

Module 6: Foreign Policy

Topic 1 Content: Influences on Foreign Policy

Introduction



Glover Mint: Hello, America. Welcome to WUSG News. During this episode, we will focus on a variety of factors that influence America's foreign policy. Our foreign correspondent, Emily Airheart, is here to assist.

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Global Guide



Emily Airheart: Thanks for joining me for this special edition of *Global Guide*. As some of you in the audience know, my passion has always been traveling. I love the excitement of visiting new countries and learning as much as I possibly can about them. When it comes to the specifics of foreign policy, I'll be the first to admit I'm no expert. That's why I contacted my close friend and foreign policy expert, Terry S. Tate, and asked him to lend a hand. Isn't that right, Terry?

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Influences on Foreign Policy



Terry S. Tate: That is correct, Emily. I'm always happy to help. It's great to be here in the WUSG News studio. My name is Terry S. Tate. I'm sure the audience is eager to get started, so let's take a look at some of the major influences on America's foreign policy, starting with the main one, the President of the United States.

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Presidential Role in Foreign Policy



Terry S. Tate: The primary contributor to America's foreign policy is the President of the United States. As the Chief Diplomat, the President is the main architect of the nation's current foreign policy, and America's main spokesperson to the world. He or she decides how and when to utilize different diplomatic, economic, and military tools.

Treaties are just one of the diplomatic tools available to the President. Treaties have been used to secure peace, create alliances, strengthen international ties, and protect economic and security interests. The Senate must approve these treaties, but the President may also use an executive agreement to bypass the legislative branch altogether. An executive agreement is a deal made with another country that had no legislative oversight.

In addition to representing America in diplomatic negotiations, the President also decides when to apply economic pressure or threaten military intervention. Congress has the sole power to declare war, but the President is in charge of the military. Even under the War Powers Resolution, it is accepted that as Commander-in-Chief, the President has the power to commit troops outside of a formal declaration of war.

Don't forget, the President does not operate alone. Powerful positions that have a huge influence on foreign policy are filled by presidential appointment. Some of these are the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, among many others.

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Legislative and Judicial Roles in Foreign Policy



- Presidential appointments and treaties must be approved by the Senate.
- The Senate may amend an international treaty, even after it is approved.
- The Supreme Court may rule that a treaty violates the Constitution.
- Congress may pass resolutions to assist the President's foreign policy goals.
- The legislative branch's most powerful influence on foreign policy is the authority to appropriate funds.

Terry S. Tate: The President is primarily responsible for foreign policy, but the other branches of government also have some influence. The President appoints ambassadors, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Defense, but these appointments and others like it must be approved by the Senate. When the President negotiates a treaty, this too must be approved by the Senate. The Senate may also vote to amend aspects of the treaty, even after it has been approved. Once a treaty is approved by the Senate, like any other piece of legislation, it is now subject to interpretation by the Supreme Court. This means the Supreme Court may rule that an international treaty violates the Constitution, invalidating it.

The legislative branch may pass resolutions to assist the President's foreign policy goals. It may also pass resolutions that oppose these goals, but since Congress cannot enforce them, these resolutions are usually ignored by the President. We already discussed how only Congress has the power to declare war. We also mentioned how the executive branch frequently bypasses this restriction. This leaves the legislative branch's most powerful influence on foreign policy, the authority to appropriate funds. Congress determines where federal funds will be spent. This includes funds for national defense and economic aid to foreign countries. By choosing where to appropriate or deny money, the legislative branch impacts the effectiveness of the executive branch's actions.

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Other Influences



- Public opinion and interest groups influence foreign policy just as they influence domestic public policy.
- Unpopular foreign policy decisions can risk a politician's odds for reelection.
- Foreign policy decisions of other nations impact American foreign policy.
- International organizations may also influence American foreign policy.
- There are intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Terry S. Tate: Public opinion and interest groups influence foreign policy just as they influence domestic public policy. All politicians are at the mercy of public opinion, so when unpopular foreign policy decisions are made, there is a backlash from voters. Making unpopular foreign policy decisions can jeopardize a President's odds for reelection. Legislators who support the unpopular decisions may also suffer at election time.

There are two other factors that have enormous influence on foreign policy: other countries and international organizations. Obviously, the foreign policy decisions of another nation are going to impact American foreign policy. For example, the U.S. may offer to lend economic support to an allied nation in need. As another example, consider how an overtly aggressive nation could force the U.S. to use military force or seek international support.

When it comes to international support, there are two types of organizations. There are intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations, which attempts to promote international cooperation. There are also non-governmental organizations like Amnesty International, which focuses on supporting human rights. We could devote an entire episode of *Global Guide* to organizations like the UN, but we'll save that for another time. Thank you, Glover and Demi!

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Ending of Episode



Glover Mint: Great job, Terry! The President is the main person responsible for making foreign policy. As one person, the Chief Executive is able to make decisions quickly. The President also has the power to negotiate treaties and deploy the military. Many presidents throughout history have issued presidential doctrines, which are executive statements that guide America's foreign policy. These doctrines have been used as official declarations of the current goals of U.S. foreign policy.