

U.S. FOREIGN POLICY
INFLUENCES AND
ADAPTATION



INTRODUCTION:

WHAT IS FOREIGN POLICY?

Foreign policy refers to the strategies and decisions a country uses to interact with the rest of the world. The United States uses foreign policy to promote peace, support allies, protect its economy, and respond to global issues like war, climate change, or humanitarian crises. In this lesson, we'll explore who influences U.S. foreign policy, how global challenges shape decisions, and how the U.S. government adjusts its strategies over time.



INTERNAL INFLUENCES ON **FOREIGN POLICY**



Many people within the U.S. government shape foreign policy, not just the president. Key advisors include the National Security Advisor, who leads the National Security Council, and the Secretary of State, who manages diplomacy. The Secretary of Defense oversees military policy, while intelligence is guided by the CIA Director and the Director of National Intelligence.

Congress also plays an important role. Committees like the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee review foreign policy issues, approve budgets, and influence major decisions.



INTEREST GROUPS & **POLICY INFLUENCE**

Interest groups are organizations that try to shape public policy to support their goals. Some focus on foreign issues—like environmental protection, international trade, or human rights. They use lobbying, media campaigns, and public pressure to influence lawmakers.



For example, an environmental group might support treaties to reduce global emissions, while an industry group might push back against international regulations that affect profits. These groups don't make policy—but they often help shape it.

GLOBAL ORGANIZATIONS **COOPERATION**

Foreign policy is also shaped by external organizations that help manage global challenges.

The U.S. works with these organizations through funding, diplomacy, and agreements. These partnerships influence how the U.S. responds to global needs.



1

The United Nations (UN) promotes peace, security, and human rights across nations.

2

The **World Bank** provides financial aid and loans to developing countries to fight poverty and support growth.

3

The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** supports economic stability by helping countries manage financial crises.

FOREIGN POLICY **ISSUES**

Many foreign policy decisions respond to global issues like:



Economic problems: global recessions, trade disputes, and financial market stability.



Humanitarian crises: disasters, refugee emergencies, or disease outbreaks.



Environmental challenges: climate change, pollution, and natural resource scarcity.

The U.S. often provides foreign aid, negotiates international deals, or leads global efforts to solve these problems. These actions build alliances and help protect long-term national interests.

PUBLIC OPINION AFFECTS **PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL**

Public opinion plays a big role in shaping how presidents act, especially during global events. When a crisis happens, approval ratings often rise —this is called the **rally phenomenon**.

Presidents use polls to guide decisions or adjust their message. If public support is high, they may move forward confidently. If it drops, they may change course or explain their choices differently.





ADAPTING TO **INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES**

The world is constantly changing, and U.S. foreign policy has to adapt.

After the Cold War, the focus shifted to terrorism, then to economic globalization, and more recently, to environmental cooperation and competition with rising powers like China. Leaders often need to adjust their strategies in response to new threats, shifting alliances, or public pressure.

Whether through diplomacy, aid, military action, or trade, foreign policy evolves to protect the national interest in a complex world.



A GLOBAL **BALANCING ACT**



U.S. foreign policy is not created by one person or one issue. It is shaped by a range of internal and external forces—from government advisors and Congress to global institutions, public opinion, and international events. As the world changes, the United States must find new ways to lead, cooperate, and respond to the needs of both its citizens and the international community.