

# Foreign Policy-Making Processes in XX-XXI Centuries: Theoretical and Practical Background on the Example of the USA

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## Abstract

“Avoid entangling alliances”- these words were formulated by George Washington in 1789 and contained a message to the country to respect and regard other nations. Those words shaped United States foreign policy for more than a century.

Today, as with all policy making, many people and organizations have a hand in setting United States foreign policy, but the President almost always has the primary responsibility for shaping it.

The article aims to represent the political system of the U.S. and its implications toward foreign-policy making provisions, the key members of the foreign policy team players, the missions and goals of the USA government in foreign-policy decision making process.

**Keywords:** Foreign policy, government officials, hard power, policy making provisions, policy makers, president, soft power

## Introduction

The foreign policy of the United States is the way of communications with other nations and setting standards of communications for its organizations, corporations and individual citizens of the United States.

Foreign policy making process is continuous and permanent. Decision makers don't set policy in solitude and separately. There is a tight link between them. Often, a decision is made within a complex environment where the number of options available are limited by a multitude of factors.

The officially stated goals of the foreign policy of the United States, as mentioned in the Foreign Policy Agenda of the Department of State, are *“to build and sustain a more democratic, secure, and prosperous world for the benefit of the American people and the international community.”*

As Thomas R. Pickering, under Secretary of State for Political Affairs from date x to date writes, “International relations today have become increasingly more complex and involve a wide range of issues that, in the 19th century, were never seen as major questions of foreign policy” (The making of U.S foreign policy, 2000, p. 5). He also claims that the most influential players in the development of U.S. foreign policy are the President and the Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor to the President, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and,

of course, the Director of Central Intelligence, who provides the other key members of the foreign policy team with the latest information on world events. These officials constitute the core of the National Security Council, which is the nation's highest-level foreign policy-making body. And the Secretary of State takes very seriously the primary role of being the principal advisor to the President on foreign policy issues.

## Institutional Cooperation in the Process of Formulating Public Policy

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas R. Pickering explains how the roles of officials responsible for policy making process, are overlapped and complemented: “The President and the Secretary of State have to give the most comprehensive consideration to foreign policy issues because of their unparalleled responsibilities at the apex of the U.S. foreign policymaking apparatus. The Secretary of Defense often brings an added dimension to the review of national security questions, and the National Security Advisor to the President coordinates and integrates the activities and functions of all of the members of the foreign policy team. He of course intimately understands the President's foreign policy priorities and often initiates insightful debates about that agenda during those meetings of the foreign

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policy principals which the President does not attend" (The making of U.S foreign policy, 2000).

Thomas R. Pickering thinks that the National Security Council team is cooperative. They have not allowed personal feelings to intrude on the national interest and have to work very hard to maintain the element of confidentiality as they deal with issues over a long period of time.

He also outlines the major role of Congress in the entire foreign policy establishment. As he mentions: "it takes very seriously the Congressional role on any foreign policy issue that comes up for consideration" (The making of U.S foreign policy, 2000, p. 5).

Thomas R. Pickering divides Congressional consideration into two sets:

-The first deals to policy, particularly how the Congress vocalize its attitude and react to issues from policy perspective.

- Secondly, Thomas R. Pickering highlights the important role of the Congress in providing funding for government programs. As the National Security Council claims, it also takes a decisive role in annual budget process and on emergency basis through supplemental appropriation.

Thomas R. Pickering also defines the President's contribution in problem solving process, as President consults with Congress and adds the importance on the final decision. As about Secretary, he also spends a very large portion of time conferring with senior Members of the Congress about particular issues.

He believes that for all policy-makers, the ability - to think "out of the box" is critical. To try to get to new dimensions of a solution to a problem is often one of the most interesting and important challenges.

In foreign policy making process, outsiders have often become insiders. Many of the most important government officials come from the private sector, serve for a few years, and then return to universities, research institutes, the media, business, or law firms. They continue to comment on and seek to influence the course of U.S. foreign relations from their positions outside the government. "Outsiders have regular opportunities to influence the course of public affairs. Government officials constantly are able to measure and refresh their views with the help of the most thoughtful, experienced, and committed members of the public. People outside the government who are interested in foreign affairs have a dense web of outlets to use in helping policy-makers to set the diplomatic agenda and adopt specific policies for implementation", says Robert Schulzinger (The making of U.S foreign policy, 2000, p. 49).

The decentralization of foreign policy-making in the United States "reflects the growth of the U.S. government and its increasing accessibility to outside interests," says Stephen Wayne, professor of government at Georgetown University and an expert on the American presidency. Foreign policy is being "debated and conducted for the most part by more people with substantive training and experience in foreign affairs from both the public and private sectors," he says.

"When people think of foreign policy-making in the United States, they usually think of the president. After all, presidents have been the chief architects and implementers of American foreign policy since the beginning of the republic. The framers of the U.S. Constitution were mindful of the advantages that the presidency brought to this endeavor: a hierarchical institution with a single head, the one institution that would be in continuous tenure, and the one that could act with the greatest "energy, dispatch, and responsibility" (The making of U.S foreign policy, 2000, p. 25).

### Historical Background of Policy Making

As Stephen Wayne believes, divided powers require institutional cooperation to formulate public policy. That is why the framers sought to establish the Senate, the smaller of the two legislative houses, as an advisory body to assist the president in making foreign policy. Both the treaty-making and appointment provisions require the Senate's "advice and consent." He chooses examples from American history. "However, when the country's first president, George Washington, tried to seek the Senate's advice on a treaty that his administration wished to negotiate with native peoples who lived in the western part of the state of Georgia, he found the Senate slow to respond and members' advice insipid at best. Instead of returning to the Senate for foreign policy recommendations, Washington turned instead to the principal heads of his executive departments, a group James Madison termed the president's cabinet. The term stuck, and so did the practice of using the cabinet as an advisory body for foreign and domestic affairs. Beginning with Washington, presidents became the chief foreign policy-makers and their secretaries of state their principal advisers and administrators for that policy" (The making of U.S foreign policy, 2000, p. 25).

The Senate continued to ratify treaties, but presidents rarely sought its institutional advice. Nonetheless, about 70 percent of the treaties they submitted to the Senate gained ratification with little or no modification. Throughout the 19th century and into the 20th, presidents dominated the foreign policy-making process. They received ambassadors, recognized countries, and entered into agreements, short of formal treaties, with their executive counterparts in other countries. As commanders in chief, presidents also positioned armed forces to defend American lives and interests. President Thomas Jefferson ordered the Navy and Marines to retaliate against the Barbary pirates, who threatened American shipping. President James Polk directed the Army into disputed territory with Mexico to reinforce what Texans considered to be their rightful border. President Abraham Lincoln called up the militia and instituted a blockade of the South. Congress could have opposed these presidential actions but chose not to do so. When a policy was unsuccessful, however, members of Congress felt free to condemn it, as they often did. Only in the areas of trade and tariffs did Congress play an active policy-setting role.

"U.S. foreign policy emerges from a dialogue between public officials...and private citizens," says Robert Schulzinger, a professor of history at the University of Col-

orado at Boulder and author of eight books on the history of U.S. foreign relations. "Government officials constantly are able to measure and refresh their views with the help of the most thoughtful, experienced, and committed members of the public," he says (*The making of U.S foreign policy*, 2000, p. 27). He claims that, foreign policy of the United States can never be understood by looking solely at the government. Throughout American history, and especially in the 55 years since the end of World War II, men and women working outside the government have played major roles in shaping the contours of U.S. relations with the rest of the world. They have done so through writing, teaching, and appealing directly to Congress and the executive branch. They have worked through the political process to elect new administrations with different points of view.

### What is Soft-Power Capability and How Does it Impact on Foreign Policy?

"What is power, and why does it matter? I define power as the ability to affect others to get the things you want. You can do that in three ways: you can use coercion, sticks; you can use payments, carrots; or you can use attraction and persuasion, soft power. In the twenty-first century, the ability to combine these as smart power will be one of the main challenges not just for the United States but for any actor in international politics. Today we are seeing two big shifts in how power is used in international politics and world affairs. These shifts, which are the result of the information revolution and globalization, are power transition among states and power diffusion from states to non-state actors" (Nye, 2011, p. 6).

Hard power has been the traditional form of foreign policy tool, but in the 21st Century, soft power has been emerging according to some scholars. Many scholars have studied soft power as a behavior influence outcome in the post September 11 period (Nye, 2004; Arndt, 2005 & Gray, 2011).

The definition of soft power has been closely linked with Joseph Nye, Jr. (1990, 2002) who first coined this term in 1990. Nye describes soft power as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than through coercion." He sees strong relations with allies, economic assistance programs, and vital cultural exchanges as examples of soft power.

Despite Nye's concept's popularity, current power scholarship is still divided about the nature of power. Some scholars see capabilities the most important factor and others see it as a behavior outcome (Nye, 2011, p.11) Nye built his concept as a behavior outcome, or as he calls it "relational power concept" on the multiple faces of power.

As power literature has developed, so did Nye's initial definition of soft power. Earlier versions of Nye's soft power definition were: "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment" (Nye, 2004, p. x) which included "culture, values and foreign policies" (Nye, 2004, p. 11). Later, Nye extended his definition into "the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction

in order to obtain preferred outcomes" Nye, 2011, pp. 20-21). While further developing his concept of soft power, Nye (2002, 2011) has been focusing on the outcome of soft power.

Soft power and hard power literature has also been divided about the effectiveness and usefulness of such capabilities. Some scholars claim that soft power is effective and it sometimes reinforces and sometimes interferes with hard power, while others strongly believe that, soft power is emerging and getting more influential in today's global information space and it has less hard power support.

Skeptics of soft power argue that hard power is the most effective foreign policy tool. Gray (2011, p. ix) states that hard power must remain the essential instrument of policy as soft power is unsuitable for policy directions and control as it relies too much on the foreign countries' soft power is the opposite of "hard power." Hard power includes the more noticeable and predictable power associated with military force, coercion, and intimidation.

One of the classic examples of American soft power is considered to be the Marshall plan. After World War II, the United States was enthusiastic about billions of dollars into war-ravaged Western Europe to prevent it from falling to the influence of the Communist Soviet Union. The Marshall Plan included humanitarian aid, such as food and medical care; expert advice for rebuilding destroyed infrastructures, such as transportation and communication networks and public utilities,

Nye also sees American cultural exports - such as movies, soft drinks, and fast-food chains - as an element of soft power. Cultural exchanges repeatedly impress foreign nations with the freedom and openness of U.S. business and communication dynamics. I have to mention The Internet, which reflects American freedom of expression, is also a soft power.

To outline the difference between soft and hard power it will be better to clarify the meaning of both term. Soft power is the series of national resources that can lead to a country's ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes

Hard Power: Using military or economic force to get others to change their position (Nye, 2004, p.5).

As about Foreign Policy Instruments it "Forms of pressure and influence available to decision makers, represent an ascending scale of seriousness in terms of the commitment of resources, the impact of third parties and the degree of risk in use" (Brighi & Hill 2008, p.131).

Nye has seen a decline in the United States' use of soft power since 9/11. The wars of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the Bush Doctrine's use of preventive warfare and unilateral decision making have all eclipsed the value of soft power in the minds of people at home and abroad. As Nye defines "Hard power - basically military and economic might (coercion and payments) - is a vital element, but as we've seen over the past few years, it doesn't necessarily translate into influence in today's world. Smart power is about tapping

into diverse sources of American power, including our soft power, to attract others. It is about how we can get other countries to share our goals without resorting to coercion, which is limited and inevitably costly" (Nye, 2004, p.5).

## Conclusion

United States foreign policy has changed dramatically from George Washington's day. Americans are always particular about their revered founder. To investigate the nature of current United States foreign policy, we will come up with main goals such as:

- Maintaining a balance of power among nations
- Working with allies to solve international problems
- Promoting democratic values and human rights
- Furthering cooperative foreign trade and global involvement in international trade organizations

Examining them we come to conclusion that they are based on cooperation with other nations, although "preserving the national security of the United States" (The making of U.S foreign policy, 2000, p. 2). The many people that shape American foreign policy today accept the fact that the United States is a member of a world community that cannot afford to ignore the importance of getting along.

People outside the government who are interested in foreign affairs have a dense web of outlets to use in helping policy-makers to set the diplomatic agenda and adopt specific policies for implementation.

As ex- Secretary of State Madeleine Albright claims, "Today's players are not only nations, but a host of non-state actors. The issues are often not separable, but inter-connected. The rules shift with every scientific breakthrough. And although America has enemies, the outcome is not zero-sum: In the long run, we will all do better, or none of us will" (The making of U.S foreign policy, 2000, p. 2)

To sum up, it was necessary for policy to evolve in order to accommodate strategies that address modern problems that were not as much of a priority in the late 20th century. However, whilst those changes made an immediate impact on foreign policy, it did not alter the long-term course of US foreign policy because that remained firmly focused on the outcomes of action elsewhere in the world in relation to American interests.

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