States ceases trade with another country unless or until it changes a policy to which the United States objects. Ceasing trade means U.S. goods cannot be sold in that country and its goods cannot be sold in the United States. For example, in recent years the United States and other countries implemented an economic boycott of Iran as it escalated the development of its nuclear energy program. The recent Iran nuclear deal is a pact in which Iran agrees to halt nuclear development while the United States and six other countries lift economic sanctions to again allow trade with Iran. Barriers to trade also include tariffs, or fees charged for moving goods from one country to another. Protectionist trade policies raise tariffs so that it becomes difficult for imported goods, now more expensive, to compete on price with domestic goods. Free trade agreements seek to reduce these trade barriers.

The second main goal of U.S. foreign policy is to ensure the nation maintains access to key resources and markets across the world. Resources include natural resources, such as oil, and economic resources, including the infusion of foreign capital investment for U.S. domestic infrastructure projects like buildings, bridges, and weapons systems. Of course, access to the international marketplace also means access to goods that American consumers might want, such as Swiss chocolate and Australian wine. U.S. foreign policy also seeks to advance the interests of U.S. business, to both sell domestic products in the international marketplace and support general economic development around the globe (especially in developing countries).

A third main goal is the preservation of a balance of power in the world. A **balance of power** means no one nation or region is much more powerful militarily than are the countries of the rest of the world. The achievement of a perfect balance of power is probably not possible, but general stability, or predictability in the operation of governments, strong institutions, and the absence of violence within and between nations may be. For much of U.S. history, leaders viewed world stability through the lens of Europe. If the European continent was stable, so too was the world. During the **Cold War** era that followed World War II, stability was achieved by the existence of dual superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, and by the real fear of the nuclear

annihilation of which both were capable. Until approximately 1989–1990, advanced industrial democracies aligned themselves behind one of these two superpowers.

Today, in the post–Cold War era, many parts of Europe are politically more free than they were during the years of the Soviet bloc, and there is less fear of nuclear war than when the United States and the Soviet Union had missiles pointed at each other for four straight decades. However, despite the mostly stabilizing presence of the **European Union** (EU), which now has twenty-eight member countries, several wars have been fought in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Moreover, the EU itself faces some challenges, including a vote in the United Kingdom to leave the EU, the ongoing controversy about how to resolve the national debt of Greece, and the crisis in Europe created by thousands of refugees from the Middle East.

Carefully planned acts of **terrorism** in the United States, Asia, and Europe have introduced a new type of enemy into the balance of power equation—nonstate or nongovernmental organizations, such as al-Qaeda and ISIS (or ISIL), consisting of various terrorist cells located in many different countries and across all continents ([Figure 17.3](#)).



FIGURE 17.3 President Barack Obama, along with French president François Hollande and Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo, place roses on the makeshift memorial in front of the Bataclan concert hall, one of the sites targeted in the Paris terrorist attacks of November 13, 2015.

The fourth main goal of U.S. foreign policy is the protection of **human rights** and democracy. The payoff of stability that comes from other U.S. foreign policy goals is peace and tranquility. While certainly looking out for its own strategic interests in considering foreign policy strategy, the United States nonetheless attempts to support international peace through many aspects of its foreign policy, such as foreign aid, and through its support of and participation in international organizations such as the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Organization of American States.

The **United Nations (UN)** is perhaps the foremost international organization in the world today. The main institutional bodies of the UN are the General Assembly and the Security Council. The General Assembly includes all member nations and admits new members and approves the UN budget by a two-thirds majority. The Security Council includes fifteen countries, five of which are permanent members (including the United States) and ten that are non-permanent and rotate on a five two-year-term basis. The entire membership is bound by decisions of the Security Council, which makes all decisions related to international peace and security. Two other important units of the UN are the International Court of Justice in The Hague (Netherlands) and the UN Secretariat, which includes the Secretary-General of the UN and the UN staff directors and employees.

MILESTONE

The Creation of the United Nations

One of the unique and challenging aspects of global affairs is the fact that no world-level authority exists to

mandate when and how the world's nations interact. After the failed attempt by President Woodrow Wilson and others to formalize a “League of Nations” in the wake of World War I in the 1920s, and on the heels of a worldwide depression that began in 1929, came World War II, history's deadliest military conflict. Now, in the early decades of the twenty-first century, it is common to think of the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001 as the big game-changer. Yet while 9/11 was hugely significant in the United States and abroad, World War II was even more so. The December 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (Hawaii) was a comparable surprise-style attack that plunged the United States into war.

The scope of the conflict, fought in Europe and the Pacific Ocean, and Hitler's nearly successful attempt to take over Europe entirely, struck fear in minds and hearts. The war brought about a sea change in international relations and governance, from the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe, to NATO that created a cross-national military shield for Western Europe, to the creation of the UN in 1945, when the representatives of fifty countries met and signed the Charter of the United Nations in San Francisco, California (Figure 17.4).



FIGURE 17.4 On June 26, 2015, then-House minority leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) joined UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon, California governor Jerry Brown, and other dignitaries to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the UN Charter in San Francisco. (credit: modification of work by “Nancy Pelosi”/Flickr)

Today, the United Nations, headquartered in New York City, includes 193 of the 195 nations of the world. It is a voluntary association to which member nations pay dues based on the size of their economy. The UN's main purposes are to maintain peace and security, promote human rights and social progress, and develop friendly relationships among nations.

Follow-up activity: In addition to facilitating collective decision-making on world matters, the UN carries out many different programs. Go to the [UN website \(https://openstax.org/l/29UNmain\)](https://openstax.org/l/29UNmain) to find information about three different UN programs that are carried out around the world.

An ongoing question for the United States in waging the war against terrorism is to what degree it should work in concert with the UN to carry out anti-terrorism initiatives around the world in a multilateral manner, rather than pursuing a “go it alone” strategy of unilateralism. The fact that the U.S. government has such a choice suggests the voluntary nature of the United States (or another country) accepting world-level governance in foreign policy. If the United States truly felt bound by UN opinion regarding the manner in which it carries out its war on terrorism, it would approach the UN Security Council for approval.

Another cross-national organization to which the United States is tied, and that exists to forcefully represent Western allies and in turn forge the peace, is the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**. NATO was formed after World War II as the Cold War between East and West started to emerge. While more militaristic in

approach than the United Nations, NATO has the goal of protecting the interests of Europe and the West and the assurance of support and defense from partner nations. However, while it is a strong military coalition, it has not sought to expand and take over other countries. Rather, the peace and stability of Europe are its main goals. NATO initially included only Western European nations and the United States. However, since the end of the Cold War, additional countries from the East, such as Turkey, have entered into the NATO alliance.

Besides participating in the UN and NATO, the United States also distributes hundreds of millions of dollars each year in foreign aid to improve the quality of life of citizens in developing countries. The United States may also forgive the foreign debts of these countries. By definition, developing countries are not modernized in terms of infrastructure and social services and thus suffer from instability. Helping them modernize and develop stable governments is intended as a benefit to them and a prop to the stability of the world. An alternative view of U.S. assistance is that there are more nefarious goals at work, that perhaps it is intended to buy influence in developing countries, secure a position in the region, obtain access to resources, or foster dependence on the United States.

The United States pursues its four main foreign policy goals through several different foreign policy types, or distinct substantive areas of foreign policy in which the United States is engaged. These types are trade, diplomacy, sanctions, military/defense, intelligence, foreign aid, and global environmental policy.

Trade policy is the way the United States interacts with other countries to ease the flow of commerce and goods and services between countries. A country is said to be engaging in **protectionism** when it does not permit other countries to sell goods and services within its borders, or when it charges them very high tariffs (or import taxes) to do so. At the other end of the spectrum is a **free trade** approach, in which a country allows the unfettered flow of goods and services between itself and other countries. At times the United States has been free trade-oriented, while at other times it has been protectionist. Perhaps its most free trade-oriented move was the 1991 implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This pact removed trade barriers and other transaction costs levied on goods moving between the United States, Mexico, and Canada.

Critics see a free trade approach as problematic and instead advocate for protectionist policies that shield U.S. companies and their products against cheaper foreign products that might be imported here. One of the more prominent recent examples of protectionist policies occurred in the steel industry, as U.S. companies in the international steel marketplace struggled with competition from Chinese factories in particular.

The **balance of trade** is the relationship between a country's inflow and outflow of goods. The United States sells many goods and services around the world, but overall it maintains a trade deficit, in which more goods and services are coming in from other countries than are going out to be sold overseas. The March, 2025 U.S. trade deficit was \$140.5 billion, which means the value of what the United States imports from other countries is much larger than the value of what it exports to other countries.⁴ This trade deficit has led some to advocate for protectionist trade policies.

For many, foreign policy is synonymous with diplomacy. **Diplomacy** is the establishment and maintenance of a formal relationship between countries that governs their interactions on matters as diverse as tourism, the taxation of goods they trade, and the landing of planes on each other's runways. While diplomatic relations are not always rosy, when they are operating it does suggest that things are going well between the countries. Diplomatic relations are formalized through the sharing of ambassadors. Ambassadors are country representatives who live and maintain an office (known as an embassy) in the other country. Just as exchanging ambassadors formalizes the bilateral relationship between countries, calling them home signifies the end of the relationship. Diplomacy tends to be the U.S. government's first step when it tries to resolve a conflict with another country.

To illustrate how international relations play out when countries come into conflict, consider what has become known as the Hainan Island incident. In 2001, a U.S. spy plane collided with a Chinese jet fighter near Chinese airspace, where U.S. planes were not authorized to be. The Chinese jet fighter crashed and the pilot died. The

U.S. plane made an emergency landing on the island of Hainan. China retrieved the aircraft and captured the U.S. pilots. U.S. ambassadors then attempted to negotiate for their return. These negotiations were slow and ended up involving officials of the president's cabinet, but they ultimately worked. Had they not succeeded, an escalating set of options likely would have included diplomatic sanctions (removal of ambassadors), economic sanctions (such as an embargo on trade and the flow of money between the countries), minor military options (such as establishment of a no-fly zone just outside Chinese airspace), or more significant military options (such as a focused campaign to enter China and get the pilots back). Nonmilitary tools to influence another country, like economic sanctions, are referred to as **soft power**, while the use of military power is termed **hard power**.⁵

At the more serious end of the foreign policy decision-making spectrum, and usually as a last resort when diplomacy fails, the U.S. military and defense establishment exists to provide the United States the ability to wage war against other state and nonstate actors. Such war can be offensive, as were the Iraq War in 2003 and the 1989 removal of Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega. Or it can be defensive, as a means to respond to aggression from others, such as the Persian Gulf War in 1991, also known as Operation Desert Storm (Figure 17.5). The potential for military engagement, and indeed the scattering about the globe of hundreds of U.S. military installations, can also be a potential source of foreign policy strength for the United States. On the other hand, in the world of diplomacy, such an approach can be seen as imperialistic by other world nations.



FIGURE 17.5 President George H. W. Bush greets U.S. troops stationed in Saudi Arabia on Thanksgiving Day in 1990. The first troops were deployed there in August 1990, as part of Operation Desert Shield, which was intended to build U.S. military strength in the area in preparation for an eventual military operation.

Intelligence policy is related to defense and includes the overt and covert gathering of information from foreign sources that might be of strategic interest to the United States. The **intelligence** world, perhaps more than any other area of foreign policy, captures the imagination of the general public. Many books, television shows, and movies entertain us (with varying degrees of accuracy) through stories about U.S. intelligence operations and people.

Foreign aid and **global environmental policy** are the final two foreign policy types. With both, as with the other types, the United States operates as a strategic actor with its own interests in mind, but here it also acts as an international steward trying to serve the common good. With foreign aid, the United States provides material and economic aid to other countries, especially developing countries, in order to improve their stability and their citizens' quality of life. This type of aid is sometimes called humanitarian aid; in 2013 the U.S. contribution totaled \$32 billion. Military aid is classified under military/defense or national security policy (and totaled \$8 billion in 2013). At \$40 billion the total U.S. foreign aid budget for 2013 was sizeable, though it represented less than 1 percent of the entire federal budget.⁶

Global environmental policy addresses world-level environmental matters such as climate change and global warming, the thinning of the ozone layer, rainforest depletion in areas along the Equator, and ocean pollution and species extinction. The United States' commitment to such issues has varied considerably over the years. For example, the United States was the largest country not to sign the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas

emissions. However, few would argue that the U.S. government has not been a leader on global environmental matters. The **Paris Agreement** on climate change took effect in late 2016. The pact establishes a framework to prevent further climate change, namely to limit the rise in overall global temperature. The agreement was negotiated during the Obama administration and the U.S. signed on initially. However, President Trump officially withdrew the U.S. from the pact in November 2020. Early in 2021, the newly elected president, Joe Biden, rejoined the Paris Agreement with a commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030.⁷

UNIQUE CHALLENGES IN FOREIGN POLICY

U.S. foreign policy is a massive and complex enterprise. What are its unique challenges for the country?

First, there exists no true world-level authority dictating how the nations of the world should relate to one another. If one nation negotiates in bad faith or lies to another, there is no central world-level government authority to sanction that country. This makes diplomacy and international coordination an ongoing bargain as issues evolve and governmental leaders and nations change. Foreign relations are certainly made smoother by the existence of cross-national voluntary associations like the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and the African Union. However, these associations do not have strict enforcement authority over specific nations, unless a group of member nations takes action in some manner (which is ultimately voluntary).

The **European Union** is the single supranational entity with some real and significant authority over its member nations. Adoption of its common currency, the euro, brings with it concessions from countries on a variety of matters, and the EU's economic and environmental regulations are the strictest in the world. Yet even the EU has enforcement issues, as evidenced by the battle within its ranks to force member Greece to reduce its national debt or the recurring problem of Spain overfishing in the North Atlantic Ocean. The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (commonly referred to as Brexit, short for British exit) also points to the struggles that supra-national institutions like the EU can face.

International relations take place in a relatively open venue in which it is seldom clear how to achieve collective action among countries generally or between the United States and specific other nations in particular. When does it make sense to sign a multinational pact and when doesn't it? Is a particular bilateral economic agreement truly as beneficial to the United States as to the other party, or are we giving away too much in the deal? These are open and complicated questions, which the various schools of thought discussed later in the chapter will help us answer.

A second challenge for the United States is the widely differing views among countries about the role of government in people's lives. The government of hardline communist North Korea regulates everything in its people's lives every day. At the other end of the spectrum are countries with little government activity at all, such as parts of the island of New Guinea. In between is a vast array of diverse approaches to governance. Countries like Sweden provide cradle-to-grave human services programs like health care and education that in some parts of India are minimal at best. In Egypt, the nonprofit sector provides many services rather than the government. The United States relishes its tradition of freedom and the principle of limited government, but practice and reality can be somewhat different. In the end, it falls somewhere in the middle of this continuum because of its focus on law and order, educational and training services, and old-age pensions and health care in the form of Social Security and Medicare.

The challenge of pinpointing the appropriate role of government may sound more like a domestic than a foreign policy matter, and to some degree it is an internal choice about the way government interacts with the people. Yet the internal (or domestic) relationship between a government and its people can often become intertwined with foreign policy. For example, the narrow stance on personal liberty that Iran has taken in recent decades led other countries to impose economic sanctions that crippled the country internally. Some of these sanctions have eased in light of the new nuclear deal with Iran. So the domestic and foreign policy realms are intertwined in terms of what we view as national priorities—whether they consist of nation building

abroad or infrastructure building here at home, for example. This latter choice is often described as the “guns versus butter” debate.

A third, and related, unique challenge for the United States in the foreign policy realm is other countries’ varying ideas about the appropriate **form of government**. These forms range from democracies on one side to various authoritarian (or nondemocratic) forms of government on the other. Relations between the United States and democratic states tend to operate more smoothly, proceeding from the shared core assumption that government’s authority comes from the people. Monarchies and other nondemocratic forms of government do not share this assumption, which can complicate foreign policy discussions immensely. People in the United States often assume that people who live in a nondemocratic country would prefer to live in a democratic one. However, in some regions of the world, such as the Middle East, this does not seem to be the case—people often prefer having stability within a nondemocratic system over changing to a less predictable democratic form of government. Or they may believe in a theocratic form of government. And the United States does have formal relations with some more totalitarian and monarchical governments, such as Saudi Arabia, when it is in U.S. interests to do so.

A fourth challenge is that many new foreign policy issues transcend borders. That is, there are no longer simply friendly states and enemy states. Problems around the world that might affect the United States, such as terrorism, the international slave trade, and climate change, originate with groups and issues that are not country-specific. They are transnational. So, for example, while we can readily name the enemies of the Allied forces in World War II (Germany, Italy, and Japan), the U.S. war against terrorism has been aimed at terrorist groups that do not fit neatly within the borders of any one country with which the United States could quickly interact to solve the problem. Intelligence-gathering and focused military intervention are needed more than traditional diplomatic relations, and relations can become complicated when the United States wants to pursue terrorists within other countries’ borders. An ongoing example is the use of U.S. drone strikes on terrorist targets within the nation of Pakistan, in addition to the 2011 campaign that resulted in the death of Osama **bin Laden**, the founder of al-Qaeda ([Figure 17.6](#)).



FIGURE 17.6 President Barack Obama (second from left) with Vice President Joe Biden (far left), Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (second from right), Secretary of Defense Robert Gates (far right), and other national security advisers in the Situation Room of the White House, watching the successful raid on Osama bin Laden’s compound on May 1, 2011.

The fifth and final unique challenge is the varying conditions of the countries in the world and their effect on what is possible in terms of foreign policy and diplomatic relations. Relations between the United States and a stable industrial democracy are going to be easier than between the United States and an unstable developing country being run by a military junta (a group that has taken control of the government by force). Moreover, an unstable country will be more focused on establishing internal stability than on broader world concerns like environmental policy. In fact, developing countries are temporarily exempt from the requirements of certain treaties while they seek to develop stable industrial and governmental frameworks.

LINK TO LEARNING

The [Council on Foreign Relations \(https://openstax.org/l/29ConclFrgRel\)](https://openstax.org/l/29ConclFrgRel) is one of the nation's oldest organizations that exist to promote thoughtful discussion on U.S. foreign policy.

17.2 Foreign Policy Instruments

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the outputs of broadly focused U.S. foreign policy
- Describe the outputs of sharply focused U.S. foreign policy
- Analyze the role of Congress in foreign policy

The decisions or outputs of U.S. foreign policy vary from presidential directives about conducting drone strikes to the size of the overall foreign relations budget passed by Congress, and from presidential summits with other heads of state to U.S. views of new policies considered in the UN Security Council. In this section, we consider the outputs of foreign policy produced by the U.S. government, beginning with broadly focused decisions and then discussing more sharply focused strategies. Drawing this distinction brings some clarity to the array of different policy outcomes in foreign policy. Broadly focused decisions typically take longer to formalize, bring in more actors in the United States and abroad, require more resources to carry out, are harder to reverse, and hence tend to have a lasting impact. Sharply focused outputs tend to be processed quickly, are often unilateral moves by the president, have a shorter time horizon, are easier for subsequent decision-makers to reverse, and hence do not usually have so lasting an impact as broadly focused foreign policy outputs.

BROADLY FOCUSED FOREIGN POLICY OUTPUTS

Broadly focused foreign policy outputs not only span multiple topics and organizations, but they also typically require large-scale spending and take longer to implement than sharply focused outputs. In the realm of broadly focused outputs, we will consider public laws, the periodic reauthorization of the foreign policy agencies, the foreign policy budget, international agreements, and the appointment process for new executive officials and ambassadors.

Public Laws

When we talk about new laws enacted by Congress and the president, we are referring to **public laws**. *Public laws*, sometimes called statutes, are policies that affect more than a single individual. All policies enacted by Congress and the president are public laws, except for a few dozen each year. They differ from *private laws*, which require some sort of action or payment by a specific individual or individuals named in the law.

Many statutes affect what the government can do in the foreign policy realm, including the National Security Act, the Patriot Act, the Homeland Security Act, and the War Powers Resolution. The National Security Act governs the way the government shares and stores information, while the Patriot Act (passed immediately after 9/11) clarifies what the government may do in collecting information about people in the name of protecting the country. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 authorized the creation of a massive new federal agency, the Department of Homeland Security, consolidating powers that had been under the jurisdiction of several different agencies. Their earlier lack of coordination may have prevented the United States from recognizing warning signs of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The War Powers Resolution was passed in 1973 by a congressional override of President Richard Nixon's veto. The bill was Congress's attempt to reassert itself in war-making. Congress has the power to declare war, but it had not formally done so since Japan's 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into World War II. Yet the United States had entered several wars since that time, including in Korea, in Vietnam, and in

focused military campaigns such as the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. The War Powers Resolution created a new series of steps to be followed by presidents in waging military conflict with other countries.

Its main feature was a requirement that presidents get approval from Congress to continue any military campaign beyond sixty days. To many, however, the overall effect was actually to strengthen the role of the president in war-making. After all, the law clarified that presidents could act on their own for sixty days before getting authorization from Congress to continue, and many smaller-scale conflicts are over within sixty days. Before the War Powers Resolution, the first approval for war was supposed to come from Congress. In theory, Congress, with its constitutional war powers, could act to reverse the actions of a president once the sixty days have passed. However, a clear disagreement between Congress and the president, especially once an initiative has begun and there is a “rally around the flag” effect, is relatively rare. More likely are tough questions about the campaign to which continuing congressional funding is tied.

Reauthorization

All federal agencies, including those dedicated to foreign policy, face **reauthorization** every three to five years. If not reauthorized, agencies lose their legal standing and the ability to spend federal funds to carry out programs. Agencies typically are reauthorized, because they coordinate carefully with presidential and congressional staff to get their affairs in order when the time comes. However, the reauthorization requirements do create a regular conversation between the agency and its political principals about how well it is functioning and what could be improved.

The federal budget process is an important annual tradition that affects all areas of foreign policy. The foreign policy and defense budgets are part of the discretionary budget, or the section of the national budget that Congress vets and decides on each year. Foreign policy leaders in the executive and legislative branches must advocate for funding from this budget, and while foreign policy budgets are usually renewed, there are enough proposed changes each year to make things interesting. In addition to new agencies, new cross-national projects are proposed each year to add to infrastructure and increase or improve foreign aid, intelligence, and national security technology.

Agreements

International agreements represent another of the broad-based foreign policy instruments. The United States finds it useful to enter into **international agreements** with other countries for a variety of reasons and on a variety of different subjects. These agreements run the gamut from bilateral agreements about tariffs to multinational agreements among dozens of countries about the treatment of prisoners of war. One recent multinational pact was the seven-country Iran Nuclear Agreement in 2015, intended to limit nuclear development in Iran in exchange for the lifting of long-standing economic sanctions on that country ([Figure 17.7](#)).



FIGURE 17.7 The ministers of foreign affairs and other officials from China, France, Germany, the European Union, Iran, Russia, and the United Kingdom join Secretary of State John Kerry (far right) in April 2015 to announce the framework that would lead to the multinational Iran Nuclear Agreement. (credit: modification of work by the U.S. Department of State)

The format that an international agreement takes has been the point of considerable discussion in recent years. The U.S. Constitution outlines the **treaty** process in Article II. The president negotiates a treaty, the Senate consents to the treaty by a two-thirds vote, and finally the president ratifies it. Despite that constitutional clarity, today over 90 percent of the international agreements into which the United States enters are not treaties but rather executive agreements.⁸ Executive agreements are negotiated by the president, and in the case of **sole executive agreements**, they are simultaneously approved by the president as well. On the other hand, **congressional-executive agreements**, like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), are negotiated by the president and then approved by a simple majority of the House and Senate (rather than a two-thirds vote in the Senate as is the case for a treaty). In the key case of *United States v. Pink* (1942), the Supreme Court ruled that executive agreements were legally equivalent to treaties provided they did not alter federal law.⁹ Most executive agreements are not of major importance and do not spark controversy, while some, like the Iran Nuclear Agreement, generate considerable debate. Many in the Senate thought the Iran deal should have been completed as a treaty rather than as a sole executive agreement.

FINDING A MIDDLE GROUND

Treaty or Executive Agreement?

Should new international agreements into which the United States enters be forged through the Article II treaty process of the U.S. Constitution, or through executive agreements? This question arose again in 2015 as the Iran Nuclear Agreement was being completed. That pact required Iran to halt further nuclear development and agree to nuclear inspections, while the United States and five other signatories lifted long-standing economic sanctions on Iran. The debate over whether the United States should have entered the agreement and whether it should have been a treaty rather than an executive agreement was conducted in the news media and on political comedy shows like *The Daily Show*.

Your view on the form of the pact will depend on how you see executive agreements being employed. Do presidents use them to circumvent the Senate (as the “evasion hypothesis” suggests)? Or are they an efficient tool that saves the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations the work of processing hundreds of agreements each year?

Politicians’ opinions about the form of the Iran Nuclear Agreement fell along party lines. Democrats accepted the president’s decision to use an executive agreement to finalize the pact, which they tended to support.

Republicans, who were overwhelmingly against the pact, favored the use of the treaty process, which would have allowed them to vote the deal down. In the end, the president used an executive agreement and the pact was enacted. The downside is that an executive agreement can be reversed by the next president. Treaties are much more difficult to undo because they require a new process to be undertaken in the Senate in order for the president to gain approval.

Which approach do you favor for the Iran Nuclear Agreement, an executive agreement or a treaty? Why?

LINK TO LEARNING

Watch “[Under Miner](https://openstax.org/l/29UnderMin)” (<https://openstax.org/l/29UnderMin>) and “[Start Wars](https://openstax.org/l/29StartWars)” (<https://openstax.org/l/29StartWars>) to see the take of Jon Stewart and *The Daily Show* on the Iran Nuclear Agreement.

Appointments

The last broad type of foreign policy output consists of the **foreign policy appointments** made when a new president takes office. Typically, when the party in the White House changes, more new appointments are made than when the party does not change, because the incoming president wants to put in place people who share the president's agenda. This has been the case in every presidential transition since 1993, when Republican George H.W. Bush left office and Democrat Bill Clinton took over. The pattern continued in 2001 when Republican George W. Bush became president, and then again with Democrat Barack Obama, Republican Donald Trump, and Democrat Joe Biden.

Most foreign policy–related appointments, such as secretary of state and the various undersecretaries and assistant secretaries, as well as all ambassadors, must be confirmed by a majority vote of the Senate ([Figure 17.8](#)). Presidents seek to nominate people who know the area to which they're being appointed and who will be loyal to the president rather than to the bureaucracy in which they might work. They also want their nominees to be readily confirmed. As we will see in more detail later in the chapter, an isolationist group of appointees will run the country's foreign policy agencies very differently than a group that is more internationalist in its outlook. Isolationists might seek to pull back from foreign policy involvement around the globe, while internationalists would go in the other direction, toward more involvement and toward acting in conjunction with other countries.



FIGURE 17.8 Madeleine Albright (a), the first female secretary of state, was nominated by President Bill Clinton and unanimously confirmed by the Senate 99–0. Colin Powell (b), nominated by George W. Bush, was also unanimously confirmed. Condoleezza Rice (c) had a more difficult road, earning thirteen votes against, at the time the most for any secretary of state nominee since Henry Clay in 1825. According to Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), senators wanted “to hold Dr. Rice and the Bush administration accountable for their failures in Iraq and in the war on terrorism.”

SHARPLY FOCUSED FOREIGN POLICY OUTPUTS

In addition to the broad-based foreign policy outputs above, which are president-led with some involvement from Congress, many other decisions need to be made. These sharply focused foreign policy outputs tend to be exclusively the province of the president, including the deployment of troops and/or intelligence agents in a crisis, executive summits between the president and other heads of state on targeted matters of foreign policy, presidential use of military force, and emergency funding measures to deal with foreign policy crises. These measures of foreign policy are more quickly enacted and demonstrate the “energy and dispatch” that Alexander Hamilton, writing in the *Federalist Papers*, saw as inherent in the institution of the presidency. Emergency spending does involve Congress through its power of the purse, but Congress tends to give presidents what they need to deal with emergencies. That said, the framers were consistent in wanting checks and balances sprinkled throughout the Constitution, including in the area of foreign policy and war powers. Hence, Congress has several roles, as discussed at points throughout this chapter.

Perhaps the most famous foreign policy emergency was the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. With the Soviet Union placing nuclear missiles in Cuba, just a few hundred miles from Florida, a Cold War standoff with the United States escalated. The Soviets at first denied the existence of the missiles, but U.S. reconnaissance flights proved they were there, gathering photographic evidence that was presented at the UN (Figure 17.9). The Soviets stood firm, and U.S. foreign policy leaders debated their approach. Some in the military were pushing for aggressive action to take out the missiles and the installation in Cuba, while State Department officials favored a diplomatic route. President John F. Kennedy ended up taking the recommendation of a special committee, and the United States implemented a naval blockade of Cuba that subtly forced the Soviets’ hands. The Soviets agreed to remove their Cuban missiles and the United States in turn agreed six months later to remove its missiles from Turkey.



(a)



(b)

FIGURE 17.9 This low-level U.S. Navy photograph of San Cristobal, Cuba, clearly shows one of the sites built to launch intermediate-range missiles at the United States (a). As the date indicates, it was taken on the last day of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Following the crisis, President Kennedy (far right) met with the reconnaissance pilots who flew the Cuban missions (b). (credit a: modification of work by the National Archives and Record Administration)

LINK TO LEARNING

Listen to [President Kennedy’s speech \(https://openstax.org/l/29KennSpch\)](https://openstax.org/l/29KennSpch) announcing the naval blockade the United States imposed on Cuba, ending the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

Another form of focused foreign policy output is the **presidential summit**. Often held at the Presidential Retreat at Camp David, Maryland, these meetings bring together the president and one or more other heads of state. Presidents use these types of summits when they and their visitors need to dive deeply into important issues that are not quickly solved. An example is the 1978 summit that led to the Camp David Accords, in which President Jimmy Carter, Egyptian president Anwar El Sadat, and Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin met privately for twelve days at Camp David negotiating a peace process for the two countries, which had been at odds with each other in the Middle East. Another example is the Malta Summit between President

George H. W. Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, which took place on the island of Malta over two days in December 1989 ([Figure 17.10](#)). The meetings were an important symbol of the end of the Cold War, the Berlin Wall having come down just a few months earlier.



(a)



(b)

FIGURE 17.10 President Jimmy Carter meets with Egypt’s Anwar El Sadat (left) and Israel’s Menachem Begin (right) at Camp David in 1978 (a). President George H. W. Bush (right) dines with Mikhail Gorbachev (left) at the Malta Summit in 1989 (b). (credit b: modification of work by the National Archives and Records Administration)

Another focused foreign policy output is the **military use of force**. Since the 1941 Pearl Harbor attacks and the immediate declaration of war by Congress that resulted, all such initial uses of force have been authorized by the president. Congress in many cases has subsequently supported additional military action, but the president has been the instigator. While there has sometimes been criticism, Congress has never acted to reverse presidential action. As discussed above, the War Powers Resolution clarified that the first step in the use of force was the president’s, for the first sixty days. A recent example of the military use of force was the U.S. role in enforcing a no-fly zone over Libya in 2011, which included kinetic strikes—or active engagement of the enemy—to protect anti-government forces on the ground. U.S. fighter jets flew out of Aviano Air Base in northern Italy ([Figure 17.11](#)).



FIGURE 17.11 One example of a sharply focused foreign policy output is the use of the U.S. military abroad. Here, the Air Force fighter jets used to enforce a 2011 no-fly zone over Libya return to a NATO air base in northeastern Italy. (credit: Tierney P. Wilson)

The final example of a focused foreign policy input is the passage of an **emergency funding** measure for a specific national security task. Congress tends to pass at least one emergency spending measure per year, which must be signed by the president to take effect, and it often provides funding for domestic disasters. However, at times foreign policy matters drive an emergency spending measure, as was the case right after the 9/11 attacks. In such a case, the president or the administration proposes particular amounts for emergency foreign policy plans.

17.3 Institutional Relations in Foreign Policy

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the use of shared power in U.S. foreign policymaking
- Explain why presidents lead more in foreign policy than in domestic policy
- Discuss why individual House and Senate members rarely venture into foreign policy
- List the actors who engage in foreign policy

Institutional relationships in foreign policy constitute a paradox. On the one hand, there are aspects of foreign policymaking that necessarily engage multiple branches of government and a multiplicity of actors. Indeed, there is a complexity to foreign policy that is bewildering, in terms of both substance and process. On the other hand, foreign policymaking can sometimes call for nothing more than for the president to make a formal decision, quickly endorsed by the legislative branch. This section will explore the institutional relationships present in U.S. foreign policymaking.

FOREIGN POLICY AND SHARED POWER

While presidents are more empowered by the Constitution in foreign than in domestic policy, they nonetheless must seek approval from Congress on a variety of matters; chief among these is the basic budgetary authority needed to run foreign policy programs. Indeed, most if not all of the foreign policy instruments described earlier in this chapter require interbranch approval to go into effect. Such approval may sometimes be a formality, but it is still important. Even a sole executive agreement often requires subsequent funding from Congress in order to be carried out, and funding calls for majority support from the House and Senate. Presidents lead, to be sure, but they must consult with and engage the Congress on many matters of foreign policy. Presidents must also delegate a great deal in foreign policy to the bureaucratic experts in the foreign policy agencies. Not every operation can be run from the West Wing of the White House.

At bottom, the United States is a separation-of-powers political system with authority divided among executive and legislative branches, including in the foreign policy realm. [Table 17.1](#) shows the formal roles of the president and Congress in conducting foreign policy.

Roles of the President and Congress in Conducting Foreign Policy

Policy Output	Presidential Role	Congressional Role
Public laws	Proposes, signs into law	Proposes, approves for passage
Agency reauthorizations	Proposes, signs into law	Approves for passage
Foreign policy budget	Proposes, signs into law	Authorizes/appropriates for passage
Treaties	Negotiates, ratifies	Senate consents to treaty (two-thirds)
Sole executive agreements	Negotiates, approves	None (unless funding is required)
Congressional-executive agreements	Negotiates	Approves by majority vote
Declaration of war	Proposes	Approves by majority vote

TABLE 17.1

Policy Output	Presidential Role	Congressional Role
Military use of force	Carries out operations at will (sixty days)	Approves for operations beyond sixty days
Presidential appointments	Nominates candidates	Senate approves by majority vote

TABLE 17.1

The main lesson of [Table 17.1](#) is that nearly all major outputs of foreign policy require a formal congressional role in order to be carried out. Foreign policy might be done by executive say-so in times of crisis and in the handful of sole executive agreements that actually pertain to major issues (like the Iran Nuclear Agreement). In general, however, a consultative relationship between the branches in foreign policy is the usual result of their constitutional sharing of power. A president who ignores Congress on matters of foreign policy and does not keep them briefed may find later interactions on other matters more difficult. Probably the most extreme version of this potential dynamic occurred during the Eisenhower presidency. When President Dwight D. Eisenhower used too many executive agreements instead of sending key ones to the Senate as treaties, Congress reacted by considering a constitutional amendment (the Bricker Amendment) that would have altered the treaty process as we know it. Eisenhower understood the message and began to send more agreements through the process as treaties.¹⁰

Shared power creates an incentive for the branches to cooperate. Even in the midst of a crisis, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, it is common for the president or senior staff to brief congressional leaders in order to keep them up to speed and ensure the country can stand unified on international matters. That said, there are areas of foreign policy where the president has more discretion, such as the operation of intelligence programs, the holding of foreign policy summits, and the mobilization of troops or agents in times of crisis. Moreover, presidents have more power and influence in foreign policymaking than they do in domestic policymaking. It is to that power that we now turn.

THE TWO PRESIDENCIES THESIS

When the media cover a domestic controversy, such as social unrest or police brutality, reporters consult officials at different levels and in branches of government, as well as think tanks and advocacy groups. In contrast, when an international event occurs, such as a terrorist bombing in Paris or Brussels, the media flock predominately to one actor—the president of the United States—to get the official U.S. position.

In the realm of foreign policy and international relations, the president occupies a leadership spot that is much clearer than in the realm of domestic policy. This dual domestic and international role has been described by the **two presidencies thesis**. This theory originated with University of California–Berkeley professor Aaron Wildavsky and suggests that there are two distinct presidencies, one for foreign policy and one for domestic policy, and that presidents are more successful in foreign than domestic policy. Let’s look at the reasoning behind this thesis.

The Constitution names the president as the commander-in-chief of the military, the nominating authority for executive officials and ambassadors, and the initial negotiator of foreign agreements and treaties. The president is the agenda-setter for foreign policy and may move unilaterally in some instances. Beyond the Constitution, presidents were also gradually given more authority to enter into international agreements without Senate consent by using the executive agreement. We saw above that the passage of the War Powers Resolution in 1973, though intended as a statute to rein in executive power and reassert Congress as a check on the president, effectively gave presidents two months to wage war however they wish. Given all these powers, we have good reason to expect presidents to have more influence and be more successful in foreign than in domestic policy.

A second reason for the stronger foreign policy presidency has to do with the informal aspects of power. In some eras, Congress will be more willing to allow the president to be a clear leader and speak for the country. For instance, the Cold War between the Eastern bloc countries (led by the Soviet Union) and the West (led by the United States and Western European allies) prompted many to want a single actor to speak for the United States. A willing Congress allowed the president to take the lead because of urgent circumstances (Figure 17.12). Much of the Cold War also took place when the parties in Congress included more moderates on both sides of the aisle and the environment was less partisan than today. A phrase often heard at that time was, “Partisanship stops at the water’s edge.” This means that foreign policy matters should not be subject to the bitter disagreements seen in party politics.



FIGURE 17.12 President John F. Kennedy gives a speech about freedom in the shadow of the Berlin Wall (a). The wall was erected in 1963 by East Germany to keep its citizens from defecting to West Berlin. On September 14, 2001, President George W. Bush promises justice at the site of the destroyed World Trade Center in New York City (b). Rescue workers responded by chanting “U.S.A., U.S.A.!” (credit a: modification of work by the John F. Kennedy Library)

Does the thesis’s expectation of a more successful foreign policy presidency apply today? While the president still has stronger foreign policy powers than domestic powers, the governing context has changed in two key ways. First, the Cold War ended in 1989 with the demolition of the Berlin Wall, the subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the eventual opening up of Eastern European territories to independence and democracy. These dramatic changes removed the competitive superpower aspect of the Cold War, in which the United States and the USSR were dueling rivals on the world stage. The absence of the Cold War has led to less of a rally-behind-the-president effect in the area of foreign policy.

Second, beginning in the 1980s and escalating in the 1990s, the Democratic and Republican parties began to become polarized in Congress. The moderate members in each party all but disappeared, while more ideologically motivated candidates began to win election to the House and later the Senate. Hence, the Democrats in Congress became more liberal on average, the Republicans became more conservative, and the moderates from each party, who had been able to work together, were edged out. It became increasingly likely that the party opposite the president in Congress might be more willing to challenge his initiatives, whereas in the past it was rare for the opposition party to publicly stand against the president in foreign policy.

Finally, several analysts have tried applying the two presidencies thesis to contemporary presidential-congressional relationships in foreign policy. Is the two presidencies framework still valid in the more partisan post-Cold War era? The answer is mixed. On the one hand, presidents are more successful on foreign policy votes in the House and Senate, on average, than on domestic policy votes. However, the gap has narrowed. Moreover, analysis has also shown that presidents are opposed more often in Congress, even on the foreign policy votes they win.¹¹ Democratic leaders regularly challenged Republican George W. Bush on the Iraq War and it became common to see the most senior foreign relations committee members of the Republican Party opposing the foreign policy positions of Democratic president Barack Obama. Such challenging of the president by the opposition party simply didn’t happen during the Cold War.

In the Trump administration, there was a distinct shift in foreign policy style. While for some regions, like

South America, Trump was content to let the foreign policy bureaucracies proceed as they always had, in certain areas, the president was pivotal in changing the direction of American foreign policy. For example, he stepped away from two key international agreements—the Iran-Nuclear Deal and the Paris climate change accords. Moreover, his actions in Syria were quite unilateral, employing bombing raids unilaterally on two occasions. This approach reflected more of a neoconservative foreign policy approach, similar to Obama's widespread use of drone strikes.

Therefore, it seems presidents no longer enjoy unanimous foreign policy support as they did in the early 1960s. They have to work harder to get a consensus and are more likely to face opposition. Still, because of their formal powers in foreign policy, presidents are overall more successful on foreign policy than on domestic policy.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF HOUSE AND SENATE MEMBERS

Congress is a bicameral legislative institution with 100 senators serving in the Senate and 435 representatives serving in the House. How interested in foreign policy are typical House and Senate members?

While key White House, executive, and legislative leaders monitor and regularly weigh in on foreign policy matters, the fact is that individual representatives and senators do so much less often. Unless there is a foreign policy crisis, legislators in Congress tend to focus on domestic matters, mainly because there is not much to be gained with their constituents by pursuing foreign policy matters.¹² Domestic policy matters resonate more strongly with the voters at home. A sluggish economy, increasing health care costs, and crime matter more to them than U.S. policy toward North Korea, for example. In an open-ended Gallup poll question from early 2021 about the “most important problem” in the United States, fewer than 10 percent of respondents named a foreign policy topic (and most of those respondents mentioned immigration). These results suggest that foreign policy is not at the top of many voters’ minds. In the end, legislators must be responsive to constituents in order to be good representatives and to achieve reelection.¹³

However, some House and Senate members do wade into foreign policy matters. First, congressional party leaders in the majority and minority parties speak on behalf of their institution and their party on all types of issues, including foreign policy. Some House and Senate members ask to serve on the foreign policy committees, such as the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and the two defense committees (Figure 17.13). These members might have military bases within their districts or states and hence have a constituency reason for being interested in foreign policy. Legislators might also simply have a personal interest in foreign policy matters that drives their engagement in the issue. Finally, they may have ambitions to move into an executive branch position that deals with foreign policy matters, such as secretary of state or defense, CIA director, or even president.



FIGURE 17.13 Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) (a) serves on the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, along with Senator Jim Risch (R-ID) (b), the ranking member.



GET CONNECTED!

Let People Know What You Think!

Most House and Senate members do not engage in foreign policy because there is no electoral benefit to doing so. Thus, when citizens become involved, House members and senators will take notice. Research by John Kingdon on roll-call voting and by Richard Hall on committee participation found that when constituents are activated, their interest becomes salient to a legislator and the legislator will respond.¹⁴

One way you can become active in the foreign policy realm is by writing a letter or e-mail to your House member and/or your two U.S. senators about what you believe the U.S. foreign policy approach in a particular area ought to be. Perhaps you want the United States to work with other countries to protect dolphins from being accidentally trapped in tuna nets. You can also state your position in a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, or post an opinion on the newspaper's website where a related article or op-ed piece appears. You can share links to news coverage on Facebook or Twitter and consider joining a foreign policy interest group such as Greenpeace.

When you engaged in foreign policy discussion as suggested above, what type of response did you receive?



LINK TO LEARNING

For more information on the two key congressional committees on U.S. foreign policy, visit the [Senate Committee on Foreign Relations \(https://openstax.org/l/29SeCoFrRel\)](https://openstax.org/l/29SeCoFrRel) and the [House Foreign Affairs Committee \(https://openstax.org/l/29HoForAfCom\)](https://openstax.org/l/29HoForAfCom) websites.

THE MANY ACTORS IN FOREIGN POLICY

A variety of actors carry out the various and complex activities of U.S. foreign policy: White House staff, executive branch staff, and congressional leaders.

The White House staff members engaged in foreign policy are likely to have very regular contact with the president about their work. The national security advisor heads the president's National Security Council, a group of senior-level staff from multiple foreign policy agencies, and is generally the president's top foreign policy advisor. Also reporting to the president in the White House is the director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Even more important on intelligence than the CIA director is the director of national intelligence, a position created in the government reorganizations after 9/11, who oversees the entire intelligence community in the U.S. government. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consist of six members, one each from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines, plus a chair and vice chair. The chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the president's top uniformed military officer. In contrast, the secretary of defense is head of the entire Department of Defense but is a nonmilitary civilian. The U.S. trade representative develops and directs the country's international trade agenda. Finally, within the Executive Office of the President, another important foreign policy official is the director of the president's Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The OMB director develops the president's yearly budget proposal, including funding for the foreign policy agencies and foreign aid.

In addition to those who work directly in the White House or Executive Office of the President, several important officials work in the broader executive branch and report to the president in the area of foreign policy. Chief among these is the secretary of state. The secretary of state is the nation's chief diplomat, serves in the president's cabinet, and oversees the Foreign Service. The secretary of defense, who is the civilian (nonmilitary) head of the armed services housed in the Department of Defense, is also a key cabinet member for foreign policy (as mentioned above). A third cabinet secretary, the secretary of homeland security, is critically important in foreign policy, overseeing the massive Department of Homeland Security ([Figure 17.14](#)).

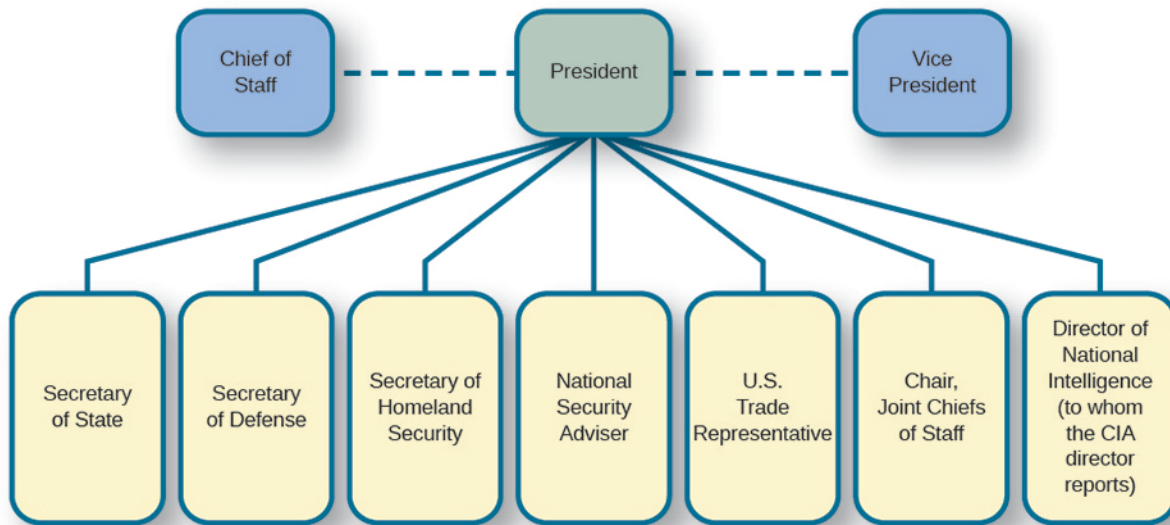


FIGURE 17.14 In addition to the secretaries of state, defense, and homeland security, numerous officials report to the president in the area of foreign policy.

INSIDER PERSPECTIVE

Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates

Former secretary of defense Robert Gates served under both Republican and Democratic presidents. First Gates rose through the ranks of the CIA to become the director during the George H. W. Bush administration. He then left government to serve as an academic administrator at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, where he rose to the position of university president. He was able to win over reluctant faculty and advance the university's position, including increasing the faculty at a time when budgets were in decline in Texas. Then, when Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld resigned, President George W. Bush invited Gates to return to government service as Rumsfeld's replacement. Gates agreed, serving in that capacity for the remainder of the Bush years and then for several years in the Obama administration before retiring from government service a second time (Figure 17.15). He has generally been seen as thorough, systematic, and fair.



FIGURE 17.15 In March 2011, then-secretary of defense Robert Gates (left) held talks with Afghan president Hamid Karzai in Kabul, Afghanistan. (credit: Cherie Cullen)

In his memoir, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War*,¹⁵ Secretary Gates takes issue with the actions of both the presidents for whom he worked, but ultimately he praises them for their service and for upholding the right principles in protecting the United States and U.S. military troops. In this and earlier books, Gates discusses the need to have an overarching plan but says plans cannot be too tight or they will fail when things change in the

external environment. After leaving politics, Gates served as president of the Boy Scouts of America, where he presided over the change in policy that allowed openly gay scouts and leaders, an issue with which he had had experience as secretary of defense under President Obama. In that role Gates oversaw the end of the military’s “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy.¹⁶

What do you think about a cabinet secretary serving presidents from two different political parties? Is this a good idea? Why or why not?

The final group of official key actors in foreign policy are in the U.S. Congress. The Speaker of the House, the House minority leader, and the Senate majority and minority leaders are often given updates on foreign policy matters by the president or the president’s staff. They are also consulted when the president needs foreign policy support or funding. However, the experts in Congress who are most often called on for their views are the committee chairs and the highest-ranking minority members of the relevant House and Senate committees. In the House, that means the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Committee on Armed Services. In the Senate, the relevant committees are the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Armed Services Committee. These committees hold regular hearings on key foreign policy topics, consider budget authorizations, and debate the future of U.S. foreign policy.

17.4 Approaches to Foreign Policy

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain classic schools of thought on U.S. foreign policy
- Describe contemporary schools of thought on U.S. foreign policy
- Delineate the U.S. foreign policy approach with Russia and China

Frameworks and theories help us make sense of the environment of governance in a complex area like foreign policy. A variety of schools of thought exist about how to approach foreign policy, each with different ideas about what “should” be done. These approaches also vary in terms of what they assume about human nature, how many other countries ought to be involved in U.S. foreign policy, and what the tenor of foreign policymaking ought to be. They help us situate the current U.S. approach to many foreign policy challenges around the world.

CLASSIC APPROACHES

A variety of traditional concepts of foreign policy remain helpful today as we consider the proper role of the United States in, and its approach to, foreign affairs. These include isolationism, the idealism versus realism debate, liberal internationalism, hard versus soft power, and the grand strategy of U.S. foreign policy.

From the end of the Revolutionary War in the late eighteenth century until the early twentieth century, **isolationism**—whereby a country stays out of foreign entanglements and keeps to itself—was a popular stance in U.S. foreign policy. Among the founders, Thomas Jefferson especially was an advocate of isolationism or non-involvement. He thought that by keeping to itself, the United States stood a better chance of becoming a truly free nation. This fact is full of irony, because Jefferson later served as ambassador to France and president of the United States, both roles that required at least some attention to foreign policy. Still, Jefferson’s ideas had broad support. After all, Europe was where volatile changes were occurring. The new nation was tired of war, and there was no reason for it to be entangled militarily with anyone. Indeed, in his farewell address, President George Washington famously warned against the creation of “entangling alliances.”¹⁷

Despite this legacy, the United States was pulled squarely into world affairs with its entry into World War I. But between the Armistice in 1918 that ended that war and U.S. entry into World War II in 1941, isolationist

sentiment returned, based on the idea that Europe should learn to govern its own affairs. Then, after World War II, the United States engaged the world stage as one of two superpowers and the military leader of Europe and the Pacific. Isolationism never completely went away, but now it operated in the background. Again, Europe seemed to be the center of the problem, while political life in the United States seemed calmer somehow.

The end of the Cold War opened up old wounds as a variety of smaller European countries sought independence and old ethnic conflicts reappeared. Some in the United States felt the country should again be isolationist as the world settled into a new political arrangement, including a vocal senator, Jesse Helms (R-NC), who was against the United States continuing to be the military “policeman” of the world. Helms was famous for opposing nearly all treaties brought to the Senate during his tenure. Congressman Ron Paul (R-TX) and his son Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) were both isolationist candidates for the presidency (in 2008 and 2016, respectively); both thought the United States should retreat from foreign entanglements, spend far less on military and foreign policy, and focus more on domestic issues.

At the other end of the spectrum is **liberal internationalism**. Liberal internationalism advocates a foreign policy approach in which the United States becomes proactively engaged in world affairs. Its adherents assume that liberal democracies must take the lead in creating a peaceful world by cooperating as a community of nations and creating effective world structures such as the United Nations. To fully understand liberal internationalism, it is helpful to understand the idealist versus realist debate in international relations. Idealists assume the best in others and see it as possible for countries to run the world together, with open diplomacy, freedom of the seas, free trade, and no militaries. Everyone will take care of each other. There is an element of idealism in liberal internationalism, because the United States assumes other countries will also put their best foot forward. A classic example of a liberal internationalist is President Woodrow Wilson, who sought a League of Nations to voluntarily save the world after World War I.

Realists assume that others will act in their own self-interest and hence cannot necessarily be trusted. They want a healthy military and contracts between countries in case others want to wiggle out of their commitments. Realism also has a place in liberal internationalism, because the United States approaches foreign relationships with open eyes and an emphasis on self-preservation.

Soft power, or diplomacy, with which the United States often begins a foreign policy relationship or entanglement, is in line with liberal internationalism and idealism, while hard power, which allows the potential for military force, is the stuff of realism. For example, at first the United States was rather isolationist in its approach to China, assuming it was a developing country of little impact that could safely be ignored. Then President Nixon opened up China as an area for U.S. investment, and an era of open diplomatic relations began in the early 1970s ([Figure 17.16](#)). As China modernized and began to dominate the trade relationship with the United States, many came to see it through a realist lens and to consider whether China’s behavior really warranted its beneficial most-favored-nation trading status.



FIGURE 17.16 President Nixon and First Lady Patricia Nixon visited the Great Wall on their 1972 trip to China. The Chinese showed them the sights and hosted a banquet for them in the Great Hall of the People. Nixon was the first U.S. president to visit China following the Communist victory in the civil war in 1949. (credit: National Archives and Records Administration)

The final classic idea of foreign policy is the so-called grand strategy—employing all available diplomatic, economic, and military resources to advance the national interest. The grand strategy invokes the possibility of hard power, because it relies on developing clear strategic directions for U.S. foreign policy and the methods to achieve those goals, often with military capability attached. The U.S. foreign policy plan in Europe and Asia after World War II reflects a grand strategy approach. In order to stabilize the world, the United States built military bases in Italy, Germany, Spain, England, Belgium, Japan, Guam, and Korea. It still operates nearly all these, though often under a multinational arrangement such as NATO. These bases help preserve stability on the one hand, and U.S. influence on the other.

MORE RECENT SCHOOLS OF THOUGHTS

Two particular events in foreign policy caused many to change their views about the proper approach to U.S. involvement in world affairs. First, the debacle of U.S. involvement in the civil war in Vietnam in the years leading up to 1973 caused many to rethink the country's traditional **containment** approach to the Cold War. Containment was the U.S. foreign policy goal of limiting the spread of communism. In Vietnam the United States supported one governing faction within the country (democratic South Vietnam), whereas the Soviet Union supported the opposing governing faction (communist North Vietnam). The U.S. military approach of battlefield engagement did not translate well to the jungles of Vietnam, where “guerilla warfare” predominated.

Skeptics became particularly pessimistic about liberal internationalism given how poorly the conflict in Vietnam had played out. U.S. military forces withdrew from South Vietnam in 1973, and Saigon, its capital, fell to North Vietnam and the communists eighteen months later. Many of those pessimists then became neoconservatives on foreign policy.

Neoconservatives believe that rather than exercising restraint and always using international organizations as the path to international outcomes, the United States should aggressively use its might to promote its values and ideals around the world. The aggressive use (or threat) of hard power is the core value of **neoconservatism**. Acting unilaterally is acceptable in this view, as is adopting a preemptive strategy in which the United States intervenes militarily before the enemy can make its move. Preemption is a new idea; the United States has tended to be retaliatory in its use of military force, as in the case of Pearl Harbor at the start of World War II. Examples of neoconservatism in action are the 1980s U.S. campaigns in Central American countries to turn back communism under President Ronald Reagan, the Iraq War of 2003 led by President George W. Bush and his vice president Dick Cheney ([Figure 17.17](#)), and the use of drones as counterterrorism weapons during the Obama administration.



FIGURE 17.17 Heading to a going-away party for departing defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld in December 2006, former president George W. Bush (left) walks with then-vice president (and former secretary of defense) Dick Cheney (center), the prototypical twenty-first century foreign policy neoconservative. Rumsfeld is on the right. (credit: modification of work by D. Myles Cullen)

Neo-isolationism, like earlier isolationism, advocates keeping free of foreign entanglements. Yet no advanced industrial democracy completely separates itself from the rest of the world. Foreign markets beckon, tourism helps spur economic development at home and abroad, and global environmental challenges require cross-national conversation. In the twenty-first century, **neo-isolationism** means distancing the United States from the United Nations and other international organizations that get in the way. The strategy of **selective engagement**—retaining a strong military presence and remaining engaged across the world through alliances and formal installations—is used to protect the national security interests of the United States. However, this strategy also seeks to avoid being the world’s police officer.

The second factor that changed minds about twenty-first century foreign policy is the rise of elusive new enemies who defy traditional designations. Rather than countries, these enemies are terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS (or ISIL) that spread across national boundaries. A hybrid approach to U.S. foreign policy that uses multiple schools of thought as circumstances warrant may thus be the wave of the future. President Obama often took a hybrid approach. In some respects, he was a liberal internationalist seeking to put together broad coalitions to carry out world business. At the same time, his sending teams of troops and drones to take out terrorist targets in other legitimate nation-states without those states’ approval fits with a neoconservative approach. Finally, his desire to not be the “world’s police officer” led him to follow a practice of selective engagement.

LINK TO LEARNING

Several interest groups debate what should happen in U.S. foreign policy, many of which are included in this [list \(https://openstax.org/l/29nafsig\)](https://openstax.org/l/29nafsig) compiled by project Vote Smart.

U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN THE COLD WAR AND WITH CHINA

The foreign policy environment from the end of World War II until the end of the Cold War in 1990 was dominated by a duel of superpowers between the United States and its Western allies on the one hand and the Soviet Union and the communist bloc of countries in the East on the other. Both superpowers developed thousands of weapons of mass destruction and readied for a potential world war to be fought with nuclear weapons. That period was certainly challenging and ominous at times, but it was simpler than the present era. Nations knew what team they were on, and there was generally an incentive to not go to war because it would lead to the unthinkable—the end of the Earth as we know it, or mutually assured destruction. The result of this logic, essentially a standoff between the two powers, is sometime referred to as nuclear deterrence.

When the Soviet Union imploded and the Cold War ended, it was in many ways a victory for the West and for democracy. However, once the bilateral nature of the Cold War was gone, dozens of countries sought independence and old ethnic conflicts emerged in several regions of the world, including Eastern Europe. This new era holds great promise, but it is in many ways more complex than the Cold War. The rise of cross-national

terrorist organizations further complicates the equation because the enemy hides within the borders of potentially dozens of countries around the globe. In summary, the United States pursues a variety of topics and goals in different areas of the world in the twenty-first century.

The Soviet Union dissolved into many component parts after the Cold War, including **Russia**, various former Soviet republics like Georgia and Ukraine, and smaller nation-states in Eastern Europe, such as the Czech Republic. The general approach of the United States has been to encourage the adoption of democracy and economic reforms in these former Eastern bloc countries. Many of them now align with the EU and even with the West's cross-national military organization, NATO. With freedoms can come conflict, and there has been much of that in these fledgling countries as opposition coalitions debate how the future course should be charted, and by whom. Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia is again trying to strengthen its power on the country's western border, testing expansionism while invoking Russian nationalism. The United States is adopting a defensive position and trying to prevent the spread of Russian influence. The EU and NATO factor in here from the standpoint of an internationalist approach. U.S.-Russia relations have been frosty since Putin ascended, save for President Trump's initial efforts to befriend him. President Biden took a more emphatic stand with Russia on issues of wrongdoing and especially questions regarding Russian influence in the 2016 and 2020 elections. During the early part of the Trump Presidency, he was more assertive toward Russia and Putin in efforts to end the war in Ukraine. While Trump seemed prepared to support Russia retaining the land it had occupied in the war, he also repeatedly criticized Russia, and issued sharp statements against Putin, particularly after Russian attacks targeting and killing civilians.

In many ways the more visible future threat to the United States is **China**, the potential rival superpower of the future. A communist state that has also encouraged much economic development, China has been growing and modernizing for more than thirty years. Its nearly 1.4 billion citizens are stepping onto the world economic stage with other advanced industrial nations. In addition to fueling an explosion of industrial domestic development, public and private Chinese investors have spread their resources to every continent and most countries of the world. Indeed, Chinese investors lend money to the United States government on a regular basis, as U.S. domestic borrowing capacity is pushed to the limit in most years.

Many in the United States are worried by the lack of freedom and human rights in China. During the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing on June 4, 1989, thousands of pro-democracy protestors were arrested and many were killed as Chinese authorities fired into the crowd and tanks crushed people who attempted to wall them out. Over one thousand more dissidents were arrested in the following weeks as the Chinese government investigated the planning of the protests in the square. The United States instituted minor sanctions for a time, but President George H. W. Bush chose not to remove the most-favored-nation trading status of this long-time economic partner. Most in the U.S. government, including leaders in both political parties, wish to engage China as an economic partner at the same time that they keep a watchful eye on its increasing influence around the world, especially in developing countries. President Trump, on the other hand, was assertive in Asia, imposing a series of tariffs designed particularly to hit goods imported from China. The relationship with China therefore became quite strained under President Trump, and President Biden has continued to raise tough questions about and take tough stances on China. This souring relationship has negatively impacted U.S. universities where several Confucius Institutes have been shut down.

Elsewhere in Asia, the United States has good relationships with most other countries, especially South Korea and Japan, which have both followed paths the United States favored after World War II. Both countries embraced democracy, market-oriented economies, and the hosting of U.S. military bases to stabilize the region. North Korea, however, is another matter. A closed, communist, totalitarian regime, North Korea has been testing nuclear bombs in recent decades, to the concern of the rest of the world. Here, again, President Trump has been assertive, challenging the North Koreans to come to the bargaining table. It is an open question how much change this assertiveness will achieve, but it is significant that a dialogue has actually begun. Like China many decades earlier, India is a developing country with a large population that is expanding and modernizing. Unlike China, India has embraced democracy, especially at the local level.

 LINK TO LEARNING

You can plot U.S. government attention to different types of policy matters (including international affairs and foreign aid and its several dozen more focused subtopics) by using the online [trend analysis tool](https://openstax.org/l/29ComAgen) (<https://openstax.org/l/29ComAgen>) at the Comparative Agendas Project.

Key Terms

balance of power a situation in which no one nation or region is much more powerful militarily than any other in the world

balance of trade the relationship between a country's inflow and outflow of goods

Cold War the period from shortly after World War II until approximately 1989–1990 when advanced industrial democracies divided behind the two superpowers (East: Soviet Union, West: United States) and the fear of nuclear war abounded

congressional executive agreement an international agreement that is not a treaty and that is negotiated by the president and approved by a simple majority of the House and Senate

containment the effort by the United States and Western European allies, begun during the Cold War, to prevent the spread of communism

diplomacy the establishment and maintenance of a formal relationship between countries

economic sanction a situation in which a country or multiple countries suspend trade or other financial relationships with another country in order to signal their displeasure with the behavior of the other country

foreign policy a government's goals in dealing with other countries or regions and the strategy used to achieve them

free trade a policy in which a country allows the unfettered flow of goods and services between itself and other countries

hard power the use or threat of military power to influence the behavior of another country

isolationism a foreign policy approach that advocates a nation's staying out of foreign entanglements and keeping to itself

liberal internationalism a foreign policy approach of becoming proactively engaged in world affairs by cooperating in a community of nations

neo-isolationism a policy of distancing the United States from the United Nations and other international organizations, while still participating in the world economy

neoconservatism the belief that, rather than exercising restraint, the United States should aggressively use its might to promote its values and ideals around the world

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) a cross-national military organization with bases in Belgium and Germany formed to maintain stability in Europe

protectionism a policy in which a country does not permit other countries to sell goods and services within its borders or charges them very high tariffs (import taxes) to do so

selective engagement a policy of retaining a strong military presence and remaining engaged across the world

soft power nonmilitary tools used to influence another country, such as economic sanctions

sole executive agreement an international agreement that is not a treaty and that is negotiated and approved by the president acting alone

treaty an international agreement entered by the United States that requires presidential negotiation with other nation(s), consent by two-thirds of the Senate, and final ratification by the president

two presidencies thesis the thesis by Wildavsky that there are two distinct presidencies, one for foreign and one for domestic policy, and that presidents are more successful in foreign than domestic policy

United Nations (UN) an international organization of nation-states that seeks to promote peace, international relations, and economic and environmental programs

Summary

17.1 Defining Foreign Policy

As the president, Congress, and others carry out U.S. foreign policy in the areas of trade, diplomacy, defense, intelligence, foreign aid, and global environmental policy, they pursue a variety of objectives and face a multitude of challenges. The four main objectives of U.S. foreign policy are the protection of the United States

and its citizens and allies, the assurance of continuing access to international resources and markets, the preservation of a balance of power in the world, and the protection of human rights and democracy.

The challenges of the massive and complex enterprise of U.S. foreign policy are many. First, there exists no true world-level authority dictating how the nations of the world should relate to one another. A second challenge is the widely differing views among countries about the role of government in people's lives. A third is other countries' varying ideas about the appropriate form of government. A fourth challenge is that many new foreign policy issues transcend borders. Finally, the varying conditions of the countries in the world affect what is possible in foreign policy and diplomatic relations.

17.2 Foreign Policy Instruments

U.S. foreign policy outputs vary considerably. At one end of the continuum are sharply focused outputs such as the presidential use of military force via a specific drone strike on an enemy target, or the forging of a presidential summit with another country's president or head of state. At the other end of the spectrum are broadly focused outputs that typically bring more involvement from the Congress and other world leaders, such as the process to formalize a multilateral treaty on the global environment or the process to finalize the U.S. diplomatic budget each fiscal year. Broadly focused outputs typically take more time to decide, involve more nation-states, are more expensive, and are quite difficult to reverse once in place. Sharply focused outputs are faster, tend to be led by the president, and are easier for future policymakers to undo.

17.3 Institutional Relations in Foreign Policy

Many aspects of foreign policymaking rely on the powers shared between Congress and the president, including foreign policy appointments and the foreign affairs budget. Within the executive branch, an array of foreign policy leaders report directly to the president. Foreign policy can at times seem fragmented and diffuse because of the complexity of actors and topics. However, the president is clearly the leader, having both formal authority and the ability to delegate to Congress, as explained in the two presidencies thesis. With this leadership, presidents at times can make foreign policymaking quick and decisive, especially when it calls for executive agreements and the military use of force.

17.4 Approaches to Foreign Policy

Classic theories of foreign policy divide into the isolationist camp and the internationalist camp. The use of hard versus soft power comes into play in the internationalist route. Neoconservatism, a more recent school of thought in foreign policy, takes the view that the United States should go it alone as a single superpower, retreating from foreign involvement with the exception of trade and economic policy.

In the end, the complexity of international relationships, combined with a multifaceted decision-making process and a multiplicity of actors, leads to a U.S. foreign policy approach that uses a bit of all the schools of thought. The United States is being neoconservative when drone strikes are carried out unilaterally within the boundaries of another sovereign nation. It is being internationalist when building a coalition on the Iran nuclear deal or when participating in NATO initiatives.

Review Questions

1. Why are foreign policy issues more complicated than domestic policy issues?
 - A. They are more specific.
 - B. They are more complex.
 - C. The international environment is unpredictable.
 - D. They are more expensive.
2. Which of the following is not a foreign policy type?
 - A. trade policy
 - B. intelligence policy

- C. war-making
 - D. bureaucratic oversight
3. The goals of U.S. foreign policy include _____.
- A. keeping the country safe
 - B. securing access to foreign markets
 - C. protecting human rights
 - D. all the above
4. What are two key differences between domestic policymaking and foreign policymaking?
5. A sole executive agreement is likely to be in effect longer than is a treaty.
- A. true
 - B. false
6. All the following are examples of sharply focused foreign policy outputs *except* _____.
- A. presidential summits
 - B. military uses of force
 - C. emergency spending measures
 - D. international agreements
7. The War Powers Resolution _____.
- A. strengthened congressional war powers
 - B. strengthened presidential war powers
 - C. affected the presidency and congress equally
 - D. ultimately had little impact on war-making
8. The federal budget process matters in foreign policy for all the following reasons *except* _____.
- A. Congress has the power of the purse, so the president needs its approval
 - B. the budget provides the funding needed to run the foreign policy agencies
 - C. the budget for every presidential action has to be approved in advance
 - D. the budget allows political institutions to increase funding in key new areas
9. Which types of foreign policy outputs have more impact, broadly conceived ones or sharply focused ones? Why?
10. In terms of formal powers in the realm of foreign policy, _____.
- A. the president is entirely in charge
 - B. the president and Congress share power
 - C. Congress is entirely in charge
 - D. decisions are delegated to experts in the bureaucracy
11. Why do House members and senators tend to be less active on foreign policy matters than domestic ones?
- A. Foreign policy matters are more technical and difficult.
 - B. Legislators do not want to offend certain immigrant groups within their constituency.
 - C. Constituents are more directly affected by domestic policy topics than foreign ones.
 - D. Legislators themselves are not interested in foreign policy matters.
12. Neoconservatism is an isolationist foreign policy approach of a nation keeping to itself and engaging less internationally.
- A. true

- B. false
13. President George W. Bush was a proponent of liberal internationalism in his foreign policy.
A. true
B. false
14. The U.S. policy of containment during the Cold War related to keeping _____.
A. terrorism from spreading
B. rogue countries like North Korea from developing nuclear weapons
C. communism from spreading
D. oil prices from rising
15. The use of drones within other countries' borders is consistent with which school of thought?
A. liberal internationalism
B. neoconservatism
C. neo-isolationism
D. grand strategy
16. What are the pros and cons of the neoconservative foreign policy approach followed in recent decades?

Critical Thinking Questions

17. In your view, what are the best ways to get the community of nations working together?
18. What are the three most important foreign policy issues facing the United States today? Why?
19. Which is more important as an influencer of foreign policy, the president or a cabinet department like the Department of State or Defense? Why?
20. What do you think is the most advantageous school of thought for the United States to follow in foreign policy in the future? Why?
21. If you were president and wanted to gather support for a new foreign policy initiative, which three U.S. foreign policy actors would you approach and why?

Suggestions for Further Study

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