

How far has the usa
role in world affairs
developed from 1929
to 2000?

[War](#), [Cold War](#)



America had adopted a policy of isolationism following the events of WW1, stating openly that the US wanted to stay out of world affairs. They believed that they were geographically isolated - sufficiently protected from potential enemies by the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. They wanted to avoid sending US soldiers on another 'death march' and instead focus on US economic problems such as the Depression. They managed to keep their role in world affairs to a minimum by not joining the League of Nations and passing a series of Neutrality Acts after 1935 which made them neutral.

However, they did not suppress their role in world affairs completely. They were still involved in foreign affairs - they loaned money to Europe to help them recover after WW1 and they signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928 which renounced war as a means of settling disputes. America's role in world affairs was minimal - they stayed out of the League of Nations but they were still involved in world affairs, shown by the US investment into Europe to help it recover from WW1.

America's role in world affairs changed from isolationist when they joined WW2 in 1941, following the Japanese attack on the US naval fleet at Pearl Harbour on December 7 1941. After the attack, it became evident that America had assumed a more prominent role in world affairs, particularly in Europe and in the Pacific. They had taken part in the D-Day landings in June 1944 with the Allies which had led to the surrender of Germany in May 1945 and had governed the end of the war by dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

WW2 was an important factor in re-orientating US foreign policy as America had abandoned their policy of isolationism and had intervened in a war. America's role in world affairs developed as they emerged from WW2 as a paramount nation that had survived the war with its economy rebuilt and other nations had turned to them for protection from emerging communist countries like the USSR. America had started to play an international role in world affairs when they adopted a policy of containment, announced by Truman in an important speech in March 1947 which marked a turning point in US foreign policy as it was the start of a proactive policy.

He backed this policy of containment with the Marshall Plan announced in June 1947 which would provide economic aid to European countries that had suffered badly as a result of WW2 and were struggling to deal with the damage. America played a part in leading the West in the Cold War.

America's involvement in world affairs increased when they sent forces to Korea, Vietnam and Cuba in an attempt to contain communism, which shows they had a more proactive role in world affairs. The expense of the policy of containment had to be cut as the cost of the arms race was massive.

America wanted to develop friendlier relations with the Communist superpowers during the 1970s; US foreign policy had changed to detente. Nixon visited China in 1972 and the 21 year old trade embargo was lifted. The policy of detente had improved relations with the USSR between 1972 and 1979 - arms reduction agreements such as SALT 1 emerged. However, when Ronald Reagan became president in 1980, he was not a supporter of detente and called the USSR an 'evil empire' in a speech in June 1982.

He issued SDI (a plan to shoot down Soviet missiles in space) which caused the relations to deteriorate and cause a Second Cold War. In 1985, the new USSR leader Gorbachev and Reagan returned to the policy of detente and the Cold War ended in 1989. In the 1990s, America had become increasingly involved in the Middle East such as the conflicts of Iran and Iraq. America fought in the Gulf War in 1990 to protect oil supplies in Kuwait, as oil was important to the US economy. This conflict showed that America were still proactive in world affairs and were involved in most of the conflicts.

Since 1929, America's role in world affairs has developed increasingly. They were isolationist and inactive in world affairs in the 1930s. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour forced America to become reactive in world affairs and enter WW2 in 1941. In 1947, America's role in world affairs had become proactive, attempting to prevent the spread of communism. In the 1970s, America attempted to reduce its role in world affairs by following the policy of detente but the conflicts in the Middle East showed their role to be more proactive in world affairs.