

Module 6: Foreign Policy

Topic 2 Content: History of American Foreign Policy

Introduction




Demi Tracy: Welcome to another episode of WUSG News. I'm Demi Tracy, and this is my cohost, Glover Mint. Today's episode will examine the history of American foreign policy, from independence through the end of the Cold War.

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Monroe Doctrine

Monroe Doctrine



**President
James Monroe**

- America was a weak nation after gaining independence.
- Many of the Founding Fathers believed the U.S. should only be involved in Europe economically.
- The first few American presidents took an isolationist position.
- President James Monroe issued the Monroe Doctrine in 1823.
- It officially declared that America would stay neutral in all European affairs.
- It also stated that any European interference in the Americas would be seen as an act of aggression.
- The Monroe Doctrine reinforced neutrality in Europe and asserted the independence of nations in the western hemisphere.

Glover Mint: America may have managed to win its independence from England, but it was still a young and relatively weak nation compared to the major European powers. Many of the Founding Fathers believed that the only European connections America should have were economic ones. Not wanting to be drawn into an unnecessary and costly conflict, the first few American presidents took an isolationist position and attempted to stay out of European affairs entirely.

In 1823, President James Monroe issued the Monroe Doctrine. The Monroe Doctrine officially declared that America intended to stay neutral during all conflicts between European nations. It also stated that if any European power interfered with nations located in North or South America, the U.S. would view it as an act of aggression and would be forced to intervene. The Monroe Doctrine reinforced the idea of neutrality in European foreign affairs, while also asserting the independence of nations in the western hemisphere.

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Spanish-American War

Spanish-American War



**President
Theodore Roosevelt**

- America was a developing world power by the end of the 19th Century.
- The U.S. desired global markets and resources available through colonization.
- Spain's power was in decline, but it still held a few territories, like Cuba.
- Many Americans wanted to get involved in Cuba, based on a variety of reasons.
- The U.S. declared war on Spain in 1898.
- The U.S. won the war quickly and gained several territories.
- In 1904, President Roosevelt added the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine.
- The Roosevelt Corollary was used to justify American intervention in the western hemisphere.

Glover Mint: By the end of the 19th Century, America had grown into a developing world power. On the world stage, it was not as big a player as nations like England, France, and Germany. However, like those nations, the U.S. began to develop a desire for the global markets and resources available through colonization.

At this point, Spain's status as a major world power had been in decline for centuries. One of the last territories that Spain held in the Americas was Cuba, an island located directly off the coast of Florida. Cubans were unhappy with Spanish rule, and were actively fighting for independence. Some Americans sympathized with the Cuban revolutionaries, while some saw an opportunity for America to expand its territory. Some Americans cited the Monroe Doctrine as a reason to intervene, while others saw the strategic importance of having control over an island located so close to American shores. All of these factors contributed to the United States declaring war on Spain in 1898. The U.S. won the war quickly, and through its victory, gained possession of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. After a few years of American occupation, Cuba eventually received its independence.

This shift in American foreign policy became official in 1904, when President Theodore Roosevelt added the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. The original goal of the Monroe Doctrine was to prevent European intervention in the Americas. The Roosevelt Corollary was used to justify American intervention in the western hemisphere, in order to keep European powers out.

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World War I



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World War I

- In 1914, many powerful European nations began a global conflict known as World War I.
- The U.S. was neutral at first, but it provided supplies to the Allied powers.
- This led to German attacks against U.S. shipping, and the sinking of the Lusitania.
- Arthur Zimmermann proposed an alliance with Mexico in a telegram that was intercepted.
- The Zimmermann telegram was seen as a direct threat to the U.S. by the Germans.
- 1917, the United States officially entered World War I.
- The Allied forces declared victory over Germany on November 11, 1918.

Glover Mint: Growing tensions among many powerful European nations came to a head in 1914, resulting in a global conflict known as World War I. After the Spanish-American War, the U.S. was more involved in the international scene, but still preferred to stay out of the affairs of Europe. America was officially neutral during the beginning of the World War I, but it also continued to provide supplies to England, France, and the other Allied powers. This economic support led to German attacks against U.S. shipping, the most famous of which was the sinking of a vessel known as the Lusitania. The German Foreign Minister, Arthur Zimmermann, even proposed an alliance with Mexico against the United States in a telegram. The telegram was intercepted by the British, who informed the U.S. government. The Zimmermann telegram was viewed as a direct threat and justified America's involvement. In 1917, the United States officially entered World War I. The Allied forces declared victory over Germany on November 11, 1918.

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Aftermath of the First World War

Aftermath of the First World War

LEAGUE OF NATIONS



SOCIÉTÉ DES NATIONS



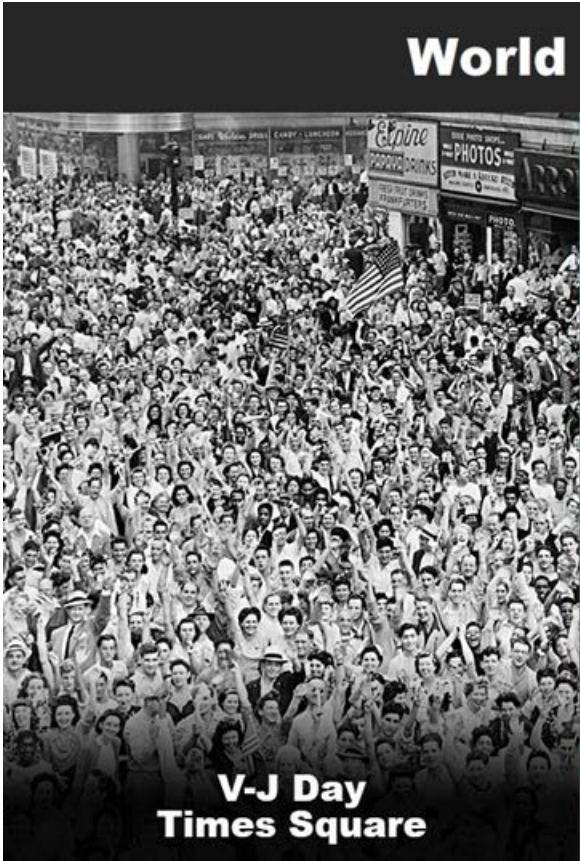
- World War I was a devastating conflict.
- America's initial neutrality allowed it to avoid most of the devastation.
- The U.S. made a lot of money from the supplies provided to the Allied powers.
- This wealth led to a dramatic increase in America's international influence.
- President Wilson suggested an international organization dedicated to preventing conflicts like World War I.
- The League of Nations was formed in 1920 to prevent another major conflict.
- America never joined the League of Nations.

Glover Mint: World War I, originally known as the Great War, was a devastating conflict for all of the nations involved. The decision to remain neutral at the onset of the war had allowed the U.S. to avoid most of the devastation. This, coupled with the fact the U.S. made large amounts of money from the supplies provided to the Allied powers, led to a dramatic increase in America's international influence. Using this influence, President Woodrow Wilson suggested the creation of an international organization dedicated to preventing conflicts like this from occurring again. The League of Nations was formed in 1920 with this goal in mind; however, America never joined the organization. Many Americans still preferred to stay out of international affairs.

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World War II



World War II

- After the brutality of World War I, antiwar sentiment was common.
- The Treaty of Versailles punished Germany instead of ensuring peace.
- The League of Nations lacked the international support to be effective.
- These failures, plus growing militarism in Germany, Italy, and Japan, led to World War II in 1939.
- Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and Congress declared war.
- The Axis powers were defeated in 1945.
- The United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the two major world powers.

**V-J Day
Times Square**

Glover Mint: After the brutality of World War I, antiwar sentiment was common in many countries, including the United States. Despite the desire to avoid another global war, the stage was being set for a major international conflict. The Treaty of Versailles was signed at the end of World War I, but rather than ensuring a lasting peace, it focused on imposing severe punishments on Germany. The League of Nations was formed to maintain a peaceful international community, but it lacked the necessary support to be effective; Germany was to be forbidden to join the organization, Russia was never asked, and America refused. The Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations both failed to prevent the growing militarism in Germany, Italy, and Japan. World War II officially began in 1939.

President Franklin Roosevelt supported American neutrality at the beginning of the conflict, but after the Empire of Japan attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Congress officially declared war. The United States and the Allied powers defeated the Axis powers in 1945. Although the war was over, Europe and Japan were left destroyed. From the rubble of the war, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the two major world powers. The idea of returning to a foreign policy based on isolationism was no longer an option.

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Truman Doctrine

Truman Doctrine



NATO

- The relationship between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. changed after WWII.
- The American political system was in direct conflict with the political system of the Soviet Union.
- In 1947, President Truman declared a policy of containment with regard to communism.
- The Truman Doctrine was based on the view that democratic values were threatened by communist expansion.
- It implied that nations resisting communism would receive support.
- The Truman Doctrine became the basis for American foreign policy.
- Considered the beginning of the Cold War.
- By 1950, both nations had nuclear weapons.

Glover Mint: Although they were allies during World War II, the relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union quickly changed after the war. The American political system, based on representative government and free market capitalism, was in direct conflict with the state-controlled communist political system of the Soviet Union.

In March, 1947, President Harry Truman delivered a speech declaring a policy of containment with regard to communism. This policy, later called the Truman Doctrine, was based on the view that democratic values were threatened by the expansion of communism and must be stopped. The Truman Doctrine implied that nations resisting communism would receive American support. In some instances, this was economic support, and in others it was military support. The Truman Doctrine became the basis for American foreign policy and led the formation of the defense alliance NATO. Many experts cite this as the beginning of the Cold War. By 1950, both America and the Soviet Union possessed nuclear weapons. This intensified the situation and added the goal of avoiding nuclear war to the American foreign policy agenda.

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The Cold War

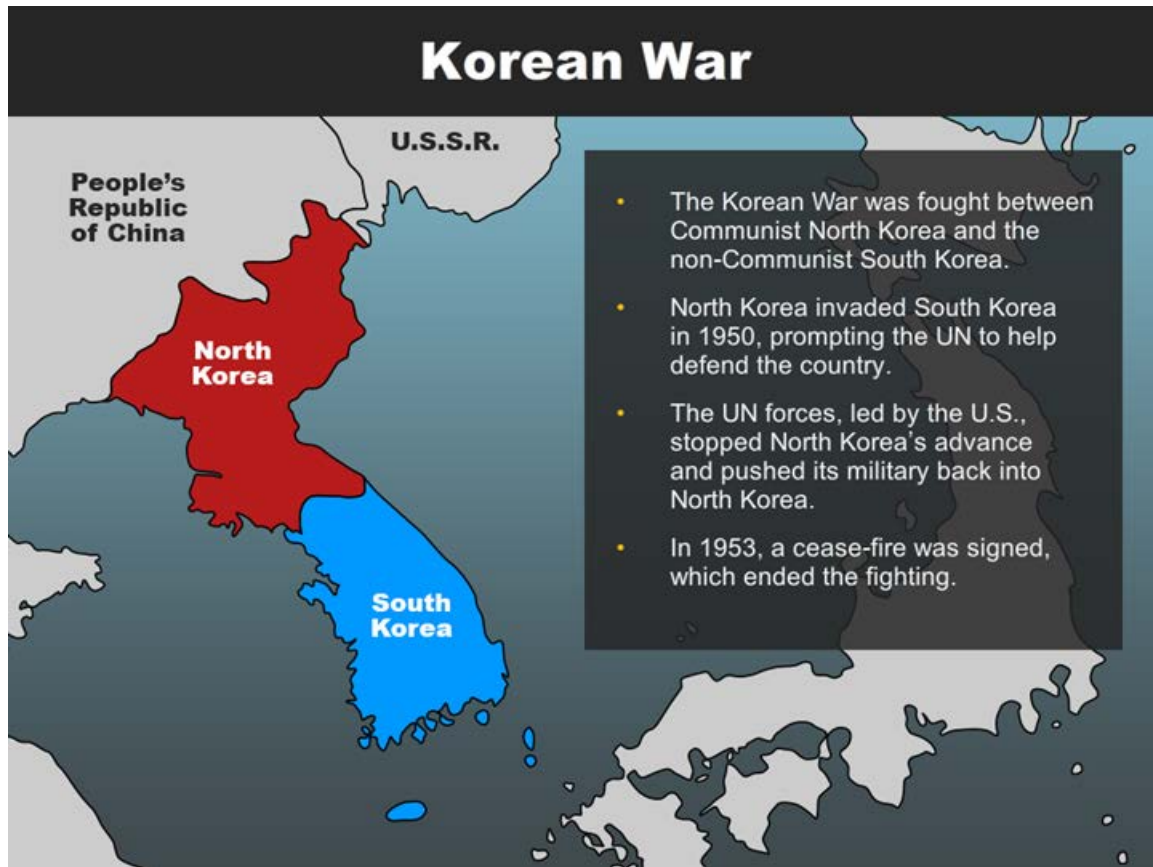


Glover Mint: War never officially broke out between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, which is why this conflict is referred to as the Cold War. There were, however, several wars fought against the expansion of communism, the most notable being the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

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Korean War



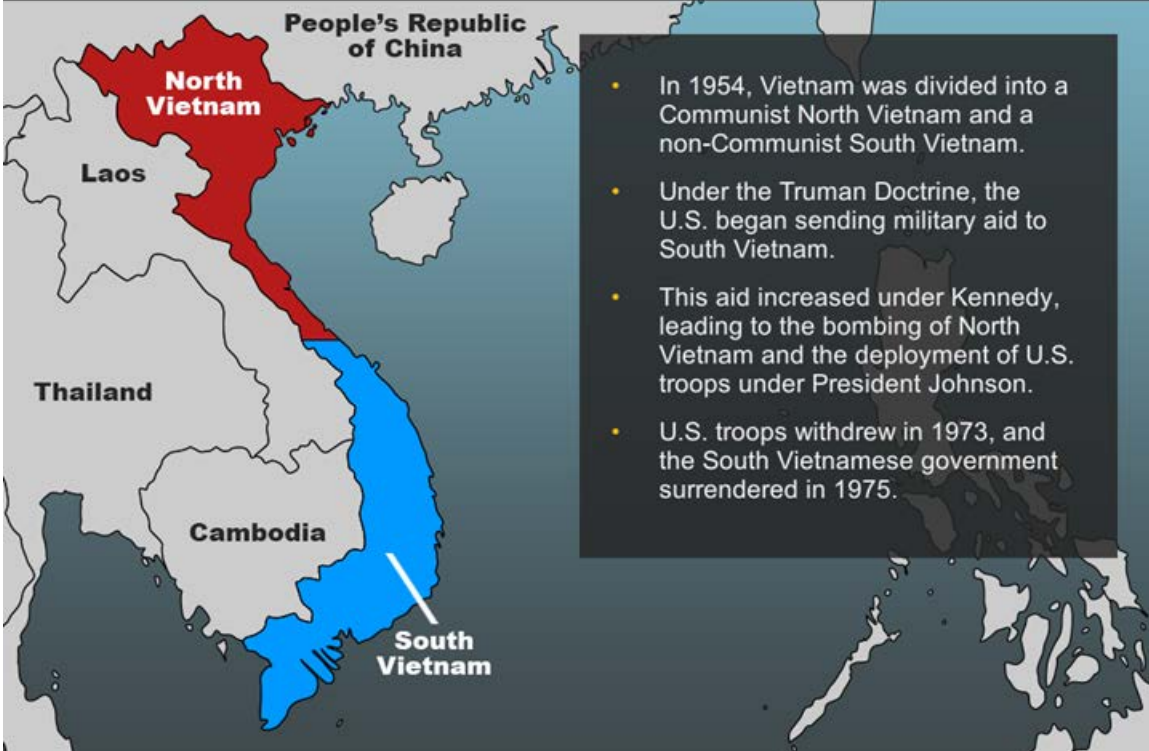
Glover Mint: The Korean War was fought between Communist North Korea, which had the support of China and the Soviet Union, and the non-Communist South Korea, which was supported by the United States and the United Nations. North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950, prompting the United Nations to help defend the country. The UN forces, led by the United States, stopped North Korea's advance and pushed its military back into North Korea. In 1953, a cease-fire was signed, which ended the fighting. It is important to note that no peace treaty was ever signed, meaning the two countries are still technically at war today.

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Vietnam War

Vietnam War



The map shows North Vietnam in red and South Vietnam in blue. Neighboring countries are labeled: People's Republic of China to the north, Laos to the west, Thailand to the west, and Cambodia to the south. A white arrow points to the border between North and South Vietnam.

- In 1954, Vietnam was divided into a Communist North Vietnam and a non-Communist South Vietnam.
- Under the Truman Doctrine, the U.S. began sending military aid to South Vietnam.
- This aid increased under Kennedy, leading to the bombing of North Vietnam and the deployment of U.S. troops under President Johnson.
- U.S. troops withdrew in 1973, and the South Vietnamese government surrendered in 1975.


Glover Mint: In 1954, Vietnamese nationalists had gained independence from France, but the country was divided into a Communist North Vietnam and a non-Communist South Vietnam. Under the Truman Doctrine, the U.S. began sending military aid to South Vietnam. This aid increased under Kennedy, eventually leading to the bombing of North Vietnam and the deployment of U.S. troops under President Johnson. President Nixon also increased the war efforts, but due to opposition at home, U.S. troops withdrew in 1973, and the South Vietnamese government surrendered in 1975.

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Cuban Missile Crisis

Cuban Missile Crisis



**President
John F. Kennedy**

- The Cuban Missile Crisis is perhaps the closest the world has ever come to nuclear war.
- In 1962, the Soviet Union began to install nuclear weapons in Cuba to support its communist ally, Fidel Castro.
- President John F. Kennedy ordered a naval blockade to prevent the Soviets from delivering the missiles to Cuba.
- After thirteen days and negotiations, the Soviets agreed to remove their missiles from Cuba.
- The U.S. agreed to remove its missiles from Italy and Turkey.

Glover Mint: As bloody as the Korean War and Vietnam War were, a full-on nuclear war would have been catastrophic. The Cuban Missile Crisis is perhaps the closest the world has ever come to nuclear war. In 1962, the Soviet Union began to install nuclear weapons in Cuba to support its communist ally and the leader of Cuba, Fidel Castro. Concerned about nuclear arms being within range of the U.S., President John F. Kennedy ordered a naval blockade to prevent the Soviets from delivering the missiles to Cuba. After thirteen intense days and negotiations, the Soviets agreed to remove their missiles from Cuba and the U.S. agreed to remove its missiles from Italy and Turkey.

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End of the Cold War

End of the Cold War



- Soviet and U.S. relations began to thaw in the 1980s.
- Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Communist Party in 1985.
- He instituted reforms in the U.S.S.R.
- Gorbachev relaxed tensions with the U.S., reduced the arms race, and withdrew the threat of military involvement in satellite countries.
- President Ronald Reagan's administration pushed Gorbachev to go even further with his reforms.
- Eastern European communist governments began to fall.
- The Soviet Union was dissolved and replaced by the Russian Federation in 1991.

Glover Mint: After decades of aggressive policies and arms buildup, relations between the Soviet Union and the United States began to thaw in the 1980s. Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Communist Party in 1985, and began to institute reforms in the U.S.S.R. He introduced capitalist elements into the economy, which had been strongly centralized under state control. Gorbachev also reformed foreign policy by relaxing tensions with the United States, reducing the arms race, and withdrawing the threat of military involvement in Soviet satellite countries. President Ronald Reagan's administration had also taken a hard line against the Soviet Union, pushing Gorbachev to go even further with his reforms. Across Eastern Europe, communist governments began to fall, and by 1991, the Soviet Union was dissolved and replaced by the Russian Federation.

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Ending of Episode



Demi Tracy: Thank you, Glover. That was a very informative overview of how American foreign policy has changed through the years. Thanks for tuning in to this episode of WUSG News.