

# 47. Foreign Policies



A FOREIGN policy is the kind of relations that a government seeks to have with other nations and the means it uses to achieve them. It is a goal, a desired condition of its affairs with a foreign country or with the world. It is also the means, such as a loan or an alliance, that it employs in order to reach the goal. Today the formation and execution of its foreign policies are generally regarded as the most critical tasks facing the American government. No other problems concern the lives, fortunes, and beliefs of the people as strongly as war and peace, international communism, and world prosperity. At the same time, the problems of foreign affairs are most complex; there are many disputes among American voters and leaders regarding what should be the goals of the nation in the world. Furthermore, the choice of means for carrying out any policies range from complete isolation from the world to total economic, diplomatic, and military intervention throughout the globe. At no given moment will one find people in unanimous agreement upon either the ends or the means of foreign policy. What one does find are persistent and widespread tendencies of

the American government to seek certain foreign objectives and to use certain means to these ends.

## THE ESSENTIALS OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

The foreign policy of the United States is based generally upon three political goals: (1) self-defense; (2) peace; and (3) spreading the American way of life. These goals have often been concrete enough to be considered the actual leading principles of American foreign policy. They have carried substantial weight with Americans since the United States won its independence from England in 1783. Each has expanded and contracted in importance and vitality from time to time, and each has been affected by the conditions of the other two principles at any given moment.

### *Self-defense*

Like every other country in the world, the United States is eminently concerned with its welfare, its freedom and its safety from attack by other countries. As the United States has grown from thirteen States to forty-eight, as means of transportation and communication have grown more rapid, and as weapons have become more destructive, the United States has had to modify its devices for assuring its own defense. To this time, no effective means of insuring an adequate and eternal defense have been found; the irony of the history of the desire for defense is that America, risen from a fourth-rate power in 1790 to the greatest power in the world today, has never before been so gravely concerned about its capacity to defend itself against a foreign enemy.

*Continentalism:* One historic component in the defense policy of the United States has been continentalism. The doctrine of continentalism holds that the real interests of the United States are confined to the Western Hemisphere; indeed, some interpreters would restrict American interests to the territory of the United States and its possessions. This is the oldest doctrine of American foreign policy, originating in the first days of the Republic. It obtained its classic statement in the Farewell Address of George Washington, who asserted that the United States had interests separate from those of the rest of the world and that the United States in the future must "avoid entangling alliances" with the countries of Europe. When Washington enunciated this doctrine he did so not with the expectation of establishing a permanent concept but under the prodding of contemporary events; at this epoch Europe was being rocked by the wars of the French Revolution, and the United States was split between those who would honor, and those who would disregard, the Franco-American alliance made in 1778.

However, this doctrine satisfied the needs and aims of the United States during most of the nineteenth century; even today it is a most important element in American foreign policy. It was an ideal principle for a nation strung out along a coast with a vast hinterland to exploit. Under its aegis

the United States purchased Louisiana; fought the War of 1812 against Great Britain; annexed Florida, Texas, and the Oregon Territory; drove Mexico out of the Southwest, and bought Alaska from Russia. The notion of continentalism is shared both by those who believe that the United States should turn its back upon the world, and by those who propose many other international involvements. In the former case, continentalism is a kind of isolationism that regards the concerns of non-American nations as not being immediately associated with the security and welfare of the United States. The non-isolationists hold that continentalism comes first, but that other international relations are also vital.

*The Monroe Doctrine:* The Monroe Doctrine, enunciated by President James Monroe in 1823, holds that European nations must not meddle with the domestic affairs of American countries, and that they must not seek to obtain further territorial possessions in the New World. The Monroe Doctrine was also based upon contemporary circumstances, the apparent aim of France and Spain to restore Spanish rule to the former colonies in Latin America that had just achieved independence. The Doctrine is a logically consistent expansion of continentalism; its premise was that the security of the United States required that European states should not have bases in South or Central America from which they might launch attacks on the United States.

The Monroe Doctrine since its enunciation has received two major amendments. The first of these, termed the Roosevelt Corollary, was stated by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1904. Essentially, it holds that in the event some nation in the Western Hemisphere shows itself incapable of self-government, if particularly it cannot pay its international obligations, the United States has the right to intercede so as to establish a government that would comply with the rules of international morality. Subsequently, to forestall European intervention, the United States occupied, first the Dominican Republic, then Nicaragua, two countries that had been unable to pay their debts or to protect the assets of American investors; the United States reorganized their fiscal system and administered their revenues until they were again solvent.

The other important amendment to the Monroe Doctrine was the Good Neighbor Policy, proclaimed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1934 but inaugurated in fact if not in name by President Hoover. The Good Neighbor Policy was designed to create better feelings among the American nations; in a fashion it was aimed at superseding the Roosevelt Corollary. Certain Latin-American powers, especially the Argentine, resented the Roosevelt Corollary as a doctrine that subjected them to the control of the United States and in effect cast a shadow over their independence. The guiding principle of the Good Neighbor Policy is that all American nations are in law equal, and that the United States shall not view other American countries as its protectorates. An important purpose of the Policy has been to unite the Americas in the face of external aggression. The Policy has taken institutional form in the Organization of American States, the successor to the Pan American Union (see Figure 121, pp. 760-1).

*The Defense of Non-Communist Asia:* Today the United States has committed itself to the defense of all the countries in Asia that are not now dominated by the Soviet Union. At one time American policy with respect to Asia was limited to the protection of American markets in the Orient, according to the so-called "Open Door" Policy (1899). The role of the United States in the Far East was, however, sufficiently annoying to the Japanese military and economic leaders that in 1941 they seized the initiative and launched an all-embracing attack upon Western interests in the Far East. Yet after the end of World War II, when China had been freed from Japanese control, the United States did not act decisively to prevent the communists from overrunning the country.

Finally, in 1950 the United States spearheaded the action of the United Nations to block the communist North Koreans from absorbing non-communist South Korea; and in 1953 it renewed its material support to the anti-communist, pro-American Nationalist Government of China which the communists had forced to seek asylum on the island of Formosa. As matters stand today, the Open Door Policy, an economic concept, has been supplanted by the military concept that the western defense line of the United States is made up of the Philippines, Formosa, Okinawa, and Japan—all of them together comprising a string of islands off the eastern coast of Asia. In addition, the United States in 1954 established a South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) to protect these and other non-communist Asian nations from communist aggression (see Figure 121, pp. 760-1).

*Anti-communism:* Anti-communism has been the leading element in the foreign policy of the United States since shortly after the end of World War II. The principle of anti-communism is directed against the Soviet Union and its satellites in Europe, and against China and its satellites in Asia. It is based on the recognition that communism is a world movement aimed at the overthrow of all non-communist governments, and that the United States is the chief target of Soviet rulers. Under these conditions the tasks of the United States have been to procure allies and to help in reconstructing the world economy, so as to confront the Soviet Union and its allies on at least an equal basis.

The true extent of anti-communism in American foreign policy is impossible to determine save as events occur and the nation has to choose a position. Some Americans would define the policy to embrace a universal attack from every quarter to eliminate communism as an effective force. Others are quite content to let communism triumph everywhere save in the United States. A third very large group, which probably dominates the actual foreign operations of the government, moves back and forth from aggressive anti-communism to passive anti-communism. As a result, at one moment the American policy seems to be one of "appeasement," that is, of letting the communist nations take whatever they can short of assault upon America; then at another moment, the policy seems to be one of increasing pressures and restriction of communism by all means, including the threat of war over "the next" movement of communist forces into a non-communist foreign territory.

Between 1954 and 1956, for example, the policy of "co-existence" was being debated; England, France, and other allies of the United States were joining with Soviet Russians and Chinese in extolling the notion that the two different worlds might live side by side indefinitely. However, in America, many considered co-existence as synonymous with appeasement and a decline in American vigilance. It appeared that the American government was unwilling to define strictly its degree of anti-communism and was unable to do so because of the shifting currents of official and public opinion in America. However, one should not conclude either that other countries were immune to these difficulties—including even the Soviet Union—or that the foreign policy emerging from such uncertainty was less effective than that being pursued by the allies or the enemies of the United States.

### **Peace**

Although often bellicose itself, the government of the United States has sought to encourage peace by setting an example of peaceful relations that other nations might well emulate. Washington emphasized fostering peace by example in his Farewell Address. One of the most remarkable phenomena in present world politics is the almost undefended three-thousand-mile frontier between Canada and the United States extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The United States has provided further illustrations of the peaceful settlement of disputes through its various agreements with Great Britain, especially the satisfaction of the *Alabama* claims after the American Civil War resulting from the depredations of a sea-raider, the *Alabama*, built for the Confederate States by the British.

Beginning in the twentieth century the United States has concerned itself with the maintenance of peace in Europe. For example, in 1906, under Theodore Roosevelt the United States took part in the Algeciras Conference, which was summoned to settle differences between Germany and France over Morocco. The United States also took part in the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907, which had gathered to seek means for resolving international disputes by methods short of war. The United States also negotiated many treaties with various countries arranging for the arbitration of international questions. After World War I the United States took a leading role in drafting the Pact of Paris, or Kellogg-Briand Pact, of 1928, whose signatories renounced war "as an instrument of national policy."

After each world war of the twentieth century the victorious powers have created an international organization for the keeping of peace: the League of Nations after World War I and the United Nations after World War II. The United States did not join the League of Nations; the Senate found several reasons for objecting to it, most prominent of which was that apparently membership in the League might compel the United States to engage in war without any action on the part of the United States government, thus taking the power of declaring war away from Congress.

By contrast, the United States has joined the United Nations; it is the seat of the United Nations, and it is very active in United Nations affairs. Since the USSR has demonstrated a unique notion of what a just peace

should be, and since it has employed the United Nations as a sounding-board for its beliefs, the United States has tended to rely on other mechanisms for avoiding war, such as bilateral and multilateral alliances. The fact is that today the United States government regards only one country, the Soviet Union, as a continuous threat to peace.

America has often been viewed abroad as essentially a warlike and imperialist nation. It is known to much of the world by two things: the atomic bomb and Wall Street. Are all these people deluded? Many Americans think not, as shown by the fact that the government for many years has been under attack for aggressiveness and economic exploitation even at home. How then can it also be said that peace is a major principle of American foreign policy?

The riddle posed by these questions is not difficult to explain if one considers that the American public, as described in an early chapter, is not a single, unanimous body, but is a collection of publics, each with different interests. To begin with, one of the most persistent and profound splits in the American public is that which divides a very strong and vocal pacifist sentiment from an equally strong and brash nationalist spirit. Each wants to go its own way, and by so doing makes the task of government difficult. Both beliefs are strong; both are American; and their existence cannot be denied. Knowing these facts, one can think about the foreign policy of the United States with less confusion and doubt; many foreigners and many Americans keep running to some political oculist because they think they are seeing America double, when they would do better to become adjusted to a double America.

### *Spreading the American way of life*

A third constant stream in American foreign policy has been the effort to spread the American way of life around the earth; this is expressed in the brash nationalism and aggressiveness just mentioned. The American people and their government have been convinced since the American Revolution that the American way of life is unique. This is undoubtedly correct. The thirteen colonies, with the assistance of several European powers, broke away from one of the greatest colonial empires of its day and a few years thereafter created an unexampled government under a written constitution. The United States under this regime was able to expand to the Pacific Ocean, to unearth and exploit a superb endowment of natural resources, and to create the highest standard of living in the world and the most comprehensive industrial system. It is little wonder that Americans ascribed much of their good fortune in international affairs to their political system of a representative government under the rule of law and an economic system permitting great latitude to individual judgment and initiative; it is also little wonder that Americans, particularly with their merchandising talents, should strive to have these principles accepted by all countries.

*Spreading the American Political System:* The American people, or at least certain groups in American society, have often tried to persuade other countries to adopt governmental structures akin to that of the United States.

In the 1790's, the adherents of Thomas Jefferson professed to see in the French Revolution a movement analogous to the process that had brought the American Declaration of Independence. The Monroe Doctrine was motivated partly by the wish of the American government to see republicanism triumph in Latin America. Indeed, until recent years Americans have applauded virtually every attempt by a colonial people to achieve independence; of late, however, they have sometimes hesitated to support aspirations of colonial people, as in the case of Morocco, because by so doing they might alienate an ally—in this case, France. In 1918, President Wilson refused to negotiate with the Kaiser's government, and would not discuss peace until the empire had been supplanted by a republic. After each world war the United States government exhorted all nations to install constitutional, representative polities.

*Cultural Affinities:* Cultural affinities have been of some consequence in the foreign policy of the United States; it has taken action sometimes for reasons of sentiment and respect for certain nations that it would not have taken for reasons of power and profit. This behavior is not unique. The Greek city-states had different rules of war for conflict among themselves than for struggles against non-Greek, "barbarian" peoples. The Crusades of Christians against "infidels," the wars between Catholic Spain and France on the one hand and Protestant England and Holland on the other, and the wars of the French Revolution against non-republican governments, were all justified by cultural concepts. Of course, many diplomats of the past, such as Catholic King Francis I of France, who formed an alliance with the Moslem Turks, and the Catholic Cardinal Richelieu, who united France with Protestant Sweden, were not impressed by cultural or ideological similarities. It is not surprising, then, that the United States should base its foreign policy partly upon cultural affinities, and yet also be to a certain extent free of their restraints.

The most important cultural affinity of the United States has been that with Great Britain. The language of each nation is English. The government in each nation, although the British is a monarchy and the American a republic, is based upon constitutionalism. Almost half the people of the United States are descended in part or wholly from British forebears. Communications between the two countries have been frequent and rich. The two governments also have a tradition of peacefully solving their disputes. The record of 1775 and of 1812 is not sufficient to undo these cultural ties. The foreign affairs leadership in the United States, save perhaps that in Congress, regards the Anglo-American alliance as almost unbreakable, in spite of the fact that American and English interests clash in various corners of the world. The British Conservative Party leadership has the same view of the tie. The United States tends to be on amicable terms with all members of the British Commonwealth whose predominant tongue is English—Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; indeed, it has replaced their mother country in some respects.

America has also a cultural affinity with France, based partly upon the influence of eighteenth-century French philosophy in the British North

American colonies, the republican structure of the French government, the revolutionary traditions of that government, and the fact that France supported the colonies in their war for independence. Correspondingly, the United States manifests great friendship for France, although French and American interests are at odds in various regions. The foreign policy of the United States is generally favorable also toward the small countries of western Europe—the Scandinavian nations, Ireland, the Low Countries, and Switzerland—partly because of their common attachment to peace, their representative governments, and their backgrounds of striving for national independence or of resisting powerful aggressors. A friendly concern is expressed for Israel because of its ideals and institutions, and because of the kinship felt for the Jews among many Americans. Moreover, especially because of the large Roman Catholic element in America, the government is inclined to assist all anti-communist forces in Italy.

Germany seems to be an exception to the general point being made. A moment of reflection will bring an explanation. Germany in the twentieth century has suffered two bellicose governments, the Kaiser's and the Nazis'. In each case, its targets were Britain and France; moreover, the Nazis' violence against other European groups, such as the Jews and Poles, made them millions of enemies in America. Hence a strong cultural regard for Germany in the United States has had to give way before other policies and friendships. Yet one notes that the United States has been generous to Germany after its defeat in both World War I and World War II. Toward most other nations in the world the foreign policy of the United States does not show any pronounced leaning that is based chiefly upon likenesses of ideas, though no doubt Europe and Latin America command generally more affection and interest in the United States than Asia does.

*Spreading the American Economic System:* Most of the activity connected with spreading the American economic system has occurred since the end of World War II. It has been based on the idea that this system assures a people against poverty, and that a defense against poverty is one of the surest barriers to communism. This logic contributed to the Marshall Plan and has prompted a number of other undertakings such as the Point Four Program, whereby the United States is attempting to bring industry to technologically retarded areas. (See pp. 755-6 below.) A noteworthy feature of American economic intervention in the world lately has been its softened tone of anti-socialism; most American efforts have aimed at avoiding controversy over fundamental principles and have stressed the improvement of industrial and agricultural techniques.

## QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS

1. Name and describe briefly the three major principles of American foreign policy presented in this chapter.

2. What parallels can be drawn between the process of international politics, as discussed in the last section of this book, and the domestic political process of American government? Explain your answer.

3. In what ways can the policy of self-defense conflict with the policy of peace?
4. In what ways can the policy of peace conflict with the policy of spreading the American system of government?
5. Describe the transformation of the Open Door Policy into a military policy.
6. What is meant by the American policy of anti-communism?
7. In what ways do American cultural affinities with western Europe (including England) play a part in the foreign policies of the United States?
8. What are the foreign economic interests of the United States? Which among these is or are important for military reasons?
9. Describe briefly the advantages of the geographical position of the United States.
10. What do you consider to be the condition of American morale in foreign affairs today?