

The Formation Of The U.S. Foreign Policy

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The foreign policy of the US has considerable bearings for the nations and the world. Analysts have been raising questions regarding the formation of foreign policy. A plethora of researchers has analyzed in depth the mechanisms of the United States foreign policy. The task is not easy. In the United States, more than elsewhere globally, the foreign policy development process includes a wide variety of actors that make very powerful debates and discussions and include lengthy trade-offs. The researchers must be aware of certain criticisms that sometimes suggest that the collaboration between civil society and political power in the United States is such that there is no internal discussion or debate. Some researchers might realize that the US does not create any monolithic block. However, all the debates converge on the Presidency. This gives the impression that Americans speak with one voice, which is, in this case, that of the President. Multiple factors, including political, geographical, cultural, and ideological traditions, have a vital role in forming U.S. foreign policy.

Political Factors In The Formation Of The U.S. Foreign Policy

The political history of the US plays an imperative part in the formation of its foreign policy. Americans were blessed during the early years of their nation's formation and its constitutional process with what was probably the most sophisticated group of political philosophers ever assembled in one place, people like Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, Jay, and Adams; people who have made a lasting impression on modern political thought (*Founding Fathers, Constitution Day Materials, Pocket Constitution Book, U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights*, 2019). The combination of their liberal political philosophies and the fullness of the land on the North American continent resulted in policies that avoided class division in favour of consensus and mass participation. The country's foreign policy depicts the colours of its early leaders.

Americans tend to be fiercely independent individuals with a trait of "libertarianism," a word that does not have an exact translation in Spanish but implies a strong preference for individual liberties over centralized states. The nature of American political systems has been the development of a government that allows both a high degree of personal freedom and a sense of devotion to a larger community, in effect, a limited government that must justify its meddling in the life of an individual. From the first day of school, Americans learn that their nation was founded by freedom lovers who escaped their homelands' political and religious tyrannies. They believe that legitimacy flows from popular sovereignty, from the bottom up, and that government operates most efficiently at the lowest and most internal levels possible. For two hundred years, they have shown that individual states can thrive within a federal system, working together under a certain set of common rules (*Founding Fathers, Constitution Day Materials, Pocket Constitution Book, U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights*, 2019).

The most obvious result of such an attitude at the international level is the U.S. hypothesis that individual nations can work together just as effectively as in an international federated system. They have applied this hypothesis, with varying levels of success, in a number of international organizations. Its rich political history plays an important role in the formation of its foreign policy.

In many ways, the United States national institutions affect the approach in which American officials carry out the policies regarding other nations. There might be a few other countries like the US in which a small but coherent elite would determine its nation's diplomacy. This influence manifests itself in three ways: First, through the constitutional right of the House of Representatives to initiate government appropriations, making the control of public finances a vital tool to influence certain policies (History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives). Second, through the Senate's right to approve the nomination of all the main officials who intervene in the formation of policies in said departments, as well as all Ambassadors, each time they are nominated for a new position; third, through the active participation of a number of executive branch agencies in shaping U.S. foreign policy. These, in addition to the State Department, include the Departments of Defense, Commerce and the Treasury, and the Special Representative for Commerce, among others. The formation and working of political systems and institutions have a strong impact on the foreign policy of the US.

Apart from national political factors, global political factors also play an imperative part in the development of U.S. foreign policy. In a comprehensive research study published last year, interviewees said, "U.S. leadership task 'to maintain or expand American spheres of influence' by stabilizing or replacing regimes by those more willing to cooperate, and, at the same time, by containing adversaries" (Kurthen, 2021). Finkel, Perez-Linan, and Selisgon (2007, 410) also elaborate on how the U.S. intervenes through both force and aid at various stages of a country's democratic transition. Being the superpower, The US has global interests, and such goals play a critical role in forming its foreign policy.

Personal chemistry and thinking patterns also influence US foreign policy. In recent times, Trump has had a significant hold on U.S. foreign policy. Such examples of presidential influences are in abundance. The difficulty in interpreting Donald Trump's foreign policy stems from the multiple contradictions of this policy on several issues, linked to a chaotic, even dysfunctional decision-making process, but also to the personality of the President, a real estate and media professional, whose political communication is unprecedented, in particular through the use of his Twitter thread. However, it is necessary to recall that the presidential word also refers to foreign policy. The strongest dissonance in this sometimes schizophrenic foreign policy concerned Europe and, more broadly, the allies. It resulted from contradictions between President Trump's words and strategic documents and the positions of his administration. Every President of the United States has applied all the trends, and he has used all the approaches, but to different degrees (Montgomery, 2020). The development of American foreign policy is, according to him, always crossed by all the major political currents which are at the heart of a perpetual game of influences. The distribution of powers in matters of foreign policy takes on a special character in the United States compared to domestic policy. It imposes a more complex mechanism based on the complementarity of executive power and legislative power.

The thinking of the President of the United States influences its foreign policy.

Geographical Factors In Formation Of The U.S. Foreign Policy

Apart from many other advantages, the US is blessed by its ideal geography. It occupies much of the North American continent. The vast areas and space in the US have allowed it to seek opportunities and have shaped and strengthened its economy. Thanks to friendly relations with its neighbours to the north and south and the wide oceans to its east and west, it has historically enjoyed a considerable margin of safety in its foreign relations. It has not fought an invader within its continental territory since 1812. (Bukovansky, 1997). While the technological advances of this century have eroded that margin of safety, the United States has not suffered a sense of immediate danger from its European friends. Geography has also created a tradition of concentration on the development and affairs of its own continent, creating a strong isolationist streak in American domestic politics – modelled on 19th-century American diplomacy – that continues to this day. At times, it has raised the domestic political costs of engagement, as the Americans might not agree with Washington's policymakers. The geography of the USA plays an imperative part in the formation of its foreign policy.

The United States' privileged geographic location has shaped the making of its diplomacy in a different way. The US is a participant in three worlds: The American, the Pacific, and the Atlantic. The colonization patterns and communication lines of its early years determine the Euro-centrism of its culture and its policies; Eurocentric trends continue to be dominant to this day. However, the colonization of the Pacific coast of the United States and the subsequent expansion of commercial interests in the Pacific changed its focus considerably, beginning in the last decade of the last century. The largest state in the United States – California, which would rank sixth in the world for its gross domestic product (GDP) if it were an independent nation – is bordering the Pacific and has given greater emphasis on developing trade ties between the United States and its Asian partners. Geography, too, of course, has made it an American nation. The United States' ties with Latin American countries have always been strong (Barshefsky et al., 2008). They welcomed the independence of the new American states. President James Monroe and Secretary of State John Quincy Adams contributed greatly to preserving Latin American independence through their Monroe Doctrine's proclamation (*What is the Monroe Doctrine?* 2019). Since then, Americans have played an important and highly positive role in developing the Western Hemisphere. In any case, political ties with Europe and Asia have traditionally been more active because of geography and political commitments. The USA's privileged geographic location has moulded the formation of its diplomacy.

Cultural And Ideological Factors In The Formation Of The U.S. Foreign Policy

In the USA, human rights are given priority, which the country wants to apply at the international level through its foreign policy. Another less obvious but perhaps more important aspect of its foreign policy is the ideological tendency to defend individuals' human and civil rights from oppressing states. The explicit adoption of human rights criteria in U.S. foreign policy dates back to the Carter administration and was widely supported by the Southern Democrats who participated in the Civil Rights movement in the United States in the 1960s. They represent Americans' belief that they can improve or even perfect flawed societies, whether within or outside their borders. The Republican administrations that have followed one another did not reject these criteria but rather adopted and developed them further. American political culture creates, one might say, a natural tendency to resist outside compromises. This does not imply isolationism or neo-isolationism, but only that their commitments in the outside world are generally widely considered, well thought out, and have some internal political cost.

A final point in the formation of U.S. foreign policy has to do with the relationship and affection that Americans continue to feel in their home countries. While those who immigrate to the United States tend to settle permanently there and become North American very quickly, they continue to maintain a strong interest in their home countries, sometimes acting as advocates within the American political system. No one would underestimate, for example, the very active role played by Greek-Americans, Cuban-Americans, Polish-Americans, and Americans of Jewish descent within the policy-making system of the United States. Being one of the largest nations that attract immigrants, the influx of foreign nationals plays a vital role in the USA's foreign policy.

Potential For Further Research

A plethora of factors play a role in the formation of the USA's foreign policy. The geographical location of the state is critical to its relationship with its neighbours. Apart from this, the geographical location has an important bearing on the economy, impacting foreign policy. The historical evaluation, the constitution, and laws also shape foreign policy. There is a great need to conduct further research on cultural and ideological factors regarding U.S. foreign policy because it is a relatively less explored area.

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