

Foreign Relations of the United States

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"America...goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. She will commend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example."

-John Quincy Adams, 6th President of the United States

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HISTORY OF U.S. FOREIGN RELATIONS

The official goals of United States foreign policy are described by the U.S. Department of State as being “to create a more secure, democratic, and prosperous world for the benefit of the American people and the international community.” Over time, this approach to foreign relations has been the subject of much debate, criticism and praise both domestically and abroad.

American foreign relations first emerged on the world stage with the “Olive Branch Policy,” an attempt on the part of the newly formed United States to reconcile with Great Britain during the American Revolution. At the conclusion of the war, the newly established country increased its trade and political relations with various nations abroad, and thus America’s international policy began to take shape.

Numerous defining moments in American foreign relations have occurred in various stages of its diplomatic history. From the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 that proclaimed European powers could no longer colonize or interfere with the affairs of the newly independent nations of the Americas, to the conclusion of World War I which saw the return to “isolationist” policies, and the Cold War which focused on “containment,” America quickly became and continues to be a major player in world affairs.

Today, the United States has economic and diplomatic interests in every region of the globe. As of 2019, only four nations do not have formal diplomatic relationships with the U.S.: Bhutan, North Korea, Syria, and Iran. Because the United States is one of the largest diplomatic presences of any nation in the world, its foreign relations with other countries will continue to be one of the most critical topics in media and politics across the globe.

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