

Paper #6



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140282 Do you think the best prospects for an advantageous U. S. foreign policy lie in building a healthy global economy or in taking care of problems at home and maintaining a large defense establishment? Explain your view.

The foreign policy of the United States due to its prominent military, economic, and political importance makes it globally significant as well as a cause of many domestic debates. There have always been people that believed the United States best interest rely on co-operating with other nation states, whilst others have argued that isolation and overwhelming military strength were better options. The end of the Cold War, the changing nature of conflicts since the early 1990s had increased the level of debate over the direction of United States foreign policy.

As a consequence of 9 /11 the foreign policy of the United States changed markedly, with the invasion of Afghanistan to remove the Taliban regime and close the Al - Qaeda bases situated there. The Bush administration had previously being criticised for having isolationist tendencies yet in the immediate aftermath of 9 /11 sought greater levels of international co-operation in its self-proclaimed war on terror. The invasion of Afghanistan seemed to have successfully removed the Taliban regime and weaken Al - Qaeda.

United States foreign policy has often attempted to gain influence with other countries by establishing strong economic links with them. There have been various reasons for doing so. The United States needs strong economic links as trade is vital for wealth creation both domestic and for foreign trading partners. The strategy of gaining influence through trading with foreign countries was a consequence of the Inter - war period in which American isolationism failed to prevent the Second World War. After the Second World

War the onset of the Cold War added urgency to such links as a means of preventing the spread of Communism to Western Europe, South East Asia, Japan, and the Middle East. The United States already a strong economic relationship with Latin America. The economic links with the Middle East and to Western Europe were considered to be highly important due to the need for oil supplies and proximity to the Soviet bloc respectively. The Marshall Plan was developed to shore up the shattered Western European economies after the Second World War, and greatly contributed to Post-war reconstruction, most notably the West German economic miracle. Similar economic aid was given to Japan, which assisted its economic development and the consolidation of democracy there. The close economic relationships that the United States forged during the Cold War arguably made the capitalist world more prosperous. It was economic strength as much as military power that allowed the Cold War to be won. Without a strong economy the United States would not be able to maintain its present military status. However creating strong economic links with other countries does not always improve American security. The United States dependency on oil supplies means that it has often become involved in military action in the Middle East. Strong economic links with other countries does not guarantee peace or security, especially to adversaries such as Al-Qaeda.

There are other arguments that United States foreign policy should concentrate solely on the United States military capacity, links with other countries should be confined to military alliances that enhance the United States defend its own national security. This line of argument rests on the assumption that the United States overwhelming military might and advanced weapons technology deters attacks against American interests.

American military power was clearly demonstrated by the 1990 - 91 Gulf War, plus the removal of hostile regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq. In conventional wars the firepower of the American military could not be matched by any other country, with the possible exception of China. Defenders of such opinions also point to the fact that the United States military build up during the 1980s led directly to the end of Cold War and inadvertently contributed to the break up of the Soviet Union. The United States does not need to form strong economic or diplomatic links to provide for its security. However not all conflicts are wars between nation states where sheer firepower normally determines the outcome. The 1990s saw the emergence of conflicts that were more complicated to solve, for instance in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia. The counter arguments to such views were strengthened as a result of 9 / 11. Al-Qaeda have proved to be an enemy that is extremely difficult to completely destroy, whilst the American led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan have failed to bring peace and stability. On their own neither foreign policy strategy will be completely successful. In many respects United States governments have to adopt a mixture of both. The United States needs to have strong economic and diplomatic links with as many countries as possible, whilst having enough residual military firepower to overcome direct military threats. Promoting a healthy global economy may solve some problems or disputes yet other problems will not be altered.

Bibliography

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Chapters 15, 16, 17

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