**Chapter 6: Introduction to U.S. Foreign Policy**

1. What is U.S. Foreign Policy?
2. The President’s Foreign Policy Team
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4. Checking Presidential Power
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**What is U.S. Foreign Policy?**

How does the U.S. exert its power in other countries? How is U.S. foreign policy made? Why does the United States act the way that it does around the world?

This chapter explores how U.S. foreign policy evolved and how the U.S. government is organized to spread its influence around the globe. It argues that the justification for U.S. influence abroad has evolved significantly since the foundation of the United States, however the main motivations for U.S. foreign policy remain the same. Powerbrokers and policymakers in the United States have historically worked to protect and grow U.S. political, cultural and economic influence throughout the world, while justifying U.S. actions by framing the mission of the United States as benevolent.

**The President’s Foreign Policy Team**

Formal powers specified in the United States Constitution put the President at the center of foreign policy. The President, who is “Commander in Chief” of the armed forces can negotiate treaties and appoint ambassadors. The President is also the spokesperson for, and to, the nation. [President Franklin D. Roosevelt](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lK8gYGg0dkE) addressed the nation after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. President Roosevelt went before the Congress and asked for a declaration of war. President [Lyndon B. Johnson’s Gulf of Tonkin Speech in 1964](https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search;_ylt=AwrDQ2qoh7NeqzoAswk0nIlQ?fr=yhs-iba-1&ei=UTF-8&hsimp=yhs-1&hspart=iba&param1=rBeGMR2eBQ%2F165KVgNBjWg%3D%3D&param2=9dUI1n2R0BLDxNuWfiP4aWyjOZc2NBa%2Bx2opBYQCDMSB7nBAfwbAzkkglZNKi5o21u72Jm8TatlnU7NDGbP7Fx5zjEp0EzZ2I9XmX9uM71U%2B%2BjGrbqjCtZOzvHVb4ppE6wwQx2hpApBkbZH8CsJv7J%2FogK0YOW0ymaRsXXFktsqWW4Vg5TKOZz7ITDQUgcrfoPBiSZarzNW5TuhQveT3ZAORoRUQLaoVxxWxGjS6f6Qyp%2BuPyBmUCT%2FZLTLUACVBXz6BlCXDmu%2FfiL%2BeYfStKA%3D%3D&param3=NwVEMR%2FzKcG52XsVBYEh22rLXe6q76urNnLsrl1neDV%2Blgt7Vb%2Fm0cvoMpLRKapVwchc5pOqWaGHq%2F8k%2BEAm6CGq7w3GPMy2nNA1cgZGMhJ898xw7BPlw8AI0QAhjaKS5s9QZfmR19t3vQpflw8x%2F0IdHSrmvD4pqrjoQKXkFNmE3WjdHMQJQHW2K33WiaGVeH63He1r9tOWKuR0SW4BXY%2BvIawikmlaKBCgiT9yd%2Fg%3D&param4=HXPVNcEIUP3iKGO%2B%2FznSIDkqrCowlqBsOicvRvx2tkY%3D&vm=r&type=gyff_8804_FFW_US&p=gulf+of+tonkin+speech&fr2=p%3As%2Cv%3Av%2Cm%3Asp-qrw-corr-top&norw=1#id=1&vid=e9feea56d9e3e86d1f6d4b402763834c&action=view) led to an escalation of the Vietnam War, and President [George W. Bush Speech after September 11, 2001 announced the War on Terror.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vzRMaHCysU)

[embed]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lK8gYGg0dkE[/embed]

[embed]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dx8-ffiYyzA[/embed]

[embed]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vzRMaHCysU[/embed]

*Assignment*: *Choose one of these clips. What are the justifications for war articulated by President Franklin Roosevelt, President Lyndon Johnson****OR****President George W. Bush?*

Many people and agencies help the President make foreign policy decisions including the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the CIA Director, the Director of Homeland Security, and the Director of National Intelligence**.** Presidents also often choose other members of their inner circle to help form an overseas agenda as President George W. Bush did with his Vice President Richard Cheney and as President Donald Trump has done with his son-in-law Jared Kushner.

**The State Department** is run by the Secretary of State. The [State Department](https://www.state.gov/) manages the foreign affairs budget and resources. Ambassadors to other countries work within the State Department, and often help other state department officials negotiate with other countries.

Running the military on behalf of the President is the **Department of Defense (DOD).**The [DOD](https://dod.defense.gov/) is run by the Secretary of Defense who participates in making and executing foreign policy, especially when using the military.

The [**Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XPtO2WDhik) was created right after World War II in 1947. The CIA developed out of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The OSS was America’s wartime intelligence gathering agency during World War II. Initially, the CIA’s main job was to evaluate and share intelligence. (Ranelagh, 1986; Hulnick, 1999) It was not originally authorized to participate in actions or to collect its own information. However, both of these tasks quickly became part of the CIA’s mission. The CIA has organized foreign **coups** that overthrew progressive governments in Iran, Guatemala, Chile and elsewhere. A coup is “a sudden, violent, and illegal seizure of power from a government.” The CIA has contracted assassinations against political leaders, including the successful murder of the [President of the Congo Patrice Lumumba](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkTSCcW1MDo) and the unsuccessful murder attempts of [Cuban President Fidel Castro](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ly7L9PdWpB8). U.S. intelligence agencies have interfered foreign elections including those that occurred in Italy and Japan immediately following World War II and in Bolivia in 2002. The CIA has come under scrutiny for the establishment of [torture programs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01LfFi3xt6o) in Vietnam and during the War on Terror. (Morris, 2018)

The CIA’s long track record of intervening in other nations’ sovereignty has caused **blowback**. “Blowback” is a term created by the Central Intelligence Agency to describe a policy or action that has unintended negative consequences. For instance, installing pro-U.S. governments in Cuba, [Iran](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyHpVZoMIbc) and Nicaragua, eventually led to deeply anti-U.S. revolutions. The propping up of violent dictators in nations like Haiti, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras has led to economic suffering, political instability and security failures within those nations, which have resulted in a mass exodus of people looking to find sanctuary around the globe, and particularly in the United States.

*Assignment: Given the goals of U.S. foreign policy laid out earlier in the chapter, in a paragraph explain why “blowback” happens. Why people around the world object to U.S. foreign policy aims?*

**U.S. Military Spending**

[embed]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvsqkbMkcDY[/embed]

The annual U.S. defense budget is an estimated $934 billion. This includes spending in a number of agencies like the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Central Intelligence Agency among others. The U.S. spends more on defense than the next ten countries combined. (Amadeo, 2020) The United States’ major weapons programs under development cost a collective $2 trillion as of 2019. (Tiron and Capaccio, 2019) The U.S. has established formal or informal agreements to defend thirty-seven countries around the world. The U.S. military can be found in around 130 different countries. Excluding Iraq and Afghanistan, some 200,000 American military personnel are currently abroad. This massive military budget has positioned the United States to be, today and throughout history, extraordinarily active in international affairs.

Despite its enormous budget, the Defense Department has been unable to explain how they spend U.S. taxpayer money. When an audit of the Defense Department was attempted, the firms hired to look into how the military spends its money announced in 2018 that it was unable to determine how the budget had been spent. (Lindorff, 2019)

*Assignment: Write a paragraph either defending or attacking U.S. military spending. Us evidence from “U.S. Military Spending” and the video*[*Why Does the U.S. Spend So Much on The Military*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvsqkbMkcDY)

**Checking the President’s Power**

Presidents’ ability to respond quickly to situations gives them more power over foreign policy than the Congress, which typically takes more time to deliberate. Nonetheless, Congress can be influential by exerting oversight, and exercising budgetary decisions that can interfere with the President’s actions and priorities. (Collier, 1988)

Congress can also influence the executive branch’s implementation of foreign policy. (Johnson, 1980) During the Vietnam War, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by Senator J. W. Fulbright (D-AR), held hearings critical of the administration’s conduct during the war. During the George W. Bush administration, committees in the House and Senate held hearings on the abusive treatment of prisoners by U.S. soldiers at the [Abu Ghraib prison](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGpaOp6_I7M) in Iraq. However, Congressional hearings, like those looking into Abu Ghraib, usually take place after policies have been implemented or when it’s too late to change them significantly.

Congress can reduce or even refuse to fund defense programs that are priorities of the president. However, historically Congress has been wary of cutting off funding, as members of congress may then be vulnerable to accusations of failing to fund the troops, as happened during the Iraq War. These accusations can hurt a Congressperson or Senator up for reelection.

The President appoints ambassadors and those charged with running government departments that conduct foreign policy, such as the CIA Director, or Secretaries of State and Defense. The Senate has the constitutional authority to approve (or deny the approval of) these appointments. President Trump often depended on temporary appointees to national security positions to get around confirmation by the U.S. Senate.

Presidents sometimes avoid the congressional approval process by empowering lower-ranking officials whose appointments are not subject to Senate approval. During the Reagan administration, despite never being confirmed by the Senate,[National Security Council staffer Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North](https://www.brown.edu/Research/Understanding_the_Iran_Contra_Affair/profile-north.php) was the driving force in the Iran-Contra Affair that freed the American hostages in Lebanon by funding the Contras in Nicaragua through secret weapons sales to Iran. The Reagan administration organized this deal despite Congress explicitly forbidding the funding of the Contras.

[embed]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccZkcFEyUyc[/embed]

Iran-Contra Affair

Throughout his presidency, Reagan pursued an aggressively anti-Communist foreign policy. Early in his first term, Reagan authorized a covert CIA operation to overthrow the leftist government in Nicaragua. The Sandinistas had overthrown Nicaragua's military dictatorship run by the Somoza family that had ruled Nicaragua since the 1930s. Overwhelmingly supportive of U.S. economic and political aims in the region, the fall of the corrupt and repressive Somoza dynasty was a blow to U.S. foreign policy. The Contras were a coalition of armed groups that opposed the Sandinistas.

Fearing the spread of communism in the Western Hemisphere, Reagan explained the Contras as “freedom fighters” and sent weapons and CIA support to them. Congress remained skeptical and in 1984 the banned U.S. military aid to the Contras. Reagan officials, however, did not give up their support of the Contras. National security advisors created a plan to fund the Contras with money brought in by the sale of weapons to Iran. Officials also hoped the weapons sales would make Iran more favorable to helping the U.S. negotiate with its allies in Lebanon who had taken several Americans hostage. The proposed sale of weapons, however, was illegal; the U.S. had passed an embargo and publicly denounced Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism in 1979.

The profits from this illegal arms trade were used to fund the Contras in their war against Nicaragua’s Sandinista government. Several Reagan officials went to jail, and much evidence suggested that President Reagan had approved the illegal acts. It is clear that Reagan supported the sale of weapons to Iran for the release of hostages and he supported the covert aid to the Contras. No one ever testified that he approved the weapons sales in order to fund the Contras. Although Democratic lawmakers shied away from any effort to impeach the still-popular president, the Iran-Contra Affair nonetheless deprived Reagan of his ability to set the national political agenda for the remainder of his term. (Smith, [Decoding U.S. Foreign Policy: The Iran-Contra Affair](https://www.oercommons.org/courses/decoding-u-s-foreign-policy-the-iran-contra-affair/view))

*Assignment: In a paragraph answer the following prompt: If you had been in congress during the Iran-Contra affair would have you supported impeaching President Reagan? Why or why not.*

The Constitution states that the President “by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, negotiates treaties.” Approval by two-thirds of the voting senators is required. The Senate does not always consent. The Republican-controlled Senate, for example, rejected the [Treaty of Versailles](http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/versailles.htm) negotiated by Democratic President Woodrow Wilson following the end of World War I. This treaty created the League of Nations, the forerunner to the United Nations, but with the treaty’s rejection by the Senate, the United States did not join.

The Constitution grants Congress the “power to declare war” and to “raise and maintain armed forces.” But when does a state of war come into existence? The United States has sent troops into battle over 125 times in its history, yet Congress has declared war only five times (The War of 1812, The Mexican American War, The Spanish American War, World War I and World War II) and not since 1941. No declaration of war preceded the entry of American forces into the Korean War. President Harry Truman all but ignored Congress, instead legitimizing the conflict based on a UN Security Council resolution. This rationale would be used again later in the Persian Gulf War and the Iraq War. Vietnam too was fought without a formal declaration of war by Congress. When the legality of this war was challenged, defenders pointed to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, in which Congress authorized the president to take whatever steps he felt necessary to protect and defend U.S. forces in South Vietnam. The war’s defenders also pointed to congressional votes authorizing funds for fighting the war. They argued that if Congress did not support the war, all it had to do was stop authorizing funds to fight it. Such an action was far easier said than done. (Howell & Pevehouse, 2007)

**Economic Interests**

Historically, the United States has intervened in sovereign nations culturally, diplomatically, covertly and militarily on behalf of U.S. businesses. U.S. corporations often influence U.S. foreign policy, with U.S. business leaders guiding the President’s actions. Historically, U.S. Presidents have depended on private businesses to arm U.S. troops and advise Presidents on regions where they have investments.

Large corporations upset that they were losing profits contacted officials in the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower to overthrow the progressive governments of Iran and Guatemala that were demanding more control over their own nations’ resources. U.S. corporations, the CIA and U.S. government officials pushed the U.S. media to cover these coups in a way that justified U.S. intervention. By and large, the media complied. President Jacobo Árbenz of Guatemala and Prime Minister Muhammed Mosaddegh of Iran, both intent on reclaiming their nation’s economic sovereignty, were replaced with dictators who made it their priority to protect U.S. financial interests, generally at the expense of their nation’s poor.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyZ0au9s4TU

1954 CIA Coup in Guatemala

The CIA overthrew Guatemala’s democratically elected Jacobo Árbenz in 1954, because he attempted to exert economic sovereignty for Guatemalans at the U.S.-owned United Fruit Company’s (UFC) expense. The context for Árbenz’ efforts was that United Fruit was able to gain control over 42% of all land in Guatemala, growing bananas for U.S. consumers. ([Background on the Guatemalan Coup of 1954](https://www.umbc.edu/che/tahlessons/pdf/historylabs/Guatemalan_Coup_student:RS01.pdf)) Before the Presidency of Árbenz, the Guatemalan government had made a deal with United Fruit assuring that the wages of Guatemalan peasants would never rise above 50 cents a day and that the company would be exempt from international taxes. (Schlesinger, 67-71) Guatemalans demanded change.

Jacobo Árbenz won election in 1950 running on a promise to take control of Guatemala from the United Fruit Company. (Kwitny, 220-222) Árbenz demanded United Fruit accept the government as the final arbitrator in disputes between Guatemalan banana pickers and the company. Árbenz called for a reduction in the rail fees, among the world’s highest due UFC’s monopoly on travel. He insisted that United Fruit begin paying export taxes. Árbenz’ Agrarian Reform Law declared 209,842 acres of unfarmed land owned by United Fruit to be given to peasant Guatemalan families. ([Background on the Guatemalan Coup of 1954](https://www.umbc.edu/che/tahlessons/pdf/historylabs/Guatemalan_Coup_student:RS01.pdf))

These changes angered UFC executives. United Fruit, however, was confident in its ability to alter the direction of the Guatemalan government. Many people in the Eisenhower administration had deep connections to UFC. The Dulles Brothers, serving as Director of Central Intelligence and Secretary of State respectively, both had worked at the Sullivan and Cromwell law firm. This firm represented United Fruit. (Turner, 2005) Eisenhower’s Undersecretary of State Walter Bedell Smith expected to be the President of the United Fruit Company for his political support. (Kwitny, 222-223) If this was not enough to guarantee backing from Washington, the United Fruit Company had loyally donated their fleet to the U.S. war effort during World War II aiding the commander of Allied forces General—and then President—Dwight D. Eisenhower. (Richter, 1944) Collectively, these men decided to support the United Fruit Company and overthrow the Guatemalan government.

The truth would have little impact on the CIA’s campaign to undermine Árbenz. On May Day 1954, due to the unusually large number of workers that would be home, la Voz de Liberación, played its first broadcast. The radio station aired propaganda against the government calling on the people of Guatemala to rise up against Árbenz. They claimed to be broadcasting from the jungles of Guatemala. la Voz de Liberación was developed by the CIA; early broadcasts emanated from Miami and their tapes were beamed into Guatemala with a mobile transmitter. The CIA also worked closely with Catholic priests in Guatemala, pushing them to give anti-Árbenz sermons. (Immerman, 1982) With the CIA operation set to begin on June 15, 1954 the U.S. government succeeded in gaining control of the U.S. press reporting from Guatemala. Just before the operation against Árbenz began, the Ambassador met with reporters to chat about “the type of stories they were writing.” The aim was to have this coup covered as a popular uprising, rather than an assault by the United States on Guatemalan democracy. (Cullather)

The U.S.-backed Castillo Armas emerged with a small force of just 480 men. President Eisenhower supplied air support. (Eisenhower, 1963) Meanwhile, la Voz de Liberación radio station distorted the successes of Armas’ forces. The CIA blocked all other radio signals. La Voz de Liberación reported mass desertion from Árbenz’ army. Árbenz resigned the presidency. Armas was elected president in October with a fabricated 99% of the vote after outlawing political parties and screening all potential opponents. President Eisenhower congratulated Armas for the great victory. (Cullather, Immerman)

Two-hundred-thousand Guatemalans would be killed in a 36-year Civil War caused by the coup. The UN concluded in 1999 that the Guatemalan Security Forces, who in large part were trained, funded and given supplies by the United States for the duration of the conflict, committed 93% of the human rights violations during the war. The conflict produced one million refugees. (“[Timeline Guatemala](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1215811.stm)”) Today Guatemalans, like Salvadorians and Hondurans, suffer from substantial economic, physical, political and environmental insecurity. The destabilizing influence of U.S. foreign policy decisions in these countries has helped to cultivate the current refugee crisis being played out at the U.S. border and in detainment camps holding Central Americans seeking asylum.

Ironically it was President Eisenhower who warned against corporate influence over foreign affairs in his farewell address where he derided the power of the [Military Industrial Complex](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gg-jvHynP9Y). However, U.S. policymakers refused to listen to Eisenhower’s warnings and are increasingly dependent on private corporations to arm and supply the U.S. military. This, in turn, has grown the influence of U.S. arms makers and defense contractors over the U.S. government.

The influence of corporate arms manufacturers and defense contractors on U.S. foreign policy has only expanded since the start of the War on Terror in 2001. The United States military has depended more and more on private contractors and mercenaries to fight U.S. wars abroad, supply U.S. troops and provide security to high priority officials in warzones. These private contractors and corporations, operating outside the formal military command structure, have presented many [ethical questions](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LaSD8oFBZE) about their place in U.S. foreign policy.

*Assignment: Using evidence from the section “Economic Interests” and the video*[*Árbenz & The CIA, Guatemala* 1950s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyZ0au9s4TU) write *a paragraph explaining the role you think economic interests should play in U.S. foreign policy.*

**Political Interests**

Interest groups often conflict on an issue. In the debate over creating free trade areas such as the [North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)](http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/north-american-free-trade-agreement-nafta), business groups were pitted against U.S. workers and groups dedicated to preserving the environment. In other cases, one interest group seems to dominate a policy area. This has long been the case with the [Israeli-Palestinian conflict](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRYZjOuUnlU), where conservative Jewish-American groups, notably the [American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPgxEkg_OUM) (AIPAC), have been particularly influential. While representing only a small portion of Jews in the United States, AIPAC has used its resources and influence to build relationships with Democrats and Republican to gain bipartisan support for Israel. As a result, Israel remains the largest recipient of U.S. military aid despite the growing concerns about Israel's treatment of Palestinians.

**The Role of the Public**

In the age of the internet and social media, people are able to connect to information unfiltered by corporate press. Increasingly, the public—activists, organizers and everyday people—can elevate an issue and constrain U.S. foreign policy. (Johnstone & Laville, 2010) Still, the U.S. public has always had a role in shaping the stances of the U.S. government around the world. Long conflicts without clear justifications lowers presidential popularity as was true with the Korean War for President Truman, the Vietnam War for President Johnson, and the Iraq War for President George W. Bush. All three saw their political party lose the Presidency when they departed office. Social movements mobilized against these wars and helped to facilitate the defeat of these presidents.

Conflict abroad often arouses frustration from Americans who want the United States to be less active militarily around the world. Many U.S. citizens protest in anger about what they see as the destructive role the U.S. plays globally. Some are upset at the cost of war for U.S. taxpayers. Others protest the curbing of freedoms by the U.S. government in the name of security.

The government often requires a context of conflict and fear to enact laws that limit individual liberties and expand government power. In response to activism against World War I, President Wilson championed the [Espionage and Seditions Acts](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3479)of 1917 and 1918 that made it a crime to use “disloyal” language during the conflict. During WWI, many progressives who had been fighting for racial equity, as well as immigrant and worker rights, were outraged by U.S. attempts to drag them into a foreign conflict that seemed to be about the extension of European empires. With enormous economic, racial and gender inequity U.S. policymakers feared a revolution could consume U.S. society.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqZOQK731hQ

During World War One as a result of the **Espionage and Sedition Acts,** the First Amendment’s guarantee of Freedom of Speech was curbed. The Espionage Act remains on the books, and recently has been used to convict people who release information "with intent or reason to believe that the information is to be used to the injury of the United States, or to the advantage of any foreign nation."

A pattern has developed where U.S. authorities seek to punish U.S. activists who protest or organize to change U.S. foreign policy. This also occurred during the Cold War when suspected communists were seen as disloyal Americans for professing sympathy to the nations and movements that rejected global capitalism dominated by the United States. An accusation of communism got Americans harassed by U.S. authorities and often blacklisted by potential employers. During the Vietnam War police infiltrated anti-war groups. People were sent to jail for refusing to be drafted into the U.S. military and students were killed for protesting the expansion of the conflict into Cambodia. After 9/11, the United States entered into the “War on Terror”, which was opposed by many who saw the conflict as a crusade for Middle Eastern oil. In the fear-soaked atmosphere after the terror attacks, the United States passed the Patriot Act, which allows the government to spy on its citizens without a warrant, which remains largely in effect.

The Obama administration has attacked dissenters of the government’s wartime actions by dusting off the Espionage Act of 1917 and using it to prosecute whistleblowers. Enforcement of the Espionage Act has become popular under the Obama and Trump administrations because of its extremely broad definition of criminality allowing the conviction of leakers and whistleblowers, even when they were acting in the public interest. Famously, the Obama Administration charged **Edward Snowden** under the Espionage Act. Snowden remains in exile in Russia to avoid capture by U.S. authorities for informing U.S. citizens of the ways in which the United States government was spying on them. (Borger, 2013)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hLjuVyIIrs&t=177s

*Assignment: To protect state secrets, should the U.S. government still be using the Espionage Act to prosecute dissent? Why or why not? Use evidence from*[*How WWI Changed America: Citizenship and WWI*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqZOQK731hQ)*,*[*NSA Whistleblower Edward Snowden*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hLjuVyIIrs&t=177s)*and “The Role of the Public” in a one paragraph response.*

**Dissent Still Matters**

Despite the criminalization of dissent by the U.S. government, protest and mass mobilizations can force power brokers to reconsider U.S. positioning on the world stage. Protest eventually pressured U.S. policymakers to end the War in Vietnam. Because of the widespread outrage, the United States has not held a military draft since the conflict ended in the 1970s. The anti-War movement led to congressional investigations that informed new laws curbing the authority of the President to wage war and conduct U.S. foreign policy without oversight.

Similarly, the ambition from some within the George W. Bush and Trump Administrations to go to war with Iran proved politically impossible. The U.S. public was weary of occupying foreign nations after years in Afghanistan and Iraq, and anti-war activists held large demonstrations to denounce the march to war in Iran. While tension remains high between Washington and Tehran, especially after President Trump abandoned the nuclear deal brokered by President Obama, that tension has not led to an invasion.

**Summary**

The President of the United States directs U.S. foreign policy through institutions including the State Department, The Department of Defense, The Department of Commerce and The Central Intelligence Agency. The Constitution empowers Congress to play a very large role in checking the President’s power in regard to Foreign Policy; however, the slow pace at which Congress operates has often positioned the Legislative Branch to investigate already committed wrongs as opposed to preventing them. While granted the power to declare war in the Constitution, in recent years Congress has completely abdicated this responsibility. Congress has not officially declared war since WWII, despite widespread U.S. military engagement throughout the world.

Because of the United States’ status as the most powerful nation in the world, the foreign policy of the United States deeply impacts the global community. Unfortunately for much of the globe, U.S. foreign policy is generally guided by U.S. economic and geopolitical interests, as opposed to improving the lives of people around the world. Overtime social movements have been able to curb some of the ambitions of warmongers within the U.S. government. However, dissent in times of war has time and again been criminalized by the U.S. government, with activists punished for speaking out.

**Assignments**

1. Choose one of these clips. What are the justifications for war articulated by [President Franklin Roosevelt](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lK8gYGg0dkE), [President Lyndon Johnson](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dx8-ffiYyzA&feature=emb_logo) **OR** [President George W. Bush](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vzRMaHCysU)?
2. Given the goals of U.S. foreign policy laid out earlier in the chapter, in a paragraph explain why “blowback” happens. Why people around the world object to U.S. foreign policy aims?
3. Write a letter to a congressperson, one-two paragraphs, either defending or attacking U.S. military spending. Us evidence from “U.S. Military Spending” and the video [Why Does the U.S. Spend So Much on The Military](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvsqkbMkcDY).
4. Given the goals of U.S. foreign policy laid out earlier in the chapter, in a paragraph explain why “blowback” happens. Why people around the world object to U.S. foreign policy aims?
5. In a paragraph answer the following prompt: If you had been in congress during the Iran-Contra affair would have you supported impeaching President Reagan? Why or why not.
6. Using evidence from the section “Economic Interests” and the video [Árbenz & The CIA, Guatemala 1950s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyZ0au9s4TU) write a paragraph explaining the role you think economic interests should play in U.S. foreign policy.
7. To protect state secrets, should the U.S. government still be using the Espionage Act to prosecute dissent? Why or why not? Use evidence from [How WWI Changed America: Citizenship and WWI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqZOQK731hQ), [NSA Whistleblower Edward Snowden](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hLjuVyIIrs&t=177s) and “The Role of the Public” in a one paragraph response.

**Key Terms**

* *State Department*
* *Department of Defense*
* *Coups*
* *Blowback*
* *The Military Industrial Complex*
* *Espionage Act*
* *Edward Snowden*

**Resources**

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