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Roots of U.S. Foreign and Defense Policy

- ❑ Isolationism in the Early Republic
- ❑ The United States as an Emerging Power
- ❑ World War I and the Interwar Years

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When we talk of foreign and defense policy we need to define exactly what we mean. Foreign policy relates to how one country builds relationships with other countries to protect its national interests. Defense policy, on the other hand, is the collection of strategies a country uses to protect itself from its enemies. In this section we will look at both of these policies and their roots in American history.

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Isolationism in the Early Republic

- ❑ Great Britain v. France
- ❑ Isolationism
- ❑ Monroe Doctrine

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The largest foreign policy challenge of the young republic was charting a safe course between European giants Great Britain and France. This was complicated by the fact that Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson disagreed; Hamilton wanted policies that favored the British, while Jefferson favored France.

Given these conflicts, young America, led by George Washington, embraced a policy of neutrality and isolationism. Washington, in his farewell address, urged Americans to steer clear of "entangling alliances."




When peace was established between France and Great Britain, Americans feared one or both countries would try to re-establish power in the Western Hemisphere. The Monroe Doctrine declared that any attempt to expand in this area would be seen as a danger to American safety.

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The U. S. as an Emerging Power

- Trade Policy and Commerce
 - Tariffs
 - [Most favored nation status](#)
- Continental Expansion and Manifest Destiny
- Dominance over the Western Hemisphere
 - [Roosevelt Corollary](#)



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So, neutrality was the way early America did business. When it came to trade and commerce, the U.S. treated foreign traders the same way the traders treated Americans. Those countries that received most favored nation status were guaranteed the lowest tariffs on their imports. This lasted until the end of the Napoleonic Wars, when global trading increased.

Meanwhile, the U.S. was expanding across the continent by acquiring vast tracts of land. Manifest Destiny, the belief that God intended the U.S. to stretch from sea to sea, drove this expansion. By the the 20th century, the U.S. was clearly dominating the Western Hemisphere.

The Roosevelt Corollary revised the Monroe Doctrine; it stated that the U.S. was responsible for the stability of Latin America and the Caribbean. In terms of Asia, we took different paths for different countries. We sought open door policies for China, but tried to contain Japan through a series of international agreements.



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World War I & the Interwar Years

- ▣ U.S. initially neutral
- ▣ German submarine warfare
- ▣ League of Nations
- ▣ Disarmament and Isolationism



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The United States initially remained neutral when World War I broke out. America was a nation of European immigrants, and so many were deeply divided on the issue.

But when German submarines sank U.S. ships carrying supplies to Great Britain and France, President Woodrow Wilson declared in 1917 that the U.S. would fight "to make the world safe for democracy."

Wilson succeeded in establishing a League of Nations based on the principle of "collective security," that an attack on one nation was an attack on all nations, but he failed to gain support at home and the United States did not join. The time between the two world wars was defined both by disarmament—getting other countries to limit arms—and by isolationism.

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World War II and Its Aftermath

- ▣ U.N. Security Council
- ▣ President Franklin D. Roosevelt
- ▣ Economic Peace
 - General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade



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The U.S. entered World War II in 1941, after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Once the war was over, we helped create the United Nations, which replaced the League of Nations, and became permanent members of the Security Council.


During this time, President Franklin D. Roosevelt took an active role in diplomacy by engineering conferences with world leaders. Americans also sought to develop instruments of economic peace to encourage and manage global trade and finance. Thus, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade were established.



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Exit Question **18**

How did the philosophy of United States change dramatically with World War I?



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