

## Summary

### 12.1 Defining Foreign Policy

As the president, Congress, and others carry out U.S. foreign policy in the areas of trade, diplomacy, defense, intelligence, foreign aid, and global environmental policy, they pursue a variety of objectives and face a multitude of challenges. The four main objectives of U.S. foreign policy are the protection of the United States and its citizens and allies, the assurance of continuing access to international resources and markets, the preservation of a balance of power in the world, and the protection of human rights and democracy.

The challenges of the massive and complex enterprise of U.S. foreign policy are many. First, there exists no true world-level authority dictating how the nations of the world should relate to one another. A second challenge is the widely differing views among countries about the role of government in people's lives. A third is other countries' varying ideas about the appropriate form of government. A fourth challenge is that many new foreign policy issues transcend borders. Finally, the varying conditions of the countries in the world affect what is possible in foreign policy and diplomatic relations.

### 12.2 Foreign Policy Instruments

U.S. foreign policy outputs vary considerably. At one end of the continuum are sharply focused outputs such as the presidential use of military force via a specific drone strike on an enemy target, or the forging of a presidential summit with another country's president or head of state. At the other end of the spectrum are broadly focused outputs that typically bring more involvement from the Congress and other world leaders, such as the process to formalize a multilateral treaty on the global environment or the process to finalize the U.S. diplomatic budget each fiscal year. Broadly focused outputs typically take more time to decide, involve more nation-states, are more expensive, and are quite difficult to reverse once in place. Sharply focused outputs are faster, tend to be led by the president, and are easier for future policymakers to undo.

### 12.3 Institutional Relations in Foreign Policy

Many aspects of foreign policymaking rely on the powers shared between Congress and the president, including foreign policy appointments and the foreign affairs budget. Within the executive branch, an array of foreign policy leaders report directly to the president. Foreign policy can at times seem fragmented and diffuse because of the complexity of actors and topics. However, the president is clearly the leader, having both formal authority and the ability to delegate to Congress, as explained in the two presidencies thesis. With this leadership, presidents at times can make foreign policymaking quick and decisive, especially when it calls for executive agreements and the military use of force.

## 12.4 Approaches to Foreign Policy

Classic theories of foreign policy divide into the isolationist camp and the internationalist camp. The use of hard versus soft power comes into play in the internationalist route. Neoconservatism, a more recent school of thought in foreign policy, takes the view that the United States should go it alone as a single superpower, retreating from foreign involvement with the exception of trade and economic policy.

In the end, the complexity of international relationships, combined with a multifaceted decision-making process and a multiplicity of actors, leads to a U.S. foreign policy approach that uses a bit of all the schools of thought. The United States is being neoconservative when drone strikes are carried out unilaterally within the boundaries of another sovereign nation. It is being internationalist when building a coalition on the Iran nuclear deal or when participating in NATO initiatives.

### Key Terms

#### **balance of power**

a situation in which no one nation or region is much more powerful militarily than any other in the world

#### **balance of trade**

the relationship between a country's inflow and outflow of goods

#### **Cold War**

the period from shortly after World War II until approximately 1989–1990 when advanced industrial democracies divided behind the two superpowers (East: Soviet Union, West: United States) and the fear of nuclear war abounded

#### **congressional executive agreement**

an international agreement that is not a treaty and that is negotiated by the president and approved by a simple majority of the House and Senate

#### **containment**

the effort by the United States and Western European allies, begun during the Cold War, to prevent the spread of communism

#### **diplomacy**

the establishment and maintenance of a formal relationship between countries

#### **economic sanction**

a situation in which a country or multiple countries suspend trade or other financial relationships with another country in order to signal their displeasure with the behavior of the other country

#### **foreign policy**

a government's goals in dealing with other countries or regions and the strategy used to achieve them

**free trade**

a policy in which a country allows the unfettered flow of goods and services between itself and other countries

**hard power**

the use or threat of military power to influence the behavior of another country

**isolationism**

a foreign policy approach that advocates a nation's staying out of foreign entanglements and keeping to itself

**liberal internationalism**

a foreign policy approach of becoming proactively engaged in world affairs by cooperating in a community of nations

**neo-isolationism**

a policy of distancing the United States from the United Nations and other international organizations, while still participating in the world economy

**neoconservatism**

the belief that, rather than exercising restraint, the United States should aggressively use its might to promote its values and ideals around the world

**North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**

a cross-national military organization with bases in Belgium and Germany formed to maintain stability in Europe

**protectionism**

a policy in which a country does not permit other countries to sell goods and services within its borders or charges them very high tariffs (import taxes) to do so

**selective engagement**

a policy of retaining a strong military presence and remaining engaged across the world

**soft power**

nonmilitary tools used to influence another country, such as economic sanctions

**sole executive agreement**

an international agreement that is not a treaty and that is negotiated and approved by the president acting alone

**treaty**

an international agreement entered by the United States that requires presidential negotiation with other nation(s), consent by two-thirds of the Senate, and final ratification by the president

**two presidencies thesis**

the thesis by Wildavsky that there are two distinct presidencies, one for foreign and one for domestic policy, and that presidents are more successful in foreign than domestic policy

**United Nations (UN)**

an international organization of nation-states that seeks to promote peace, international relations, and economic and environmental programs