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**The U.S. Foreign Policy: Isolationism and Interventionism under the Trump  
Administration**

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## Dedication

*To those whose lives bore witness to unspeakable atrocities and genocide, may their memory fuel our unwavering commitment to justice, freedom, and the pursuit of a future where the cries of suffering are replaced by the triumphant songs of liberation.*

*To the Algerian Martyrs*

*To the Palestinian Martyrs*

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>AFC</b>	America First Committee
<b>CAATSA</b>	The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act
<b>CIA</b>	Central Intelligence Agency
<b>CSP</b>	Center for Security Policy
<b>DACA</b>	Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals
<b>DoC</b>	Deal of the Century
<b>DPRK</b>	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
<b>FBI</b>	Federal Bureau of Investigation
<b>FPA</b>	Foreign policy analysis
<b>IAEA</b>	International Atomic Energy Agency
<b>INF</b>	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces
<b>IRGC</b>	Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps
<b>ISIS</b>	The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
<b>JCPOA</b>	The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
<b>MFN</b>	most favored nation
<b>NAFTA</b>	North American Free Trade Agreement
<b>NAM</b>	National Association of Manufacturers
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>New START</b>	New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
<b>NPT</b>	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
<b>NSC</b>	National Security Council

<b>NSRB</b>	National Security Resources Board
<b>OEEC</b>	Organization for European Economic Cooperation
<b>OSS</b>	Office of Strategic Services
<b>PLA</b>	People's Liberation Army
<b>PRC</b>	People's Republic of China
<b>RNC</b>	Republican National Convention
<b>SALT I</b>	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks I
<b>SEZs</b>	Special Economic Zones
<b>SORT</b>	Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty
<b>TPP</b>	Trans-Pacific Partnership
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>USCIS</b>	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WMD</b>	Weapons of Mass Destruction
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization
<b>WWI</b>	World War I
<b>WWII</b>	World War II

## Abstract

During his 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump employed a rhetoric aimed at reshaping United States foreign policy. The call to put America first and to abrogate or renegotiate treaties made by his predecessors was significant in shifting the U.S. from being a liberal superpower and world leader. These stances attracted social and political researchers and evoked controversy over his isolationist rhetoric. Thus, the present dissertation examines the trajectory of U.S. foreign policy under Trump with a thesis exploring the complex dialectic between isolationism and interventionism. Through pluridisciplinary approaches, this research traces the historical roots of U.S. foreign relations, focusing on the evolution of isolationist tendencies and the shift to interventionism. It also explores Trump's 2016 campaign rhetoric resonating with historical isolationist sentiments. In addition, it looks into Trump's foreign policy implementation by examining key events, including U.S. relations with other actors, to assess whether Trump's policies align with isolationist ideals or reflect interventionist tendencies like his predecessors. The findings demonstrate that while Trump's campaign rhetoric promoted isolationism, his presidency shifted towards interventionism, as seen in the trade war with China involving tariffs and negotiations. The research outcomes contribute to a comprehensive understanding of U.S. foreign policy under Trump.

**Keywords:** U.S. foreign policy; Donald Trump; isolationism; interventionism, rhetoric.



## ملخص

خلال حملته الرئاسية لعام 2016، استخدم دونالد ترامب خطابًا استهدف إعادة تشكيل السياسة الخارجية للولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. وقد كانت دعوته لوضع "أمريكا أولاً" وإلغاء أو إعادة التفاوض بشأن المعاهدات التي أبرمها أسلافه ذات أهمية كبيرة في دفع الولايات المتحدة بعيدًا عن دورها كقوة ليبرالية عظمى وقائدة للعالم. وقد جذبت هذه المواقف اهتمام الباحثين الاجتماعيين والسياسيين وأثارت جدلاً واسعاً حول خطابه الانعزالي. بناءً على ذلك، تتناول هذه الأطروحة مسار السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية في ظل إدارة ترامب، من خلال أطروحة تستكشف الجدل المعقد بين الانعزالية والتدخلية. ومن خلال مقاربات متعددة التخصصات، تتبع هذه الدراسة الجذور التاريخية للعلاقات الخارجية الأمريكية مع التركيز على تطور النزعات الانعزالية والتحول نحو التدخلية. كما تستعرض خطاب ترامب خلال حملته الرئاسية لعام 2016، الذي تردد صداه مع المشاعر الانعزالية التاريخية. إضافة إلى ذلك، تتناول الدراسة تنفيذ ترامب لسياسته الخارجية من خلال تحليل الأحداث الرئيسية، بما في ذلك علاقات الولايات المتحدة مع أطراف دولية أخرى، لتقييم مدى اتساق سياسات ترامب مع المبادئ الانعزالية أو ما إذا كانت تعكس نزعات تدخلية شبيهة بسياسات أسلافه. وتظهر النتائج أن خطاب حملة ترامب روج للانعزالية، إلا أن فترة رئاسته شهدت تحولاً نحو التدخلية، كما يتضح من الحرب التجارية مع الصين التي تضمنت فرض رسوم جمركية والانخراط في مفاوضات. وتسهم نتائج هذا البحث في تقديم فهم شامل للسياسة الخارجية الأمريكية في عهد ترامب.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية؛ دونالد ترامب؛ الانعزالية؛ التدخل؛ الخطابية.

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## **General Introduction**

### **Background and Research Questions**

In his inaugural address on January 20, 2017, Donald Trump outlined a new vision for the United States, emphasizing an "America First" approach that would shape the nation's future policies. This stance, as articulated in his speech, prioritized American interests in trade, taxes, immigration, and foreign affairs, all aimed at benefiting American workers and families. The key idea was to safeguard the nation's borders, prevent outsourcing of production and loss of companies, and preserve jobs. Trump believed that this protectionist approach would lead to substantial prosperity and national strength. These remarks echo the historical isolationist tradition in U.S. foreign policy, where the focus is on prioritizing national interest by stepping back from extensive international involvement. The phrase "America first" has historical roots, notably used by isolationists in the lead-up to World War II (1939-1945), advocating for U.S. non-involvement. Trump's commitment was to redirect power and decision-making to the American people.

In the field of foreign policy and international relations, interactions are chiefly guided by self-interest and established norms. The U.S. foreign policy tradition has historically swung between embracing an isolationist or an interventionist approach when engaging with other nations, always driven by its pursuit of national interests. At the early stages of its existence, from around 1790 up until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the U.S. was a weak and vulnerable country that struggled to protect its borders and people from the European nations; thus, the isolationist doctrine was adopted and some laws were enacted to ensure both national and international security. This era was marked by the American withdrawal from the international scene, and by its focus on the internal affairs to build the nation and expand through the continent.

As the nation continued to grow and expand, the shift from isolationism into internationalism was marked in the era 1914-1945. Although the US president at the time, Woodrow Wilson, intended to carry his predecessors' doctrine in remaining apart from the Great War (1914- 1918), the impositions of the war and the advancement of the war technologies and weapons were considered as a threat to the USA. A heated debate in the US inflamed the public opinion about the morality of its neutrality in standing with the right side and its traditional allies. To justify the US involvement in the war, Wilson had delivered his Fourteen Points in 1918 as principles for peace to end the First World War. It was the first time the US to take new approach and to establish a new world order through the creation of the League of Nations in 1920. The doctrine of interventionism has continued ever since through the Second World War and the Cold War era that lasted from the aftermath of the WWII until the 1991 as the U.S. became the sole superpower until the present day.

However, the 2016 presidential election was marked by Donald Trump's rhetoric of calling to return to the traditional role focusing on the domestic affairs rather than spending more on the international issues that erode and impoverish the working class. Trump's campaign slogan "America First" is commonly read as a call to return to isolationism. This slogan, particularly, is linked to the America First Committee founded in 1940 that concerned itself in promoting the anti-war movement (Cole 10).

In recent years, the US foreign policy conducted by Donald Trump has attracted many social and political researchers in the scientific world. His policies stirred controversy over his isolationist rhetoric during the 2016 presidential election campaign. The call to put America first and to abrogate or renegotiate some treaties made by his predecessors was of pivotal role in setting the US down from being the liberal superpower and the world leader. His declarations

aroused fear among the leaders, especially the European ones, who believed that if he won the election, he would destabilize the relations with their countries.

On the eve of 08<sup>th</sup> November, the world was taken by surprise when Donald Trump was elected as the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. Many expected his conduct to be reduced at the world stage giving more priorities to the domestic issues and believing that the US was going to witness a fundamental change of its role in the world. In his first year in office, Donald Trump is viewed as a muscular character who intends to use force at any time; the thing that raises questions about his 'America First' tendency and the U.S. commitment to the outer world relations. As a president, he declared that he did not want to be the president of the world, instead the president of the United States who cared to his people more than anything else. Days after this statement, Trump launched series of missiles at a Syrian government airbase, the thing that led observers (Irkhin and Moskalenko) (Eneasato) to question his political style. Such paradoxical conductance between his rhetoric and actions with the lack of clear strategy in conducting the international affairs made the US foreign policy to seem vague and inconsistent, sometimes isolationist sometimes interventionist.

Due to this inconsistency, Americans have debated over the confusion about the direction of their foreign policy and what Trump foreign policy really is. Thus, the focus of this dissertation revolves around Trump's rhetoric during his 2016 campaign and his conductance of the foreign affairs as president through some case studies. Therefore, the main research question that stems from what has been already discussed is as follow: To what extent did U.S. foreign policy under Donald Trump reflect isolationist or interventionist principles in its international actions?

This major research question, in turn, presupposes answering a number of subsidiary questions:

- What are the characteristics of the American foreign policy tradition of isolationism and interventionism through the history?
- Does Trump's rhetoric during his 2016 presidential campaign imply the return to the old isolationist approach?
- To what extent do Trump's statements and actions reflect the US foreign policy traditions of isolationism and interventionism?

### **Literature Review**

The United States foreign policy has been characterized by its long strife between isolationism and interventionism. Isolationism refers to a foreign policy that advocates for a country's withdrawal from international affairs. According to Bernard Fensterwald, in his article *The Anatomy of American "isolationism" and Expansionism. Part I*, the American tendency towards isolationism has been characterized by a sense of aloofness and detachment from the affairs of Europe. The term has been used for the first time in the middle of nineteenth century to designate non-expansionists. Later on, the term was used to describe those who were against the U.S. involvement in World War I and the factions who opposed U.S. participation in the League of Nations (112). Isolationism according to Braumoeller is "the voluntary and general abstention by a state from security-related activity in an area of the international system in which it is capable of action" (354), in this regard, it is characterized by two main features which are: unilateralism and non-interventionism (Johnstone 10).

In contrast to isolationism, interventionism advocates for active involvement in global affairs be it militarily, economically, or diplomatically. It is defined also as an act of interference of a state in “the relations of two other states without the consent of both or either of them, or when it interferes in the domestic affairs of another state irrespectively of the will of the latter for the purpose of either maintaining or altering the actual condition of things within it” (Winfield 130). Historically, American foreign policy has balanced between these two extremes. Under the presidency of Donald Trump, the foreign policy has been a topic of debate and discussion among scholars and policymakers. While some argue that Trump’s foreign policy swings towards isolationism, others contend that it was interventionist.

In an article titled *Trump’s Foreign Policy Agenda is Anything but Isolationism*, Stranne emphasized that Trump's approach to foreign policy was far from isolationist. Instead, it demonstrated ambition and more inclination for intervention on a global scale. She highlighted Trump's keen focus on great power competition, a readiness to employ military force, and a clear stance against multilateralism in shaping the nation's foreign policies. Stranne argues that focusing on the actions of the administration rather than Trump's rhetoric reveals an engaged foreign policy, actively seeking global dominance. While it may lean towards a more unilateral approach, it aligns with a consistent pattern in U.S. foreign policy. This pattern involves seizing opportunities to extend U.S. influence by reshaping its global position and employing various strategies. Additionally, Trump has aligned himself with notable neo-conservative figures, leveraging domestic tensions and evolving global dynamics to advance their agenda.

Similarly, another study conducted by Lacatus under the title *Populism and President Trump’s Approach to Foreign Policy: An Analysis of Tweets and Rally Speeches* found that Trump's foreign policy was characterized by a populist approach that emphasized American

interests and sovereignty. The author argues that President Trump's foreign policy approach is influenced by a renewed form of Jacksonian populism, often associated with the Tea Party. This brand of populism is fundamentally against elites and expresses strong skepticism towards migration and multilateralism. Moreover, the study questions the United States' ability to sustain a global liberal order, which it views as contrary to the economic well-being of the American populace. Additionally, the analysis notes discrepancies between Trump's initial campaign promise of non-intervention in foreign conflicts and his subsequent actions in foreign policy.

Likewise, the Cato Institute published a study conducted by Carpenter through which the author challenges the perception that Donald Trump's administration is withdrawing the United States from its global leadership role and adopting an isolationist stance. The author argues against the portrayal of Trump's policies as a significant departure from the traditional U.S. approach, emphasizing the continuity in security engagements and alliances, especially in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia. The article contends that claims of isolationism are largely unfounded, and the U.S. remains engaged and active in various international domains, refuting the notion of a substantial retreat from global responsibilities. The author also questions the idea of a "liberal international order," highlighting U.S. hegemony and the role of military alliances in its exercise of power.

However, other scholars believe that Trump's foreign policy was isolationist. For instance, Irkhin and Moskalenko in their study entitled *The Global Crisis and the USA Search for Its New Identity: Trump's Attempt of Transition from Globalism to Isolationism* highlights the US economic isolationism and a rejection of multilateralism. The authors argue that a thorough examination of the doctrinal papers from the Trump era reveals a dual stance by the U.S. Economically; it leaned towards isolationism, yet pursued an interventionist approach in the

realms of military and politics, albeit with resource constraints. The U.S. viewed its adversaries during this period as both strategic competitors (like China and Russia) and tactical adversaries (such as Iran and North Korea), signifying an acknowledgment of a multipolar global landscape.

In this regard, another research by Eneasato entitled *US Isolationist Foreign Policy Stance under Trump* does not explicitly label Trump's policy as isolationist. Instead, it examines the challenges and complexities of adopting a complete isolationist approach in the modern interconnected world. It discusses the America First policy and emphasizes the need for a balanced approach considering both the America First policy and the traditional role of the U.S. as a global actor. While it highlights the notion of isolationism in the broader context of U.S. foreign policy, it does not specifically label Trump's policy as purely isolationist.

Despite the debate over whether Trump's foreign policy was isolationist or interventionist, there is a gap in the literature regarding the impact of Trump's foreign policy on U.S. foreign relations. One possible gap in the studies is the lack of in-depth analysis of how the administration's policies and rhetoric affected international cooperation and global governance structures. While there were many studies that explored the political, economic, and security implications of Trump's America First agenda, few studies examined the impact of these policies on different issues such as climate change and international trade employing multiple case studies. These topics are important to understanding how the United States' relationship with its allies and adversaries was affected under the Trump administration and how future administrations can strengthen multilateralism and global cooperation.

### **Purpose of the Research**

The principal aim of the present study is the investigation of the principles of isolationism and interventionism of the US foreign policy under Donald Trump to extract and understand his approaches in dealing with other nations. By this examination, the study traces the evolution of these principles and provides a comprehensive review about the US foreign policy in general, more specifically under Donald Trump as a president. In short, this study aims to:

1. Understand the principles and foundations that govern U.S. foreign policy, in addition to its major historical periods.
2. Inspect Donald Trump's rhetoric and statements on the international issues during the presidential campaign and in office.
3. Investigate the involvement in the world affairs that gained prominence across the world such as in the Middle East, China, North Korea, and the relationship with Russia and European Union.

This study argues that Donald Trump's policies align more with an interventionist doctrine than with an isolationist one. During the presidential campaign, Donald Trump used a populist rhetoric to galvanize new segments, mainly the working class, to boost his chances in winning the election. He employed plain language rich in pathos to appeal to their anger, ultimately aiming to secure their vote (Yekken 43). However, as president, all the rhetoric that assumes his focus on domestic issues and withdrawal from world stage has the purpose of boosting his legitimacy.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs pluridisciplinary approach involving historical, political, and Foreign Policy Analysis approaches. The historical approach involves understanding the events and the factors that affect and govern policy making of the U.S. foreign affairs. Its methods of

reconstruction and narrative analysis are important in exploring the U.S. foreign policy and assessing Trump's political doctrine. It contributes in embedding the events and policies in the readers mind. This approach aims to impartially integrate historical events, aiming for a precise record of past U.S. foreign policy. This understanding is crucial for discerning the current scenario and potentially anticipating and managing future shifts or developments in U.S. foreign policy.

It is thus necessary to use descriptive, analytical, and interpretive methods in order to obtain a clear account about the nature of the US foreign policy in the recent years under Donald Trump administration. Hence, the description of the history of the U.S. foreign policy will help us in drawing an accurate account that enables us to understand the different practices on this scope, and provides us with background to the study from which we launch our analysis. The Analysis of the different aspects of Trump's rhetoric and practices in dealing with other countries will contribute in the elucidation of the characteristics and the approaches adopted by the president. Therefore, this analysis will enable us to understand whether his attitudes are determined by domestic needs and national security considerations or by self-interest and the traditional ambitions of expansionism and imperialism.

Additionally, this dissertation employs the methods of qualitative content analysis to comprehensively scrutinize and analyze Trump's rhetoric through his various speeches, addresses and different statements in the field of foreign policy. An in-depth examination of Trump's language use provides a qualitative lens through which we can identify the recurring themes and ideologies. Furthermore, within the framework of Foreign Policy Analysis approach (FPA), which is concerned with how the leaders and states execute and make foreign policy (Potter), we adopt the archival method of FPA and develop some case studies.

Therefore this study relies mainly on president Donald Trump speeches, rallies, public statements, press conferences, publicly televised meetings, debates, interviews, treaties, and the decisions made by Trump while in office. The case studies are important in capturing a range of perspectives and events in decision-making and gaining greater understanding of the subject matter and in avoiding any bias. Case studies provide an in-depth investigation into the events and the decisions made by the Trump administration in their international relations. This will allow to cross-check the information through different sources to reach more accurate and solid conclusions.

It is worth mentioning that for this dissertation, we chose to use the MLA (Modern Language Association) style, specifically the 8th edition. This decision is based on the suitability of MLA style for this research in this field. MLA formatting is widely used in the humanities, which makes it a natural fit for my dissertation. Its focus on clear and concise citation guidelines aligns well with the requirements of academic writing in these disciplines. Furthermore, MLA style provides a comprehensive framework for proper citation of sources, enabling us to accurately and consistently acknowledge the scholarly works that inform this research. Thus, the in-text citation in the MLA formatting is of great significance in providing a clear and precise attribution of information to its source within the text. It not only enhances the credibility of this research by avoiding plagiarism, but also allows the reader to easily locate the full citation with the page number of the original source.

### **Structure of the Study**

The study will first develop a historical background of the U.S. foreign policy through which we aim to identify the different stages and periods it has undergone. This will be

embodied in the first chapter through which we discuss the early stages of the nation-building where the U.S. opted for non-entanglement to shield itself from the outside powers. This chapter displays the prominent events and ideologies that paved the way towards isolationism and shaped the U.S. foreign policy starting from Washington's Farwell Address which is considered as the founding pillar of isolationism and as a reference from which the U.S. foreign policy makers stem their decisions for decades. Then, this chapter moves to read through some events that reinforced this trend such as the XYZ Affair which was followed by the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 to restrict the immigrants' activities and to curb foreign influence. Another cornerstone in the U.S. foreign policy is the Monroe Doctrine which asserts the U.S opposition of colonization and of European interference in the affairs of independent nations in the Americas. This chapter explores also the U.S developments from expansionism to imperialism and the growing of the nation and its attempts in world affairs.

The second chapter discusses a shift in approach, the re-emergence of the nation on the global platform, its efforts to move away from isolationism, and its increasing engagement in global matters, eventually attaining the position of the world's dominant power. This role, of interventionism, lasts for nearly a century as Donald Trump came to office. This chapter serves as background for the U.S. foreign policy developments toward interventionism and its role in world affairs through the two world wars and the influence it exerted during the cold war, it also explores the dominant ideologies that were promoted in the era and advocated by prominent politicians to justify the U.S interference in other nations' affairs.

However, it was the first time since the U.S. shift in its foreign policy that the longstanding interventionism to be called into question in parallel with the rise of isolationist rhetoric during the 2016 presidential campaign through the candidate Donald J. Trump. This is

why the third chapter of this dissertation attempts to analyze Trump's rhetoric mainly during his presidential campaign with an aim of exploring the different isolationist aspects in his speeches and statements. Trump's America First agenda and the themes it includes will be analyzed along with the rhetoric which implied trade protectionism, border security, global alliances and the use of military forces. This analysis is crucial to the study as a complementary to the fourth chapter which deals with Trump's actions instead of rhetoric. Thus, this chapter helps to understand trump's stances in various issues on foreign affairs.

Finally, the fourth chapter examines the implementation of Trump's foreign policy during his tenure through some case studies. These cases serve the purpose of this dissertation in providing in-depth insights into specific diplomatic relations the U.S. had with other actors such as China, the Middle East, Russia, and North Korea. These cases also help the readers understand the complexities and the implications of international relations. This chapter helps in drawing conclusions about the reality of Trump's isolationist rhetoric during his campaign and his actions as presidents.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **The Evolution of U.S. Foreign Policy: 1790-1914**

## Introduction

U.S. foreign policy throughout its history has always been guided by several principles. Isolationism and interventionism are among these principles, which have remained constant over time to secure U.S. interests. Isolationism in its purest sense means avoiding foreign alliances and conflicts, this approach was adopted by the U.S. Founding Fathers. Therefore, the historical background is highly important in framing the events and policies under study. This importance in understanding the present and expecting the future is stated by James Liu and Denis Hilton in their article *How the Past Weighs on the Present: Social Representations of History and their Role in Identity Politics*:

History provides us with narratives that tell us who we are, where we came from and where we should be going. It defines a trajectory which helps construct the essence of a group's identity, how it relates to other groups, and ascertains what its options are for facing present challenges. A group's representation of its history will condition its sense of what it was, is, can and should be, and is thus central to the construction of its identity, norms, and values. Representations of history help to define the social identity of peoples, especially in how they relate to other peoples and to current issues of international politics and internal diversity. (537)

Indeed, this quote highlights the profound influence of history on societal identity and behavior. It illuminates how our understanding of the past shapes our present actions and future aspirations. By acknowledging history's role in constructing identity and values, we can better navigate the complexities of today's world. Overall, it emphasizes the significance of a thoughtful historical perspective in guiding collective trajectories. Hence, this chapter provides a comprehensive account of the early phase of the U.S. isolationist foreign policy by examining its

historical beginnings. It covers the major events that contributed to the evolution of U.S foreign policy from neutrality to isolationism, as well as the Founding Fathers' concerns about their system of government. Likewise, it addresses certain ideologies adopted by the U.S. presidents during that period of time, the ways they handled the eminent threats coming from Europe, and the U.S. desire to expand its territory and power using moral justification, such as the concept of Manifest Destiny.

For this purpose, this chapter is divided into two sections in order to understand the origins of the U.S. Foreign Policy and where does it stem from today. The first section traces back the beginnings of isolationism and examines the reasons behind adopting this ideology, notably, George Washington's fear for the stability of the young Republic and its constitution from the threats of foreign powers interference. The enactment of the controversial laws of The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 is another prospect that has significant impact on the foreign policy makers. We try also to investigate the reasons that pushed President John Adams to set these laws in addition to the Monroe Doctrine which played a great role in conducting the foreign affairs.

The second section of this chapter sheds the lights on the era of expansionism and imperialism. This includes the emphasis on the sense of "exceptionalism" that guided the national strategy, coupled with Manifest Destiny that encouraged U.S. continental expansion, and ended by the calls for overseas missions.

### **1.1 The U.S. Foreign Policy from Neutrality to Isolationism**

This section delves into the transition of U.S. foreign policy from neutrality to isolationism, highlighting key elements that shaped this shift. Firstly, George Washington's

Farewell Address set the tone by advocating for a policy of non-intervention and avoiding permanent alliances, emphasizing the importance of preserving national unity and avoiding entanglements in European conflicts. Secondly, the XYZ Affair and the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts in the late 18th century demonstrated a growing suspicion and desire for self-protection, as the United States faced hostility from France and sought to restrict foreign influence within its borders.

Furthermore, the Monroe Doctrine played a pivotal role in shaping early U.S. foreign policy, asserting the United States as the dominant power in the Western Hemisphere and warning European nations against further colonization or intervention in the Americas. This doctrine reflected a desire to maintain a sphere of influence and limit external involvement. Lastly, the transition from expansionism to imperialism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries marked a significant turning point in U.S. foreign policy. The acquisition of territories such as Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, along with increased military presence overseas, revealed a departure from isolationist ideals and a pursuit of global influence.

These historical events are of paramount importance in understanding the emergence and development of isolationism in U.S. foreign policy. They highlight the nation's inclination to prioritize its own interests, maintain a distance from international conflicts, limit foreign influence, and preserve its sovereignty. The examination of these events provides valuable insights into the factors that shaped the United States' isolationist stance and its impact on the nation's diplomatic approach.

### **1.1.1 George Washington's Farewell Address**

At the end of his second term in 1796, the U.S. president George Washington was preparing for his retirement. For this reason, he wrote a farewell address to the American nation warning them of the political dangers and the foreign entanglements they have to avoid if they wanted to remain as a strong and united nation. However, the Farewell Address had been subject to changes and adjustments until it was published in the American newspapers on September 19, 1796.

Four years before he left the presidency, Washington by the end of his first term considered retiring and going back to Mount Vernon to spend his life as a farmer. For this purpose he consulted James Madison about the best way to carry his intention. Madison in return advised him to announce it through a valedictory message to the nation (Gilbert 115), but Washington was convinced by his political friends to not retire as the nation needs him to serve for the second term (115). When they urged him to stay in office, he was needed in fact to consolidate the government and secure it from the dangers of internal instability and foreign interference.

The US foreign policy at the time came into the foreground and dominated the arena. In February 1793, when Great Britain, Holland, and Spain joined the fight against the French Revolution, the war of German powers against France expanded into a world conflict, the thing that may cause France to request American help according to the Franco-American alliance of 1778. However, the United States entanglement is dangerous because the English and the Spanish colonies on the North American continent surround the borders which seem unlikely to resist British and Spanish operations (Gilbert 116).

In order to avoid the involvement in any war, Washington in his early second term initiated a Proclamation of Neutrality on April 22, 1793 to keep America neutral on ongoing conflicts between the belligerent powers (117). The Proclamation represents a pivotal moment in the early foreign policy of the United States. Faced with the ongoing conflict between European powers, including Austria, Prussia, Sardinia, Great Britain, and the United Netherlands against France, Washington deemed it essential for the United States to adopt a stance of neutrality. Washington warned “the citizens of the United States carefully to avoid all acts and proceedings whatsoever, which may in any manner tend to contravene such disposition,” otherwise they shall be “liable to punishment or forfeiture under the law of nations” (“Neutrality Proclamation, 22 April 1793”). The proclamation conveys the United States' commitment to maintaining a friendly and impartial posture toward the belligerent powers. It stresses the duty and interest of the nation to pursue a course that avoids entanglement in the conflicts of the European powers.

Washington's directive extends to the prohibition of carrying contraband items to any of the belligerent powers, aligning with the modern usage of nations. The president's commitment to enforcing these principles is evident in the instructions given to relevant officers to initiate prosecutions against those who violate the law of nations within the jurisdiction of U.S. courts. In essence, the Proclamation of Neutrality serves as a foundational document in shaping the principles of U.S. foreign policy. It reflects a strategic decision by the United States to prioritize its own interests and security by avoiding entanglement in the conflicts of European powers, setting a precedent for the nation's approach to neutrality in the face of global wars.

*The Farewell Address* was mostly drafted by Hamilton; thus, some prominent ideas were his. However, the draft was edited several times by Washington (Bemis 262). When the draft of

the valedictory was sent to Washington, Hamilton wrote that he tried “to render this act importantly and lastingly useful”. It is understood that Hamilton wanted Washington to pass to his successors guiding principles of his policies and to render the document into a political testament (Gilbert 134).

The valedictory message addressed the diplomatic and the foreign affairs issues particularly the French Revolution in the same manner did Woodrow Wilson in his Fourteen Pointes speech in addressing the intricate diplomacy of the First World War. The document became a polestar in US foreign policy; it was given to the public newspapers, and it addressed the simple audience directly (Bemis 262). Indeed, the Farewell Address was first published in the American Daily Advertiser on September 19, 1796. It became one of the most influential political documents in the American history. For more than a century, the guiding principles that had been established in Washington’s Farwell Address have always been the guidelines for American foreign policy (Gilbert 135).

In his Farewell Address, Washington announced that he would not run for a third term as president. He devoted a large part of the address to domestic issues and foreign affairs. He explained that he would have withdrawn from the presidency four years earlier if it had not been for the critical situation in the country’s foreign affairs and the advice of his trusted friends, who urged him to seek a second term (Elkins and McKittrick 491). Then he moves to discuss and stress the importance of the unity and the urgency of preserving it. All the parts of the country, asserts Washington, are united by interest not merely by “common danger, sufferings and success”; therefore; they have to put the common interests of the nation above their sectional interests “in this sense it is, that your Union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to endear to you the preservation of the other”

("George Washington, September 17, 1796, Farewell Address"). Thereafter, Washington goes on to warn against division, factions, and the practice of party politics believing that checks and balances, which may be useful in monarchical governments is not necessary in popular ones (Elkins and McKittrick 491).

After discussing the domestic issues, Washington devoted a considerable part of the Farewell Address to discuss the U.S. foreign affairs. He urged his citizens to steer clear of foreign alliances and wars (Bemis 263). Washington provided a strong support of a policy of peace, good intentions, and justice toward all countries. This can only be achieved by avoiding “permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations and passionate attachments for others” and this should be replaced by amicable feelings towards all, instead of ill will and resentment. Washington went further by claiming that alliances with foreign nations can drag the country into unjustified war, and this will damage the country for the sake of defending other nations. These alliances, he argued, lead to weak relations with countries that think that they are not treated as allies, the thing that makes the latter try to influence the government to make decisions for their own good instead of making them for the benefit of American people ("George Washington, September 17, 1796, Farewell Address").

The document provided a justification for American neutrality, allowing the nation to take advantage of its unique position and develop enough strength to control its own destiny. The authors of the Address were constantly aware of the potential benefits of a beneficial alliance with France, which could provide support but also create entanglements. They also considered the ongoing wars in Europe, which seemed distant but had significant implications. They looked back at the solutions achieved through Jay's Treaty and Pinckney's Treaty, which were made possible by the troubles faced by Britain and Spain in Europe (Bemis 263).

The primary objective of the Address was to strongly oppose French interference in American affairs. Following the successful passage of Jay's Treaty in the House of Representatives, Adet and Fauchet advised taking decisive action to make the American ally more receptive to French interests. They reported extensively that the American people were supportive of France and opposed to their own government. However, they believed that if France did not pressure the U.S. government to align with their interests and support the "good" people who sought to overthrow it, there would be little hope for their cause (263).

Adet proposed that the French Republic should treat American ships in the same manner that the United States allowed its flag to be treated by Great Britain, based on the principles outlined in Jay's Treaty. This approach had been followed by France until January 3, 1795, when Monroe secured full recognition of the 1778 treaty from the Convention. However, suspicions arose regarding the nature of Jay's Treaty in France, and the enforcement of the "grand act of honesty and justice" ceased. Ultimately, it was the United States government itself that would bear the financial burden, enduring a century of litigation, to compensate its citizens for the damages caused by French actions during this war (264).

After Jay's Treaty finally came into effect, the French Directory took action by denouncing what they perceived as treachery by Washington's government. In order to warn the American people of potential consequences if President Washington remained in office, they decided to suspend Adet's duties as a diplomat and formally cut diplomatic ties with the United States. The Directory characterized Jay's Treaty as tantamount to an alliance between France's main enemy and their ungrateful former ally. As a reprisal for what they considered a deceitful treaty, they invoked the maritime principles outlined in Jay's Treaty against American shipping.

If Jefferson were to be elected, the plan was to restore relations based on the previous arrangement, with the hope that a new treaty with France could overturn Jay's Treaty (264).

To Adet's satisfaction, he was able to convey to the United States government, on October 27, 1796, the contents of a decree issued by the Directory. The decree stated that all neutral or allied powers would promptly be informed that the French republic would treat neutral vessels in the same manner as the English treated them, in terms of confiscation, searches, or capture. A few weeks later, on November 15, Adet announced the definitive suspension of his duties. This action was not intended to indicate a formal rupture between the United States and France, but rather as a sign of justified discontent. The suspension would last until the government of the United States adopted sentiments and measures that were more in line with the interests of the alliance and the sworn friendship between the two nations (264, 265).

The presidential election of 1796 was approaching, and the states were in the process of selecting their electors who would later cast their votes. At this stage, the established tradition that prohibited electors from engaging in discussions or deliberations among themselves had not yet been set. The French action was carefully calculated to sway the electors into choosing Jefferson instead of John Adams. Adet, following his instructions, accompanied the announcement of the suspension of his duties with a comprehensive and one-sided review of the entire dispute between France and the United States over American neutrality. This review included passionate criticism of Jay's Treaty, cleverly disguised within a fervent manifesto directed at the American people. A summary of the contents of Adet's note, translated into English, appeared in the newspapers before the official translation of the original French document could be prepared by the Department of State. In his note, Adet addressed the people rather than the government to which it was delivered, urging the government to "return to itself."

He assured that if the government did so, the American people would still find faithful friends and generous allies among the French (265).

Timothy Pickering, an unwavering Federalist, who had served as a military officer, negotiator of Indian treaties, and a competent and versatile member of Washington's cabinet, was now entrusted with the responsibility of defending the foreign policy outlined in the Farewell Address. Before accepting the position, four others had turned down the offer to become Secretary of State due to its modest salary. Although Pickering lacked specific training for the role, he possessed skill as a writer and a sharp mind for debating. These were the primary qualifications sought during the period from 1795 to 1800. It can be inferred that Pickering's defense was likely influenced by Alexander Hamilton, who played a role in drafting Jay's Treaty and shaping the Farewell Address.

Pickering's defense took the form of instructions to Charles C. Pinckney, who had been sent as Monroe's replacement to France. The instructions, dated January 16, 1797, were released to the press on January 19, 1797, serving as a counter-manifesto to Adet's passionate attacks on Washington's administration and his covert efforts to support Thomas Jefferson's election over John Adams, who championed Washington's policies. By examining the archives of France and the United States, historians today would find little fault with Pickering's eloquent rebuttal of French accusations of American ingratitude towards Washington's government. Pickering concluded bluntly, after a thorough review, that France owed as much to the United States as the United States owed to France in terms of services rendered. At the time, foreign diplomacy was attempting to bypass the American government and manipulate public opinion to involve the United States in European conflicts. Pickering's defense aimed to convey the truth to the American people and counter these efforts (265, 266).

During the years 1795 and 1796, while French diplomats accused the United States of ingratitude and treachery, they themselves were plotting to regain control over the American republic. Their plans included acquiring Louisiana and West Florida from Spain, forming alliances with southwestern Native American tribes, and enticing the new western states to align with France, with the intention of building a new colonial empire that would be the dominant power in the New World. Pickering's instructions to Pinckney embodied these arguments and are regarded as one of the most significant defensive documents in the diplomatic history of the United States, alongside Jefferson's rejoinder to Hammond in 1792, John Quincy Adams's defense of General Jackson's actions in 1818, and Lansing's response to Austria in 1915 regarding contraband (266).

Before the document went to press, presidential electors narrowly selected John Adams as President, with a one-vote margin and a three-vote lead over Thomas Jefferson, who assumed the Vice Presidency according to the original constitutional provision. Adams, Washington's successor, grasped the significance of his election in determining whether the American people would self-govern or succumb to foreign influence. Upon assuming office, he adhered to Washington's policies and inherited his entire cabinet, which later proved to be a source of frustration for him.

It's important to note that Pickering's instructions to Pinckney did not sway the election's outcome, as it had already been determined. The dispatch was published after the electors' votes were revealed in January but before their official tally in February. Instead, the document aimed to rally public support for Washington's and Hamilton's foreign policy, suggesting a potential departure from the French alliance. The objective was to demonstrate the United States' good

faith actions and, if warranted by the other party's conduct, to contemplate freeing the nation from its commitments without jeopardizing peace.

Despite France's anticipation of Jefferson's victory, both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, his Vice President, were equally committed to America, albeit with differing political philosophies, and held similar levels of goodwill toward France. Furthermore, they maintained a cordial relationship with each other. Jefferson even authorized his friend Madison to advise electors to vote for Adams in case of a tie, acknowledging Adams' seniority and presidential experience. Adet became aware of this association before his departure (267).

The historical context surrounding the famous Farewell Address was crucial. It was delivered in 1796, a time that differed greatly from what it would have been if given in 1792. The address emerged victorious in countering foreign manipulation within the United States. While it did not renounce the French alliance, it conveyed to France, a condescending ally, that the United States was an independent and sovereign nation. It made clear that the French Republic could not employ the same tactics used successfully with European border states, namely using political opposition to overthrow governments that opposed French policy, objectives, and interests. During Washington's presidency, avoiding foreign alliances and entanglements was seen as a matter of preserving independence and national sovereignty. What has often been interpreted as a policy of "isolation" should rather be understood as a policy of vigilant defense and safeguarding of national independence against foreign interference in America's internal affairs (268).

In short, Washington's remarks on the foreign affairs served as an inspiration for American isolationism. In fact it is a symbol of America's isolationism (Kaplan 80). The Address itself was not merely for an idealistic end but for realistic needs. The withdrawal from any entanglement with European nations was urged by the US interests in protecting its borders and citizens (Rossignol 225); and it was mainly directed against the French alliance in 1778, which was the first and only political entanglement between the United States and Europe before the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949. Therefore, isolationism of the Address meant a free access to all ports interested in receiving American goods and consequently freedom from any foreign powers (Kaplan 80).

### **1.1.2 The XYZ Affair and the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798**

By the end of George Washington term, John Adams won the election and became the second president of the United States. His presidency witnessed a strong opposition from the Democratic - Republican Party which showed its support to France. Unlike the Washington administration which enjoyed many successes, the Adams' administration prominent success is its maintaining of peace with other nations. However, this success came at the expense of splitting the party and causing unrest from within. Arguably, the major reason for this failure, which cost Adams his bid for a second term, was the issuance of the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 (Bird 10).

The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 are considered as sign of a serious sense of insecurity about the loyalty of new immigrants. These laws demonstrate the fear of the United States of becoming a pawn of the European powers. Therefore, they were enacted against foreign threats that would disrupt the country from within. It was the French sympathizers that urged the

US to initiate these acts that enabled the president and courts to impose fines, imprisonment or deportation of any foreigners who pose a threat to a national security (Mauk and Oakland 176).

Arguably, this tense, which reached its zenith, finds its roots in the divergence between the Federalist Party and the Democratic-Republican Party. This division was described by John C. Miller in his book *Crisis in Freedom the Alien and Sedition Acts* as “a conflict between good and evil on a scale almost without precedent since Biblical times” (21). The Federalist period which began with the ratification of the constitution, the unanimous election of the U.S president, and the adoption of the Bill of Rights, had become a thing of the past. However, the two parties diverged immensely over foreign policy issues, especially over the French Revolution and its significant consequences, and the Jay Treaty with Britain which was signed in 1794.

Consequently, the federalists were labeled as Tories by the Republicans because of their sympathy for Britain and their endeavors to have close ties with it. This could be encapsulated in Adams statement when he considered the English constitution as the greatest fabric of human invention and warning, at the same time, from falling into the abomination of the French Revolution. On the other hand the republicans supported France and showed their suspicions towards Britain, thus, they were mocked by the federalists as Jacobins and as French Party (Bird 12).

Although Washington administration succeeded in keeping America out of European wars and the Jay Treaty facilitated expanding trade and relations with Britain , the U.S. relations with France deteriorated and reached the point of war as he left office (Kupchan 83). Amid this mounting tensions that led to the Quasi-War, Adams, in order to avert war with

France, sent three diplomats to restore harmony and to put an end to the French attacks on U.S. ships. Prior to the departure of the three envoys to Paris, a special session of congress had been held. Adams, who intended to placate France, was urged to press and seek for compensation for the damages and the losses of American merchants caused by the French in the Caribbean. Hamilton, on the other hand, advised Adams to strengthen the navy and to prepare defensive plans. At the special session of Congress, Adams delivered his speech. He expressed his anger about France treatment of Ambassador Pinckney whose credentials were refused until the crisis was resolved. He also condemned the French looting in the Caribbean; and he emphasized defending the U.S neutrality. Adams demonstrated his willingness to go for war if necessary urging the Congress to modernize the militia, in addition to extending the navy, and arming merchant vessels. At the same time, he insisted on having negotiations with France through dispatching a team of commissioners (Ferling 344).

The team of commissioners Adams intended to send included Elbridge Gerry, John Marshall, and Charles Cotsworth Pinckney. They were instructed to negotiate for a treaty granting France commercial rights as had been granted to Britain in the Jay Treaty and to defend the U.S. neutrality in trading with the country it wants. They were also told that the U.S. will not provide France with aid or loans in its wars (Ferling 345). And for the depredations on the American ships, the commissioners were required to make their efforts to get compensation, in the same vein to be flexible in arranging the conditions of payment (Elkins and McKittrick 562-563).

Once the three diplomats reached France, Foreign Minister Charles de Talleyrand refused to meet them. Instead, they were approached by some intermediaries, known later as commissioners W, X, Y, and Z. These intermediaries informed the U.S. envoys that in order to

meet Talleyrand for negotiations they have first to pay a bribe of fifty thousand pounds (Stinchcombe 598). They went further by demanding the U.S. to provide France with a low interest loan, and an apology from Adams for his comments against France in the special session of Congress (Ferling 353).

As for Talleyrand, the purpose behind his demands was procrastination. In fact, he intended to end the attacks on the American ships, but he first wanted to grow his wealth and to consolidate his political position. However, with the victories achieved by France in Europe and the increase of its military power, the French threatened waging the war against the U.S. if its commissioners did not comply. When the US commissioners did not comply with France's demands, Talleyrand finally accepted to meet them formally and relinquished most of his demands, but refused to end the seizing of American Ships ("Milestone: 1784-1800").

As soon as Adams was informed of what had happened, he, along with pro-war Federalists, began preparations for war, while the Republicans remained skeptical of Adams' plans. Therefore, they demanded that the reports of the diplomats regarding the negotiations in France be made public ("Milestone: 1784-1800"). As the astonished congressmen scrutinized the documents in disbelief, it became clear to most which path was inevitable. The envoys' correspondence revealed a network of French diplomatic deceit complete with demands for bribes and forced loans, and filled with personal insults and national threats that even surprised many Federalists who were harsh critics of France. The pro-French Republicans were even more shocked, as they were completely unprepared for this concrete evidence of French treachery and struggled to defend such hostile actions. Congress swiftly voted to publish the incriminating dispatches, which were quickly labeled the XYZ Affair (Ray 398).

After releasing the correspondence of the dispatches, Adams continued his preparation for war without declaring it. Meanwhile, the French Foreign Minister Talleyrand realized his mistake. In order to repair the French relations with the US and to avoid further hostility, he proceeded a peace negotiations in France. The negotiators preferred to abrogate the 1778 Treaty of Alliance and negotiate a new agreement, which resulted in the convention of 1800 (“Milestone: 1784-1800”).

It is important here to note that a surge of national outrage swept across the country as newspapers rapidly disseminated the story. This marked a dramatic reversal in the traditionally pro-French sentiment, with Americans now vehemently denouncing their former ally. In Philadelphia, the capital and first major city to feel the impact of the news, the change in public opinion was swift and decisive. First Lady Abigail Adams noted, "The public opinion is changing here very fast," adding that ordinary citizens were now hostile towards the French and their defenders. An astonished Henrietta Liston, wife of the British minister, observed, "The tide is turned" and now flows strongly against the French party (Ray 390).

Across the nation, the response was similarly intense. A staunch Federalist in New York enthusiastically noted that the publication of the dispatches had generated significant "effects" and sparked "a spirit of warm indignation against the rulers of France." In Baltimore, it was reported that the XYZ papers had united citizens against the French. In New England, it was claimed that any lingering enthusiasm for the French Revolution had "burnt out," and that the correspondence had even made the administration's advisors "decidedly popular." The anti-French sentiment that swept the country during the summer of 1798 manifested in various ways. Americans expressed their anger towards France through symbolic gestures, such as singing patriotic songs and wearing black armbands. Many also channeled their emotions into more

tangible actions; eligible men in nearly every community swiftly volunteered for local militias, while those too young or too old for military service contributed by forming private patrols ready to be called upon in the event of an invasion (391, 392).

Consequently, the passing of the Alien Acts was due to the pro-French revolution sentiment which led to an internal political division, and because of the tumultuous events and the impacts of the XYZ Affair. It was a fall for the Republicans who “looked round, like Milton’s devils when first recovering from the stunning force of their fall from heaven, to see what new ground they could take” (qtd. in Miller 21). These Acts were enacted to cut off the road for the pro-French Republicans who are willing to subvert the constitution (Miller 24).

The first law, the Naturalization Act extended the residency time for the immigrants to become citizens from five to fourteen years. Additionally, it mandated that white non-citizens register their arrival in the United States within forty-eight hours and obtain a certificate from designated officials (or, if already in the country, register within six months). Failure to comply could result in being brought to court, fined, and required to provide a surety bond (Bird 37). The second, The Alien Enemies Act granted the president prerogatives of arresting, deporting, and detaining any male citizen of an enemy nation. The third law, the Alien Friends Act, allowed the president to deport any foreigner suspected of conspiring against the government. The last law, the Sedition Act, made it a crime to criticize or oppose any measure of the government (Costly).

Wendell Bird, the author of *Criminal Dissent: Prosecutions under the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798*, argued that Signing the Alien and Sedition Acts was the largest mistake of the Adams administration. This led to escalating political opposition and left a permanent stain on his administration's history. It was a greater error than keeping a disloyal cabinet, provoking

Hamilton's anger over the generals' ranks and other issues, or dividing the Federalists with an unexpectedly declared new mission to France, as these actions did not entail violating the Constitution or infringing on individual rights (37).

Although John Adams endeavored to protect the United States from foreign powers through the enactment of the Alien and Sedition Acts, the latter played a major role in his defeat by his Republican opponent, Thomas Jefferson.

### **1.1.3 The Impact of Monroe Doctrine on the U.S. Early Foreign Policy**

In 1823, President James Monroe delivered his annual address to Congress taking a firm stance regarding the US independence from Europe. He warned the European powers that any attempt of interference or colonization in the Western Hemisphere would be regarded as a threat to the United States' safety. All the European powers, at the time, were interested in Latin America's raw materials and land which was considered as a United States' sphere of interest. This was later known as the Monroe Doctrine which became a cornerstone in the U.S foreign policy. At the time the speech was delivered, it was regarded as a defensive and isolationist statement, but later on, it was employed as a justification of interference of the US in Latin America (Livingstone 09). Monroe reinforced Washington's policy and statement in his Farewell Address; and it broadened the sphere of the U.S. interests (Walker 07). However, while the Washington policy was urged by his fear of being dragged to the European wars, Monroe's policy was prompted by defensive considerations (08):

American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers ...

We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety. With the existing colonies or dependences of any European power we have not interfered and shall not interfere. President James Monroe (1817–25), Annual message to Congress, 2 December 1823. (qtd. in Livingstone 11)

In this quote of President Monroe, the message asserts that the American continent is no longer open to colonization by European powers. It warns against any attempts by European nations to extend their political systems to any part of the Western Hemisphere, considering such attempts as a threat to the peace and safety of the United States. The statement emphasizes non-interference with existing European colonies but firmly asserts the United States' opposition to new colonization efforts in the Americas by European powers.

The Monroe Doctrine was enunciated to set up strategies in favour of humankind. For instance, supporting values like "freedom, democracy, and peace," yet, the Doctrine's language "sometimes served as a cover for less ennobling purposes related to the defense of strategic and economic interests and usually contained some kind of threat to take countermeasures if other nations went beyond what the United States regarded as the appropriate bound". The language of the Monroe Doctrine is characterized by flexibility and adaptability, as its various meanings and implications have shifted in accordance with U.S. purposes and interests. However, it has consistently maintained its core goals regarding the Western Hemisphere (Gilderhus,5-6). Simply put, the Doctrine represents American foreign policy aimed at defining its relations with other nations, as well as organizing their relations with the United States

Remarkably, this policy designates patterns without taking into account other nations' "consent: it may therefore be changed without reference to their wishes". For example, the U.S. decides to "dig a Panama canal "without returning to any country but England because it has by veto the right of such act, (Woolsey,833). The Doctrine has a set of principles which characterize President Monroe's future vision about the nature of relations between his country and the rest of the world. Woolsey in his article "Monroe Doctrine Fundamentals" defines three principles that he considers to be fundamental, and they are:

I. The Monroe Doctrine was a statement of policy, originated and maintained by reason of self-interest, not of altruism.

II. It was justifiable by reason of the right of self-defense (which is a recognized principle of International Law).

III. It called no new rights into being, therefore whenever it oversteps the principle of self-defense reasonably interpreted, the right disappears and the policy is questionable because it then violates the rights of others (835).

The first principle puts the priority of the U.S. right for defence and assurance for its peace and safety from outer threats, especially those coming from Europe. Here, Monroe declares, "we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety,"(qtd. in Woolsey 836) And it also covers a portion in which the U.S protects Latin America that meant rather protecting the U.S from any European threat, like that of Spain (836). The second principle suggests that self-defence is justified by the existence of this right in the International Law that guarantees for nations this right in cases of dangerous circumstances. Furthermore, this principle justifies intervention or

involvement. Professor Hershey comments on the implicated meaning of this right, saying " The right of self-preservation takes precedence in a sense of all other rights and duties and is more than a right in the ordinary use of this term(837).The third principle seems critical in tone as it shows the paradox of the Doctrine .From one part it protects the nation's right to defend its territory, and it violates the rights of other nations from the other because "if a right is pushed beyond its reasonable and logical limits, it becomes an aggression upon the rights of others,"(839). In other terms, the doctrine can be seen through two possible lenses, that is a policy formed to preserve the U.S rights and interests by extending its protection across America to make sure that European colonial rivalry did not spread, and as a measure which the U.S sees beneficial to its interests.

Europeans, for the most part, showed little interest in the Monroe Doctrine. Some leaders, such as Austria's Foreign Minister Klemens von Metternich and Russia's Tsar Alexander I, dismissed it as an arrogant gesture deserving of international disdain. They believed that the United States lacked the naval and military power to enforce it effectively. On the other hand, while concerned about Monroe gaining an advantage in Latin American trade, British statesman Canning distributed copies of the Polignac Memorandum to government leaders, revealing Britain's role in restraining France. Initially, Latin Americans showed considerable interest in the doctrine, but their enthusiasm waned when the United States rejected their offers of a military alliance. Ironically, the responsibility for upholding the Monroe Doctrine fell upon the Royal British Navy, as both the United States and Britain shared a common concern for maintaining open markets and free trade. Historian John J. Johnson notes that the Monroe Doctrine, being a unilateral statement by the U.S. president without legal standing in international law, committed

the United States to very little, apart from defending its own fundamental interests ( Gilderhus 8).

After its initial impact, the Monroe Doctrine gradually faded into the background for most Americans throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. In fact, apart from Mexico, Cuba, and Central America, Latin America lost its appeal as a significant area of interest. Geographically distant and culturally distinct, South American countries did not pose either threats or opportunities for the United States. Instead, these nations developed economic and political connections with Europeans, particularly the British, viewing these ties as a counterbalance to the growing power of the United States. Motivated by a desire for land, commercial ambitions, and the ideological beliefs associated with "Manifest Destiny," the United States expanded its territorial holdings through the conquest of the North American continent. As a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo following the War with Mexico in 1848, the United States acquired half of Mexico's national territory. Cuba and Central America also attracted interest from southern slave owners seeking new territories and northern merchants searching for a shorter route to Asia, but neither group succeeded in adding new states to the United States (9).

During the late nineteenth century, there was a significant shift in U.S. foreign relations towards a more proactive and assertive approach to policy. This transformation was driven by the desire for markets and resources amidst urbanization, immigration, and industrialization, as well as the geopolitical competition among European powers and Japan. One manifestation of this change was the emphasis on Pan-Americanism, which was evident during Benjamin Harrison's presidency at the first International American Conference in 1889. Secretary of State James G. Blaine, a strong advocate of Pan-Americanism, proposed cooperation with Latin

American nations to promote peace and trade through arbitration and a customs union. Although Latin American delegates were generally uninterested and distrustful of these initiatives, they agreed to the creation of a commercial clearing house known as the Pan-American Union. Despite limited tangible achievements, Blaine's agenda highlighted the new diplomatic focus on commerce and peace (9).

Another indication of the paradigm shift was the reinvigorated and more assertive interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. In 1895, during a dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela over a boundary issue, Secretary of State Richard Olney proclaimed the corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, asserting that the United States practically held sovereignty over the continent and had the authority to intervene in relevant matters. The British responded with disdain, delaying their reply and ultimately denying the applicability of the Monroe Doctrine. In response, President Grover Cleveland supported Olney's position and managed to reach a compromise, with the British agreeing to arbitration while excluding territory they had occupied for over fifty years (10).

Furthermore, during President William McKinley's tenure, the U.S. intervention in the Spanish-Cuban conflict in 1898 showcased even more assertive and nationalist attitudes in foreign policy. After several years of attempting peaceful resolutions to restore stability in war-torn Cuba, McKinley requested a declaration of war with goals consistent with the Monroe Doctrine. These goals included expelling Spanish presence from the Caribbean region, establishing peace, and forging a special relationship between Cuba and the United States (10).

In short, the Monroe doctrine can be seen as a transformation of George Washington's neutrality into isolationism and as an extract of its principles. It is a consolidation of the non-

entanglement policy that had been issued and fought by Washington. Latin America was declared as the U.S.'s exclusive sphere of influence, and the non-colonization and non-intervention were condemned. In this sense, the doctrine urges the European powers to pursue their own policies of neutrality toward America. However, Monroe was not affected by the rigid isolationism that rejected forming alliances. Thus, he believed in the common destiny and interests of the US with Latin America than it had with Europe. By this, he demonstrated the flexibility and evolutionary approach that Washington defended in his valedictory (Malanson 82). The Monroe Doctrine showcases an evolving perspective while maintaining core principles of non-intervention.

What can be said about the Monroe Doctrine is that it embraces both isolationist ideas and at the same time asserts an interventionist stance within the Western Hemisphere. It is thus an example of the complex and sometimes conflicting impulses within American foreign policy. This ideology, which reflects an isolationist desire to reduce entanglements and engagement in the affairs of other nations, on the one hand, discourages more European colonization and meddling in the Americas. However, the doctrine also asserts American hegemony and supremacy over the Western Hemisphere, implying a readiness to aggressively monitor and interfere in the area. This dichotomy demonstrates how the US has frequently chosen to exercise its influence in some situations and at certain times while maintaining a moderate degree of isolationism and unrestrained interventionism.

## **1.2 The U.S. Foreign Policy from Expansionism to Imperialism**

This section explores the transformation of U.S. foreign policy from expansionism to imperialism, with a focus on key elements that contributed to this shift. Firstly, expansionism in

U.S. history, driven by a belief in Manifest Destiny, fueled the desire to expand American territory and influence across the continent. The idea that it was the destiny of the United States to stretch from coast to coast played a significant role in shaping foreign policy objectives. The Mexican-American War of 1846 further exemplified this shift. The conflict resulted in the acquisition of vast territories, including California and Texas, which expanded the territorial reach of the United States. This expansionist mindset, combined with economic and strategic interests, laid the foundation for a more assertive foreign policy.

Furthermore, the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, proclaimed by President Theodore Roosevelt, marked a significant development in U.S. foreign policy. It asserted America's right to intervene in Latin American affairs to ensure stability and protect its economic interests. This policy shift reflected a more interventionist approach, with the United States using its power to maintain influence and control in the Western Hemisphere.

These events are crucial in understanding the transformation of U.S. foreign policy from expansionism to imperialism. They demonstrate the progression from a focus on territorial expansion and westward expansion within the continent to a more assertive and interventionist stance on the global stage. The examination of these events highlights the motivations, strategies, and consequences of the United States' pursuit of imperialist objectives, shedding light on the evolution of its foreign policy and its impact on both domestic and international affairs.

### **1.2.1 Expansionism in the U.S. History**

Expansionism is a significant practice throughout global historical events. It is an appeal for expanding power, influence and geographical territories through multiple means and strategies. Such strategies can be ranging from hard and soft power, imperialism and colonialism,

to economic and business developments. This term is, significantly, a defining character of the U.S. history and foreign policy. Expansionism is one of the crucial ideas, which has roots in Europe, on which this country had built and still building its nation, (Sauers and Jennifer x). Expansionism is an activity that promises U.S growth geographically and economically. A concrete fact from history which proves such idea to be realized is “the United States grew from a union of 13 former English colonies to a continental power, one that stretched from the Atlantic Ocean westward to the Pacific”, approximately in one century (1).

America is distinct in that, over time, it became allied with another idea — Manifest Destiny — which began to shape the American nation in the 1840s: the belief that America’s mission was to occupy the North American continent and spread democracy across the land. Some historians have called this idea “democratic imperialism,” because Americans of the nineteenth century believed it was their duty" (2) to help other peoples who are not civilized. Indeed, from the time of the nation's founding until the late nineteenth century, the concept of American exceptionalism played a crucial role in shaping the American ideology. The belief that America was a unique and exceptional experiment led to the conviction that the United States should safeguard it by staying detached from the dangers and corrupting influences beyond its borders. The primary goal of U.S. grand strategy was to shield the nation from the perils of the world. Early Americans ardently held the belief in the exceptional nature of the American experiment, rooted in Protestant ideas of redemption. They viewed their young country as the “New Israel”, a chosen nation with the mission to uplift humanity spiritually, politically, and economically (Kupchan 14). Herman Melville succinctly captured the essence of American exceptionalism in his 1850 book *White-Jacket*:

We Americans are the peculiar, chosen people - the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world... God has predestinated, mankind expects, great things from our race; and great things we feel in our souls. The rest of the nations must soon be in our rear. We are the pioneers of the world; the advance guard, sent on through the wilderness of untried things, to break a new path in the New World that is ours. (qtd. in Kupchan 14)

Melville's words reflect a sentiment of American exceptionalism and a sense of divine destiny. In comparing Americans to the "chosen people" or the "Israel of our time," he suggests that the United States has a unique and predestined role in the world. The metaphor of bearing the "ark of the liberties of the world" implies a responsibility to safeguard and advance the principles of freedom. The notion that "great things" are expected from the American race conveys a sense of destiny and a belief in the exceptional character of the nation. The language of being "pioneers of the world" and the "advance guard" reinforces the idea that Americans are forging a new path and leading the way in uncharted territory. It is, thus, the belief of America's mission to bring progress, liberty, and innovation to the world.

From 1783 to 1861, America expanded as a result of the French and Indian war that was waged in 1754 and ended in 1736, in which King George III was forbidden to colonize or settle in the west of the Appalachian Mountains. Despite the conference launched at Paris in order to negotiate peace, the Americans refused to discard the region under question and rather they desired it. Towards the end of the revolution, "the new United States totaled around 900,000 square miles "while the population there was around four millions. It is significant to mention that around that time, the new emerging United States was girded by the existence of great powers of Britain in the North, and Spain in the West and South, which the latter expressed its

worries about "the young *democracy in the Americas and its possible effects* on their own colonies in the hemisphere," (3-4, italics are added).

Moving to the west of the Mississippi, at the very start of 1800's the French military Napoleon took the possession of the "Louisiana Territory from Spain", he planned to establish "a new French empire in North America". Yet, after realizing that French troops were unable to match with the British forces, he decided to sell the region of Louisiana to the U.S. in 1803. As an outcome of this new territory or as it called the Louisiana Purchase, the Mississippi River was under the control of the United States. Furthermore, the borders of the Louisiana Purchase were not cut clear which led to conflicts between the United States from one side, and Great Britain and Spain from the other.

The dispute with Britain was settled in 1803 over the northern boundary; and the dispute over the western boundary was solved with Spain in 1819 with the latter giving up Florida to the U.S. (4). The United States expanded further and further, neglecting the drawn boundaries on maps, through seeking low priced lands which led many American citizens to settle in Spanish Mexico during the 1820's and 1830's. The activity of expansion continued after Mexico got its independence from Spain in 1821 to reach Texas. Mexico attempts to force its control in this province failed, and a revolt launched in 1835 to be independent from Mexico in 1836. From that period, people from Texas desired the annexation into the United States that faced problems until 1845 at which it took place. This led to further the Mexican war (1846-1848). The war gave President James K. Polk the opportunity to realize the desires of the manifest destiny and take over another Mexican province that is California and New Mexico. "Together with the settlement of the Oregon Territory boundary with Great Britain, the United States now stretched from coast to coast"(4-5).

As it has been discussed above, expansion takes place when one country extends its boundaries to annex other new territories to its region through buying lands or acquiring them by war. Another means of land acquisition is through treaties and congressional laws. For instance, in 1785, the Congress passed what is known as the Land Ordinance to expand orderly into the west of the Appalachian Mountains because of the Treaty of Paris of 1783. After that, it passed the Northwest Ordinance to organize the expansion in north of the territory of Ohio River that divided the region into three territories, each with a governor and judicial system and security, in 1787. Moreover, slavery was prohibited in these territories. The Congress went further and enlarged the scope of the principal of statehood in 1785 and 1787 Ordinances "to all continental territory that was acquired by the United States". As a result, revolts were ousted and never threatened the stability of the acquired territory, and what the American citizenship dictated was enjoyed by all of the people there (5).

Another aspect of American expansionism is centering the issue of slavery in its arguments to expand its map. As a historical fact," by the early 1800s an abolition movement was growing across the North" in which most of its states ended the practice of slavery and manumitted its slaves progressively. It is through The Northern Ordinance that slavery was prohibited in new jointed Northwest regions like Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois.

Over the issue of slavery, the Congress in 1820 passed the Missouri Compromise as a result of turning the Missouri into one of the American states. The Northern worries about slavery increasingly spread throughout the territories and "convincing many Southerners who did not own slaves to unite with slave owners in order to defend their unique Southern way of life", therefore, this Missouri Compromise helped permanently to settle down the conflicts in the region. Yet, the Mexican war minded again the conflict about slavery .What has happened was

that crowded people in the north argued that what really caused the war to be waged was in fact the plot set by the slaveholders who, in their opinion, desired to let the institution of slave alive and expanding (6).

Another compromise which was passed as a result of solving the issue of slavery was The Compromise of 1850. This compromise set California as a free state,

and the settlers of the Utah and New Mexico territories would be allowed to decide whether to allow slavery. Later, Democratic senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, however, advocated the idea of popular sovereignty, which would allow the residents of each territory to decide whether or not to have slavery. This idea set off a storm of protest across the North. (6)

This highlights the debate over the expansion of slavery into newly acquired territories in the United States during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. According to the compromise, settlers in the Utah and New Mexico territories would be given the authority to decide whether or not to allow slavery within their borders. However, the Democratic senator Stephen A. Douglas introduces the concept of "popular sovereignty." Douglas advocated for the idea that the residents of each territory should have the power to determine the status of slavery within their region. This proposal triggered strong opposition in the North, indicating that the issue of slavery and its expansion remained a highly contentious and divisive topic. This reflects the ongoing tensions and debates surrounding the expansion of slavery, foreshadowing the deeper conflicts that would eventually lead to the American Civil War.

Four years later, abolitionists founded the Republican Party as a means to block the further expansion of slavery into new territories. Moreover, in 1856 in the Kansas Territory

witnessed a struggle between proslavery settlers and adherents, or antislavery, of slavery and continued until 1856. By the year of 1856, the issue of slavery reached the presidential politics in which the Democrat James Buchanan won over his opponent from the Republican Party, John C. Frémont. In 1860, Republican Abraham Lincoln (1861–1865) was pointed out for the presidential elections for the main reason that the Democratic Party itself split over the issue of slavery (7).

After the civil war the United States experienced expansion under several conditions. For instance, in 1879 America took the Alaska Territory from Russia. This followed by " expansion of railroads and the effects of the 1862 Homestead Act, which gave away western land in return for living on the land for five years and improving it, westward settlement greatly expanded after 1865". And to encourage the development of railroad, the American government offered "land grants to railroad companies". Interestingly, the United States witnessed an economic growth, especially in the late 1880s and early 1890s and increase in populations as well, due to immigration into the region. The immigrants from Europe gave the U.S.A new functions and employment which helped to let the economy progressing. Moreover, the merchant navy was also needed in order to protect America from sudden or expected wars (7-8).

As a final historical point to be noted here, the American-Spanish War significantly impacted U.S. expansionism. The war was driven by opposition to Spanish rule in Cuba, which was considered harsh and dictatorial. What the war ultimately revealed was that the United States, having become a colonial power, now had new needs, such as:

[...] the need for a canal across Central America. President Theodore Roosevelt (1901–1909) quickly recognized the new nation of Panama when it revolted from Colombia, and he secured a treaty allowing the United States to build a canal, which opened in 1914.

Purchase of the Danish Virgin Islands by the United States during World War I (1914–1918) completed U.S. overseas possessions (8).

Today, America keeps in its possession many regions: Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands. Furthermore, the small islands situated in the Pacific Ocean also belong to the U.S like Canton, Enderbury, Howland, Baker, Jarvis, Palmyra, Wake, Johnston, Sand, Kingman Reef, and Midway. More than that, the U.S is also present in the Caribbean, in which it owns Navassa, a very small isle between Jamaica and Haiti.

The United States emerged as the latest imperialist Western power due to its leaders and their imperialist vision. Since the late eighteenth century, USA expanded from thirteen states to more than fifty states. This shows that U.S. Manifest Destiny on its expansionist movement before the mid-twentieth century. The USA became one of the largest countries in the world and in the American continent. Expansionism, thus, provided the country with vast landscapes and abundant natural resources. It also brought a diversity of ethnic groups, including African Americans, Native Americans, Japanese Americans, and Chinese Americans, among others. However, expansionism had also a negative impact on its political relations with other countries, especially Mexico. USA and Mexico have controversial and critical relations since the start of expansionism and the inclusion of several Mexican states. Their relations are highly critical and unstable till the twentieth and twenty-first- centuries (8).

### **1.2.2 Manifest Destiny: A Catalyst for the U.S. foreign Policy Shift**

After the independence, the USA occupied parts of North America. It occupied lands between "the Atlantic Oceans and the Mississippi River, from the St. Lawrence River to the

thirty first parallel" (Owsley Jr and Smith 1). In fact, Americans had a great sense of nationalism towards their new country and states at the expense of other nations or races. Consequently, their beliefs in expansionism were explained through the concept of Manifest Destiny and these ideas are always intertwined. Several literary texts emerged to support the ideology of Manifest Destiny and expansion; they include the names of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and James Monroe. They "all wanted expansion yet without embroiling the nation in a war" (9). They created this philosophy and worked to accomplish throughout the coming years. In this context, Frank Lawrence Owsley Jr. and Gene A. Smith argue that "Nineteenth-century Manifest Destiny meant expansion, ordained by divine will, over unspecified area that could include North America or even the entire Western Hemisphere" (16). This uncovers that Americans' main goal manifests in achieving their expansion all over the continent.

The acquisition of other states and pieces of lands had a deep meaning to Americans, which manifested in their pursuit of happiness (Owsley Jr and Smith 30). This shows that the American nation was determined to be happy once it achieved their Manifest Destiny. In addition to this, Andrew C. Isenberg and Thomas Richangs, Jr claim that several historians define this concept; "historians have used Manifest Destiny and its related concept, American expansion, to variously describe American ideology, federal policy, settler action, demographic dominance, and military conquest, or a combination of any or all of these phenomena" (5). It seems that Manifest Destiny is intertwined with different ideas and ideologies of both late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

It is worth noting that the main definition of this concept has an influential relation to Americans' aim to expand to the Gulf Coast during Jefferson's period. Jefferson is a crucial figure who called for expansion by the rise of the nineteenth century owing to the presence of

English, Spanish, Afro-Americans and native-Americans threats. Both Madison and Monroe followed the same path of their successor in encouraging and celebrating both Manifest Destiny and expansionism. In fact, American leaders pursued their dream and only destiny to expand. U.S. leaders took control over the Baton Rouge because they thought that it is their destiny to expand due to O'Sullivan's Manifest Destiny. Importantly, the USA was against Spanish rule in its nearby states; this is why it invited those Spanish states to its previous ones. Jefferson had a major role in the expansion to Mississippi River; once it was obtained, he claimed that "this removes from us the greatest source of danger to our peace" (qtd. in Owsley Jr. and Smith, 21). Further, Monroe took possession of Florida in 1821; this opens Americans' intention to expand to Spanish held Cuba and Texas (26). Americans believed that they could accomplish this aim without sacrificing their independence or sense of nationalism.

Manifest Destiny is an inspirational phrase that marks the history of the United States. The concept expressed a widely held belief that the United States would achieve political and territorial prominence. This conviction stemmed from the belief that national growth would be driven by distinct qualities inherent in the American people—such as their vitality, faith in democratic institutions, and a sense of responsibility to share the benefits of their civilization with less fortunate nations (Graebner 105). Actually, during a speech session that took place in 1846, in the House of Representatives Robert C. Winthrop, a Representative of Massachusetts articulates statements which describe the significance of Manifest Destiny to the Americans, saying:

There is one element in our title [to Oregon], however, which I confess that I have not named, and to which I may not have done entire justice. I mean that new revelation of right which has been designated as the right of our manifest destiny to spread over this

whole continent. It has been openly avowed in a leading Administration journal that this, after all, is our best and strongest title-one so clear, so pre-eminent, and so indisputable, that if Great Britain had all our other titles in addition to her own, they would weigh nothing against it. The right of our manifest destiny! There is a right for a new chapter in the law of nations; or rather, in the special laws of our own country; for I suppose the right of a manifest destiny to spread will not be admitted to exist in any nation except the universal Yankee nation (qtd. in Pratt 795).

From the above speech, the hypothesis about the origin of this Manifest Destiny can be traced back to the period of independence. The new nation emerges to call for its rights to decide for itself and to mark its differentiable status by creating new "strongest title-one so clear, so pre-eminent, and so indisputable" which would lead this nation to the future. Put differently, the Congress, where Manifest Destiny was officially articulated, signals the coming of an important era or period that would change this nation. Through that Administration, a futuristic "vision of a great and democratic nation" comes to light.

Julius Pratt argues that the first appearance of the phrase was before, in 1845 and particularly in the *Morning News* of July 9, 1845 and then in the Democratic review. He concluded that the actual author of Manifest Destiny "was John L. O'Sullivan", the editor in both journals. O'Sullivan is one of the main figures in American history who believed in their destiny to expand after the independence of the thirteen colonies (Deoujari 492). Indeed, the phrase was first in sight in another article published in the *Democratic Review* for July-August, 1845. O'Sullivan argued that it is "the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole continent which Providence has given us for the experiment of liberty" (492). This statement uncovers O'Sullivan's belief and aim, which manifested in their right to possess land.

Manifest Destiny was for the second time mentioned in the *Morning News's* article "of December 27, 1845... Thence it was carried into the debate on the Oregon question in the House of Representatives and proved to be such a convenient summing up of the self-confident nationalist and expansionist sentiment of the time that it passed into the permanent national vocabulary".(Pratt 798)

Consequently, the phrase becomes a national symbol that helps the newly independent nation to seek power inside and outside its boundaries. This entails O'Sullivan's perspective concerning American destiny to spread to Oregon and other places. Literarily speaking, Walt Whitman is an influential American national poet who believed in Manifest Destiny. Throughout his literary works, he focused on the "imperial mission" of the United States and the significance of the landscape to Americans (Smith 373). Whitman was fascinated by the landscape and nature in the new continent; hence, he claimed that "I swear there is no greatness or power that does not emulate those of the earth!" (qtd. in Smith 374). Subsequently, Whitman used his writings to express his views on America's mission to expand into different regions. It is worth noting that his literary writing is significant to encourage Americans to believe in Manifest Destiny. In fact, Whitman's high interest in land is not a personal issue but due to his American society.

Manifest Destiny, a 19th-century belief in the divine mission of the United States to expand its influence, laid the groundwork for American Exceptionalism in the 20th century. American Exceptionalism is portrayed as a conviction in the nation's superior virtue and a duty to address global problems as stated by Norman A. Graebner:

Manifest destiny left a heritage that continued into the twentieth century in the form of American Exceptionalism—a belief that the country had a superior virtue and obligation

to correct the world's ills. Like the earlier idea of Manifest Destiny, Exceptionalism was not accepted by other nations, and it lacked a precise definition of goals and a realistic consideration of how such objectives could be achieved abroad. It is not surprising, then, that American Exceptionalism, despite its perennial appeal, has brought no measurable success to U.S. efforts abroad. (106)

This statement implies that, similar to Manifest Destiny, American Exceptionalism faced challenges: it wasn't embraced by other nations, lacked clear objectives, and didn't consider realistic approaches for achieving its goals abroad. The overall assessment is that, despite its enduring appeal, American Exceptionalism hasn't translated into tangible success for U.S. endeavors on the international stage.

### **1.2.3 Mexican-American War of 1846**

Several historians have discussed the reasons that caused the US- Mexican war before the mid-nineteenth century. The origin of US- Mexican war has its roots in Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and Spain's loss of Florida in 1819. Brian Hamnett explains that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Mexico did not realize the danger of US expansion till 1830s (151). Mexico got its independence from Spain in 1821, and the main goal of U.S. leaders is to absorb these previously colonized territories (Stephen 87). Mark S. Joy notes that:

the United States was unlikely to give up attempts to purchase Mexican land, and public opinion in Mexico made it impossible for politician to publicly suggest the sale of land to the northern neighbor. Another serious issue between the two nations was the claims by American citizens for the damages against the Mexican government. Mexico had acknowledged the validity of these claims but could not pay (66).

This highlights the diplomatic complexities between the United States and Mexico, involving territorial disputes and financial claims, and suggests that the political and public dynamics in both countries contributed to the challenges in resolving these issues. The United States' desire for land acquisition and the outstanding claims by American citizens were contributing factors to the strained relations between the two nations.

Mexico faced a critical situation once it was unable to pay the damages Mexicans caused in northern areas; this led some American leaders to call for the annexation of Texas. In fact, Mexico considered Texas as its own city; however, the leaders of Texas assumed that it is an independent city once Mexico abolished slavery in 1830 (Stephen 87). In 1844, President John Tyler started to appeal for the annexation of this Mexican city even if the Mexican President, Santa Anna, warned them of war (Joy 66).

James Knox Polk is one of US leaders who wanted the annexation of some Mexican cities. In 1844, he launched his Presidential campaign where he claimed that he wanted to annex both Texas and Oregon country. However, once he became President, Polk could not annex them due to his fear of war; hence, he preferred negotiations first. Mexican leaders refused any negotiations about Texas. Significantly, Polk sought to annex California and New Mexico to the United States due to the rising tension with Mexico over Texas. California held particular significance for the US because it offered agricultural production and access to Pacific trade (67). In this vein, Mark S. Joy explains that

while he was willing to give up the more extreme claims in the case of Oregon, Polk held firm in regard to Texas and the southwest. Polk told his cabinet that the acquisition of California- with the ports at Sand Diego and San Franscisco- was the primary goal of his presidency (67).

It seems that the main intention and Manifest Destiny of American leaders is to annex several states to their previous ones. Polk thought more about the landscape and nature that they could acquire from the previously Spanish and French colonized places.

The war between these two countries started because the United States Congress wanted to annex Texas in June 1845. In "Independent Indians and U.S-Mexican War", Brian Delay argued that Native Americans had a major role in the rising tensions between USA and Mexico. US leaders were aware that Mexicans had serious problems towards the Indians; therefore, Americans encouraged savage and barbaric acts just before the declaration of war in 1830. "Americans watched Indians driving Mexicans backward, and this observation inspired ambitions and tactics for continual expansion" (36). These attacks on Mexico had a great impact on their military system and defense during the 1830s and 1840s; Delay says, "these events had powerful but virtually forgotten consequences for the course and outcome of the U.S- Mexican War" (35). This led to the collapse and division of Mexican states; this is why Mexico is unable to defend U.S army in 1846.

During the summer of 1845, Polk prepared US troops in Texas for its annexation; but Mexican leaders could not sell any piece or state out of their fear of Mexican citizens (68). It is worth noting that Zachary Taylor, a leader in US forces, moved his force to Rio Grande, which is near to Matamoros, a Mexican city. This action influenced US- Mexican relation because Mexican leaders asked Taylor to remove his troops. Joy argues that "Taylor refused, and on 24 April Mexican forces crossed the Rio Grande attacked the American troops in the disputed territory" (69). Importantly, several members in the House of Representatives in USA voted for the approval of war against Mexico.

The war divided Americans because the Whig Party opposed US- Mexican war while the Democrats called for it. The Whig Party opposed it because its members were afraid of the collapse of their Party; it is because they recall what happened to the Federalist Party in 1812 (70). In this respect, Joy admits that "Democrats were faced with a political paradox once the war started. Since a Democratic president had asked for the declaration of war, it was very important that the war be won so that this party not be blamed for failure" (70). Democrats had to defeat Mexicans for fear of any crisis in their country. They did not want to be blamed for their failure in front of Mexican forces.

Mexicans had to act in 1846 so as to eliminate threat in Rio Bravo and northern river; however, Mexican governors were unable to secure northern Mexico. Mexican forces aimed to defeat US army in Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma battles (Hamnett 153). American troops succeeded in having several victories in this war against Mexico (Joy 71). Mexico collapses because its governors are unable to defend northern states or handle armed forces due to its inability to pay its previous debts to Britain. In this vein, Hamnett explains that "the collapse of the north-eastern frontier exposed the country to invasion" such as Monterrey (Hamnett 154). A second invasion controlled other territories, particularly Chihuahua and Coahuila. Significantly, there were some attempts to gain back Mexican territories. Santa Anna was one of the leaders who fought US forces to take back his city but fails. Indeed, the war continued until September 1847 when Mexican forces weakened; therefore, Hamnett argues that "the War of 1846-47 exposed the failure of the Mexican officer corps, the obsolete weapons of the army, and the inadequacy of its logistical support. US artillery played a key role at all stages" (156). This entails that the lack of Mexican management led the US army to control Mexico.

Mexico refused any American peaceful attempts; this is why the whole situation worsened. Eastern Mexican forces failed to ensure some states once US army reached The Valley of Mexico. Additionally, "the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 confirmed the loss of" several Mexican states (151). In February 1848, Mexico signed an agreement in which USA designed the northern territories of Mexico. In this vein, Lynn Stephen argues that "the Treaty called for Mexico to give up almost half of its territory, which included modern-day California, Arizona, Texas and parts of Colorado, Nevada and Utah" (87). Mexicans had not only lost these states but also their farms and lands after the war through "force or fraud" (88). This war had a great effect on the USA and its leading figures such as Abraham Lincoln who was against further expansions. USA and Mexico reached a final peace in 1848 because of the huge losses they witnessed during these years.

Historically speaking, during this war thousands of American and Mexican soldiers lost their lives owing to their severe injuries and disease. The USA acquired other territories after the war such as Gadsden and northwestern states; subsequently, the USA became the largest country in North America. In this respect, Joy calls it a 'continental nation' due to the immensity of its landscape and states (78). US expansion created critical relations with South American nations; therefore, Joy explains that "the war also created an enmity between the United States and much of Latin America that lingers even today" (78). Additionally, USA could not control all of its states during the mid-nineteenth century. It was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that United States organized an administration to control its western states. This expansion created a serious issue regarding slavery; hence, the main question they faced was whether a state should be free or slave-holding.

### 1.2.4 Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine

In 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt boldly asserted a new chapter in American foreign policy with the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. This controversial expansion of the original 1823 doctrine fundamentally reshaped US involvement in the Western Hemisphere, sparking both praise and critique for its implications on regional sovereignty and international influence. Understanding the key tenets, historical context, and lasting impacts of the Roosevelt Corollary requires examining its origins, its application in practice, and the ongoing debates it continues to generate.

Monroe Doctrine, articulated by President James Monroe in 1823, is the principle of non-intervention and non-colonization in the affairs of the newly independent nations in the Western Hemisphere. The doctrine sought to establish the United States as the dominant power in the region and to protect the sovereignty and independence of Latin American countries (see section 1.1.3). However, it remained ambiguous on how the United States would respond to internal instability or financial problems within Latin American nations. This gap created an opportunity for European powers, particularly Germany and Great Britain, to exert economic and political pressure on struggling Latin American countries.

The resurgence of European involvement in Latin America became a focal point in U.S. foreign policy as European governments used military force to compel several Latin American nations to settle their debts. A notable instance occurred in 1902 when British, German, and Italian naval vessels blockaded Venezuela's ports due to the Venezuelan government's default on debts owed to foreign bondholders. This led to concerns among many Americans about the potential erosion of their nation's longstanding influence in the region as a result of European intervention in Latin America. ("Theodore Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine 1905").

To prevent the involvement of other nations and maintain fiscal stability, President Theodore Roosevelt presented his corollary. He stated in his annual message to Congress in December 1904 that

Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power. (qtd. in Ricard 18)

Roosevelt's notion of the United States serving as an "international police power" raises questions about interventionism, sovereignty, and the potential challenges associated with a powerful nation assuming a role of oversight. While framed as a measure to uphold order and prevent deterioration of civilized society, such interventionist ideas have been both praised for promoting stability and criticized for potentially infringing on the sovereignty of other nations. This perspective captures the complex balance between maintaining regional stability and respecting the autonomy of nations within the Western Hemisphere (Bryne 51).

Shortly after assuming the presidency, and with the International Conference of the American States in Mexico City approaching, Roosevelt directed Secretary of State John Hay to emphasize to the "sister republics" the importance of their stability and prosperity for the United States. He proposed offering them substantial commercial cooperation and invited them to collectively support the Monroe Doctrine to better safeguard their sovereign rights and territorial integrity against potential European encroachments (Ricard 24).

Roosevelt connected his approach to the Monroe Doctrine, aligning with his broader foreign policy of "speak softly and carry a big stick." He asserted that, in accordance with the Monroe Doctrine, the United States had the right to employ "international police power" to quell persistent disorder or misconduct in the Western Hemisphere ("Theodore Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine 1905"). Roosevelt held the belief that the Monroe Doctrine required intervention by the United States. The president formulated a plan allowing the United States to assume control of the custom houses in the Dominican Republic, asserting that this action "provides a tangible demonstration of the effectiveness of the United States Government in upholding the Monroe Doctrine" (Bryne 51)

The corollary was initially directed specifically toward the Caribbean region, where Dominica Republic faced revolutions and challenges from foreign creditors. However, Roosevelt's announcement had broader implications, the country's desire was for all other republics on the continent to be happy and prosperous. According to Roosevelt, their happiness and prosperity hinged on maintaining order within their borders and fulfilling their obligations to external parties. Roosevelt's significant contribution to U.S. statecraft lay in his articulation of why revolutions posed a threat to the nation's interests and the subsequent justification for using force, if necessary, to subdue them. However, the Corollary went beyond advocating war for the sake of peace; it embodied a North American disregard for those who seemed more inclined toward revolts than working diligently on the farm for ten hours a day. To Roosevelt and like-minded Progressives, such individuals were viewed as "small bandit nests of a wicked and inefficient type," and within the Progressive ethos, nothing was more egregious than both inefficiency and instability (LaFeber 37).

Arguably, the Roosevelt Corollary, an extension of the Monroe Doctrine, carried a significant irony. The Monroe Doctrine, initially conceived to deter European intervention in the Western Hemisphere, was now being employed to rationalize United States intervention. What was originally a defensive principle had evolved into an assertive policy. While strictly speaking, it represented a distortion of Monroe's original purpose; it did not precisely serve as a guise for imperial ambitions in Latin America (Ricard 18). The Roosevelt Corollary marked a significant shift from earlier hemispheric policies by adopting a global perspective on U.S. security. Before the 1890s, Americans largely believed that defending the coastlines of the United States was adequate protection against foreign threats, with the army and militia available to respond if necessary (21).

Indeed, that perspective completely changed the interpretation of the original Monroe Doctrine. Initially, Monroe and Adams had intended for it to safeguard Latin American revolutions from external interference, particularly from Europe. However, after eighty years, the power dynamics had shifted in favor of the United States, and the Doctrine itself underwent a transformation, suggesting that Latin Americans should now be subject to external intervention, specifically from North America if deemed necessary. Roosevelt rationalized such interference as merely a deployment of "police" power, yet this term provided U.S. presidents with the flexibility to intervene based on any criteria they could conceive. Ultimately, discussions about "civilization" and "self-determination" notwithstanding, their military and economic prowess served as its own validation (LaFeber 38).

The Roosevelt Corollary, which established the United States as the sole policeman of the Western Hemisphere, led to repeated interventions in the name of law and order, leaving an enduring legacy of anti-Americanism in South America. The United States' interventionist

posture and practice logically resulted from the assumption of superiority and the police duties it implied. This posture, combined with the enforcement of law and order and economic imperialism, was antagonistic to the principle of self-determination, which was dear to American hearts. As a result, Washington's "protectorates" saw their legitimate aspirations thwarted by the United States' power and self-interest, leading to resentment and anti-American sentiment in South America. The perception of the United States as an imperialist power further fueled enduring anti-Americanism in the region. This legacy of anti-Americanism persisted throughout World War II and the Cold War, despite assurances to the contrary (Ricard 25).

It is worth noting that Roosevelt's successor, president William Howard Taft along with Secretary of State Philander C. Knox aimed to alter Roosevelt's military "Big Stick" approach with a more subtle and constructive strategy based on economic influence. They believed in the traditional North American idea that capital could have a healing effect on political issues. Knox thought it appropriate for the United States to control the customs revenues of other nations to prevent them from becoming vulnerable to "devastating and unprincipled revolutions." To stabilize Central America and benefit U.S. investors while doing so, Taft and Knox sought a comprehensive legal right for intervention. Taft candidly told a Mexican diplomat that North Americans would "not be content until we have secured some formal right to compel the peace between those Central American Governments," and "have the right to knock their heads together until they should maintain peace between them." However, they were unable to find such a legal right, as State Department legal experts informed Knox that no such provision existed. Consequently, Taft and Knox resorted to straightforward dollar diplomacy, which, given their views of Central Americans, eventually led them to use force in the manner of T.R. Knox soon came to rely on what he called "the moral value" of naval power (LaFeber 38).

In conclusion, one can argue that the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine paved the way towards interventionism: and it had significant consequences on US foreign policy. By asserting the right to intervene in Latin American affairs to maintain stability, the Corollary expanded US involvement in the region. While it aimed to protect US interests and prevent European intervention, it often resulted in unilateral interventions that undermined sovereignty and fueled anti-American sentiment. The Corollary shaped a legacy of interventionist policies and strained diplomatic relations with Latin American countries. Its long-term impact continues to shape US foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere.

### **Conclusion**

In short, the policy adopted by the United States at its early stages was characterized by its neutrality and isolation. The U.S. first president, George Washington, is considered as the father of isolationism. He set the stage for isolationist foreign policy for more than 150 years. He encouraged his countrymen to remain neutral and to avoid any alliance or entanglement with the conflicting European powers in an effort to keep certain interests. The Proclamation of Neutrality was primarily intended to avoid the then war between the belligerent powers i.e. France and Britain. However, despite the fact that he advocated the policy of neutrality and to remain unilateral in politics, he advised to keep commercial ties with foreign nations in his Farewell Address for better domestic achievements. Likewise, James Monroe, the U.S. fifth president, announced that the Western Hemisphere is the U.S. exclusive sphere of influence and the colonial powers should stay away from it; in return, the U.S. will not interfere in the European wars and in their politics. This doctrine contributed in the development of the U.S. foreign policy, it opposed any form of colonization in Latin America and it warned the European powers not to intervene in these countries. This doctrine was justified by the U.S. fear of conflict with

Spain which lost many colonies in the region. America was afraid that Spain or France would return to these colonies. Under those circumstances, Monroe consolidated Washington's non-entanglement policy and he combined it with the sense of exceptionalism and having a mission in the Americas.

Indeed, Americans had a great sense of nationalism towards their country at the expense of other nations. As a result, their belief in expansionism has been explained through the concept of Manifest Destiny and their mission is divinely guided. The U.S geographical separation from the rest of the world was an opportunity for Americans to cultivate their nation and their sense of exceptionalism in solitude. During this period, they were preoccupied with the settlements of their frontiers and moving further west through treaties and purchase. They pursued this way in an attempt to reduce European dangers and foreign interference, thus they believed that their expansion through the continent will keep America safe from threats. However, this did not last for long until the U.S. waged a war against Mexico following the annexation of Texas to the U.S. territory. The war ended in success for Americans; Mexico lost significant portions of its territories, including Texas, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Arizona. This success fostered a heightened sense of national pride. With the notable increase in U.S. growth—militarily, geographically, and economically — calls for overseas missions emerged at the surface in order to protect the U.S. shipping.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **The U.S. Shift from Isolationism to Interventionism**

## **Introduction**

The twentieth century witnessed a remarkable evolution in the foreign policy stance of the United States, shifting from a doctrine of isolationism to active interventionism on the global stage. This transformation was profoundly influenced by significant events such as the First World War, the Second World War, and the gradual erosion of isolationist tendencies. This chapter delves into the key turning points and factors that propelled this shift, spanning from the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 to the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 marked a crucial inflection point, forcing the United States to reevaluate its longstanding policy of isolationism. As the conflict escalated and threatened to disrupt global stability, the U.S. began to engage more actively in international affairs, ultimately joining the war in 1917 on the side of the Allies. The aftermath of this war saw the emergence of the League of Nations, indicating an inclination towards international collaboration and a departure from pure isolationism.

However, the interwar period was fraught with economic turmoil and the rise of authoritarian regimes, culminating in the cataclysmic events of the Second World War. The unparalleled devastation and loss of life experienced during this conflict compelled the United States to abandon its reticence and adopt a proactive stance on the global stage. The realization of the need to prevent such horrors in the future led to the establishment of the United Nations and an enduring commitment to international cooperation and peacekeeping.

The onset of the Cold War, a geopolitical struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, solidified the shift towards interventionism. The U.S. embraced a policy of

containment, striving to limit the spread of Soviet influence and communism globally. This approach necessitated active involvement in regional conflicts and diplomatic initiatives aimed at balancing the power dynamics of the era. The subsequent policy of détente, characterized by a temporary softening of relations and a focus on arms control, highlighted the United States' ongoing engagement in global affairs.

The early 21st century marked a significant turning point with the horrific terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. This event shook the nation to its core and propelled the United States into a new era of interventionism. The need to combat terrorism and safeguard national interests worldwide became paramount, resulting in military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The 9/11 attacks reshaped the national discourse on foreign policy and accelerated the trend toward a proactive, interventionist role on the international stage.

The shift from isolationism to interventionism (1914–2001) represents a complex and multifaceted transformation, shaped by pivotal historical events, emerging global threats, and evolving geopolitical dynamics. From the devastation of the World Wars to the challenges of the Cold War and the seismic impact of 9/11, these events forged a new paradigm of active engagement and responsibility in the global arena.

## **2.1 The U.S. Entry into World War I**

The United States' entry into the First World War in April 1917 marked a significant turning point in both the conflict and the country's history. Prior to its involvement, the United States had maintained a position of neutrality, attempting to avoid the conflict that had engulfed Europe since 1914. However, Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare and its attempt to ally with Mexico prompted the US government to declare war on Germany, leading to a massive

mobilization effort and a significant contribution to the Allies' eventual victory in 1918. The US entry into the war also had far-reaching consequences, both domestically and internationally, that would shape the country's future for decades to come.

At the onset of World War I in Europe in 1914, the United States exhibited a combination of conflicting emotions. Despite having deep cultural connections with the major warring nations, the country was disheartened by the commencement of a devastating and financially draining war. The US had been experiencing a period of peace and prosperity, and the outbreak of the conflict disrupted the tranquility. Nevertheless, due to the nation's considerable distance from the conflict and its longstanding policy of non-intervention in European affairs, the US was not compelled to take part in the war (Pendergast and Pendergast 172). President Woodrow Wilson urged Americans to “be impartial in thought as well as in action, [we] must put a curb on our sentiments as well as upon every transaction that might be construed as a preference of one party to the struggle before another.” (Schmidt 77).

American politicians extolled their country's avoidance of clandestine treaties and perilous alliances that had previously led European nations into war. They boasted that the US's interests lay in strengthening its domestic economy, rather than aggressively interfering in international affairs or engaging in distant colonization. Moreover, the US attributed the root cause of the European conflict to the combatant nations' inadequate commitment to democracy. As per the US's argument, democratic countries are responsive to their people's will and do not desire war. Despite some skepticism, many Americans were convinced of these assertions (Pendergast and Pendergast 172).

During the initial years of World War I, the United States declared official neutrality permitting trade with both the Allies and the Central Powers and refraining from direct military intervention. Despite this stance, the US exhibited an inclination towards the Allies, who were closely tied to the country culturally and economically, particularly Great Britain. As the war progressed, the US demonstrated a pro-Allies bias, as trade and public opinion shifted in their favor. Therefore, while the US maintained a neutral policy, its impartiality was often called into question due to its unofficial favoritism towards the Allies. Additionally, Britain's effective naval blockade of German ports limited the Central Powers' access to American markets, resulting in a lack of equal access. However, Germany found a weapon to counteract the blockade's limitations (Pendergast and Pendergast 172).

Wilson's decision to lead the United States into World War I was mainly influenced by Germany's decision to resume attacking both passenger and merchant ships in 1917. In March 1916, an unarmed French boat, the *Sussex*, was sunk in the English Channel which prompted Wilson to warn Germany that he would cut diplomatic ties unless they stopped attacking passenger ships and allowed enemy merchant vessel crews to leave their ships before any attack. Germany eventually agreed to these terms on May 4, 1916, which became known as the "Sussex pledge" (Doenecke 191-192). In January 1917, Germany's military leadership and Kaiser Wilhelm II were convinced by representatives from the German Navy during a wartime conference that resuming unrestricted submarine warfare could help defeat Great Britain within six months before the first U.S. troopships landed in Europe. This was a shift from their previous stance after the "Sussex pledge," and was justified by the argument that the United States could no longer be considered a neutral party, having provided assistance to the Allies. Germany also believed that the United States had violated its neutrality by consenting to the Allied blockade of

Germany. Despite the German Chancellor Bethmann protests that such a move would draw the united States into the war on behalf of the Allies, the German Government decided to resume unrestricted submarine attacks on all Allied and neutral shipping within prescribed war zone (238-239).

Consequently, on January 31, 1917, German Ambassador to the United States Count Johann von Bernstorff presented a note to U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing, declaring Germany's intention to resume unrestricted submarine warfare the following day. President Wilson's announcement on February 3, 1917, that he had severed diplomatic relations with Germany, stunned many. However, he refrained from requesting a declaration of war from Congress because he doubted the public would support such a move without sufficient evidence that Germany intended to attack U.S. ships without warning (Venzon 255).

After deciding to engage in unrestricted submarine warfare in January 1917, Germany attempted to secure new allies, particularly Mexico. The German foreign minister, Arthur Zimmermann, dispatched the Zimmermann Telegram to Mexico on January 16th of the same year. The Telegram offered the Mexicans, in the event of war between Germany and the United States, "Joint conduct of the war. . . . Ample financial support and an agreement on our part that Mexico shall gain back by conquest the territory lost by her at a prior period in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona." The British naval intelligence intercepted and deciphered the telegram, and subsequently shared it with the Wilson administration. The White House made it public on February 28, causing further anger (Cooper 177).

Despite this, in February and March of that year, German submarines targeted and sank several U.S. ships, resulting in the loss of many U.S. seamen and citizens. To counteract this, on

February 26, Wilson asked Congress for authorization to arm U.S. merchant ships with naval personnel and equipment. While this measure would likely have passed in a vote, it faced a successful filibuster in the Senate by the isolationists that consumed the remainder of the congressional session. As a result, Wilson resorted to executive action, citing an old anti-piracy law that gave him the authority to arm U.S. merchant ships (Venzon 47).

The fear of entering into war served as the backdrop for the consideration of the President's request to arm merchant ships by the Congress. On February 28, an antiwar delegation led by Jane Addams and Amos Pinchot visited Washington to persuade the President and the leaders on Capitol Hill to reject any thought of intervention. On the same day, William Jennings Bryan also arrived in the capital to confer with other antiwar proponents. The initial discussions in Congress centered on the issue of intervention. Senator Stone, the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, disagreed with the Administration's proposal to arm merchant vessels and voiced his opposition to the country entering the war. Stone made it clear that he would use all the power at his disposal to prevent the United States from entering the war. "My stance is based on this declaration," Stone stated firmly. (Cooper 177)

Several Representatives expressed their idealistic isolationist views by opposing the notion of intervention. Stanley Benedict, a California Republican, cautioned that the United States must not relinquish its position as the "beacon of hope for the oppressed and the sanctuary of all freedom-loving people" to engage in a battle to sustain the oppression of monarchies. William J. Cary, a Wisconsin Republican, succinctly remarked that the United States' government and political and social existence's example would be permanently negated if it took sides in this conflict of opposing dynasties. Another Wisconsin Republican, John M. Nelson, accused the "Steel trust" of being responsible for the agitation for war, and urged the country to

remain at peace and "emulate the teachings of Christ in the spirit of Christianity as it was embodied in its early history, before the war-mongering spirit of the world's nations corrupted the Christian church" (178).

Two Southern Democrats also adopted isolationist positions. George Huddleston from Alabama argued that business interests were pushing for war "for their own promotion, profits, and influence on our social and political life." Huddleston was particularly concerned about intervention "due to the entanglements that may result from it. I fear that the United States may become committed to alliances that will plague us for generations to come... Now is the time to follow the advice of the Republic's founders." Claude Kitchin publicly expressed the isolationist beliefs he had kept confidential until then. He argued that the European conflict "endangers mankind's faith in Christianity," and that the United States' entry into the war "would seem to challenge the right of Christianity to exist." By staying out, America could "demonstrate its blessings to humanity through the coming generations as an example of the divine reward of peace" (179)

Before 1917, it was evident that the United States had no intention of getting involved in the war. President Woodrow Wilson strongly opposed using war as a solution for international issues, instead favoring diplomacy. He believed that war disrupted trade, which was essential for the well-being of all nations. The American economy was thriving largely due to the country's significant contribution of goods and capital to the Allied war effort. For nearly three years, the American government urged citizens to remain neutral (Pendergast and Pendergast 174). However, on March 5, 1917, Wilson indicated in his second inaugural speech that maintaining neutrality, regardless of its form, was no longer viable "where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples". He expressed discontent about external factors beyond the U.S.'s

control, stating that these forces "have drawn us more and more irresistibly into their current and influence. It has been impossible to avoid them" (Ninkovich 60).

On April 2, 1917, Wilson went before the Congress to request a declaration of war against Germany, and four days later, the government abruptly shifted its stance and launched a campaign to discredit the Central Powers, particularly Germany. The government also began preparing American industry and soldiers to join the war effort, abandoning their previous policy of neutrality. Eventually, the US entered the war officially with the goal of making the world a safer place for democracy (Pendergast and Pendergast 175).

The specific reasons behind Wilson's decision to declare war remain a topic of debate among historians, given his previous efforts to avoid conflict after the sinking of American passenger ships by German submarines in 1915. Nevertheless, by 1917, the continued attacks on U.S. ships and the Zimmermann Telegram's implications that Germany planned to attack the United States had swayed public opinion in favor of entering the war. Additionally, international law held that the arming of civilian ships with U.S. naval personnel to protect them against German submarines constituted an act of war against Germany. Finally, Germany's actions had made it clear that they were not seeking a peaceful resolution to the conflict. These factors influenced Wilson's decision to ask Congress to declare war on Germany, which was granted. Wilson expressed that this decision is necessary to ensure the safety of democracy around the world, this belief was reinforced a year later in his speech when he introduced his Fourteen Points.

### **2.1.1 Wilson's Fourteen Points**

Wilson's public rationale for involvement in the war was encapsulated in the Fourteen Points, serving as a set of conditions to limit the extent of U.S. engagement. American forces operated independently from the Allied armies and were under American command. Wilson designated the USA as an 'associate' rather than an ally, indicating its emergency coalition status, and adhering to the directive against lasting alliances as outlined in Washington's Farewell Address.

The core components of the Fourteen Points can be condensed into three principal categories. The initial category emphasized the right to self-determination for all nations, with the intent of allowing each 'people' the freedom to choose their independence as national boundaries were to be redefined post-war. This principle essentially proposed popular referenda concerning ethnic nationhood in Europe, lacking a specific framework for its implementation. The second category comprised a broad array of principles governing international conduct after the war. These principles aimed to deter a return to traditional European balance-of-power strategies, which Wilson viewed as instigators of the war. Key principles within this category encompassed free trade, freedom of navigation on the seas, global disarmament, and the prohibition of clandestine alliances. The pursuit of these ideals, particularly the remaining points, would actualize Wilson's vision for collective security through the establishment of a League of Nations. This League would enforce self-determination and the aforementioned principles, with each member publicly committing to defending these principles and each other using diplomatic and military measures when required. Apart from the League, most of these points mirrored long-standing American rhetoric, if not its practical policy (Mauk and Oakland 180). It is worth mentioning that the United States did not enter the League of Nations due to a combination of factors, including the opposition of isolationists, who believed that involvement in a major

war abroad would lead to the destruction of democracy at home. Additionally, the Senate was concerned about the loss of American sovereignty and the possibility of being dragged into future wars without the consent of Congress. Ultimately, the Senate rejected the Treaty of Versailles, which included the League of Nations Covenant, and the US did not join the League (Boyle 49).

The Fourteen Points generated great enthusiasm among liberals throughout the United States. Astute observers recognized how each specific provision skillfully balanced practical considerations with ideal aspirations, while embodying the necessary combination of firmness and flexibility required for a settlement conducive to international order. The *New York World*, in an article on January 9, expressed the view that achieving a lasting global peace did not hinge on accepting the President's program without any modifications, but rather on unwavering adherence to the principles of justice and righteousness articulated in these terms. Max Eastman later reflected that Wilson's Fourteen Points had brought a similar perspective to statesmanship as Bergson, William James, and John Dewey had brought to philosophy—a profound understanding of the reality of time and the transformative nature of human agency (Throntveit 474).

Outside of the United States, the President's message was transmitted via cable to press associations across various regions including Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and South America. The official organ of the Central Executive Committee in Petrograd, *Izvestia*, hailed the Fourteen Points as an endorsement of the Brest-Litovsk peace proposals. *Pravda*, the organ of the Bolshevik party, criticized Wilson, labeling him a capitalist imperialist who only pretended to support democracy. However, Lenin still sent the president's message to Trotsky, recognizing its potential value in negotiations with the Germans. Several months later, Germany accepted the

Fourteen Points as a basis for peace, hoping that the principle of national self-determination would safeguard them against territorial losses. In the meantime, Wilson privately expressed mixed feelings about the idea. In a letter to Secretary of State Robert Lansing on January 29, 1918, he acknowledged his strong inclination towards basing territorial limits on nationality, but also believed that there were cases where strategic boundaries needed to be taken into consideration, which could modify boundaries based solely on nationality. Wilson held this view in order to protect self-governing nations from militaristic autocracies (475).

However, the term "national self-determination" became the focal point that captured the world's attention. This was partly influenced by the immediate circumstances surrounding the address. On January 5, Lloyd George's speech significantly amplified Lenin's concept of national self-determination, which distorted Wilson's vision of global self-government. For many people worldwide, Wilson's address, which House believed would overshadow Lloyd George's speech and make it forgettable, actually amplified it. A year later, as Wilson struggled to incorporate the essence of his address into the treaties that would end the war, George Harvey of the North American Review published an influential article claiming that Lloyd George's speech had been the origin of the Fourteen Commandments. The confusion was immediate. Viscount James Bryce, former British ambassador to Washington, publicly praised Wilson's assertion of the right of nationalities to self-determination. British laborites enthusiastically called for "Self-Determination for India" in response to the address. By June, the Bulgarian minister in Washington, Stephen Paneretoff, declared that Wilson's formula for national self-determination was the only viable solution to the Balkan problem. Well before Wilson traveled to Paris, "national self-determination" had become the pervasive shorthand through which his ideas for peace were translated into something simultaneously grander and shallower in the world's

consciousness. Even the pragmatists at the New Republic, while attempting to explain America's true objective of a delicate experiment in global democracy, invoked the phrase (475, 476).

Wilson cannot be blamed for the immediate misunderstandings that arose. However, it was his responsibility that the concept of self-determination grew to the point where it became uncontrollable in the realm of public opinion. Wilson began setting the stage for this development barely a month after his address, when he once again mentioned the term "self-determination" before a joint session of Congress on February 11, 1918. The careful language of the Fourteen Points had already started to fade away. In addressing Congress, upon receiving Germany's unsatisfactory response to his Fourteen Points, Wilson emphasized that "self-determination" was not merely a phrase but an imperative principle of action that statesmen could ignore at their own peril. However, his speech did not unequivocally endorse territorial sovereignty for ethnic groups. Wilson recognized that "self-determination" in the form of ethnic nationalism was already a potent force in Europe, whether or not it received his seal of approval. One did not have to fully embrace it to acknowledge its power and, in many cases, its righteousness. Furthermore, "national self-determination" was not the exact phrase Wilson used, nor was it the idea that he was primarily concerned with. He immediately clarified that Germany's insistence on "individual understandings between powerful states" rather than a peace "submitted to the common judgment" was the most intolerable aspect. As he had stated earlier in the address, Europe's problems affected the entire world and could not be discussed in isolation or behind closed doors (476).

However, Wilson's address can still be considered irresponsible. Within his criticism of the old diplomacy, he included the assertion that Europe's problems should be approached by considering the wishes, natural connections, racial aspirations, security, and peace of mind of the

peoples involved. This statement further blurred the line between ethnic national independence and self-government. Wilson also proclaimed that national aspirations must be respected and that peoples should only be governed with their own consent, adding to the confusion. Wilson did clarify that the United States did not seek to act as an arbiter in European territorial disputes but rather aimed to prevent another war. He acknowledged that the territorial program outlined in the Fourteen Points was only a general outline of principles and their application. However, he returned to the theme of "national aspirations," suggesting that the war was rooted in the disregard of the rights of small nations and nationalities that lacked the unity and power to assert their claims for self-determination (Throntveit 477).

During the period between February 1918 and his return from Paris nearly eighteen months later, Wilson's nuanced distinctions between self-government and self-determination were only clear to his closest advisors, and even they had limited insight into his true intentions. As a result, the general public, who were meant to endorse Wilson's vision of international democracy, were left to interpret the phrase as they saw fit. Although Wilson later expressed his concerns about the false hopes he had raised worldwide, he never publicly acknowledged that he had been misunderstood. Secretary of State Lansing, who had been excluded from Wilson's inner circle, lamented the removal of the phrase "self-determination" from Article X of the League of Nations Covenant. He regretted that the influence exerted on this matter was not strong enough to compel Wilson to openly disavow the principle as the appropriate standard for determining sovereign authority. While Lansing mistakenly believed that Wilson deemed ethnic calibration necessary for a "right standard," his criticism of the president's ambiguous public stance holds true (478).

Indeed, as Wilson immersed himself in waging the war and planning for peace, he deviated from his deeply held beliefs regarding democratic leadership. According to Wilson, the role of a democratic statesman was a complex balance between boldness and caution, between educating the public and deferring to their judgment. He wrote in 1887 that anyone seeking to bring about change in a modern constitutional government must first educate their fellow citizens to desire that change. Once accomplished, they must persuade the public to desire the specific change they themselves want. In the 1890s, Wilson further expounded on this idea, stating that no reform could succeed unless the majority of the nation had already embraced the underlying concept. He argued that the informed few could not be effective leaders unless they had effectively shared their knowledge with the masses and transformed it into a shared, popular understanding. By the early 1900s, Wilson firmly believed that a president who could accurately interpret the national sentiment could not only lead the nation but also shape it according to their own views. However, whether interpreting or shaping public opinion, Wilson recognized the paramount importance of communication. He stressed the necessity of complete honesty and straightforwardness between public servants and the people they served (478).

After January 1918, Wilson began to abandon the frankness and plain speaking that had characterized his approach. His independent nature took over, significantly shaping his foreign policy approach and causing concerns even among his staunch supporters. On the day Wilson asked Congress to declare war, his friend Thomas Brahaney suggested that the president should consult Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, a knowledgeable figure in shaping foreign policy, freely and frequently. However, Brahaney lamented that "In most things, the President is his own counselor." This statement proved to be entirely accurate. Wilson did not invite any senators to

join the American peace commission, and according to most accounts, even the hand-picked group that accompanied him to Paris had limited influence despite their travels (479).

Ironically, Wilson had aimed to democratize international relations behind closed doors. Multiple factors likely contributed to the noticeable decline in Wilson's leadership from the Fourteen Points address to the Senate's rejection of the Versailles Treaty. Wilson's anxious desire to garner global support for his attack on the old diplomacy may have led to his failure to differentiate between the internationalist ideal he embraced and the ethnonationalist ideals his rhetoric inspired. Additionally, once "self-determination" gained popularity, he might have found the phrase convenient, whether as a propaganda tool or as an occasional substitute for his preferred terms such as "self-government," "autonomous development," and "common counsel," which had less impact on the international discourse on war aims (479).

Regarding his reluctance to discuss the settlement details or the League before the end of the war, Wilson provided at least two reasons. Firstly, he feared that presenting the "Magnolia Covenant," a powerful League drafted in the weeks following the Fourteen Points address, would anger "Senators of the Lodge type." This, in turn, would strengthen the resistance of Allied leaders against the limitations on national sovereignty that his plan entailed. Secondly, he believed that the specific structure of the League should evolve through discussions at the peace conference, while the method of fulfilling the mutual commitments of its members should also develop on a case-by-case basis. Finally, Wilson's health played a clear role in the Senate's rejection of the League. This became evident in March 1920 when the president instructed his own party to vote against ratifying the Versailles Treaty with Republican reservations (480)

In short, the Fourteen Points can be seen as a reflection of the United States' interventionist foreign policy, which sought to change the postwar world to promote democracy and peace. During the war, however, the United States remained essentially isolationist, and its unwillingness to become engaged in European matters was a major cause for its refusal to join the League of Nations. The Fourteen Points were a watershed moment in international relations, but they also reflected the US' complicated relationship with interventionism and isolationism.

## **2.2 America First Committee and Battling the Interventionists**

The America First Committee (AFC) holds significant relevance in understanding the dynamic interplay between U.S. isolationism and interventionism during a critical period leading up to World War II. The committee embodied the isolationist sentiment prevalent in America, reflecting the wariness of getting entangled in international conflicts. The committee advocated for a policy of non-intervention and prioritization of American interests, resisting involvement in the war.

The American public was profoundly shocked and disheartened by the news of the outbreak of war in Europe in September 1939. Their reactions were markedly different from the bewildered innocence experienced during the events of August 1914. This time, the public was prepared for the onset of war and had a realistic understanding of its implications (Freidel 211). However, despite their inclination against Germany, a division in public opinion occurred, leading to the emergence of two distinct groups. The 'interventionists' believed it was more important for the United States to assist in securing a British victory over the Axis than to stay out of the European war. On the other hand, the 'isolationists' or 'noninterventionists' thought it

was more crucial for the United States to avoid the war than to ensure a British triumph over the Axis (Cole 6).

In his proclamation of neutrality, President Woodrow Wilson had urged Americans to remain neutral not only in action but also in thought. However, President Franklin D. Roosevelt did not make such an impractical request, acknowledging, "This nation will remain a neutral nation," but conceding that he could not expect every American to remain neutral in their thoughts. The majority of the American people did not desire their nation to enter the war, nor did they wish for Germany to emerge victorious. This sentiment was reflected consistently in public opinion polls from the invasion of Poland to the attack on Pearl Harbor (Freidel 211).

During the tense months between the Munich settlement in the fall of 1938 and the outbreak of war a year later, President Roosevelt, slightly ahead of public opinion, endeavored to fortify the defenses of the United States and pave the way to provide assistance to Great Britain and France. He cautioned Congress that the arms embargo would embolden Hitler, contending that American security necessitated its alteration. However, Congress, dominated by long-serving leaders and fearing entanglement in a new conflict, declined to act (211).

In September 1939, Roosevelt convened a special session of Congress. Despite conservative resistance, the majority was shocked into amending the Neutrality Act. The revised legislation still prohibited American vessels from entering war zones but allowed belligerents to purchase munitions on a "cash-and-carry" basis, utilizing their own vessels and making payments in cash. Given Britain's naval dominance, Germany was effectively unable to procure arms from the United States (212).

Roosevelt's rationale for departing from traditional neutrality lay in his belief that a triumph of Hitler in Europe would spell tragedy for the United States. He contended that a victorious Germany would isolate and suffocate the United States, prompting his departure from conventional notions of neutrality. This perspective resonated with a significant portion of those surveyed by public opinion experts. Initially, during the "phony war" period up to March 1940, only 43 percent of those polled perceived a potential German victory as a threat to the United States; however, by July, this figure rose to 69 percent. Likewise, in May 1940, only 35 percent of those surveyed favored aiding Britain, risking American involvement; but four months later, 60 percent supported this stance. Notably, the proportion of people advocating for the United States to declare war on Germany did not increase; as late as November 1941, a month prior to Pearl Harbor, only 20 percent of those polled supported American entry into the war (212).

Nevertheless, American non-belligerent aid to the Axis foes was highly likely to result in full involvement. Both the President and the majority of the American people were grappling with an exceedingly challenging position: committing the nation to aid the defeat of the Axis without plunging into war (213).

This intricate stance, aiming to secure the defeat of the Axis solely through supporting the Allies, was vigorously promoted by the renowned Kansas editor, William Allen White, who led the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies (Freidel 213). This group was enormously successful in forming over 600 local sections within a short period of time, as was the widespread belief among national leaders that the United States must provide England with all available help "short of war" to England in order to prevent itself from being Hitler's next target (Flynn 13). While White himself adhered to the avowed purpose of his committee, numerous members eventually believed that this limited approach was insufficient, advocating

for the United States to declare war. This faction established the Fight for Freedom Committee in April 1941 (Freidel 213).

Others passionately advocated for opposing approaches. Many of these individuals united under the America First Committee, which was founded by R. Douglas Stuart, Jr., a Yale student, and led by General Robert E. Wood, a Chicago businessman in summer 1940 (Cole 10). The notable figures within the America First Committee included Colonel Charles Lindbergh, a famed aviation hero from the 1920s, General Hugh Johnson, the former head of the N. R. A., as well as prominent isolationist Senators Burton K. Wheeler and Gerald Nye. Editorial support for the America First stance came from major newspapers such as the Chicago Tribune, the New York News, and the Hearst chain (Freidel 213). This movement has been often seen as a reflection of conservative, Midwestern, agrarian isolationism (Flynn 9). It also had a smaller faction of extremists, including American fascists and individuals with pro-Nazi or anti-Semitic beliefs (Freidel 213).

Charles Lindbergh, the prominent figure of U.S. isolationism associated with the America First Committee, summed up the AFC perspective on the global scenario in a speech following the losing position of England in the war. According to him:

There are many such interventionists in America, but there are more people among us of a different type. That is why you and I are assembled here tonight. There is a policy open to this nation that will lead to success – a policy that leaves us free to follow our own way of life, and to develop our own civilization. It is not a new and untried idea. It was advocated by Washington. It was incorporated in the Monroe Doctrine. Under its guidance, the United States became the greatest nation in the world. It is based

upon the belief that the security of a nation lies in the strength and character of its own people. It recommends the maintenance of armed forces sufficient to defend this hemisphere from attack by any combination of foreign powers. It demands faith in an independent American destiny. This is the policy of the America First Committee today. It is a policy not of isolation, but of independence; not of defeat, but of courage. It is a policy that led this nation to success during the most trying years of our history, and it is a policy that will lead us to success again (Lindbergh).

Lindbergh view reflects the perspective of the America First Committee and the speaker's belief in a policy rooted in national strength, independence, and self-reliance. The speaker contrasts interventionist views with the proposed policy, emphasizing the historical roots of this approach in figures like Washington and the Monroe Doctrine. The core idea centers on maintaining a robust defense, safeguarding the nation's interests, and fostering faith in an independent American destiny. He presents this policy as a proven path to success, drawing on historical examples to argue that it is not a retreat into isolationism but a commitment to national courage and resilience. Overall, the quote encapsulates the America First Committee's stance on prioritizing national interests and self-determination in the face of global challenges.

The committee made its first public announcement on September 4, 1940. One month later, it launched its national advertising campaign with a New York Times ad titled "PEACE at Home or War Abroad? Snap Out of It America! You Can Decide if You Act Now!" With the release of this advertisement, the "Great Debate of 1941" between interventionists and noninterventionists officially began. It had organized large demonstrations, disseminated massive amounts of material, funded national radio speakers, and provided research data to members of Congress. As a result, Roosevelt was compelled to be significantly more

conservative in his legislative initiatives and to execute certain interventionist steps covertly, such as ordering Navy escorts in the Atlantic (Doenecke 6). Later on, the AFC took a completely different approach. It decided to establish regional chapters and pursue an active, public membership on November 12 as a result of the overwhelming amount of correspondence it had received from citizens around the nation asking what they could do particularly to help the antiwar cause (Flynn 17).

The movement succeeded in attracting a significant number of patriotic Americans. It is likely that the collective national membership of America First fell within the range of approximately 800,000 to 850,000 individuals from across the country (Cole 30). The committee coordinated all activities against Roosevelt's plans to equip merchant ships, provide lend-lease assistance, and convoy war supplies to Allied ports. The Atlantic Charter, the annexation of Iceland, and the application of economic pressure to Japan were among the other administration actions that the AFC opposed (Doeneck 6).

The formation of the America First Committee was motivated by a variety of factors. A minority aligned with noninterventionist due to their pro-Nazi and pro-fascist leanings, along with some harboring anti-Semitic beliefs. However, events like the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 led to a shift in their stance towards interventionism. The American Communists, initially noninterventionists, also transitioned into interventionist perspectives post this event. Idealistic pacifists among the supporters of noninterventionism believed that prevailing circumstances in Europe rendered their earlier internationalist approach to peace impractical (Cole 8, 9).

While a small segment was driven by their pacifist ideals, the majority of noninterventionists were motivated by other factors. Concern for the potential loss and maiming of their sons in foreign battlefields fueled the resistance to interventionism, especially among parents and youth. Deep-seated American nationalism, distrust of Europeans, amplified by disillusionment from the aftermath of World War I, played a pivotal role. This sentiment was compounded by a pervasive aversion towards the British, with skepticism surrounding British motives prevalent among a significant portion of the American populace. The noninterventionist stance particularly resonated with specific ethnic groups, including many German-Americans. Additionally, the movement was associated with opposition to President Roosevelt and the Democratic Party, appealing to those breaking with the President solely on foreign policy. Conservatives were apprehensive that intervention might jeopardize the American capitalist system and introduce unwanted ideologies like fascism, socialism, or communism. Conversely, many liberals feared that intervention could undermine existing social gains, emphasizing the need for the nation to focus on resolving its domestic social and economic challenges (Cole 9, 10).

The America First Committee was founded on the following four core principles: a focus on an impenetrable national defense, the belief that avoiding European war preserves American democracy and liberties, caution against non-war aid to other nations, and the conviction that involvement in foreign conflicts weakens domestic defense. Their objectives were to unite diverse Americans striving to keep the country out of war, maintain composure in times of heightened war tension, and register noninterventionist opinions with the government (Flynn 17). Later, a fifth principle endorsed humanitarian aid within the limits of American neutrality and followed by two additional principles introduced in mid-1941. The sixth principle emphasized an

official advisory referendum by the people regarding war and peace, addressing concerns about an undeclared, "back door" war. The seventh principle explicitly stated that the Constitution vested the exclusive power to declare war in Congress, urging citizens to communicate their views to their representatives and senators until a congressional vote on the war question. These seven principles aimed to challenge President Roosevelt's perceived unilateral actions and encourage assertiveness from the legislative branch (18).

In addition, the group provided its intended activities, comprising four key objectives. Firstly, it aimed to unite all Americans who shared alignment on the outlined principles, explicitly excluding individuals affiliated with ideologies such as Nazism, Fascism, Communism, or those prioritizing foreign nations' interests over their own country. Secondly, the committee sought to encourage Americans to remain level-headed during periods of escalating panic and crisis. Thirdly, it aimed to furnish sensible national guidance to the majority of Americans desiring to steer clear of involvement in the European war. Lastly, the committee aimed to formally convey and record this collective perspective by registering it with both the President and the prevailing congressional majority (Doenecke 9).

In 1941, the America First Committee was dissolved following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which brought the US into the conflict. On the evening of December 7, after the Pearl Harbor attacks, the national headquarters swiftly released a concise statement. It emphasized that the America First Committee urged its adherents to support the ongoing war efforts of the country until a successful resolution of the conflict with Japan. The committee pledged its assistance to the President in his capacity as the commander in chief of the United States armed forces. Lindbergh, recognizing the gravity of the situation, acknowledged that there was no alternative but to engage in the fight. The AFC faced a critical juncture in its brief history

after these events: whether to dissolve or continue its operations. On December 8, the national headquarters contacted all chapter chairmen, presenting four options, one of which was the complete termination of the committee. On December 11, a special meeting of the national committee voted to dissolve the AFC. Despite this decision, the committee expressed no remorse regarding its past endeavors, asserting the correctness of their principles and the belief that adherence to them could have averted war (47-48).

The America First Committee faced substantial challenges and can be viewed as a failure in certain aspects. Congress consistently passed bills opposed by the committee, and public opinion rarely favored anti-interventionist stances. Moreover, the United States entered a war, contrary to the AFC's perspective, which discredited anti-interventionism as a viable political posture thereafter. The committee, as political outsiders, could not set a comprehensive agenda and was reactive in its actions, lacking a well-defined domestic program or a clear vision for America's postwar role. However, the AFC did have some success. It generated public sentiment that influenced Roosevelt's cautious approach on key issues, impacting decisions related to lend-lease amendments and troop deployment. Despite limitations, it played a role in fostering dissent and promoting healthy political debate, highlighting the importance of dissenting voices in a democracy (48-51).

The legacy of the America First organization is controversial and complex. The group was formed to advocate for isolationism and to oppose U.S. involvement in World War II. Although it disbanded after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the America First slogan and ideology have been invoked in various political contexts since then, sometimes in reference to a nationalist or protectionist agenda. The principles and debates surrounding the AFC informed subsequent foreign policy discussions, especially regarding the balance between isolationism and

international interventionism. The memory of the AFC continued to influence debates on US engagement in global affairs, shaping how subsequent generations approached foreign policy decisions and the delicate balance between national interests and international involvement.

The AFC indirectly influenced Donald Trump's approach to foreign policy. Its emphasis on prioritizing American interests and avoiding unnecessary international entanglements resonated with Trump's "America First" approach during his presidency. Trump's foreign policy reflected skepticism of multilateral agreements and a preference for bilateral negotiations to protect American economic and security interests. He frequently criticized prior agreements like NAFTA and TPP, aiming to renegotiate or withdraw from them to safeguard American jobs and industries. Additionally, Trump's reluctance to engage in prolonged military interventions aligned with the AFC's original isolationist stance. While the geopolitical landscape had changed significantly since the AFC's time, its underlying ethos of prioritizing American interests and minimizing foreign interventions echoed in Trump's foreign policy decisions.

### **2.3 The United States in WWII**

The United States' involvement in World War II marked a significant evolution in its foreign policy, transitioning from a policy of neutrality and limited engagement in international affairs to active interventionism. The concept of interventionism became paramount during this period, shaping America's role as a global power and influencing its future foreign policy. It is agreed by politicians and American scholars, as pointed in the earlier sections, that isolationism has become part of the past after the Pearl Harbor attacks as stated by senator Arthur Vandenberg, a symbol and a prominent leader of isolationism, "That day ended isolationism for any realist" (1). This section delves into the evolution of American foreign policy during World

War II, exploring how interventionism played a pivotal role in shaping the nation's responses to the war and its aftermath.

In retrospect, during the late 1930s, the United States persistently endeavored to remain uninvolved in the conflicts unfolding in Europe and Asia. Recognizing the futility of disarmament efforts, the peace movement, and the doctrine of appeasement, the US adopted a new stance of neutrality. This 1930s-style isolationism marked a departure from the past, diverging from the longstanding commitment to neutral rights that had often entangled the U.S. in foreign affairs. The primary objective of this new form of neutrality was to steer clear of war, even if it meant forsaking the dedication to neutral rights. This redefined understanding of neutrality was so widespread during the 1930s that it influenced all foreign policy standpoints (Ninkovich 113, 114). The neutrality acts were basically initiated to safeguard the nation from being embroiled in the extensive international strife, a conflict that the U.S. Government believed was inevitable. In 1940, the U.S. policy gradually shifted from a stance of neutrality to non-belligerency, extending aid to nations engaged in war against the Axis Powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan ("Milestones: 1937–1945").

Between 1937 and 1941, the intensifying conflict between China and Japan significantly influenced how the United States interacted with both nations, ultimately pushing the U.S. towards entering a full-scale war involving Japan and Germany. Initially, U.S. officials had mixed feelings about the situation in China. On one side, they opposed Japanese incursions into northeast China and the rise of Japanese militarism in that area, partly due to their longstanding friendship with China. However, most U.S. officials did not see vital interests in China that justified going to war with Japan. Additionally, internal divisions within China, notably between the Nationalists and Communists, left U.S. policymakers uncertain about the prospects of

effectively aiding a divided nation (“Milestones: 1937-1945”). As a result, prior to 1937, few U.S. officials advocated for a robust stance, and the United States offered limited assistance to China despite its neutrality (Gompert 95), fearing it might provoke Japan. The U.S. inclination to support China increased after the Marco Polo Bridge incident on July 7, 1937, which escalated the conflict between Chinese and Japanese forces, causing a significant shift in American public opinion towards supporting China. Tensions heightened after the Japanese Army bombed the U.S.S. Panay during the evacuation of American citizens from Nanjing, resulting in casualties. Despite this, the U.S. Government chose to steer clear of direct conflict and accepted an apology and indemnity from Japan, maintaining a fragile truce until 1940 (“Milestones: 1937-1945”).

In 1940 and 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt formalized assistance to China from the United States. The U.S. Government provided loans to the Chinese Government for purchasing war materials, concurrently implementing gradual restrictions on Japan. The United States, being a primary supplier of crucial resources like oil, steel, and iron needed by the Japanese military, capitalized on this position after Japan terminated the existing trade treaty with the U.S. in January 1940. Although an immediate embargo was not enforced, this move empowered the Roosevelt Administration to control the military supplies sent to Japan and use it as leverage to compel Japan to cease its aggressive actions in China (“Milestones: 1937-1945”).

Following January 1940, the United States pursued a dual approach, escalating support to China through expanded loans and the Lend-Lease program, while gradually moving towards restricting trade in militarily significant goods with Japan. Japan's actions during this period worsened the situation. Japan's political leadership, unable or unwilling to control the military, sought security by establishing the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" in August 1940. This move proclaimed Japan's intent to remove Western imperialist influences from Asia and

enhance its economic self-sufficiency. However, this project aimed at boosting Japan's wealth rather than liberating the oppressed peoples of Asia. Simultaneously, various agreements with Western nations heightened Japan's perceived threat to the United States (“Milestones: 1937-1945”). Japan's alliance with Germany and Italy in the Tripartite Pact in September 1940 by which Japan pledged “to assist one another with all political, economic, and military means” (Gompert 96) linked conflicts in Europe and Asia, potentially making China an ally in the fight against fascism. Signing this Pact solidified the belief among American internationalists of an international conspiracy involving aggressive nations (Ninkovich 127).

In April 13, 1941, Japan signed a Neutrality Pact with Russia. The agreement provided that Japan and Russia would uphold peaceful relations and respect each other's territories. If either country were targeted by hostilities from one or more external powers, the other would remain neutral for the duration of the conflict (Feis 187). Another agreement with Vichy France allowed Japan to enter Indochina and initiate its Southern Advance. In response to this escalating threat, the United States temporarily halted negotiations with Japanese diplomats, imposed a complete embargo on exports to Japan, froze Japanese assets in U.S. banks, and sent supplies to China via the Burma Road. Despite restarting negotiations after the embargo was enforced, little progress was made. Challenges arose due to pro-Chinese sentiments in the United States, making it difficult to reach a resolution without Japan's withdrawal from China, a condition unacceptable to Japan's military leaders (“Milestones: 1937-1945”).

Confronted with severe shortages due to the embargo and feeling trapped with no option to step back, Japan's leaders concluded they needed to act swiftly. On the other side, the US intelligence deciphered Japanese messages, clearly indicating an impending Japanese assault. However, Washington was uncertain about the specific target of this attack. The prevailing belief

among most officials was that Japan would strike British or Dutch territories in the southern region rather than directly attacking American soil. A mixture of confusion, misjudgment, and underestimation of Japan's military capabilities led to the government overlooking signs that Japan indeed planned a direct assault on American forces (Brinkly 625). Hence, Americans were shocked when Japanese aircraft attacked the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Within the next day, after an impactful presidential speech, the Senate unanimously approved a declaration of war against Japan, a decisive move that marked the U.S.'s formal entry into World War II. Three days later, Germany and Italy, Japan's allies in Europe, also declared war on the United States. On December 11, Congress reciprocated this declaration with unanimous agreement. With these events, the Roosevelt Administration found itself thrust into a war on both European and Asian fronts (625) ("Milestones: 1937-1945").

The United States' engagement in World War II marked the end of its isolationist stance, and President Roosevelt was resolute in avoiding a return to isolationism post-war. However, the U.S. foreign policy in Europe remained constrained in terms of international cooperation until August 1941, when an initial meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill was held off the coast of Newfoundland resulting in the Atlantic Charter. This document aimed to outline a shared Anglo-American perspective for the post war world. It pledged to halt territorial expansion, emphasizing that alterations in borders would necessitate approval from the affected populations. Additionally, it envisioned a future characterized by democratic governance, free trade, economic collaboration, alleviation of basic needs, eradication of fear, and freedom of the seas (Ninkovich 132).

Following discussions in December 1941, Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill declared the establishment of the United Nations, a coalition of 26 nations during the war.

Roosevelt, in 1943, initiated plans for a postwar United Nations and held discussions with congressional leaders to secure bipartisan support. The public endorsed Roosevelt's endeavors, leading to congressional resolutions committing the U.S. to participation in an international entity with the authority to establish and sustain a fair and enduring peace. Ultimately, in the spring of 1945, representatives from 50 nations endorsed a permanent United Nations charter. Besides fostering political concord, Roosevelt advocated for economic collaboration, culminating in the establishment of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in 1944. This move aimed to prevent a resurgence of the ruthless economic nationalism that prevailed before the war (Gopnik, et al.). American significant influence was pivotal in bringing together nations to form the organization that could address global challenges, foster cooperation, and promote peace and security on an unprecedented scale. Hence, without the U.S. endeavors, the United Nations would not have been established (Wertheim 142).

Franklin D. Roosevelt's strategic approach during World War II can be characterized as a comprehensive global realpolitik. He held the firm belief that the conflicts spanning Europe, Africa, and Asia weren't isolated events but interconnected components of a unified global struggle. In his view, it was imperative to formulate a defense strategy that took into account each of these fronts, emphasizing the need for a multifaceted approach to tackle the complex dynamics of the war across the world. Roosevelt's vision and strategy emphasized a holistic understanding of the global scenario and the necessity for a unified approach in this time of crisis (Ninkovich 128).

During the war, Roosevelt engaged in meetings with Churchill and Stalin to strategize for both military actions and postwar plans. Their final significant conference occurred in Yalta, Crimea in February 1945, where policies were established. These policies aimed to ensure

Germany's unconditional surrender, dividing it into occupation zones managed by the Allied forces, and advocate for democratic governance in Eastern European countries. Yalta also witnessed confidential agreements, notably the Soviet commitment to engage in the war against Japan following Germany's surrender, reciprocated with concessions in East Asia (Gopnik, et al.).

It is worth mentioning that Roosevelt highlighted that Americans could have selected to negotiate with Adolf Hitler and "accepted a minor role in his totalitarian world." However, he emphasized that they decisively chose a different path, stating: "We rejected that!" According to Roosevelt, Americans were not merely responding to the territorial attack on Pearl Harbor when they fought World War II. Instead, their objective was to avoid a "minor role" in global affairs, to discard the limitations, both internal and external, on their global influence. Roosevelt proclaimed, "We shall not again be thwarted in our will to live as a mature Nation, confronting limitless horizons." He added, "We shall bear our full responsibility, exercise our full influence, and bring our full help and encouragement to all who aspire to peace and freedom" (Wertheim 168). This stance demonstrates the U.S. aspirations of domination and hegemony in world affairs.

On April 12, 1945, Roosevelt passed away unexpectedly, and Truman assumed the presidency. In the ensuing months, the German military disintegrated, culminating in the surrender of all German forces on May 7. Meanwhile, in the Pacific, the invasions of Iwo Jima and Okinawa in early 1945 put Japan in a precarious position. Before a full-scale invasion, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the summer. Ultimately, on September 2, Japan surrendered, and the surrender was formalized on the battleship Missouri in Tokyo harbor (Gopnik, et al.). In the end, this culminated in the downfall of the established

Japanese government, the dissolution of the Japanese empire, a prolonged period of foreign control, and the imposition of capital punishment for numerous of its leadership (Gompert 93).

The conclusion of World War II granted the American policymakers with an exceptional opportunity to redefine the principles of the global economic framework. The ambitious plans of the Axis powers to control continental Europe and East Asia had failed. Soviet Russia was engrossed in its vast endeavors for reconstruction and solidifying its influence in Eastern Europe. Britain relied on Washington's support to sustain its international position and couldn't effectively challenge American strategies in the long run. Having been spared the devastating losses faced by other warring nations, the United States found itself in a position to establish Western economic principles in line with its unique requirements and perspectives (Maier 608).

In short, the U.S. entry into World War II marked a decisive shift from isolationism to interventionism, as seen in the 1930s-style neutrality, towards robust interventionism. The disastrous event of Pearl Harbor shattered any remnants of isolationist beliefs, thrusting the nation into a global role, exemplified by Senator Arthur Vandenberg's acknowledgment that the era of isolationism had ended. The subsequent shift towards interventionism was marked by multifaceted strategies, from aiding nations in conflict to forging alliances and envisioning a new post-war world. This transformation, catalyzed by the war's exigencies, shaped America's role as a key player on the international stage for years to come.

## **2.4 Cold War**

The U.S. involvement in the Second World War shifted the balance of power, leading to the defeat of the Axis Powers and the emergence of the U.S. and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) as superpowers in the post-war era. The ideological differences and the

mistrust between the superpowers led to an intense geopolitical rivalry starting from the end of WWII to the early 1990's. This era was marked by ideological, political, and military confrontation. The USSR's expansionist policies and its establishment of satellite states in Eastern Europe alarmed the U.S. leading to the adoption of containment policies. The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan were early manifestations of US interventionism, aiming to limit the spread of communism and rebuild war-torn European economies. These initiatives were seen as necessary interventions to protect American interests and promote the democratic way of life.

### **2.4.1 The Truman Doctrine**

The origins of the Truman Doctrine can be traced back to a speech President Truman delivered to a joint session of Congress on March 12, 1947. The direct trigger for this address was a recent decision by the British Government to halt military and economic aid to the Greek Government in its struggle against the Greek Communist Party (Ninkovich 155). In response, Truman urged Congress to back the Greek Government in its fight against the Communists. Additionally, he requested congressional support to extend aid to Turkey, as it had previously relied on British assistance. Through the Truman Doctrine, President Harry S. Truman outlined the United States' commitment to offering political, economic, and military aid to any democratic nations facing threats from authoritarian sources, whether within or outside their borders. Truman's policy is encapsulated in his words: "It must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures" (Merril 27). This doctrine marked a significant shift in U.S. foreign policy, moving from its customary approach of avoiding involvement in regional conflicts that did not directly concern the nation to considering intervention in distant disputes.

During that period, the U.S. Government held the view that the Soviet Union was backing the Greek Communist war endeavor, fearing that a Communist triumph in the Greek civil conflict would lead to Soviet influence over Greek policies. However, in reality, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin deliberately chose not to support the Greek Communists, pressuring Yugoslav Prime Minister Josip Tito to do the same, straining Soviet-Yugoslav relations. President Truman's decision to actively assist Greece and Turkey was influenced not only by these beliefs but also by various other foreign policy challenges. In 1946, four significant setbacks dashed any hopes for a lasting post-war reconciliation with the Soviet Union: the Soviets' non-compliance with the Tehran Declaration of 1943 by not withdrawing their troops from northern Iran in early 1946; their efforts to coerce the Iranian Government into granting them oil concessions while inciting Azerbaijani separatists in northern Iran; endeavors to compel the Turkish Government to provide them with base and transit rights through the Turkish Straits; and their rejection of the Baruch plan for international oversight of nuclear energy and weapons in June 1946. Given the worsening relations with the Soviet Union and the perceived Soviet interference in Greek and Turkish matters, the discontinuation of British aid to Greece served as the pivotal moment for the Truman Administration to redirect American foreign policy ("Milestone; 1947-1952"). In his address, President Truman urged Congress to allocate 400 million dollars in aid to both the Greek and Turkish Governments and back the deployment of American civilian and military personnel along with equipment to the region. However, his administration assessment extended beyond the situations in Greece and Turkey. Truman, in presenting his argument, highlighted the global conflict between divergent lifestyles (Ninkovich 155).

Truman provided rationale for his request on two fronts. He contended that a triumph by Communists in the Greek Civil War would jeopardize Turkey's political stability, consequently destabilizing the Middle East—a region of utmost strategic importance to U.S. national security. Truman also asserted that the U.S. had an obligation to aid "free peoples" in their battles against "totalitarian regimes," as the proliferation of authoritarianism would "erode the foundations of global peace and thus the safety of the United States." According to the Truman Doctrine, it became "the policy of the United States to assist liberated nations resisting attempted domination by armed minorities or external pressures" ("Milestone; 1947-1952").

The Truman Doctrine, a landmark of American foreign policy, aimed to spread its ideology and contain communism. Despite not explicitly mentioning containment or communism, it portrayed the crisis in broader historical terms, not limited to the Cold War. Truman emphasized the need to protect and not squander the wartime investment. This doctrine marked a unilateral shift, departing from traditional collective security concepts and underlining Americanized internationalism, positioning the U.S. at the forefront of global ideological control. Although facing criticism, including from liberals attached to the United Nations, it set the tone for future U.S. interventionist policies (Ninkovich 155).

It is worth noting that the pronouncement had a distinct unilateral nature. It was ironic that Truman, who had a stronger commitment to the idea of international organization compared to FDR, effectively put an end to the traditional concept of collective security. In taking this momentous step, the president declared the Americanization of internationalism and expressed the intention to establish a national foundation for collective security. Truman stated that the free nations of the world relied on the United States for support in preserving their freedoms, while the United Nations was deemed incapable of providing the necessary assistance. In a decisive

manner, contrasting with the vague obligations to the U.N., the president indicated a willingness to allocate American resources to far-off and unfamiliar regions, if necessary. The United States would no longer be a passive observer on the sidelines but would take a leading role in shaping the ideological course of the world (155).

While the request for assistance to Greece and Turkey was easily approved by Congress, the Truman Doctrine faced a wave of criticism. The most vocal opponents were liberals who were unwilling to accept that their faith in the United Nations had become meaningless, similar to worthless Confederate money. However, these criticisms mainly came from staunch supporters who failed to acknowledge a lost cause when it was evident. More consequential for the future were the critiques that, while agreeing on the need for independent action, disagreed with the specific details of the new global situation.

Realists such as George Kennan believed that the Truman Doctrine's rhetoric was exaggerated and did not translate into effective policy. While the doctrine did not explicitly promise American involvement in every situation or advocate for military action, Kennan astutely detected a sense of universalism in the address. He argued that it was impractical to write a blank check to cover all potential future scenarios. Realism, he contended, required setting priorities and maintaining a balance between goals and means.

However, when the administration later emphasized that future requests for assistance would not automatically be approved, proponents of aid to struggling regimes like Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist China accused the administration of employing a contradictory double standard. They claimed that, despite its grandiose universalist rhetoric, the administration was actually prioritizing Europe over other regions. From the left, there were accusations that

Truman was fabricating another "red scare" in order to rally public support for providing aid to a Greek government that was seen as barely deserving of assistance (156).

These criticisms missed the mark. While Kennan's objection correctly identified the global nature of the doctrine, it overlooked the fact that it was impossible for any American president to formulate foreign policy solely based on "realism" because it had never been a part of the American foreign policy tradition, unless one considered isolationism as a form of realism. Critics on the left believed that the Truman Doctrine was an ideological deception, where the government used the exaggerated threat of communism to promote foreign policy in a similar way to how sex appeal is used to sell products like cars or shampoo. However, these complaints failed to acknowledge the genuine belief of American officials that the nation and the world were at a pivotal moment where a declaration of America's commitment was absolutely necessary (156).

Truman's statement not only referred to a global threat but also heralded the resurgence of significant elements of Wilsonianism that had long been dormant. One of these elements was the recognition of America's indispensable leadership role. The Truman Doctrine, more so than the United States' willingness to join the United Nations, marked a definitive departure from prewar isolationism. Another element was the consideration of world opinion. Policymakers believed that a failure in Greece would have dire consequences for morale worldwide. An official stated that any partial action would cast doubt in the minds of the Greek and Turkish people, as well as others around the world who were closely observing the situation. Such doubt would undermine the restoration of hope and optimism in areas where it was desperately needed. Given the tumultuous history of the twentieth century, it would have been all too easy for Europeans to become demoralized (156).

Despite the significant impact of the Truman Doctrine in establishing a global role for the United States, it didn't take long for the administration to realize that they couldn't afford to remain complacent with their policies. By the spring of 1947, Europe was facing a looming economic collapse. The anticipated economic recovery was hindered by adverse weather conditions, poor harvests, coal shortages, and economic disruptions caused largely by Germany's impoverished state. Additionally, there was a shortage of dollars known as the "dollar gap," which made it impossible for Europeans to purchase essential imports and capital goods from the United States. Without a functioning economy, they couldn't generate foreign exchange through exports to meet their needs. Despite the merger of the British and American zones in Germany in early 1946, the country was far from being self-sustaining. In fact, the situation was deteriorating as the U.S. provided substantial financial aid to sustain an economy where the currency had nearly lost its value.

By the beginning of 1947, the economic crisis could no longer be disregarded. Influenced by Moscow, sizable communist parties in Italy and France appeared to be on the verge of attaining power through peaceful means, capitalizing on the radicalizing impact of the dire economic conditions. If this were to occur, the entire continent would fall under the control of a single hostile power, undermining much of the progress made in Europe during the war. Urgent action was required, but what could be done? Various sources within the American government, including Kennan's hastily assembled Policy Planning Staff, proposed a substantial economic assistance program. In contrast to the loans provided during World War I, this aid, totaling 12 billion dollars, would be granted outright. In a commencement speech at Harvard University in June, Secretary of State George Marshall introduced what later became known as the Marshall Plan (158).

### 2.4.2 Kennan and the Containment Policy

The U.S. authorities, lacking precise information on the Soviet Union's intentions, relied on reports from Foreign Service officers and observers near the Soviet Union. These reports indicated that Soviet policy aimed to conceal internal weaknesses and maintain a war capability, ostensibly to guard against Germany and Japan. Simultaneously, the Soviet Union sought to promote the triumph of Marxist-Leninist ideology as an inevitable outcome. George F. Kennan, a career Foreign Service Officer, formulated the principle of "containment," which became the fundamental strategy of the United States in combating the Cold War (1947–1989) with the Soviet Union (Rearden 7). Kennan sought a middle ground between peace and war, steering clear of potentially deadly consequences. His view of the Soviet Union revealed profound distrust, and he cautioned that the conflict between the blocs was primarily a clash of ideologies. He stated that “the issue of Soviet- American relations is in essence a test of the over- all worth of the United States as a nation among nations. To avoid destruction the United States need only measure up to its own best traditions and prove itself worthy of preservation as a great nation” (Kennan 134). George Kennan made this statement to convey his perspective on the significance of the Soviet-American relationship. He believed that the challenges posed by this relationship were not just geopolitical but also a test of the United States' character and values on the global stage. By emphasizing the need for the U.S. to adhere to its own traditions and demonstrate worthiness, Kennan drew attention to the idea that the nation's actions should align with its fundamental principles to ensure its preservation as a great nation. Therefore, he suggests that to avoid peril or destruction, the United States simply needs to adhere to its own highest ideals and demonstrate that it is deserving of preservation as a great nation. This viewpoint reflects Kennan's broader philosophy on diplomacy and the role of the United States in the world.

Kennan's concepts, serving as the foundation of the Truman administration's foreign policy, were first brought into the public sphere in 1947 through an anonymous contribution to the journal *Foreign Affairs*, famously known as the "X-Article" (Rearden 7). He emphasized that the primary aspect of any U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union should involve a "long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies" (Gaddis 29). To achieve this objective, he advocated for the strategic countering of "Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the Western world" through skillful and watchful application of counter-force at various constantly shifting geographic and political points, aligning with the shifts and tactics of Soviet policy. Kennan predicted that such a policy would encourage developments that would ultimately lead to either the dissolution or a gradual moderation of Soviet power.

Kennan's policy sparked immediate controversy. Columnist Walter Lippmann criticized the X-Article for not distinguishing between crucial and less important interests. The implication of Kennan's article was that the United States should confront the Soviet Union and its Communist allies whenever they posed a risk of expanding their influence. Kennan advocated, above all, defending the major industrial centers of the world against Soviet expansion: Western Europe, Japan, and the United States. Some criticized Kennan's policy for being excessively defensive. Particularly, during the 1952 election campaign, John Foster Dulles, the US Secretary of State, argued that the U.S. policy should not be containment but rather the "rollback" of Soviet power and the eventual "liberation" of Eastern Europe. Even within the Truman administration, there was a divide over containment between Kennan and Paul Nitze, Kennan's successor as the director of the Policy Planning Staff. Nitze, seeing the Soviet threat primarily in military terms, interpreted Kennan's call for the "adroit and vigilant application of counter-force" as advocating for the use of military power. In contrast, Kennan, viewing the Soviet threat primarily as

political, stressed economic assistance (such as the Marshall Plan) and "psychological warfare" (overt propaganda and covert operations) as crucial to counter the spread of Soviet influence. In 1950, Nitze's interpretation of containment prevailed over Kennan's. NSC 68, a policy document prepared by the National Security Council and signed by Truman, called for a significant expansion of the U.S. military budget. The paper also broadened the scope of containment from defending major industrial centers to encompassing the entire world, stating, "In the context of the present polarization of power, a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere" ("Milestones: 1945-1952").

Despite facing numerous criticisms and policy setbacks in the early 1950s, the fundamental strategy of the United States during the Cold War, which was to prevent the expansion of Soviet influence, persisted as containment. The U.S. neither retreated into isolationism nor pursued a "rollback" of Soviet power, as briefly advocated by John Foster Dulles. It can be asserted that each subsequent administration after Truman's, up until the collapse of communism in 1989, embraced a modified version of Kennan's containment policy and personalized it ("Milestones: 1945-1952").

### **2.4.3 Marshall plan**

The initiation of the Marshall Plan in June 1947 marked the inception of West Germany's incorporation into Western Europe. The U.S. prioritized the swift revival of West European economies, particularly West Germany, within an overarching international framework aligned with the United States. During the immediate postwar era, European nations lacked the necessary funds in dollars to purchase American goods. Despite the significant loans provided by the United States, the "dollar gap" persisted and worsened due to accumulating interest on these loans. To conserve vital foreign reserves for critical imports, European countries tightly

regulated external trade and frequently turned to bilateral barter agreements. The concern was that these arrangements might become permanent; potentially leaving the United States with vast surplus goods that couldn't be sold on the market (Heller 58).

Marshall's announcement of the European Recovery Program signified a strong U.S. commitment to the reconstruction of Europe. The subsequent Marshall Plan did not initially make a distinction between regions under Soviet influence and those that were not. However, the rationale behind it did consider this difference (Gaddis 31). As a substitute, European nations would receive grants instead of loans for the acquisition of U.S. goods. Administered collaboratively by Europe and the U.S., the Marshall Plan aimed to distribute around \$13 billion over the ensuing four years. Recipient states had to commit to fostering internal fiscal stability, reducing trade barriers, and becoming part of what would evolve into the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). In this blueprint, particular emphasis was placed on prioritizing the West German economy (Heller 59).

The direct impact of the Marshall Plan on initiating the European economic resurgence starting in 1950 is debatable. Contrarily, the austerity measures within the Plan exacerbated an ongoing deflation from 1949, only rectified by the outbreak of the Korean War. It was the heightened military expenditure that effectively revitalized both West European and Japanese economies at the outset of the 1950s. Nevertheless, the Marshall Plan stands as a resounding success for the United States. The stringent austerity measures, reinforced by national-level repression, suppressed inflation and the economic and political expectations of labor and left-leaning factions. This approach stimulated profitability and instilled confidence in the European capitalist system's resilience. The business framework in Western Europe expanded beyond individual nation-states. The subsequent establishment of the European Payments Union in 1950

facilitated credit and debt settlement among West European states through multilateral channels instead of bilateral ones. Primarily, it ensured the continent remained open to U.S. goods export and, eventually, investment capital. Economic integration of West Germany with the broader Western Europe allayed, if not fully resolved, West European concerns about Germany. Concurrently, the Soviet Union found itself isolated, confined within its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe (Heller 59).

Similar to many aspects of American foreign policy during the Cold War, the Marshall Plan was not formulated solely based on narrow national self-interest. However, it wasn't purely an act of benevolence either. The plan was rooted in the belief that American security and prosperity could only thrive within a broader context of global peace and prosperity. It is worth noting that, at the time, the U.S. economy represented approximately half of the world's total industrial output and was experiencing significant export surpluses (Ninkovich 158).

The funds provided through the Marshall Plan were not simply given as unconditional grants. Instead, European governments were required to collaborate and develop a comprehensive plan that outlined the recovery strategies for the entire continent. This necessitated that each nation prioritize the collective well-being over their individual economic interests. However, on a less positive note, despite the relatively lackluster performance of the U.S. economy during the 1930s, American administrators displayed a certain level of arrogance by expecting Europeans to defer to their superior economic expertise when it came to planning their reconstruction efforts (158).

Even if relations with the USSR had been harmonious, advocating for a plan like the Marshall Plan would have been sensible. However, this plan had significant implications for the

Cold War. As American policymakers anticipated, the Soviets rejected any involvement in the plan. They did attend the conference in Paris organized by British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin, hoping that American funds would be distributed without any conditions, similar to their experience with Lend-Lease aid during World War II. However, when it became evident that the Soviet Union and Eastern European economies would need to integrate into a larger European market economy, Molotov walked out of the conference and took the satellite nations with him. The communists had no intention of relinquishing control over their economic destiny, which was based on a system of centralized planning directed from Moscow. Additionally, they were determined to prevent Eastern Europe from gravitating economically towards the Western sphere of influence (159).

The Marshall Plan emerged as a remarkable success story of American postwar policy as Europe experienced a period of remarkable economic growth. Its achievements were so impressive that there were occasional calls for similar plans to be implemented in other regions. Some historians have recently argued that Europe's recovery was on the verge of taking off even without Marshall aid, which may be true. However, the objectives of the Marshall Plan extended beyond pure economics. A crucial aim of the program was to boost morale, particularly by reversing a defeatist mindset that hindered the willingness to save and invest, which were vital for capitalist development. After all, what was the point of working hard and saving if communism seemed to be the dominant force in the future? On the other hand, if the United States could demonstrate its support for Europe, if it could instill confidence and faith in Europe's destiny, then the necessary confidence and morale essential for recovery could be restored (159).

The Marshall Plan appeared to offer a relatively easy and non-threatening solution to the problems faced by Western Europe. However, like any solution, it brought about its own set of challenges. One significant issue that had remained unresolved since the end of the war was the future of Germany. Reviving Europe's economic well-being required a willingness to revive the German economy. American policymakers believed that it would be difficult for the rest of Europe to recover if Germany, the driving force of the continent, remained incapacitated. While reviving the German economy was crucial from a liberal economic standpoint, it was certain to provoke the Soviets, who had much harsher ideas about how Germany should be treated (160).

To sum up, the Marshall plan was a significant intervention by the United States in the economic and political affairs of post-World War II Europe. The US intervened by providing substantial financial assistance, resources, and aid to help the war-torn nations of Western Europe rebuild and stabilize their economies. This intervention aimed to prevent the spread of communism, promote democracy, and secure American influence in Europe during the early stages of the Cold War. It demonstrated a departure from the US's traditional non-interventionist stance and reflected a proactive engagement with international affairs to advance American interests and geopolitical objectives.

#### **2.4.4 National Security Act of 1947**

The National Security Act of 1947 necessitated a significant restructuring of the U.S. Government's foreign policy and military components, aligning with the interventionist approach in American foreign policy. This legislation was instrumental in establishing key institutions that Presidents found valuable for shaping and executing foreign policy, notably the formation of the National Security Council (NSC).

The Council included the President as its chair, along with the Secretaries of State and Defense, representatives from the military departments, and the chairman of a newly established agency called the National Security Resources Board (NSRB). The NSRB was responsible for policy formulation and developing contingency plans for industrial and civilian mobilization. Additionally, a new entity called the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was created, taking over from the Central Intelligence Group. The Central Intelligence Group, which succeeded the wartime Office of Strategic Services (OSS) since January 1946, had overseen intelligence matters across various departments, although it wasn't established by statute (Rearden 24).

These individuals convened at the White House to deliberate on enduring challenges and immediate national security emergencies. A modest NSC team was employed to centralize foreign policy resources from various agencies for the President's use. From 1953 onward, the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs supervised this team. The level of significance attributed to the NSC and the extent of autonomy and influence granted to its staff in relation to entities like the Departments of State and Defense varied across different administrations. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, for instance, utilized NSC meetings to make pivotal foreign policy determinations. Conversely, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson leaned towards a more informal approach, relying on trusted associates. During President Richard M. Nixon's tenure, the role of the NSC staff, led by Henry A. Kissinger, evolved from a coordinating entity to an active participant engaged in negotiations with foreign leaders and executing the President's directives. However, the NSC meetings themselves were infrequent and primarily validated decisions previously settled upon by Nixon and Kissinger ("Milestones: 1945-1952").

One of the key achievements of the National Security Act was its acknowledgment of the essential role of the military in shaping national policy, both in times of peace and war.

Detractors occasionally criticized the act, fearing it might overly militarize foreign policy. However, it simply recognized that maintaining national security was an ongoing and crucial responsibility, necessitating close collaboration within the government. After the lessons of World War II and amidst deteriorating postwar relations with the Soviet Union, this direction seemed most fitting. Given the circumstances, the National Security Act aimed to bridge a noticeable gap by enhancing the coordination of efforts for national security (Rearden 27), a reflection of the interventionist belief in the need for proactive and coordinated actions to secure the nation's interests. Overall, the National Security Act of 1947, by establishing key institutions like the NSC and the CIA, reflected an interventionist approach to foreign policy by actively involving various branches of government and intelligence agencies to safeguard national security and interests on the global stage.

#### **2.4.5 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) 1949**

The events occurring in Europe and the spread of the Soviet influence persuaded European beneficiaries of American economic aid that they required military protection. This urged them to call for the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), marking the first instance of the United States committing to the peacetime defense of Western Europe (Gaddis 34). In 1949, the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization with the aim of ensuring collective security against the Soviet Union.

The formation of this military alliance had a clear focus on countering the Soviet Union. However, similar to the European Recovery Program, its aim was also to encourage the consolidation of Western Europe under the umbrella of the United States. Countries like France and Belgium, apprehensive about potential German resurgence, saw U.S. involvement as a

safeguard. NATO's initial General Secretary, British Lord Ismay, highlighted its purpose: to "keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down." Yet, it came at the cost of relying on enduring U.S. protection and yielding a level of national sovereignty in foreign affairs. Notably, the United States would shape the future stances of each NATO member concerning the Soviet Union (Heller 63).

The NATO marked the initial peacetime military alliance for the United States beyond the Western Hemisphere. Following the devastation of World War II, European nations grappled with the dual challenge of reconstructing their economies and securing their nations. Reconstruction necessitated substantial aid to revive industries and agriculture in war-torn regions, while security required safeguards against potential threats from a resurging Germany or Soviet Union. Recognizing that a strong, rearmed, and unified Europe was crucial in preventing communist expansion across the continent, Secretary of State George Marshall advocated for a substantial economic aid program for Europe, resulting in the European Recovery Program, commonly known as the Marshall Plan. This initiative not only facilitated economic integration in Europe but also fostered the idea of mutual interests and collaboration between the United States and Europe. The Soviet Union's refusal to participate in the Marshall Plan or allow its Eastern European satellite states to accept economic assistance further deepened the growing divide between the Eastern and Western blocs in Europe ("Milestones: 1945-1952").

In the period of 1947–1948, a sequence of incidents heightened concerns about the security and political stability of Western European nations and drew the United States into closer involvement with European affairs. The civil war in Greece and escalating tensions in Turkey prompted President Harry S. Truman to declare the U.S.'s commitment to provide economic and military assistance to these nations, as well as any others resisting subjugation

attempts. Additionally, a communist-backed coup in Czechoslovakia resulted in a communist regime gaining power along Germany's borders. Elections in Italy gained significant attention due to notable gains by the communist party. Germany also became a focal point of concern. The post-war occupation and governance of Germany had been a longstanding contentious issue. In mid-1948, Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin heightened tensions by imposing a blockade on West Berlin, a sector jointly controlled by the U.S., Britain, and France, but encircled by Soviet-controlled East Germany. This Berlin Crisis brought the United States and the Soviet Union to the edge of a conflict, although a substantial airlift to sustain the city throughout the blockade prevented an outright confrontation. These events led U.S. officials to grow increasingly apprehensive about the possibility of Western European nations potentially negotiating their security concerns with the Soviets. To mitigate this potential scenario, the Truman Administration contemplated forming a European-American alliance that would commit the United States to enhancing the security of Western Europe (“Milestones: 1945-1952”).

## **2.5 Post-Cold War and the September 11 Attacks**

Following the downfall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union, the once dominant bipolar international system of the Cold War era gave way to a predominantly unipolar system, with the United States assuming a leadership role, particularly in military and political realms. Former adversaries of the United States, most notably the Soviet Union and China, have either collapsed or abandoned key aspects of their ideologies that were previously hostile to the United States. Many nations have sought the protective umbrella of the American military. The influence of the "American Empire" is most conspicuous in regions such as the Persian Gulf, Iraq, and the broader Middle East, where the

U.S. armed forces have established semi-permanent bases, deploying thousands of soldiers to carefully monitor perceived "potential enemies" like Iran and Syria. (Miller 72; Yilmaz 45).

Despite facing widespread critique, the role of American military power encompasses several vital functions. In specific regions, such as the Persian Gulf, it acts as a safeguard for weaker states against potential aggression from more powerful neighbors (Yilmaz 45). Analysts widely agree that the Gulf region holds immense importance for the United States due to its significant oil wealth, constituting 25 percent of the current global oil production, and possessing approximately 65 percent of the world's known reserves of this crucial resource. This perspective is even upheld by analysts subscribing to a minimalist view of U.S. global interests, making an exception for the Gulf as a vital area in the otherwise less significant Third World. Additionally, U.S. presidents, particularly evident in the 1980 Carter Doctrine, have articulated their dedication to ensuring the security of the Gulf. As Huntington, an American political scientist says:

so long as the United States remains heavily dependent upon imported oil, it will have a major interest in the Persian Gulf. Implementation of the Carter Doctrine designed to promote security in that area consumed a major share of the Reagan defense build-up. Those resources were justified by the threat from the Soviet Union. The justification, however, was not the reason. The reason was the potential threat from local wars, like the Iran-Iraq conflict and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, or from domestic instability, such as the possible overthrow of regimes in Saudi Arabia or the Gulf emirates. Those dangers, now dramatically visible, presumably will remain for a long time to come. (qtd. in Miller 88)

This statement emphasizes the enduring importance of the Persian Gulf to the United States, particularly due to its heavy reliance on imported oil. Therefore, the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, along with its ambitions for hegemony in the Arabian region, presented a substantial threat to American interests. This threat encompassed risks to America's oil-dependent economy, its strategic alliances in the area, and, ultimately, the security of the United States (Krauthammer 28). The primary worry of the Bush administration was not merely Iraq's possession of 20 percent of the world's oil reserves, but the potential pursuit of doubling this share through the annexation of Saudi Arabia (Holsti "Public Opinion" 153). This move would grant Iraq significant control over the world's most crucial commodity. While the annexation of one state by another is universally condemned, the notable concern during and after the crisis was the major powers' heightened interest due to its occurrence in a region containing 65 percent of the world's recognized oil reserves and contributing to 25 percent of current oil production (Freedman and Karsh 180). The United States has consistently pledged to defend Saudi Arabia since the conclusion of World War II. Even critics of the administration's approach, who opposed a war to free Kuwait, endorsed the extension of security assurances to Saudi Arabia, including the extended presence of U.S. military forces on Saudi territory (Miller 88).

Despite the criticism, the president Bush asserted that the challenge posed by Iraq must be confronted if this new world, striving to come into existence, was to have a chance of survival.. In this context, President Bush stated that America had no choice but to "support the rule of law" and to "stand up to aggression." He emphasized that failing to respond to this initial provocation with a clear purpose would signal weakness to despots worldwide. The president argued that not reacting to Iraqi aggression would deal a fatal blow to a promising future, while resisting the aggressor would establish a precedent for building a peaceful and just international

order. This notable proclamation on the new world order was made at a time when there were few indications that the American government would eventually use force to secure Kuwait's liberation. Four months later, the United States entered into war with Iraq. In his State of the Union address, delivered two weeks after the conflict began, the president reiterated the theme he deemed crucial to understanding the Gulf crisis. He stated that what was at stake was more than one small country; it was a significant idea—a new world order where diverse nations unite for the universal aspirations of mankind: peace, security, freedom, and the rule of law. This world, where brutality goes unrewarded, and aggression is met with collective resistance, could only be realized if the United States embraced the indispensable burden of leadership. At this "defining hour" in the nation's history, the president concluded that America was "the only nation on this earth that could assemble the forces of peace" (Tucker and Hendrickson 29, 30).

In Asia, the presence of the United States is often said to contribute to regional stability, potentially preventing various states from feeling compelled to develop substantially larger military forces. The American military presence in Japan is believed not only to shield Japan itself but also indirectly protects China and other Asian nations from potential consequences that might arise if Japan were heavily armed. Furthermore, American military power serves as a coordinator of military coalitions, both permanent (like NATO) and ad hoc (such as peacekeeping missions). American engagement is often essential to the command and control of coalition operations. When the United States assumes a leading role, other nations tend to follow, even if reluctantly. This doesn't suggest that American interventions occur in every major global conflict, but it does imply that any country contemplating the use of force beyond its borders must consider the potential reactions of the United States. (Yilmaz 46)

In the post-Cold War era, the once-bipolar distribution of military and various forms of power has given way to a world where power is more diversified among numerous actors. Notably, military power appears unipolar, concentrated primarily in the United States. Conversely, economic power is undergoing diffusion (Scott and Crothers 15). From an economic and political standpoint, the global system can be characterized as multipolar rather than unipolar. Although the United States holds significant economic influence, it is not the sole power in existence. Other influential centers include the European Union, the Organization of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and various nation-states outside these collective bodies. Notably, when the United States engaged in military operations to “stabilize” regions like Kuwait, Afghanistan, and Iraq, it emphasized cost-sharing with other major powers or relevant nations. Consequently, the post-Cold War international system manifests as a blend of unipolar and multipolar dynamics, with five major powers—the United States, Europe, China, Japan, and Russia—exerting dominance in global affairs. (Yilmaz 46)

The prevailing desire of dominant powers in the post-Cold War era is to maintain the existing state of affairs that largely favors them and to ease the financial pressures resulting from the increased frequency of peace operations after the Cold War (Pugh 45). Consequently, there has been a noticeable increase in international cooperation among major powers, evident in the rise of peace operations. To elaborate, while only a total of 13 peacekeeping forces were instituted from 1948 to 1978, with no new forces established in the subsequent decade, a notable shift occurred from May 1988 to October 1993, resulting in the creation of an additional twenty forces. By December 2008, the tally of UN peacekeeping operations had surged to 63, with 18 actively engaged in the field, comprising 112,660 military personnel and civilian police. (Yilmaz 46)

The waning ideological confrontations between the United States and Russia became most evident in the decline of vetoes exercised at the Security Council. From 1945 to 1990, the permanent members of the Security Council utilized the following number of vetoes: China, 3; France, 18; United Kingdom, 30; US, 69; and the Soviet Union, 114. However, between June 1990 and May 1993, not a single veto was cast, with the sole exception occurring in May 1993 when Russia opposed a resolution regarding the financing of the peacekeeping force on Cyprus. This exception aside, the Security Council's ability to reach consensus in the post-Cold War era has endured, playing a pivotal role in the upswing in the number of peacekeeping operations (47).

A distinct aspect of the post-Cold War era is the shift in global dominance towards the West, with Western systems and influences prevailing worldwide as the victor in the East-West ideological rivalry. Notably, the United States has significantly expanded its sway in regions like the Middle East and Caucasus since the Cold War's conclusion. The Gulf Crisis, triggered by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, provided an opportunity for the United States to exert its hegemonic power in the Middle East. In the subsequent years, lacking a counterbalancing force, the influence of the United States continued to escalate. The military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq following the September 11, 2001 attacks solidified the United States' dominance in the region (47).

Consequently, In November 1999, George W. Bush, the governor of Texas at the time, utilized his first significant foreign policy speech to criticize the U.S. foreign policy. He stated that “American internationalism should not mean action without vision, activity without priority, and missions without end -- an approach that squanders American will and drains American energy. American foreign policy must be more than the management of crisis” (Bush) In stating

so, Bush criticizes a lack of clear purpose and prioritization in foreign policy, emphasizing the need for a strategic vision, prioritized activities, and defined missions to avoid aimless and unending endeavors. However after September 11, 2001 terrorists attacks on New York City and Washington DC, commonly known as 9/11, Bush's realist stance was suddenly neglected.

According to some analysts, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 "changed everything" concerning American foreign affairs (Holsti "Making American" 13). In the aftermath of 9/11, the American public embraced the Administration's military response to terrorism and supported a significant shift in U.S. foreign policy. The heightened sense of vulnerability among the public aligned with the Administration's belief in its unprecedented power to reshape the world independently, replacing earlier caution with a determination to enhance U.S. security through military interventions in places like Afghanistan and Iraq, and actively promoting democracy globally, even through force if required (Rielly 77). Indeed, the 9/11 was a pivotal turning point in U.S. foreign policy. The attacks prompted a significant shift in priorities, leading to a heightened focus on countering terrorism, the use of military force in Afghanistan and Iraq, and an assertive stance in promoting democracy globally. The event fundamentally reshaped U.S. foreign policy strategies and objectives.

The U.S. intervention in Iraq was a multifaceted and consequential undertaking. The decision to invade Iraq was largely based on the Bush administration's perception of the country as a significant threat to U.S. national security, particularly in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. This perception was shaped by the belief that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and was supporting terrorism, although subsequent investigations failed to substantiate these claims (Hinnebush "The US invasion of Iraq: explanations" 209).

The assertions that the Saddam Hussein government in Baghdad possessed WMD and had connections to the September 11 attacks through its association with al Qaeda, never widely accepted globally, were found to lack substantial supporting evidence. As successive reports discredited the claims about WMD and al Qaeda ties, the stated war objectives by Washington increasingly emphasized the aim of establishing a democratic regime in Iraq, with the anticipation that success in this regard would have a transformative effect on the entire Middle East region. Despite earlier dismissive language, the Bush administration had, therefore, elevated democracy promotion to a central position in its foreign policy agenda (Holsti "Making American" 13).

According to Raymond Hinnebush, in his article *The American Invasion of Iraq: Causes and Consequences*, the American invasion of Iraq was caused by a combination of factors. The US global grand strategy, which aimed to establish a pro-Israeli Pax-Americana in the Middle East and spread liberalism throughout the region, played a significant role in the decision to invade Iraq. Additionally, the alliance between the neo-cons, the wider Zionist lobby, and the right-wing 'Christian Zionists' helped to win the wider public and bring Congress to abdicate its war-deciding responsibilities. The belief that the invasion would be welcomed as liberation and a pro-US "democracy" was also a factor, despite Iraqis' deep distrust of the US and UK due to the colonial experience, sanctions, and support for Israel (14-22).

The consequences of the Iraq war for the Middle East and US hegemony globally were significant. The war led to the de-stabilization of the region, with the breakdown of security. The invasion of Iraq also empowered Iran, which was surrounded by US forces or proxies and the next likely target of the neo-cons, but instead emerged as a major player in the region (Hinnebush 20).. The war also undermined the legitimacy of the US as a global leader, with the

resort to unilateralism and ad-hoc "coalitions of the willing" eroding the multilateralism and diplomacy that had previously characterized US foreign policy (25). Overall, the Iraq war had significant and far-reaching consequences for the Middle East and US hegemony globally, with the full extent of its impact still being felt today.

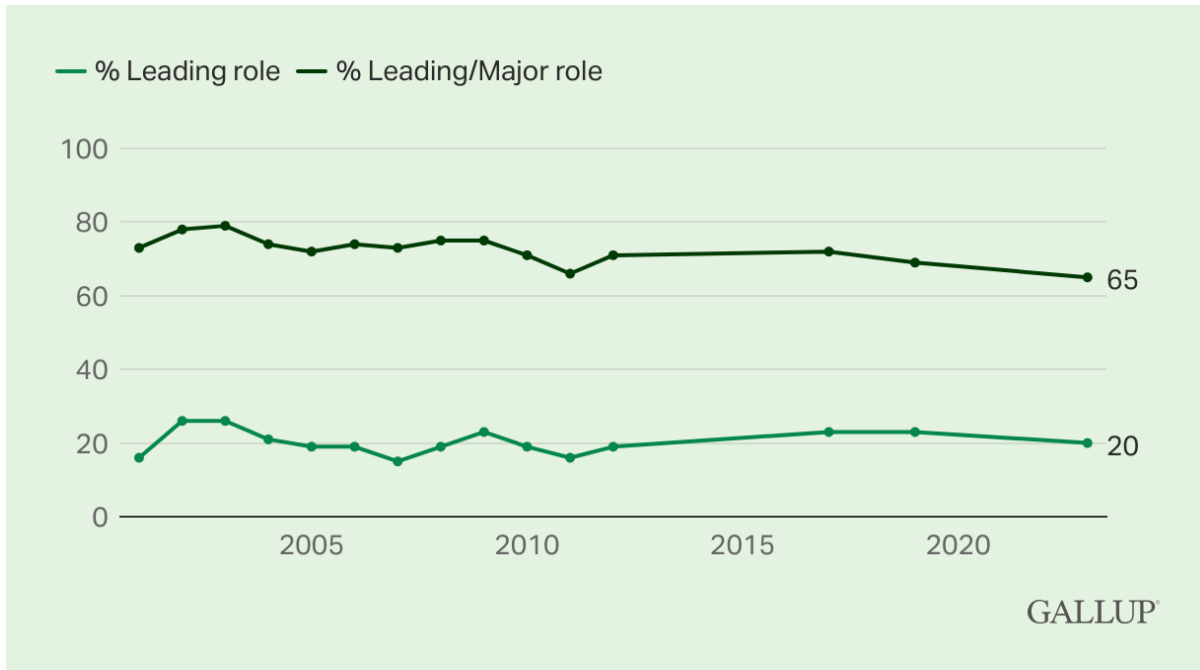
In the former Soviet states, The United States succeeded in penetrating the energy-abundant region of Caucasus by forming alliances with such states including Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and Georgia. Despite Russia's clear disapproval of U.S. presence in the area, its capacity to thwart such influence has proven to be constrained. In a parallel manner, NATO extended its reach to include Eastern Europe, traditionally under Soviet sway. Initially resistant to NATO's expansion, Russia issued various threats, even considering the establishment of a counter-defense organization. However, it eventually acquiesced to the "partnership for peace" initiative, allowing it to retain numerous privileges in Eastern European nations. Similarly, the European Union stretched its boundaries into Eastern Europe, emblematic of Western influence. The 2004 expansion marked the inclusion of eight former communist nations—Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic (excluding Cyprus and Malta). Additionally, in 2007, two more erstwhile communist states, Bulgaria and Romania, attained full membership in the Union (Yılmaz 47).

While these factors stressed Western predominance in the post-Cold War era, the repercussions of this dominance have manifested globally in both stability and instability. On one hand, the hegemonic influence of the United States and the expansion of Western-rooted organizations contribute to a reduction in international anarchy, thereby fostering global stability. Conversely, the escalating Western dominance has prompted various reactions and challenges directed at the West. Predominantly, these reactions unfold in the Islamic world, seemingly

aligning with Samuel P. Huntington's renowned "clash of civilizations" thesis. However, these reactions presently appear disorganized and relatively less potent, falling short of posing a substantial challenge to Western supremacy. Nonetheless, anti-Western sentiments in the Muslim world and elsewhere appear to fuel terrorism, posing a significant threat to peace in the post-Cold War period (47, 48). Thus, the U.S. intervention policy in the post-Cold War period appears chaotic, marked by significant variations in military deployments in response to crises.

### **2.5.1 Views of the American Public on the US in World Affairs Following 9/11 Attacks**

In the most recent survey conducted by Gallup Organization on Americans' preference for the U.S. role in global affair, the survey shows that most Americans still support major role for U.S. in world affairs. The public opinion question that had been raised is as follows: "We would like you to think about the role the U.S. should play in trying to solve international problems. Do you think the U.S. should -- [ROTATED: take the leading role in world affairs, take a major role but not the leading role, take a minor role, or take no role at all in world affairs]" (Gallup). The results are showcased in the following figures.



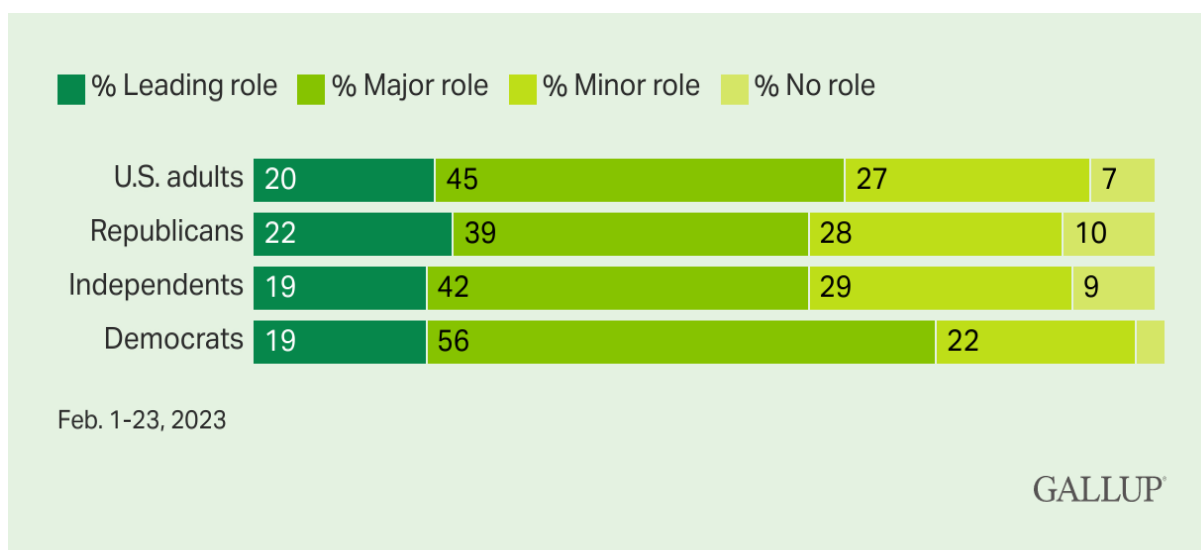
**Figure 1: Americans' Preference for U.S. Role in World Affairs**

This figure illustrates that 65% of Americans either prefer the U.S. to play a leading (20%) or a major role (45%) in global affairs. This represents a decline from 69% in 2019 and 72% in 2017, marking the lowest figure since 2011. Over the years since Gallup initiated this question in 2001, over 70% of Americans have consistently supported a leading or major role, reaching a peak of 79% in February 2003 after the 9/11 attacks and one month before the invasion of Iraq. Apart from the current 65% advocating a significant U.S. role, 27% favor a minor role, and 7% desire no role at all. Notably, this marks only the second instance, alongside 2011, where more than 30% express a preference for a limited or no role in addressing international issues (Gallup).

The decline in the percentage of Americans favoring a leading or major role for the U.S. in world affairs, from 72% in 2017 to 65% in the most recent poll, could be influenced by several factors. The shifts in global dynamics, such as the rise of new economic powers and evolving

geopolitical landscapes, may alter perceptions of the necessity for U.S. leadership. Periods of military involvement, such as the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, could contribute to wariness among the public, impacting their desire for the U.S. to play a prominent role in global affairs, in addition to the fact that citizens might prioritize domestic concerns over international engagement during times of economic uncertainty or internal challenges.

Republicans and independents, with figures of 61% each, express a lower inclination than Democrats, who stand at 75% (see figure 3), toward supporting a leading or major role for the U.S. in global affairs. Only 3% of Democrats wish for the U.S. to have no international role, contrasting with 10% of Republicans and 9% of independents who share this perspective (see figure 2).

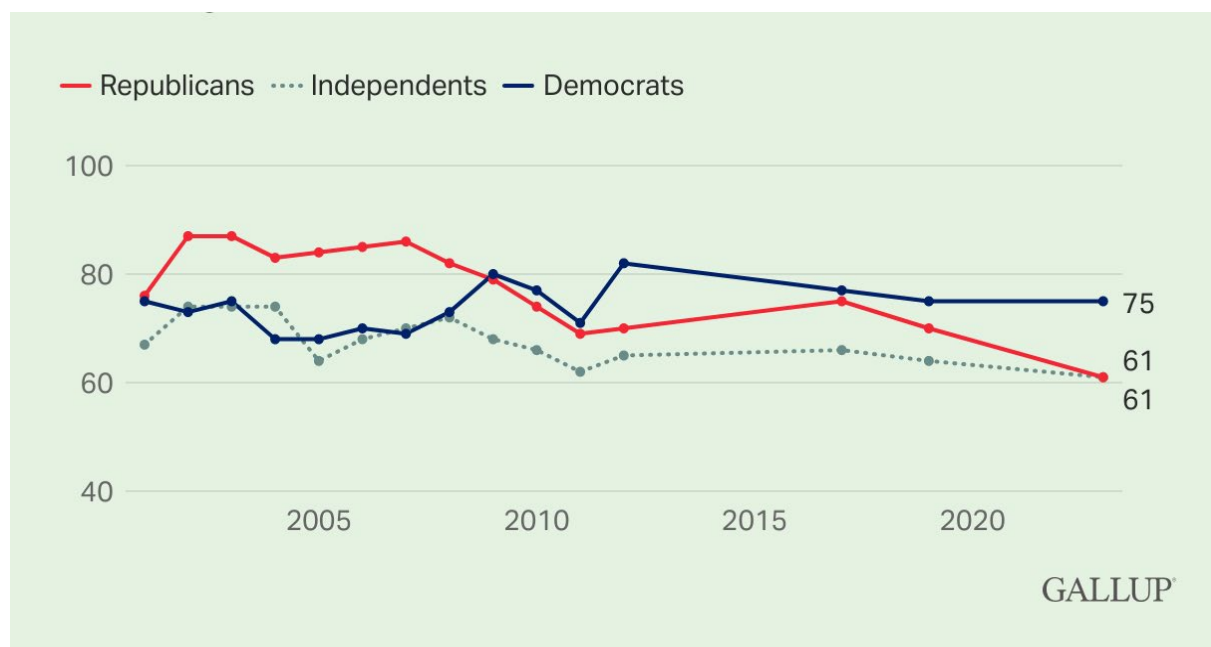


**Figure 2: American's Preferred Role for the U.S in World Affairs, 2023**

Republicans and independents show a decreased inclination for a prominent U.S. global role compared to previous years. The current percentage of Republicans advocating for the U.S. to lead or play a major role is notably lower than their prior low of 69% in 2011, marking a

significant shift from the George W. Bush era when over 80% of Republicans favored such a role. This decline in Republican preference is likely shaped by both disagreements with President Joe Biden's foreign policy and the differing foreign policy approaches of the last two Republican presidents.

While the previous Bush administration witnessed an average of 84% of Republicans supporting an active U.S. role internationally, this figure dropped to 61% in the current year, reflecting a broader trend. The proactive foreign policy of Bush stands in opposition to Donald Trump's "America First" stance on international affairs, advocating for a significantly reduced U.S. involvement in global alliances and conflicts.



**Figure 3: Preference for U.S. Role in World Affairs, by Political Party**

Since 2010, independents have consistently expressed less than two-thirds support for the U.S. playing a major or leading role in global affairs, whereas before that period, the majority leaned towards greater involvement. Among Democrats, the current 75% preference for

substantial U.S. engagement aligns with the historical average, fluctuating from a low of 68% in 2004 and 2005 during Bush's presidency to a peak of 82% in 2012 under Obama (Gallup).

In short, though a majority of Americans still desire a significant, if not the foremost, role for the U.S. in global affairs, the current preference for this stance is at its lowest point compared to previous times. Republicans are increasingly leaning towards a more restrained U.S. role, albeit this perspective is not widely embraced within the party. In a broader sense, there is a prevailing negative sentiment among Americans regarding the international standing of the United States, with more expressing dissatisfaction than satisfaction with the country's position in the world.

This shift could be attributed to evolving global dynamics, changing perceptions of U.S. leadership necessity, and the impact of past military involvements. Factors such as economic uncertainties and internal challenges may also contribute to a prioritization of domestic concerns over international engagement. Notably, Republicans and independents are less inclined than Democrats to support a prominent U.S. role, and the varied preferences across political affiliations demonstrate the complexity of public opinion on this matter.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the direction of the U.S. foreign policy from isolationism to interventionism between 1914 and 2001 showcases the dynamic nature of global politics and the imperative to adapt to evolving threats and circumstances. The First and Second World Wars shattered the illusion of isolationism's viability in an interconnected world, necessitating active participation to safeguard national interests and international stability. The subsequent Cold War rivalry and the pressing need for containment further solidified America's role as a global actor.

However, the most profound trigger for change came with the horrific events of September 11, 2001. The 9/11 attacks were a brutal awakening, pushing the United States into a new era of interventionism driven by the imperative to combat terrorism and secure the safety of its citizens. This tragic event marked a defining moment, leading to a re-evaluation of priorities, a reassessment of international relationships, and an unprecedented level of military engagement worldwide.

Ultimately, this journey from isolationism to interventionism serves as a testament to the dynamic and adaptive nature of U.S. foreign policy. It reflects the nation's enduring commitment to protecting its interests, promoting stability, and striving for a safer and more interconnected world, even in the face of significant historical challenges and paradigm-shifting events. The insights gained from this transformation continue to shape American foreign policy decisions and will undoubtedly influence the nation's approach to global affairs well into the future.

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

# **Trump's Rhetoric on Foreign Policy: Isolationism and Interventionism**

## **Introduction**

Donald Trump's foreign policy vision during his 2016 presidential campaign marked a departure from traditional approaches, injecting a unique and unconventional perspective into the discourse of American global engagement. As a political outsider, Trump presented a vision that was blatantly centered on the principle of "America First," reflecting a commitment to prioritizing domestic interests over longstanding international commitments. His campaign rhetoric challenged established norms, advocating for a reevaluation of global alliances, trade agreements, and military interventions. The phrase "America First" became a rallying cry, encapsulating Trump's promise to redefine the nation's role in the world and place the interests of the American people at the forefront of foreign policy decision-making.

After winning the presidential election, the phrase "America First" remained at the forefront, symbolizing a commitment to prioritizing U.S. interests and challenging established global norms. This era was marked by a blend of nationalism, economic pragmatism, and a transactional view of international relations. The examination of Donald Trump's rhetoric on foreign policy, encapsulated in the dichotomy of isolationism and interventionism, offers a nuanced exploration of the United States' approach to global affairs during his administration. Therefore, this chapter delves into the intricacies of Trump's foreign policy rhetoric before and after winning the presidential elections of 2016. By doing so, we attempt to unravel the rhetoric that fueled his unconventional approach and examining the key themes, policy priorities, and the impact of his communication style on America's relationships with the world.

Some scholars believe that in the field of political communication content analysis remains the most frequently employed method (Grabber and Smith 491). And since this chapter

is structured to facilitate a thorough investigation of both isolationist and interventionist rhetoric, a multifaceted approach that combines discourse analysis and qualitative content analysis is employed to comprehensively scrutinize Trump's speeches and official statements on foreign policy. Discourse analysis allows for an in-depth examination of language use, rhetorical devices, and the construction of narratives. Content analysis, on the other hand, provides a qualitative lens to identify recurring themes and ideologies across various sections. The analysts in this domain of political communication have the option to concentrate on the explicit “denotational” meanings or the extended, implied meanings “connotational” evoked by the literal message. In the latter case, scholars often investigate messages as indicators of concealed political, social, and economic circumstances, encompassing aspects like international tensions, public trust in the government, or concerns regarding economic downturns (Grabber and Smith 491).

The research under study is qualitative by nature, making it fundamentally interpretive. Our interpretation serves as a blend of our personal perspective and theoretical comprehension of the phenomenon being examined. When showcasing outcomes from qualitative content analysis, it is important to maintain equilibrium between providing a descriptive account and offering an interpretative analysis. Descriptive elements offer readers a comprehensive background and context, requiring depth and detail (Zhang and Wildemuth 5).

It is worth mentioning also that this chapter examines rhetorical skills of Trump from the lenses of the three modes of persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos. As Sheafer and others in their article *Political Actors as Communicator*, argue that a straightforward approach to comprehend the potential implications of the new realm of political communication on the rhetoric of political figures involves Aristotle's three fundamental modes of persuasion: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos.

These align with the three essential participants in any communicative act, specifically the speaker (or addresser), audience (or addressee), and the speech (or message). Aristotle's comprehensive examination of the speaker's personal character underscores the significance of credibility (ethos); he engages with the audience through emotional appeal (pathos) and with the speech through persuasive arguments and logical reasoning (logos) (218), however this chapter does not rely solely on these modes in its analysis.

### **3.1 America First and Nationalism**

The articulation of the idea of "America First" and the invocation of a strong sense of nationalism by Donald Trump in his speeches are not novel concepts in American history. As previously discussed in the second chapter of this study, the roots of this sentiment can be traced back to the creation of the America First Committee by isolationists during a critical period leading up to World War II. The historical context of the America First Committee highlights the enduring nature of the nationalist and isolationist currents within American politics. Trump's rhetoric, echoing these sentiments, reflects a historical thread woven into the fabric of American political discourse. By acknowledging the existence of the America First Committee in the earlier chapter, we recognize that the themes Trump championed have historical antecedents, illustrating the cyclical nature of certain ideologies within the broader context of U.S. foreign policy.

Prior to his presidential announcement speech, Donald Trump proclaimed his dedication to what he termed an "America First" strategy in foreign policy. This approach echoed an isolationist tendency that had largely been marginalized in national affairs since the conclusion of World War II. In this regard, Trump was asked in an interview by The New York Times about

his foreign policy approach whether it aligns with the isolationist America First that reflects a tendency towards prioritizing American interests. Donald Trump said that:

I'm not isolationist, but I am "America First." So I like the expression. I'm "America First." We have been disrespected, mocked, and ripped off for many many years by people that were smarter, shrewder, tougher. We were the big bully, but we were not smartly led. And we were the big bully who was — the big stupid bully and we were systematically ripped off by everybody. From China to Japan to South Korea to the Middle East [...] we won't be isolationists — I don't want to go there because I don't believe in that. I think we'll be very worldview, but we're not going to be ripped off anymore by all of these countries (Trump, Transcript: Donald Trump Expounds on His Foreign Policy Views).

As George F. Kennan, a career Foreign Service Officer, puts it "there is a close connection between foreign policy and internal policy" (qtd. in Gaddis 30), it appears that Donald Trump unequivocally aligns with the "America First" ideology, emphasizing a prioritized commitment to American interests. Within this framework, he conveys a deep-seated perception of past mistreatment, asserting that the United States has been disrespected and systematically taken advantage of economically. Trump critiques previous leadership as ineffectual, characterizing the nation as a "big stupid bully" in need of smarter guidance. Despite rejecting outright isolationism, he pledges a departure from being economically exploited by other countries, particularly highlighting concerns with trade imbalances with nations such as China, Japan, South Korea, and the Middle East. Trump's quote indicates a nationalist and economically protective stance, aiming to renegotiate global relationships to ensure that the United States is no longer perceived as being disadvantaged on the international stage.

Trump's Announcement Speech in June 2015 was characterized by the prominent use of populist and nationalist rhetoric focusing on issues such as immigration, trade, national security, and the rejection of globalism (Löfflmann 6). The prominent theme that emerges in his speech is the "America First" ideology that reflects a core tenet of his foreign policy stance. The speech is marked by a strong nationalist tone, exemplified by Trump's declaration: "The American dream is dead. But if I get elected president, I will bring it back bigger and better and stronger than ever before, and we will make America great again" (Trump, Presidential Announcement Speech). This assertion serves as a rhetorical device, appealing to the emotions and sentiments of the American people (Pathos). Moreover, the speech strategically deploys logical reasoning, or Logos, when Trump argues, "I will be the greatest jobs president that God ever created" (Trump, Presidential Announcement Speech). This appeals to the audience's sense of reason and pragmatism. The consistent repetition of the "America First" theme reinforces the Ethos of Trump's commitment to prioritizing the interests and well-being of the American people.

Throughout the speech and in many quotes such as when Trump states the U.S. "is in serious trouble [and Americans] don't have victories anymore". This quote emphasizes a perceived decline in national strength, resonating with the America First narrative. Furthermore, Trump presented himself as a savior of the nation when he said "we are going to make our country great again." This reflects Trump's commitment to prioritizing the greatness of the nation (America First). It is evident that Trump strategically utilized specific language pervaded with emotional appeal and recurring themes to convey a robust America First perspective in his announcement speech.

In another speech, namely his Foreign Policy Speech which was delivered at an event hosted by the National Interest in April 2016, the analysis of the speech reveals distinct themes

reflecting his stance on international relations. The speech displayed a mix of rhetoric, including assertive nationalism and a pragmatic approach to global challenges. Illustratively, Trump emphasized his 'America First' ideology, stating, "My foreign policy will always put the interests of the American people, and American security, above all else. That will be the foundation of every decision that I will make. America First will be the major and overriding theme of my administration" (Trump, Trump on Foreign Policy). This quote encapsulates the overarching theme of prioritizing national interests. Additionally, he advocated for a reevaluation of alliances, exemplified by the quote, "We have to be unpredictable. And we have to be unpredictable starting now." This reflects a strategic and unconventional approach to diplomatic relations. The speech, rich in symbolic language, employed phrases like, "We're getting out of the nation-building business" (Trump, Trump on Foreign Policy), highlighting a shift towards non-interventionism. Through these examples, the analysis shows Trump's blend of nationalist sentiments, strategic unpredictability, and a departure from interventionist policies in his foreign policy approach.

In the Republican National Convention (RNC) speech delivered by Donald Trump in July 2016, the speech reveals a resounding emphasis on the America First theme, solidifying his vision for the nation. Trump declared, "the most important difference between our plan and that of our opponents, is that our plan will put America first! Americanism, not globalism, will be our credo" (Trump, Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech) exemplifying a clear shift towards a nationalist approach. The qualitative analysis further unveils his protectionist stance with the quote, "We will never sign bad trade deals. America First again. America First!" (Trump, Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech). This repetitive use of the term "America First" serves as a rhetorical strategy, emphasizing the prioritization of national interests.

Similarly, in the Youngstown speech on August 15, 2016, Trump continued to reinforce the America First narrative. His statement, "It's time to shake the rust off America's foreign policy" (Trump, Donald Trump Delivers Foreign Policy Address), exemplifies a thematic analysis of his intent to prioritize domestic concerns. He asserted, "My foreign policy will always put the interests of the American people and American security above all else." This quote exemplifies Trump's commitment to a nationalist foreign policy, aligning with the America First ideology. It is, thus, evident that Trump strategically utilized specific rhetoric in both the RNC and Youngstown speeches to call attention to the America First theme, emphasizing the prioritization of American interests in trade, foreign policy, and national security.

During his presidency, the theme of "America First" resonates prominently throughout Donald Trump's speeches, encapsulating a distinctive approach to foreign policy and national interests. In his inaugural address on January 20, 2017, Trump reiterated his commitment to this theme, stating, "From this moment on, it's going to be America First" (Trump, The Inaugural address), emphasizing a departure from globalist policies. However, he reverts to the rhetoric of his campaign, vowing that America will experience victory once more. While not delving into specific plan particulars, he assures that his administration will restore jobs, secure borders, fulfill dreams, and generate wealth. Committing to new infrastructure and reducing dependency on welfare, he declares, "I will fight for you with every breath in my body, and I will never, ever let you down" (Trump, The Inaugural address). The promise resonates with the vision of America initiating a winning streak unprecedented in history. Employing qualitative content analysis, one can discern a recurrent pattern in Trump's speeches, with an emphasis on protecting American jobs and industries. For instance, in a speech addressing the powerful National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), he declared, "Under my administration, the era of

economic surrender is over, and the rebirth of American industry is beginning. America is winning again, and America is being respected again" (Trump, Remarks by President Trump to the National Association of Manufacturers). This rhetoric stresses a commitment to prioritizing domestic interests over global economic considerations.

Furthermore, in his first speech to a joint session of Congress, Trump affirmed the America First theme by asserting, "My job is not to represent the world; my job is to represent the United States of America" (Trump, Donald Trump's Congress Speech). This elucidates Trump's nationalist stance, emphasizing a redefined role for the United States in global affairs. The America First theme also manifested in the realm of trade, evident in Trump's weekly address on April 13, 2018, where he declared, "We will also no longer tolerate unfair and non-reciprocal trading practices – not only with China, but with anyone" (Trump). This sentiment continued into trade discussions, evident in his speech at the Economic Club of New York on November 12, 2019, where he emphasized the administration's efforts to protect American workers and industries. "My administration has taken the toughest-ever action to confront China's trade abuses" (Trump, Remarks by President Trump at the Economic Club of New York | New York, NY), he remarked, aligning with the America First principle. Additionally, in his 2020 State of the Union Address on February 4, Trump emphasized economic achievements, stating, "Jobs are booming, incomes are soaring, poverty is plummeting, crime is falling, confidence is surging, and our country is thriving and highly respected again. America's enemies are on the run, America's fortunes are on the rise, and America's future is blazing bright" (Trump, Remarks by President Trump in State of the Union Address).

In short, throughout his 2016 presidential campaign and subsequent presidency, Donald Trump consistently championed an isolationist approach encapsulated in his America First

rhetoric. This thematic thread reflected his commitment to prioritizing American interests, revitalizing domestic industries, fortifying national security, and redefining the nation's global role. The recurring refrain of "winning again" symbolized Trump's vision for a resurgent America that had ostensibly declined in global stature. The isolationist undercurrent within the America First theme became a defining aspect of Trump's communication strategy, resonating with his supporters while igniting debates about the nation's place in an interconnected world. In essence, Trump's utilization of America First rhetoric demonstrates a distinct isolationist stance, significantly influencing both his domestic and foreign policy decisions throughout his tenure.

### **3.2 Trade Protectionism and Economic Rhetoric**

Donald Trump's trade protectionism and economic rhetoric during his 2016 presidential campaign and subsequent presidency marked a departure from traditional free-trade principles, with a focus on safeguarding American industries and workers. The central theme of economic nationalism was encapsulated in his "America First" agenda, emphasizing the prioritization of domestic economic interests. Trump's official rhetoric revolves around the urgency to promptly address the renegotiation of trade agreements like North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). According to Trump these were 'bad deals' that consistently prioritized the economic prosperity of other nations by relocating jobs from the marginalized industrial regions of the American Midwest (Lacatus 9, 10).

Trump's 2016 presidential campaign was characterized by a strong emphasis on prioritizing American interests. Through qualitative content analysis of his speeches during this period, several recurring themes and quotes emerged, reflecting his stance on trade and economy.

For instance, in his campaign announcement speech on June 16, 2015, Trump stated, "We need somebody that can take the brand of the United States and make it great again" (Trump, Presidential Announcement Speech). This sentiment captured the essence of his economic nationalism, where the focus was on elevating the status of the United States in the global economic arena. Similarly, in an attempt to stimulate the voters, he presented himself as the savior of American economy: "I will be the greatest jobs president that God ever created. I tell you that. I'll bring back our jobs from China, from Mexico, from Japan, from so many places. I'll bring back our jobs, and I'll bring back our money" (Trump, Presidential Announcement Speech). In this statement, Donald Trump is appealing to his own credibility and authority (ethos) by proclaiming his ability to be an exceptional leader in creating jobs. The use of "God" in the statement also adds a rhetorical flourish, implying a divine endorsement or blessing, further enhancing Trump's credibility and moral authority in the eyes of his audience. The emphasis is on establishing trust in his capacity to fulfill his promise and undertake effective economic policies.

During the Republican National Convention (RNC) speech on July 21, 2016, Trump declared, "Americanism, not globalism, will be our credo" (Trump, Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech). This quote encapsulated his rejection of international trade agreements perceived as unfavorable to the U.S., emphasizing a return to a more nationalist economic approach. In this regard, he attacked the North American Free Trade Agreement known as NAFTA, "America has lost nearly one-third of its manufacturing jobs since 1997, following the enactment of disastrous trade deals supported by Bill and Hillary Clinton. Remember, it was Bill Clinton who signed NAFTA, one of the worst economic deals ever made by our country" (Trump, Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech), and he warned that he would renegotiate

the deal along with other deals “Our horrible trade agreements with China, and many others, will be totally renegotiated, that includes renegotiating NAFTA to get a much better deal for America” (Trump, Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech). Trump pledged that if elected president, he will “never sign any trade agreement that hurts [American] workers or that diminishes [their] freedom and independence.” Donald Trump's views on the economy and global trade, coupled with his critical position on NAFTA, were pivotal in securing his electoral triumph. This is especially noteworthy given the shifts in American perspectives on trade over recent decades (Blendon, et al. 239). Trump went further when he criticized the trade partnership between the United States and China. During a significant address on "jobs" in Monessen, Pennsylvania, on June 28, 2016, he previewed his intended policies, stating:

"If China persists in its unlawful activities, including the theft of American trade secrets, I will employ all legal presidential authority to address trade disputes, including implementing tariffs in accordance with Section 201 and 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 and Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962." (Trump, Full Transcript: Donald Trump's Jobs Plan Speech)

In the same vein, Trump thwarted President Obama's plan to finalize the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a 12-nation regional trade deal that had undergone more than five years of negotiations. President Obama aimed to present the TPP for Congressional approval in his last year in office, intending to bolster his "Asia Pivot" legacy with a significant trade agreement. However, Trump's populist rhetoric characterized free trade as detrimental to workers and the U.S. middle class. This stance swiftly reshaped the political discourse surrounding the TPP, causing a decline in initial Congressional backing and prompting presidential candidate Hillary Clinton to reverse her stance and oppose the TPP. Despite her prior involvement in negotiating

the deal as Secretary of State, this shift in position ultimately led President Obama to abandon his TPP initiatives (Skonieczny 338).

In an economic policy speech in Detroit, Michigan, on August 8, 2016 outlining his economic plan, Trump emphasized key aspects of his economic policies with a focus on tax reforms, job creation, and deregulation. Trump declared, "We will put new American steel into the spine of this nation"(Trump, Donald Trump August 8). This quote encapsulates his commitment to revitalizing the American economy particularly in manufacturing, by reducing reliance on foreign products. He advocated for a simplified tax code, stating, "I am proposing an across-the-board income tax reduction, especially for middle-income Americans" (Trump Donald Trump August 8). This reflects his intention to alleviate tax burdens on the middle class. Additionally, he highlighted the need for deregulation to stimulate economic growth: "I will also immediately cancel all illegal and overreaching executive orders" (Trump, Donald Trump August 8). This statement aligns with Trump's promise to reduce government intervention. Overall, the Detroit speech emphasized Trump's economic vision, combining tax cuts, job creation, and deregulation as essential elements to rejuvenate the nation's economic prosperity.

Furthermore, President Trump focused on his vision for America's economic revival, centering on tax reform, job creation, and the return of wealth to the United States in his speech to the National Association of Manufacturers on September 29, 2017. Emphasizing the "Made in the USA" ethos, Trump highlighted his administration's efforts to cut taxes for individuals and businesses, simplify the tax code, and make it more competitive globally as he declared: "we will cut taxes for everyday, hardworking Americans, and we're going to cut them substantially" (Trump, Remarks by President Trump to the National Association of Manufacturers). He stressed the need to protect American workers, unleash enterprise, and encourage companies to

stay and grow within the country “As part of this simplification, we’re also going to protect millions of family businesses by ending the crushing, horrible, and unfair estate tax” (Trump). The speech outlined a comprehensive tax reform plan, including significant cuts in business tax rates and encouraging the repatriation of trillions of dollars parked overseas. Trump expressed a commitment to reversing the offshoring model, embracing an "American model" that fosters patriotism, prosperity, and pride. The overarching goal was to provide opportunities for Americans to earn a living with dignity and purpose, building a future rooted in national loyalty and shared values. The speech echoed Trump's "America First" economic rhetoric, emphasizing the administration's dedication to putting American workers and businesses at the forefront of policy decisions.

In his speech to the World Economic Forum on January 26, 2018, President Trump emphasized his "America First" approach, advocating for a competitive and fair global economic system. He highlighted the economic achievements of his administration, attributing them to tax reforms and deregulation. Trump expressed his commitment to bilateral trade agreements, asserting, "America First does not mean America alone." The speech highlighted his administration's focus on protecting American interests and jobs, as evident in his statement: "I will always put America first, just like the leaders of other countries should put their countries first" (Trump, Remarks by President Trump to the World Economic Forum). This emphasis on national interest and economic sovereignty reflected a consistent theme in Trump's rhetoric during his presidency.

Likewise, President Trump addresses the harmful impact of unfair trade on American families and industries in his weekly address on April 13, 2018. He emphasizes that the U.S. has endured massive trade deficits and loss of manufacturing jobs due to other nations exploiting the

system. Trump criticizes past leadership for allowing economic aggression and vows a departure from that approach. He specifically targets China for unfair trade practices, including forced technology transfers.

Trump declared that his administration is taking decisive actions, including proposing tariffs to protect American industries. He asserts the need for fair and reciprocal trade, signaling a shift toward a more assertive stance to safeguard American interests. The speech reflects a commitment to ending economic abuse, restoring prosperity, and ensuring the country's economic independence. (Trump, President Donald J. Trump's Weekly Address)

To assert his protectionist credo, Donald Trump addressed a spirited crowd in Mississippi on October 2, 2018, commending his administration's achievement of a new trade deal with Canada and Mexico. He asserted that his stance against 'globalists' had positively impacted U.S. economic growth, earning America newfound respect. Trump emphasized the theme of 'America First,' a departure from traditional liberal internationalism. While not rejecting the U.S. role as the 'police of the world,' his presidency showcased a shift away from exporting democracy and multilateral trade agreements. This deviation has the potential to challenge longstanding foreign policy institutions. Trump's approach, labeled 'populist par excellence,' draws from far-right populism, influencing both domestic and foreign policy agendas. During his 2016 campaign, Trump portrayed the U.S. as undervalued and vulnerable to a global elite that compromised national wealth and economic fairness. This analysis explores the persistence of populist rhetoric in Trump's foreign policy during his initial two years in office, examining how he utilized social media, particularly Twitter, to rally public support for trade measures. While shedding light on

key aspects, there remains much to uncover about the impact of populism on foreign policymaking in the era of Donald Trump (Lacatus 2).

In conclusion, Donald Trump's trade protectionism and economic rhetoric during his presidential campaign and presidency have had a significant impact on US foreign relations, trade policy, and global economic dynamics. His opposition to free trade deals, notably the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the potential Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), is likely a significant factor in his success, particularly in critical Midwestern swing states and among Republican voters. This success can be attributed to the resonance of anti-trade sentiments, which were particularly robust in these regions (Blendon, et al. 229). Trump speeches revealed a consistent thread of economic protectionism, emphasizing the renegotiation of trade deals, imposition of tariffs, and the preservation of American jobs. Trump's rhetoric represented a significant shift in the U.S. economic policy, reflecting an isolationist approach that aimed to shield domestic industries and workers from perceived threats posed by globalization and certain trade agreements. However, while Trump's policies have been justified in the name of national security and benefits for American workers, they have also raised concerns about the potential for global trade wars and strained relationships with key allies.

### **3.3 Border Security and Immigration Rhetoric**

The recent history of U.S. border security policy indicates that the significance of political party affiliation and ideological stances on border security reached a peak during the 2016 presidential election. Back in 2006, when the Secure Fence Act, enacted by George W. Bush, there was widespread backing for the border fence proposal among congressional Republicans, whereas Democrats exhibited a split opinion, with some expressing criticism and

others supporting the act's objectives. Notably, several Democrats in Congress, such as then-Senators Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Joe Biden, voted in favor of the act (Gravelle 109).

The nativist aspect of Trump's campaign narrative, characterized by a distinct emphasis on bolstering American protectionism in response to national security concerns like terrorism, migration, and Islam. While not universally against all forms of immigration, Trump explicitly expresses robust opposition to the assimilation of illegal migration. Key elements of his vision for robust national security, aimed at preventing terrorism, job displacement, and crime, include the implementation of stringent measures on immigration flows, enacted through legislation, a migration ban, and the construction of a border wall with Mexico (Lacatus, *Populism and The 2016 American election* 9).

During his 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump's stances on border security and immigration emerged as central pillars of his political platform. Trump's rhetoric on these issues was characterized by a call for stricter immigration controls, a commitment to building a border wall between the United States and Mexico, and a pledge to address what he deemed as vulnerabilities in the existing immigration system. These positions not only fueled his appeal among certain segments of the electorate but also sparked widespread debate and controversy. This theme explores the key components of Trump's immigration rhetoric, shedding light on how they became defining features of his campaign and continued to shape the national discourse on immigration policy during his presidency.

Trump has highlighted U.S. border security and illegal immigration to the United States as focal points of his campaign. During his announcement speech he said that “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you. They’re not sending

you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems to us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people" (Trump, Presidential Announcement Speech). In this quote, qualitative content analysis reveals a notable framing of Mexican immigrants that reflects a negative stereotype. The language used by Donald Trump during his presidential campaign in 2015 suggests a generalization that paints Mexican immigrants as a source of problems for the United States. The emphasis on "they're not sending their best" implies a collective judgment on the quality of individuals arriving from Mexico. The mention of "bringing drugs" and "bringing crime" contributes to a narrative associating Mexican immigrants with criminality and societal harm. The acknowledgment of "some, I assume, are good people" introduces a nuanced aspect, but the overall tone of the statement is divisive, highlighting a dichotomy between 'problematic' immigrants and those deemed 'good.' This quote, therefore, reflects a rhetoric that has been criticized for its potential to perpetuate stereotypes and fuel anti-immigrant sentiments.

Consequently, this statement has established the tone for the rest of his campaign. Rather than moderating his language, he continued to claim that, with rare exceptions, Latinos were "bad" people and that immigration posed a significant physical and cultural threat to America. At nearly every rally, he asserted that "killers and rapists [are] entering this country" and that "immigrant crime" was on the rise. He frequently shared stories about victims—typically young, attractive, white women—who had been raped or murdered by Latino immigrants, framing it as a battle between "us" and "them." (Neumann 36)

In contrast to other Republican candidates who emphasized that America was a "nation of immigrants" and only opposed "illegal" immigration, Trump often equated being an immigrant with ethnicity. This was most evident in his dispute with a federal judge overseeing a lawsuit

against one of his companies. Trump labeled the judge a "hater," "very unfair," and "totally biased," and demanded his removal because he "happens to be, we believe, Mexican." The judge, however, was not Mexican but the descendant of Mexican laborers who had migrated to Indiana in 1946. Born in the United States to American citizens, he exemplified the American Dream. While other candidates might have celebrated his story, Trump and his supporters viewed him merely as a foreigner (36).

In the same speech, Trump promised that if elected president he will build a fortified wall across the southern borders, 'I would build a great wall, and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me. And I'll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great, great wall on our southern border. And I will have Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words' (Trump, Presidential Announcement Speech). In saying so, Trump underscores a commitment to constructing a physical barrier on the southern border of the United States. The repetition of "great" emphasizes the scale and significance of the proposed wall. By asserting that "nobody builds walls better than me," Trump not only positions himself as a skilled person but also implies that the wall will be unparalleled in effectiveness. The phrase "believe me" adds a persuasive tone, seeking to instill confidence in the audience about the feasibility and success of the wall construction. The assurance of building the wall "very inexpensively" addresses potential concerns about the cost, aligning with Trump's emphasis on efficiency and fiscal responsibility.

The notable pledge that Donald trump will make Mexico pay for the wall introduces a diplomatic and financial dimension to the proposal. This assertion was a central and controversial aspect of Trump's campaign promise, sparking discussions about international relations and the feasibility of making another country fund a domestic project. Overall, Trump's

declaration reflects his use of bold, assertive language, combining promises of strength, efficiency, and financial prudence in presenting a solution to what he portrayed as a critical issue of border security.

Trump statement evoked controversy in the U.S. and in Mexico. To elucidate and justify his stance on illegal immigration, he declared that:

The Mexican Government is forcing their most unwanted people into the United States. They are, in many cases, criminals, drug dealers, rapists, etc. This was evident just this week when, as an example, a young woman in San Francisco was viciously killed by a 5 time deported Mexican with a long criminal record, who was forced back into the United States because they didn't want him in Mexico. This is merely one of thousands of similar incidents throughout the United States. In other words, the worst elements in Mexico are being pushed into the United States by the Mexican government. The largest suppliers of heroin, cocaine and other illicit drugs are Mexican cartels that arrange to have Mexican immigrants trying to cross the borders and smuggle in the drugs. The Border Patrol knows this.

Likewise, tremendous infectious disease is pouring across the border. The United States has become a dumping ground for Mexico and, in fact, for many other parts of the world. On the other hand, many fabulous people come in from Mexico and our country is better for it. But these people are here legally, and are severely hurt by those coming in illegally. I am proud to say that I know many hard working Mexicans—many of them are working for and with me...and, just like our country, my organization is better for it.  
(Trump qtd. in Walker)

By reading through this quote, Donald Trump asserts that the Mexican government is deliberately sending undesirable individuals, including criminals, drug dealers, and rapists, into the United States. He supports his claim by referencing a specific incident in San Francisco and implying that similar occurrences are widespread. Trump contends that Mexico is essentially exporting its worst elements to the U.S. and highlights the role of Mexican cartels in drug smuggling across the border. He also suggests a link between illegal immigration and the spread of infectious diseases. While acknowledging the presence of "fabulous people" from Mexico who contribute positively to the country, Trump emphasizes the negative impact of illegal immigration, asserting that it harms both legally present Mexicans and the United States as a whole. This quote reflects Trump's framing of immigration as a threat to national security, public safety, and public health. His rhetoric aimed to reinforce a narrative of prioritizing the needs of the U.S. over those of other nations in the realm of immigration policy.

Following this controversy, Trump issued the Immigration Reform that Will Make America Great Again. The reform centers on three core principles, countering what he perceives as the typical agenda of "immigration reform" focused on amnesty, cheap labor, and open borders, as exemplified by the Schumer-Rubio immigration bill. Trump emphasizes the importance of prioritizing the needs of working-class Americans over the interests of wealthy global donors, criticizing the current immigration system for placing the priorities of other nations above those of the United States. The core principles of Trump's proposed reform include the construction of a wall along the southern border to establish clear national boundaries, the enforcement of laws in line with the constitutional system, and an immigration plan aimed at enhancing jobs, wages, and security for all American citizens (Trump, Immigration Reform).

In order to meet his goals on the issue of immigration, Donald trump pledged in his Presidential Announcement Speech to “immediately terminate President Obama’s illegal executive order on immigration.” Trump refers to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). DACA is an executive order, introduced by President Barack Obama On June 15, 2012, that aimed at removing the threat of deportation for young individuals who arrived in the United States as undocumented immigrants (Foundation). On September 5, 2017, Trump officially ordered an end to DACA, giving Congress six months to pass the bill; he stated that “This is a gradual process, not a sudden phase out. Permits will not begin to expire for another six months, and will remain active for up to 24 months. Thus, in effect, I am not going to just cut DACA off, but rather provide a window of opportunity for Congress to finally act” (Trump, Statement from President Donald J. Trump) He justified his order as his “highest duty to defend the American people and the Constitution of the United States of America” claiming that many officials throughout the U.S. have recommended that the program is illegal and unconstitutional, asserting that it cannot be effectively defended in court.

However, Trump’s endeavors to repeal DACA faced opposition as three federal district court judges in California, New York, and D.C. issued preliminary injunctions. On May 1, 2018, Texas and six other states challenged the 2012 program in the US District Court for the Southern District of Texas, seeking a preliminary injunction to halt the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) from accepting DACA renewal requests during the lawsuit. However, the judge denied this request on August 8, 2018. The Supreme Court, on June 18, 2020, blocked the DACA repeal, stating that the administration failed to provide sufficient justification for ending the program. As a result, the US Department of Homeland Security

currently only accepts requests for the renewal of existing status but not new applications (Giuntella, et al. 4).

Amid the European migration crisis, it became convenient to draw parallels and raise similar concerns about Muslims. Trump used the existence of the Islamic State as a rhetorical tool to portray Muslims as a threat. He argued that America's policy of accepting refugees from war-torn regions like Syria and Iraq was not only costly but also dangerous. Initially, he expressed a willingness to accept a small number of refugees but insisted on subjecting them to what he called "extreme vetting." However, after the Paris attacks in November 2015, his position shifted towards a complete ban on all refugees (Neumann 37).

A month later, this ban transformed into a "Muslim travel ban." On December 7, 2015, Donald Trump released a statement "calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until [the] country's representatives can figure out what the hell is going on" (Trump, Speech: Donald Trump in Mt. Pleasant). This statement reflects a call for a comprehensive and unconditional restriction on the entry of Muslims into the United States until a thorough understanding of the situation is achieved by the country's representatives. The language used implies a sense of urgency and the need for a temporary halt to Muslim immigration, suggesting a focus on national security concerns. The phrase "figure out what the hell is going on" conveys a sentiment of uncertainty and a perceived need for clarity in understanding the circumstances surrounding Muslim immigration. The qualitative analysis suggests a strong stance on immigration policy, aligning with the broader theme of heightened security measures.

Donald Trump explained the reason behind his call for banning Muslim from entering the United States by saying:

According to Pew Research, among others, there is great hatred towards Americans by large segments of the Muslim population. Most recently, a poll from the Center for Security Policy released data showing 25% of those polled agreed that violence against Americans here in the United States is justified as a part of the global jihad” and 51% of those polled, agreed that Muslims in America should have the choice of being governed according to Shariah. Shariah authorizes such atrocities as murder against non-believers who won’t convert beheadings and more unthinkable acts that pose great harm to Americans, especially women. [...] Mr. Trump stated, without looking at the various polling data, it is obvious to anybody the hatred is beyond comprehension. Where this hatred comes from and why we will have to determine. Until we are able to determine and understand this problem and the dangerous threat it poses, our country cannot be the victims of horrendous attacks by people that believe only in Jihad. (Trump, Speech: Donald Trump in Mt. Pleasant)

This statement reflects a concerning generalization about the Muslim population, painting a broad brushstroke of "great hatred" towards Americans. Trump used polling data to support his proposal for a ban. However, the survey, conducted by Kellyanne Conway's polling company and published by the Center for Security Policy (CSP), faced significant criticism for its unreliability and methodological flaws, as exposed by Georgetown University's the Bridge Initiative, co-authored by individuals contributing to this paper. The poll was faulted for employing biased questions and responses, selective interpretations, and an inadequate opt-in methodology (Garrity and Crnkovich 579, 580). The rhetoric employed seems to fuel fear by

emphasizing the perceived threat of violence and the imposition of Shariah law. Such language may contribute to a divisive narrative rather than fostering an understanding of the diverse perspectives within the Muslim community. It indicates the importance of critically examining the language used by political figures, as it can shape public perception and attitudes.

During the general election, Trump's policy on immigration continued to evolve, shifting towards restricting immigration from countries "tied to Islamic terror." However, the underlying theme remained the same - keeping Muslims out of the United States. Even as he appeared to "water down" the original "Muslim travel ban" by referencing countries instead of religion, he still framed the Orlando nightclub shooter, a native Floridian, as an immigrant. Furthermore, Trump falsely claimed that "hundreds of immigrants and children of immigrants" had been involved in terrorist attacks against the U.S. Notably, the original campaign pledge to "prevent Muslim immigration" remained on his website until May 2017, despite the apparent changes in his rhetoric and policy positions (Neumann 37).

To conclude, Trump's "America First" approach, manifested in measures like the push for a border wall, strict immigration controls, and the "Muslim ban," reflects a desire to prioritize domestic concerns over global engagement. His immigration rhetoric concluded with the assertion that the United States should "control our borders," evoking images reminiscent of isolationist themes dated back to the 1930s Fortress America campaign. The latter revolves around the notion that other nations have consistently taken advantage of American largesse and openness. It posits that providing public goods or engaging in multilateral agreements is a disadvantageous strategy for a self-interested superpower (Edwards 186).

By implementing stringent immigration policies, Trump sought to insulate the United States from perceived external threats, both in terms of security and economic competition. This aligns with isolationist tendencies, where the focus is on safeguarding the nation's interests by minimizing external influence. While not a strict isolationist, Trump's policies leaned towards a more protectionist and inward-looking stance, emphasizing national sovereignty and self-interest in the realm of border security and immigration.

### **3.4 Global Alliances and Multilateral Organizations**

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump presented a distinctive and, at times, controversial stance on global alliances and multilateral organizations. His approach marked a departure from traditional U.S. foreign policy, emphasizing an "America First" ideology. One of the notable statements capturing this sentiment was his declaration that "we will no longer surrender this country or its people to the false song of globalism" (Trump, Transcript of Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Speech). He frequently labeled the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as "obsolete," advised American allies to contribute more to their security, and committed to withdrawing from international agreements related to trade, climate change, and arms reduction (Edwards 176).

Trump declared "America First" as his foreign policy ideology from the beginning, openly expressing opposition to globalism and multilateralism, including the long-standing military alliance NATO (Stamman 8). He emphasized, "It will be the major and overriding theme of my administration. My foreign policy will always put the interests of the American people and American security first" (Trump, Transcript of Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Speech). In declaring so, Trump expressed a desire to restore America to its perceived historical

state of isolationism. Nevertheless, the concept of "America First" in Trump's rhetoric signifies prioritizing American interests over those of other nations. It characterizes him as a neoisolationist, as he does not advocate for a complete detachment of the U.S. from the global stage (Stamman 9).

Trump stated during his presidential campaign, "I think NATO is obsolete. NATO was done at a time you had the Soviet Union" (Trump qtd. in Benitez 183). This statement shows that Trump believes NATO was created for a different threat environment that no longer exists, and that he does not see Russia as a significant threat that justifies a military alliance such as NATO (Benitez 183).

Moreover, Trump's skepticism toward global alliances manifested in his critique of institutions like NATO in his April 27, 2016 speech on foreign policy. He raised concerns about the unequal burden-sharing within the alliance, suggesting that some member nations were not contributing their fair share to collective defense, the statement read:

Our allies must contribute toward the financial, political and human costs of our tremendous security burden. But many of them are simply not doing so. They look at the United States as weak and forgiving and feel no obligation to honor their agreements with us. In NATO, for instance, only 4 of 28 other member countries, besides America, are spending the minimum required 2 percent of GDP on defense.

We have spent trillions of dollars over time – on planes, missiles, ships, equipment – building up our military to provide a strong defense for Europe and Asia. The countries we are defending must pay for the cost of this defense – and, if not, the U.S. must be prepared to let these countries defend themselves. The whole world will be safer if our

allies do their part to support our common defense and security. A Trump administration will lead a free world that is properly armed and funded. (Trump)

In this statement, Trump expresses dissatisfaction with the perceived lack of financial and military contributions from U.S. allies. He characterizes these allies as viewing the United States as weak and forgiving, fostering a sentiment that they are not honoring their agreements. The call for increased financial contributions from U.S. allies in defense matters may strain diplomatic relations, especially if it is perceived as unilateral pressure rather than cooperative negotiation. This rhetoric sparked debates about the future of NATO and the implications for transatlantic relations.

It is worth noting that this criticism is recurrent in Trump rhetoric even after being elected president, he stated during a press conference after a NATO summit in 2018, "Now, what has happened is, presidents over many years, from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama, they came in, they said, 'Okay, hey, do the best you can,' and they left. Nobody did anything about it. And it got to a point where the United States was paying for 90 percent of NATO. And that's not fair. So it's changed" (qtd. in Benitez 182). This statement shows that Trump believes NATO allies are not contributing their fair share of defense spending to the Alliance. Instead of emphasizing the value of NATO, as previous presidents have done, Trump has entertained the idea that the United States could potentially withdraw from the alliance in order to secure concessions on issues like allied defense spending and trade terms. This inclination has raised worries that the president presents a distinct risk to American alliances (Schuessler and Shiffrinson 39).

Trump views the U.S. foreign policy as chaos that bears an interventionist ideology because of the failures of his predecessors namely Presidents Obama, Clinton, and Bush. In

President Obama's and, by extension, Hillary Clinton's foreign policy approach, the United States relied on other nations to fulfill their obligations, as evidenced by Trump's criticism of NATO countries not meeting defense expenditure expectations. This repeated dependence on others, in Trump's view, led to a loss of control over the nation's destiny, creating a sense of chaos. Trump believed that prioritizing global interests over those of the United States contributed to its decline as an exceptional nation. Implicitly, a Trump presidency aimed to halt this decline by restoring "stability." The goal was to empower the United States to prioritize its own interests, regain control of its fate, and re-establish itself as a model for others to follow (Edwards 182). Unlike his predecessors, Trump has undertaken two actions. Initially, he openly scrutinized the significance of NATO for U.S. national security. Additionally, he publicly cast doubt on the legitimacy of U.S. defense obligations to NATO allies (Benitez 183).

According to Jason Edwards in his article *Make America Great Again: Donald Trump and Redefining the U.S. Role in the World*, Trump's approach to foreign policy seemed to draw inspiration from John Quincy Adams, who advocated for an exemplarist worldview. Adams, in his 1821 oration, famously asserted that the United States "goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy." Trump echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that the U.S. does "not go abroad in search of enemies." This was a departure from the globalism of Obama and Clinton, which engaged in nation-building and interventionist policies in various countries. Trump criticized this approach, contending that it spread U.S. forces too thin and entangled the country "beyond the power of extrication." He pledged to end the nation-building project, focusing instead on creating global "stability" without promoting "universal values." This shift, while challenging 75 years of U.S. global leadership, reflected Trump's commitment to redefining how the United States projected its exceptionalism on the world stage (183).

However, after becoming president, Trump's stance on NATO evolved. He publicly reversed his earlier statement that NATO was obsolete and expressed a more positive personal view of the U.S.-NATO relationship: “America stands with those who stand in defense of freedom. We have your back every hour, every day, now and always” (Trump “Remarks by President Trump to Coalition Representatives and Senior U.S. Commanders”). Despite this, his main position that allies should pay more for defense has remained unchanged, and he has become more emphatic about this stance. Additionally, Trump has linked his criticism of NATO to trade disputes with European allies, indicating a growing emphasis on the economic aspects of the U.S.'s relationship with NATO. Overall, while Trump's initial criticisms of NATO have persisted, his presidency has seen a shift in his public statements about the Alliance, with a more nuanced approach to its value and a continued emphasis on financial contributions from allies (Benitez 185-186).

President Trump's criticisms of NATO have significant implications for the future of U.S. national security and its relationship with the Alliance. Firstly, Trump's public questioning of the value of NATO to U.S. national security weakens the cohesion of the transatlantic alliance and raises concerns in allied capitals about the U.S.'s commitment to collective defense (183). This could potentially undermine deterrence in Europe and increase the risk of foreign aggression, as U.S. allies may question the reliability of U.S. security guarantees. Secondly, Trump's suggestion that the United States may decline to fulfill its defense commitments to allies that have not met their financial commitments introduces uncertainty into the U.S.'s security partnerships, potentially eroding trust and cooperation within the Alliance (185). These criticisms have caused fears among U.S. allies that under the Trump administration, the U.S. may not come to their defense in the event of a foreign attack (183). Overall, Trump's criticisms of NATO have the

potential to strain the U.S.'s relationship with its allies and impact the effectiveness of the Alliance in addressing global security challenges.

Trump's stances and criticisms of global alliances and multilateral organizations can be seen as part of a broader historical trend of isolationism in U.S. foreign policy. This approach, that emphasizes a limited role for the United States in international affairs and a focus on domestic issues, has been present in U.S. foreign policy at various times throughout its history, including during the interwar period between World War I and World War II (see Chapter 2). During this time, the United States pursued a policy of neutrality and avoided involvement in European conflicts, which ultimately contributed to the outbreak of World War II. Trump's criticisms of NATO can be seen as a contemporary manifestation of isolationist tendencies in U.S. foreign policy. His emphasis on the financial burden of NATO and his questioning of the value of the Alliance to U.S. national security reflect a desire to limit U.S. involvement in international affairs and focus on domestic issues. This approach is consistent with the broader trend of isolationism in U.S. history, which has often been driven by a desire to avoid entanglements in foreign conflicts and prioritize domestic concerns. However, it is important to note that Trump's criticisms of NATO are not necessarily indicative of a broader shift towards isolationism in U.S. foreign policy. While his approach to NATO may reflect isolationist tendencies, his administration has also pursued an assertive foreign policy in other areas, such as trade and relations with China (see chapter 4). Therefore, it is important to view Trump's criticisms of NATO in the context of broader trends in U.S. foreign policy, rather than as a definitive shift towards isolationism.

### **3.5 Use of Military Force and National Security**

In examining Donald Trump's approach to military and national security during his 2016 presidential campaign and throughout his presidency, distinct patterns emerged in his rhetoric and policies. This analysis delves into key aspects, including Trump's views on military strength, his critiques of past interventions, his focus on counterterrorism, and his stance on alliances and international involvement. Through an exploration of prominent quotes from Trump's speeches and statements, we aim to provide insights into the evolution of his positions, shedding light on the unconventional perspectives that shaped his presidency and left a lasting impact on U.S. foreign policy.

Throughout his 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump consistently emphasized the need for a robust and powerful military as a cornerstone of his national security strategy. His rhetoric on military strength reinforced the belief that a formidable armed forces was crucial for protecting American interests and projecting strength on the global stage. Trump frequently highlighted his commitment to building up the military, often using strong language to convey his vision. In one instance, he stated, "everything begins with a strong military, everything. We will have the strongest military in our history, and our people will be equipped with the best weaponry and protection available" (Trump, *Great again* 47). "We're building a military so strong that nobody's going to mess with us, nobody" (Trump, *Remarks by President Trump Presenting the Commander-in-Chief's Trophy*). This rhetoric resonated with his supporters, positioning military strength as a means to ensure both national security and a position of dominance in international affairs. The emphasis on a powerful military was a key theme in Trump's messaging, reflecting his approach to projecting strength and protecting American interests.

Donald Trump's critique of past military interventions formed a significant component of his 2016 presidential campaign, reflecting a departure from traditional interventionist policies. He vehemently criticized the Iraq War, a conflict that loomed large in his discourse. "Our current strategy of nation-building and regime change is a proven failure. We have created the vacuums that allow terrorists to grow and thrive. I was an opponent of the Iraq war from the beginning – a major difference between me and my opponent" (Trump, Full Text: Donald Trump's Speech on Fighting Terrorism). Trump argued that the U.S. involvement in Iraq was a grave mistake, stating, "It's one of the worst decisions in the history of the country" (qtd. in Wechsler 26).

Furthermore, Trump's comments about the destabilization of the Middle East and the enormous cost of military interventions reflect his departure from traditional interventionist policies of his predecessors (Wechsler 26). Additionally, President Trump's statements about getting out of "endless wars" and his skepticism of longstanding US policy norms demonstrate his new approach in foreign policy (32). He stated that "my strategy would be the exact opposite of our strategy in going to war with Iraq. Iraq was no threat to us. The American people had no idea why the Bush administration decided to attack" (Trump, crippled America). This sentiment was in line with his broader promise to avoid entanglements in foreign conflicts that, in his view, did not directly serve American interests. Trump expressed a desire to prioritize the nation's resources and efforts on domestic concerns rather than engaging in what he saw as unnecessary military interventions abroad. His criticism of past policies reflected a commitment to a more restrained approach to the use of military force, a perspective that aligns with a more isolationist approach to foreign policy.

During his 2016 presidential campaign and throughout his presidency, Donald Trump articulated a robust focus on counterterrorism, particularly in addressing the threat posed by

groups like ISIS. It is worth noting in this regard that a poll from 2016 demonstrates that 73 percent of Americans saw the Islamic State as a "very serious" threat to the United States, while another 17 percent viewed it as "moderately serious". Additionally, almost 80 percent of respondents believed that the Islamic State had assets in the United States and the capacity to "launch a major terrorist attack against the U.S. at any time" (Byman 66). These statistics highlight the significant level of concern and perceived threat posed by the Islamic State to the United States as indicated by the public opinion reflected in the polls.

Trump increasingly framed the confrontation with the Islamic State as a clash of civilizations, portraying it not merely as a fight against a "terrorist group", but a conflict between the "Christian" West and an "alien" Muslim culture seeking to "conquer" it. In an interview with TIME magazine in December 2015, he stated: "Paris is not Paris anymore. Not because of [the attacks]. Paris wasn't Paris before this event. They [the Muslim immigrants?] have taken over Paris and destroyed it. Wait till you see what happen to Germany. Okay. Wait till you see what happens to Germany" (Neumann 38). This rhetoric suggested a view of the situation as an existential threat posed by Muslim immigrants and their culture, rather than just a security threat from a specific terrorist organization.

To illustrate, in a major policy speech on "terrorism and immigration" in Youngstown, Ohio in August 2016, Trump framed the conflict with ISIS in stark religious terms. He spoke of "ISIS killers invading a Christian church", "Christians driven from their homes", and the Islamic State "rounding up...the 'nation of the cross' in a campaign of genocide." This rhetoric created the impression that the conflict in Syria and Iraq was primarily a clash between Christians and Muslims, in direct contrast to President Obama's efforts to separate terrorists from ordinary Muslims and avoid conflating the two. Rather than distinguishing between extremists and the

broader Muslim population, Trump actively sought to present them as one and the same (Neumann 38).

Thus, Donald Trump regularly warned about "a major threat from radical Islamic terrorism" and emphasized the need to get "very smart, and very tough, FAST, before it is too late!" He also scored many points by playing up the threat of Muslim immigrants and Syrian refugees, with the terrorism danger looming in the background. Trump proposed to address the threat of terrorism by implementing policies such as a temporary ban on Muslims entering the United States, increasing surveillance of mosques, and using enhanced interrogation techniques on suspected terrorists (Byman 66-68).

Furthermore, he consistently emphasized a more aggressive and decisive approach. He pledged to "bomb the hell out of ISIS" and proposed strategies such as increasing airstrikes and loosening restrictions on military operations. In his book *Crippled America: How to Make America Great Again*, he stated:

I have a unique perspective on what action we should take. While ISIS is our most violent enemy, they ended up with oil in Iraq and Syria that we should have taken. That oil, along with ransom and extortion, is funding their army. I've advocated bombing the hell out of those oil fields to cut off the source of their money. This would barely affect the world oil supply, but it would dramatically reduce their ability to fund terrorism. We have to take that oil because it is the source of their wealth. We would hit them so hard and so fast in so many different ways they wouldn't know what happened. And then we'd hit them again and again until ISIS ceased to exist as a threat to anybody. (Trump)

Through this aggressive rhetoric, the strategy proposed by Trump involves involves a forceful and decisive response to eliminate the perceived threat posed by The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Trump's stance reflected a departure from the more cautious and multilateral approaches of his predecessors. His prioritization of a forceful response resonated with a segment of the American population seeking a strong and uncompromising approach to counterterrorism. Trump's emphasis on proactive military approach reflects an interventionist perspective.

Similarly, in his address on August 15, 2016, Donald Trump confronts the urgent global challenge of "Radical Islamic Terrorism", highlighting the frequency of ISIS attacks both globally and within the United States. He emphasizes specific incidents such as the Ft. Hood shooting and the Boston Marathon bombing to emphasize the gravity of the threat. Trump places blame on the Obama-Clinton administration, asserting that their policy decisions directly contributed to the rise of ISIS, setting the stage for his proposed strategies. He declares, "The rise of ISIS is the direct result of policy decisions made by President Obama and Secretary Clinton." Then he added that "the current strategy of nation-building and regime change is a proven failure. We have created the vacuums that allow terrorists to grow and thrive" (Trump, Donald Trump's Speech on Fighting Terrorism). Based on this statement, Trump argued that the void created by the U.S. interventions in Iraq, Libya, and Syria, followed by their withdrawal, served as proof that the nation should refrain from involvement in nation-building and democracy promotion. Trump contended that such endeavors had a detrimental effect, weakening rather than fortifying the United States. He believed that discontinuing efforts in promoting democracy abroad was a strategic shift to concentrate on a foreign policy aligned solely with U.S. interests

and to prioritize domestic nation-building—a central tenet of Trump's "America First" movement (Edwards 188).

During the election campaign, Trump frequently criticized President Obama for not doing enough against the Islamic State, at one point even falsely claiming that Obama was not bombing the group at all. Trump also talked about having a "secret plan" to defeat ISIS quickly, telling supporters "We're gonna beat ISIS very quickly, folks. It's gonna be fast. [And] I have a great plan. They ask, 'What is it?' Well, I'd rather not say." However, the clearest evidence that no such plan existed came during the first month of Trump's presidency, when he ordered his military advisors to develop an actual strategy to combat ISIS, indicating he had not actually formulated a detailed plan prior to taking office, despite his campaign rhetoric (Neumann 99).

A key aspect of Trump's approach involves a departure from nation-building endeavors. He pledges to end such efforts, signaling a shift in focus towards directly combating and defeating "Radical Islamic Terrorism". He advocates for stringent screening procedures and a temporary suspension of immigration from high-risk regions, stating, "The size of current immigration flows are simply too large to perform adequate screening." Trump proposes the establishment of a Commission on Radical Islam, explaining, "The goal of the commission will be to identify and explain to the American public the core convictions and beliefs of Radical Islam." Additionally, he accentuated the importance of promoting American values and assimilation, asserting, "Assimilation is not an act of hostility, but an expression of compassion" (Trump, Donald Trump's Speech on Fighting Terrorism). Overall, Trump's speech outlines a comprehensive plan that involves policy adjustments, immigration reforms, and a renewed emphasis on American values to address the threat of Radical Islamic Terrorism.

Regarding the potential use of nuclear weapons, Donald Trump's statements generated significant attention and concern. His approach to nuclear weapons was marked by unpredictability and, at times, ambiguity. During his 2016 campaign, Trump made remarks that suggested a willingness to consider using nuclear weapons in an April interview with NBC's Today Show, stating, "I will be the last to use nuclear weapons, but I will not be a happy trigger" (Time Staff). This statement left room for interpretation and raised questions about the conditions under which he might contemplate such a drastic measure.

Arguably, Trump provides conflicting statements, sometimes within the same sentence, regarding his stance on the use of nuclear weapons. In a presidential debate with Hillary Clinton, he initially stated, "I would certainly not do first strike," but swiftly added, "At the same time, we have to be prepared; we can't take anything off the table." Similarly, during an interview with MSNBC's Chris Matthews on March 30, 2016, Trump, when asked about using nuclear weapons in Europe or the Middle East, responded, "I am not going to use nuclear, but I'm not taking any cards off the table." When confronted about the concern raised by other countries regarding a U.S. presidential candidate openly discussing nuclear weapon use, Trump questioned, "Then why are we making them?" (Durstun 13)

Additionally, Trump has significantly influenced the nuclear taboo by fundamentally altering the conversation about nuclear weapons. His use of aggressive nuclear language in exchanges with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has the potential to dangerously desensitize the notion of a nuclear first strike. In August 2017, Trump pledged to unleash "fire and fury like the world has never seen" on North Korea in response to perceived threats to the United States. Furthermore, in September 2017, his startling declaration at the UN General Assembly included a warning that he would "completely destroy North Korea" if the U.S. had to protect itself or its

allies (Tannenwald 96). These remarks intensified global anxieties about the potential use of nuclear weapons. Trump's statements on nuclear weapons emphasized the need for clarity and careful consideration in the realm of national security, as his rhetoric often departed from traditional diplomatic norms.

It is worth mentioning in this section regarding alliances and international involvement that Donald Trump's stance on international alliances, notably NATO, marked a departure from traditional U.S. foreign policy. Throughout his presidency, he consistently emphasized the need for allies to shoulder more of the financial and military burden within these alliances. As explained in the previous section, Trump argued that many NATO members were not contributing their fair share to the alliance's defense spending, stating, "NATO is obsolete because it doesn't cover terrorism." This perspective led to concerns about the durability of longstanding partnerships and raised questions about the future of collective security arrangements. Trump's "America First" approach prioritized national interests over international commitments, reflecting a belief that the United States had been bearing an undue share of the burden in alliances. These statements sparked debates about the nature of U.S. global leadership and the potential consequences of a more transactional approach to international cooperation.

In summary, Donald Trump's approach to military and national security during his 2016 presidential campaign and presidency was characterized by a nuanced interplay between interventionist and isolationist tendencies. While he championed military strength, criticized past interventions and prioritized counterterrorism efforts, his skepticism toward certain international alliances and commitment to burden-sharing reflected isolationist inclinations. The juxtaposition of these elements created a unique foreign policy framework that defied easy categorization. Trump's stance embodied a departure from traditional interventionist norms, yet his emphasis on

protecting national interests and renegotiating international commitments showcased a pragmatic form of interventionism. The examination of Trump's statements and actions in these key areas highlights the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of his military and national security policies.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter explored the nuanced aspects of Trump's rhetoric on foreign policy during his 2016 campaign, examining key components such as "America First" and nationalism, trade protectionism, economic rhetoric, border security, immigration rhetoric, global alliances, multilateral organizations, use of military force, and national security. Trump's "America First" stance and emphasis on nationalism stresses a prioritisation of domestic interests, challenging traditional interventionist approaches. The rhetoric exhibited a clear inclination towards trade protectionism and economic policies geared towards safeguarding American interests.

The articulation of "America First" and the invocation of nationalism by Donald Trump throughout his presidential campaign and tenure echoed historical sentiments deeply rooted in American history, particularly in the isolationist currents exemplified by the America First Committee in the prelude to World War II. Trump's rhetoric reflects a cyclical nature of certain ideologies in U.S. foreign policy, drawing upon historical threads to shape his vision for the nation. His commitment to an "America First" strategy, again, demonstrated a prioritized dedication to American interests on the global stage.

Examining Trump's speeches and policy decisions reveals a consistent thread of economic protectionism and a departure from traditional free-trade principles. Trump's rejection

of international trade agreements, renegotiation of deals like NAFTA, opposition to the TPP, and imposition of tariffs exemplify a nationalist economic agenda encapsulated in the "America First" theme. His emphasis on revitalizing domestic industries, creating jobs, and reshaping trade relationships reflects a departure from the globalist approach of his predecessors.

Through a qualitative content analysis of his speeches, Trump's economic rhetoric emerges as a powerful tool that resonated with a segment of the American population. His promises to prioritize American workers, renegotiate trade deals, and safeguard national interests contributed to his electoral triumph. However, these policies also generated debates about the potential consequences of protectionism, including global trade tensions and strained alliances.

Additionally, Trump's emphasis on border security and immigration portrayed a commitment to internal priorities over global concerns. While highlighting skepticism towards certain global alliances, Trump's rhetoric on the use of military force and national security demonstrated a pragmatic approach rather than strict isolationism. Donald Trump's approach to counterterrorism was characterized by a strong focus on combating the perceived threat posed by groups like ISIS. This emphasis aligned with a significant level of public concern regarding the Islamic State's activities. Trump's proposed strategies were marked by a departure from the cautious and multilateral approaches of his predecessors, opting for a more forceful and decisive response. His rhetoric and policy proposals included measures such as a temporary ban on Muslim immigration and an aggressive stance against ISIS, demonstrating an interventionist perspective.

Furthermore, Trump's approach to nuclear weapons introduced unpredictability and ambiguity, raising concerns about potential shifts in the established nuclear taboo. Additionally, his stance on international alliances, particularly NATO, reflected a departure from traditional

U.S. foreign policy, prioritizing national interests over longstanding partnerships. The enduring legacy of Trump's counterterrorism and foreign policy approach lies in the debates it sparked about the nature of U.S. global leadership and the potential consequences of a more transactional approach to international cooperation. In essence, the recurring theme of "America First" along the Trump's campaign rhetoric presented a blend of isolationist tendencies, particularly in economic and immigration spheres, and pragmatic interventionism in matters of national security that significantly influenced both domestic and foreign policy decisions during his tenure. This synthesis of approaches underscores the complexity and adaptability of Trump's foreign policy rhetoric, defying a simple classification as strictly isolationist or interventionist.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **The Implementation of Trump's Foreign Policy: Case Studies**

## **Introduction**

Relying exclusively on Donald Trump's rhetoric is not sufficient for discerning his stance and approach to foreign policy. It was imperative to thoroughly assess his positions and actions as president concerning different countries, regardless of their friendly, adversarial, or hostile nature. Throughout his campaign and tenure, Trump's foreign policy was characterized by a distinctive blend of nationalist tendencies, economic pragmatism, and a transactional approach to diplomacy. "America First," a guiding slogan, emphasized prioritizing U.S. interests and recalibrating global engagements to benefit the nation. Therefore, in understanding the practical application of Trump's foreign policy, this chapter delves into case studies that illuminate the dynamics of U.S. relations with specific countries. To contextualize these case studies, each of which begins with a brief overview of the historical context that underpinned Trump's approach to international affairs.

By introducing a case study approach, this chapter employs in-depth analyses of U.S. interactions with key countries to unravel the complexities of Trump's foreign policy in action. By scrutinizing diplomatic maneuvers, trade strategies, and security considerations, the case studies offer detailed insights into the challenges and opportunities encountered. Each case study becomes a narrative lens through which we examine the broader implications of Trump's policies on global relations, highlighting the ways in which his administration reshaped the geopolitical landscape. The examination of U.S. relations with China, North Korea, Iran, European allies, and Russia serves as a comprehensive exploration of the implementation and consequences of Trump's foreign policy decisions.

### **4.1 U.S.-China Relations: A Trade War and Strategic Rivalry**

### 4.1.1 Historical Context to U.S.-China Relations

In the early stages of their engagement, the United States and China embarked on a nuanced relationship characterized by multifaceted interactions that spanned diplomatic, economic, and cultural realms. During the 18th and 19th centuries, American traders and missionaries established contact with China, attracted by its rich cultural heritage and flourishing economic opportunities. The opening of Chinese ports, facilitated by the Treaty of Wangxia in 1844, the first treaty signed between the two countries, it marked an early diplomatic milestone, providing American merchants access to Chinese markets (“The Opening to China”). However, cultural differences and the perception of China as a distant and mysterious land posed challenges. The 19th-century diplomatic interactions culminated with the Burlingame Treaty of 1868, which sought to strengthen diplomatic ties and foster mutual understanding. The treaty introduced fundamental principles with the goal of alleviating immigration restrictions, signifying China's attempt to restrict American involvement in internal Chinese matters (“The Burlingame-Seward Treaty, 1868”). These early engagements set the stage for the complexities and opportunities that would characterize the evolving U.S.-China relationship in the centuries to come.

The U.S. Open Door Policy, conceived during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, reflected America's strategic interest in maintaining access to Chinese markets amid increasing imperialistic endeavors by European powers and Japan (Esthus 435). The policy, articulated by Secretary of State John Hay in 1899 and subsequently communicated through a series of diplomatic notes, aimed to safeguard China's territorial integrity and preserve equal trading opportunities for all nations in the face of growing foreign influence. At the heart of this diplomatic initiative was the desire to prevent the colonization of China and ensure that the

United States could continue to participate in the economic opportunities presented by the Chinese market (452).

The Open Door Policy responded to the challenges posed by the spheres of influence established by other nations in China, where exclusive economic privileges were being carved out. The United States, without its own territorial claims in China, advocated for an open and inclusive approach that would benefit all nations engaged in trade with China (437). This policy not only articulated America's commitment to free trade but also demonstrated a pragmatic understanding of the economic benefits associated with a stable and accessible Chinese market (435). The Open Door Policy laid the groundwork for future U.S. diplomatic efforts in the region, shaping the trajectory of U.S.-China relations during a pivotal period of global power realignment.

The aftermath of World War II had profound implications for China, as the conflict accelerated the pre-existing tensions between the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) and the Communists led by Mao Zedong. The Chinese Civil War, which had been temporarily halted during the war against Japanese aggression, reignited in full force after Japan's defeat in 1945. The power vacuum left by the weakening Nationalist forces, coupled with the strength and resilience of the Communists, ultimately led to the victory of the latter in 1949 ("U.S.-China Relations"). This pivotal moment marked the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), with Mao Zedong proclaiming the founding of the new state. The Communist takeover resulted in the United States severing diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) for an extended period ("Chinese Revolution of 1949").

The emergence of the Cold War further shaped the trajectory of China's relations with the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States, initially supportive of the Nationalist government, found itself estranged from the new Communist-led government in Beijing. The Chinese Civil War outcome solidified the division between Communist China and Nationalist Taiwan, adding a complex layer to the broader geopolitical tensions of the Cold War ("Chinese Revolution of 1949"). The establishment of the People's Republic of China not only altered the regional power balance in Asia but also set the stage for decades of ideological and strategic competition between the United States and the Communist bloc, fundamentally influencing U.S.-China relations during the Cold War era.

After the Cold War, the United States became the sole global superpower, experiencing faster growth than Europe and Japan in the subsequent decade. American military bases and naval forces are strategically positioned worldwide. Meanwhile, Russia and China have transitioned into regional powers, no longer presenting ideological challenges to the West (Ikenberry 133). However, the U.S. reaction to the events of September 11 engaging in conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq presented a significant strategic advantage to China. During this period, the established power, the U.S., was preoccupied for over a decade, allowing the rising power, China, to assert its influence. Without the terrorist attack on U.S. soil and the subsequent military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is likely that the U.S. would have recognized China's ascent and its consequences sooner (Khong 227).

The Taiwan issue has been a longstanding and sensitive dimension in U.S.-China relations, rooted in the aftermath of the Chinese Civil War. Following the Communist victory and the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the defeated Nationalists retreated to the island of Taiwan. The United States, reluctant to recognize the legitimacy of the

new Communist government, continued to support the Nationalists and extended its commitment to the defense of Taiwan. The U.S. stance on Taiwan has since evolved, but the commitment to maintaining stability in the Taiwan Strait has remained a key aspect of U.S. foreign policy. This strategic commitment has been a source of tension between the United States and China, with Beijing considering Taiwan a part of its territory and opposing any foreign interference in what it sees as an internal matter (Autiello 1-2; Suettinger 200). The Taiwan issue, therefore, continues to shape the geopolitical landscape of East Asia and plays a significant role in the broader context of U.S.-China relations.

The normalization of diplomatic relations between the United States and China marked a pivotal turning point in their historical interactions. The breakthrough began with the groundbreaking visit of President Richard Nixon to China in 1972, a diplomatic maneuver that had seemed unimaginable during the Cold War. The Nixon visit initiated a process of rapprochement, driven by a shared recognition of mutual geopolitical interests and the desire to counterbalance the influence of the Soviet Union (Suettinger 4). The normalization of relations was ultimately realized in 1979 with the completion of trade agreement and granting China the most favored nation (MFN) status, under the administration of President Jimmy Carter (108). This involved the establishment of formal diplomatic ties, the severance of official relations with Taiwan, and the recognition of the People's Republic of China as the legitimate government of China (Chang 209). The normalization not only reshaped the geopolitical landscape of East Asia but also laid the foundation for a complex and multifaceted relationship between the United States and China, combining elements of cooperation, competition, and strategic rivalry.

Deng Xiaoping, the paramount leader of the PRC from December 1978 to November 1989, progressively reassumed authority, overseeing the day-to-day operations of the party,

government, and military. His return significantly contributed to internal stability and the enhancement of Sino-U.S. relations (Jie 64). With his initiation of economic reforms China's economic landscape underwent a transformative shift. Deng's pragmatic approach aimed at modernizing China's economy and moving away from the centrally planned model that had characterized the nation's economic system. The reforms, launched in the late 1970s, introduced elements of market-oriented policies, decentralization, and encouragement of foreign investment. Special Economic Zones (SEZs) were established to experiment with market-oriented practices and attract foreign capital (Naughton 506-510). These reforms marked a departure from the strict state control of economic activities, ushering in an era of economic liberalization and rapid growth.

The economic reforms implemented by Deng Xiaoping not only reshaped China's domestic economic structure but also positioned the country as a major player in the global economy. The opening of China to the global market fostered increased trade and investment, contributing to the nation's rapid economic growth. Deng's policies, often encapsulated by the phrase "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," sought to blend elements of socialism with market-oriented practices (Suettinger 373; Jie 82-88). The success of these reforms propelled China into becoming the world's second-largest economy, a testament to the transformative power of Deng's economic vision and the country's integration into the global economic order.

Consequently, the economic relationship between the United States and China has evolved significantly over the past few decades, with a notable expansion in trade relations. Beginning in the late 20th century, economic reforms in China, coupled with its integration into the global market, set the stage for increased trade with the United States. The two nations engaged in a complex web of economic exchanges, with China emerging as a major trading

partner for the U.S. The bilateral trade relationship witnessed substantial growth, characterized by the exchange of goods and services between the world's two largest economies.

The increasing interdependence between the U.S. and China in terms of trade has been a defining feature of their economic relations. China's role in the global supply chain became particularly significant, with the country establishing itself as a key manufacturing hub. Many American businesses turned to Chinese manufacturers for cost-effective production, leading to a deepening of economic ties. However, this interdependence also brought about challenges, such as concerns about intellectual property rights, trade imbalances, and the impact on domestic industries (Chow 7, 8). The intricate nature of the economic relationship between the U.S. and China reflects the complex dynamics of contemporary global trade, where both nations navigate the opportunities and challenges posed by their interwoven economic interests.

China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 marked a significant turning point in its economic relations with the United States and the global community (Erten and Leight 7). This milestone was the culmination of a lengthy negotiation process, during which China committed to various economic reforms and trade liberalization measures. Joining the WTO opened up new avenues for China's integration into the global economy, facilitating increased market access for Chinese goods and services. The accession signaled China's commitment to playing by international trade rules and norms, fostering an environment for enhanced economic cooperation with the United States and other member countries (Suettinger 395-399).

The implications of China's WTO accession for U.S.-China economic relations were multifaceted. On the positive side, it provided American businesses with expanded opportunities

to engage with the Chinese market. Increased access to China's vast consumer base became a focal point for U.S. exporters. However, challenges emerged, including concerns about intellectual property rights, fair competition, and trade imbalances. The post-WTO era saw a surge in U.S.-China economic interactions, with both countries navigating the complexities of a rapidly evolving global economic landscape (Erten and Leight 7-9). The accession indicates the intricate balance between collaboration and competition in the economic ties between the world's two largest economies.

The evolving dynamics of strategic competition between the United States and China have become increasingly pronounced, with a particular focus on the South China Sea. The region has emerged as a geopolitical hotspot, marked by territorial disputes and militarization of islands. The U.S. has expressed concerns about China's assertive actions in the South China Sea, emphasizing the importance of freedom of navigation and adherence to international law. Military posturing, including naval patrols and joint exercises, has escalated tensions between the two nations (Suettinger 222; 413). The South China Sea has become a symbolic arena for the broader strategic competition, reflecting the complex interplay of regional interests and global power dynamics.

Contemporary U.S.-China relations are also characterized by technology and cybersecurity concerns, adding another layer of complexity to the bilateral relationship. Intellectual property theft has been a persistent issue, with allegations that Chinese entities engage in cyber espionage to gain access to valuable technologies and trade secrets. This has contributed to a sense of mistrust, prompting the United States to take measures to safeguard its technological innovations. The advent of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and 5G networks, has further intensified the competition, as both nations strive to assert

dominance in these crucial sectors. Addressing cybersecurity concerns and ensuring fair practices in technology-related industries have become key aspects of managing the intricate web of economic and strategic interactions between the U.S. and China.

#### **4.1.2 U.S-China Relations under the Trump Administration**

The US-China trade war under the Trump administration marked a significant shift in global economic relations, characterized by escalating tariffs, negotiations, and the eventual signing of a phase one trade agreement. The administration enacted substantial changes to US trade policy toward China, prompting reciprocal responses from the Chinese government. These changes involved a variety of policy instruments on both sides, many of which pose measurement challenges and are not reflected in conventional trade policy data series. Beginning in 2017, the Trump administration implemented a series of trade actions targeting China, utilizing executive authority to reshape US trade policy towards the country. This period saw a mix of tariff escalations, negotiations, and challenges in meeting the commitments outlined in the phase one agreement signed in January 2020 (Bown 2, 3). The trade war not only impacted bilateral trade but also influenced foreign policy and other aspects of the US-China economic relationship.

Throughout his presidential campaign, Donald Trump consistently criticized China for perceived unfair trade practices and denounced its trade surplus with the USA. Embracing an "America First" foreign policy characterized by U.S. nationalism, protectionism, and unilateralism, Trump aimed to appeal to both large corporations, via tax cuts, and the U.S. manufacturing and agricultural sectors, by preserving jobs. He pledged to adopt a tough stance

against China, citing reported currency devaluation, export subsidies, and the alleged theft of U.S. intellectual property as reasons for his approach (Boylan et al. 24).

As president, Trump implemented economic policies that initiated a trade conflict by imposing tariffs and non-tariff restrictions on Chinese imports. In August 2017, the United States launched a Section 301 inquiry into China's trade practices, and on March 22, 2018, the Office of the US Trade Representative alleged China's engagement in unfair trade practices, encompassing the compelled transfer of technology to Chinese companies and the theft of intellectual property (Fajgelbaum and Khandelwal ).

In early 2018, The United States took several measures in the trade sector, such as the implementation of tariffs on China. In response, China promptly enacted countermeasures (Yekken and Boutouchent 1426). The Trump administration enforced tariffs on imported solar panels and washing machines, followed by tariffs on steel and aluminum. While these tariffs affected imports from various countries, Chinese goods appeared to be the primary focus. China responded with tariffs on a range of U.S. products, leading to measure for measure escalation from July to December 2018. Despite tentative progress in early 2019 negotiations, the Trump administration increased tariffs from 10 to 25% on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods in the summer of 2019. In retaliation, China imposed its own tariffs and, in August 2019, suspended new purchases of U.S. agricultural products, prompting the U.S. Treasury Department to label China a "currency manipulator". Trade relations showed signs of improvement in the fall of 2019, culminating in a trade deal in January 2020. However, China has fallen short of its purchasing commitments, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic (Boylan et al. 24; Fajgelbaum and Khandelwal). The Trump administration's imposition of tariffs on Chinese goods was a direct intervention in trade relations. By using tariffs as a tool to address what it

perceived as unfair trade practices, the administration aimed to protect American industries and jobs. This interventionist approach was a departure from the traditional free trade stance.

The reduction in China's import of various agricultural products from the United States has negatively impacted American farmers. These products encompass soybeans, grain sorghum, pork, cotton, and cattle hides. Despite China's deliberate targeting of the U.S. agricultural sector with the expectation that farmers would exert pressure on the Trump administration (Li et al), farmers remained supportive of the president. According to surveys conducted among corn and soybean farmers in 2018 three factors explain this support: firstly, the Trump administration provided billions in assistance to mitigate profit losses; secondly, farmers believe that short-term profit declines will result in long-term gains; and thirdly, farmers perceive China's historical inconsistency in purchasing agricultural goods. Consequently, despite Chinese initiatives and certain economic setbacks, farmers could maintain their support for the president. (Boylan et al. 25)

The Trump administration has taken measures to counter Chinese intellectual property theft and espionage. On January 28, 2019, the US Department of Justice accused the Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei and ZTE of a range of charges, including wiretapping (Arežina 301, 302) financial fraud, money laundering, conspiracy to defraud the United States, obstruction of justice, and violations of sanctions. Subsequently, on May 15, 2019, due to concerns outlined in the indictment, the US Department of Commerce imposed restrictions on Huawei's access to items manufactured in the United States. This move prohibited American companies from selling goods or services to Huawei without obtaining a license. The situation escalated on August 19, 2019, when the US Department of Commerce expanded its actions by adding numerous Huawei affiliates to the Entity List. This list included subsidiaries located in

the UK, Germany, France, and Singapore, further complicating Huawei's ability to acquire items from American suppliers (Bown and Kolb 20, 21). Notable events such as the arrests of Ms. Meng Wanzhou, Chief Financial Officer of Huawei, in Canada, and Wang Weijing, the company's Regional Director in Poland, along with a Polish citizen on charges of spying for China, a prohibition on the use of Huawei technology in the United States, and Washington's warnings about discontinuing cooperation with nations engaged with Chinese companies flagged as security risks have prompted a global reassessment of 5G telecommunications network contracts involving Huawei (Arežina 301, 302). These restrictions on Chinese tech giant Huawei can be seen as an intervention in the global technology landscape. By limiting Huawei's access to U.S. technology and advocating against its involvement in 5G infrastructures, the U.S. aimed to protect its technological leadership and national security interests.

In June 2020, President Trump suggested visa restrictions on Chinese students and scholars associated with China's "military-civil fusion strategy," alleging that the Chinese government exploited them to illicitly obtain intellectual property from the USA . By late July 2020, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had arrested Chinese students who had not disclosed their connections to the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the armed wing of the Chinese Communist Party and the principal military force of the People's Republic of China, when applying for admissions and student employment positions at various U.S. universities (Boylan et al. 25). According to some scholars "the trade war is not, in fact, about trade but about technological dominance, and that both sides might fall into a 'Thucydides's Trap,' the pattern of large-scale conflict when a rising power challenges a dominant one" (Chen et al. 1). This assertion emphasizes the trade war's deeper motive which centered on technological supremacy,

the thing that signals the risk of escalated conflict between the rising and dominant powers, mirroring historical patterns of tension and competition.

During the COVID-19, a contentious dispute arose between China and the United States after Trump referred to the novel virus as the "Chinese virus". This led to increased accusations and criticisms regarding the outbreak cause and the handling of the situation. China expressed displeasure, urging the U.S. to refrain from using the term "Chinese virus" and correct its alleged mistakes and baseless accusations. Trump suggested the possibility of severing the entire relationship with China, highlighting potential financial savings (Yekken and Boutouchent 1430). Trump accused the World Health Organization (WHO) of being akin to a "public relations agency for China" and withdrew U.S. funding from the organization. Former National Security Advisor John Bolton accused Trump of seeking domestic support from President Xi Jinping for his reelection bid. Bolton cited instances where Trump allegedly pressured China to purchase significant quantities of soybeans to bolster farmers' support as the presidential election approached. The president faced the challenging task of maintaining a tough stance on China for unfulfilled trade promises and actions in Hong Kong, while simultaneously promoting a market rebound before the election, a rebound linked in part to the progress of U.S.–China trade relations. Throughout, Trump's credibility and trustworthiness appeared to vary with his inconsistent behavior (Boylan et al. 25).

The tension between the US and China over COVID-19 escalated when the Chinese government expelled over a dozen of journalists from major U.S. newspapers, including the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and Washington Post, demanding information about their operations in China. This move comes in response to the U.S. decision earlier that year to limit Chinese journalists and designate state-run media outlets as foreign missions. On July 14, 2020,

following Beijing's enactment of a new national security law for Hong Kong, President Trump signs an executive order terminating the city's preferential trade status with the U.S. He also sanctions officials and businesses undermining Hong Kong's autonomy. China threatens retaliatory sanctions and denounces U.S. interference, responding to Washington's declaration of most of Beijing's South China Sea claims as illegal on the previous day. In the same month, the U.S. orders the closure of China's consulate in Houston, alleging espionage, prompting China to close the U.S. consulate in Chengdu. The week also sees the indictment of Chinese hackers for stealing vaccine research and sanctions on Chinese companies involved in human rights abuses in Xinjiang, with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi attributing tensions to the U.S. ("U.S.-China Relations").

To ease the trade war tension, the United States and China signed the Economic and Trade Agreement between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China Phase One, commonly known as "phase one agreement" on January 15, 2020. The agreement covers intellectual property protection, technology transfer, trade in food and agricultural products, new market access in China for financial services, exchange rates, transparency, and a government-to-government enforcement mechanism. The implementation, starting on February 14, 2020, saw both countries mutually halve the last round of tariff escalation from September 2019. For instance, the United States reduced tariffs from 15.0 to 7.5 percent on \$101 billion of imports covered on List 4A. Despite these reductions, all other tariffs remained in effect, and there was no mention of "tariffs" in the phase one agreement, including the Valentine's Day cuts. Consequently, the US Section 301 tariffs continued to cover approximately \$335 billion, or 66 percent of Chinese imports, while Beijing's counter-tariffs were applied to \$90 billion, or 58 percent of its imports from the United States (Bown 28, 29). This peculiar situation was often

overshadowed by the focus on Chapter 6 of the agreement, which outlined China's binding commitment to purchase an additional \$200 billion of US goods and services over 2020 and 2021, the Article 6.2 in chapter 6 of the agreement provides:

During the two-year period from January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2021, China shall ensure that purchases and imports into China from the United States of the manufactured goods, agricultural goods, energy products, and services identified in Annex 6.1 exceed the corresponding 2017 baseline amount by no less than \$200 billion. ("Economic and Trade Agreement")

On February 17, 2020, China's Ministry of Finance established a distinct process allowing Chinese companies to request exemptions from the substantial counter-tariffs that persisted on various products, despite the existence of the phase one agreement. Subsequently, reports indicated that the Chinese government started granting exemptions to Chinese companies, enabling them to acquire products like soybeans, a trend later substantiated by trade data. However, critical details regarding the number of product-level tariff exemption requests, the acceptance criteria, the participating firms, industries involved, and the factors influencing these decisions remained unclear. This development, wherein the Trump administration endorsed a system granting the Chinese government final authority over potential imports from the United States, diverged from broader US government apprehensions about China's state-driven economy (Bown 30).

From the Chinese perspective, the emergence of the trade war was unexpected. Previous administrations, especially since China's accession to the WTO in 2001, had maintained friendly and permissive trade relations. The unconventional negotiation tactics of President Trump,

including the rapid threat of tariff increases on Chinese goods, came as a shock to the Chinese. Chinese leaders perceived this approach as bullying. While many pointed to the USA as the main culprit, Chinese state media took a measured approach, critiquing the Trump administration for its protectionist policies rather than assigning blame to the entire USA for economic aggression. Chinese commentators expressed diverse views on the escalating trade tensions. Some figures propagated provocative economic nationalist messages. On the other hand, moderate opinion leaders advocated for a reasoned and collaborative approach to managing trade disputes between the US and China. At times, spokespersons from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs employed retaliatory rhetoric during the unfolding conflict, which might have been perceived as undiplomatic by foreign audiences. Ironically, economic nationalists within China welcomed this type of discourse, aimed at a domestic audience but prone to misinterpretation by foreign actors. In contrast, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, less visible to the Chinese public than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, operated with greater economic and commercial expertise during the negotiations. Its officers played a constructive role, fostering confidence across the negotiating table and operating with less pressure from Chinese nationalism. (Boylan et al. 26)

When the U.S. initiated a trade conflict with China in 2018, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo encouraged allied nations to demonstrate their commitment to U.S. interests globally. The United States now finds itself leading a coalition of countries resisting China's ascent in defense of the "liberal world order." Peter Navarro, President Trump's trade adviser, has characterized it as a "zero-sum game between China and the rest of the world," suggesting the emergence of an economic "iron curtain" between Washington and Beijing after decades of constructive engagement. Examining U.S.-China relations during the Trump administration reveals that the Chinese leadership has maintained a more robust and stable approach compared

to its American counterpart. Chinese decision-makers have consistently highlighted the risks of a trade war on the global economy, advocated for negotiations, accommodated U.S. demands on the condition of preserving China's economic and political stability, and refrained from retaliatory measures despite excessive tariffs imposed by Washington. Even when diplomatic avenues were exhausted, China opted for a limited set of countermeasures against the United States. Unfortunately, the Trump administration appeared to overlook the fundamental principle of successful negotiations, which hinges on the compromise of both parties rather than the dominance of one.

In the event of escalating U.S.-China tensions, the world confronts a phase of unpredictability where adherence to established rules becomes rare, and nations vie for strategic advantages in international relations. The actions of the two leading economic powers undoubtedly wield significant influence on the stability of the post-World War II global order. To surmount these challenges, there is a need to reaffirm a world order founded on wholehearted collaboration among nations driven by mutual benefits. It is imperative that the United States shifts away from individualistic thinking to reclaim its role as a benevolent global leader. Drawing insights from historical examples, the Trump administration should recognize, as U.S. leaders did in 1945, that isolation is not in the country's best interest. Instead, leveraging U.S. power to shape international politics and establish global institutions aligned with U.S. standards is essential. President Theodore Roosevelt's belief that the well-being of the United States is interconnected with that of other nations underscores the importance of being global citizens and members of the human community (Arežina 313, 314).

In short, the US-China relations under the Trump administration were characterized by a departure from traditional diplomatic norms of his predecessors, marked by interventionist

tendencies, particularly evident in the context of the trade war. President Trump's unconventional approach, featuring tariff escalations, accusations, and the imposition of restrictions, reflected a departure from the established norms of international trade. This interventionist stance sought to address perceived imbalances but also triggered heightened tensions, contributing to a paradigm shift in global economic dynamics. The confrontational trade policies highlights Trump's commitment to reshaping the economic landscape, challenging established norms, and prioritizing national interests in a manner that departed from previous administrations.

#### **4.2 U.S.-Middle East Relations: Shifting Dynamics in a Complex Region**

The relationship between the United States and the Middle East has long been a focal point of global geopolitics, marked by intricate alliances, regional conflicts, and strategic interests. In this section, we delve into the nuanced landscape of U.S.-Middle East relations, exploring the multifaceted dynamics that have shaped the region. From historical engagements to contemporary challenges, the United States has played a pivotal role in navigating the intricate web of political, economic, and security interests that define its interaction with Middle Eastern nations. The shifting sands of diplomacy, the impact of key policy decisions, and the ever-evolving regional landscape contribute to the complexity of this relationship. Our examination will encompass critical themes, including the fallout from the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, counterterrorism efforts, energy diplomacy, and the delicate balance of regional alliances. By delving into these intricacies, we seek to illuminate the changing contours of U.S.-Middle East relations, offering insights into the challenges, opportunities, and future trajectories that define this crucial geopolitical nexus.

##### **4.2.1 Iran Nuclear Deal and Maximum Pressure Campaign**

One of the defining chapters in U.S.-Middle East relations during the Trump administration unfolded with the Iran Nuclear Deal and the subsequent implementation of the Maximum Pressure Campaign. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran Nuclear Deal, was a landmark agreement reached in 2015 between Iran and six world powers, including the United States. Under President Trump, however, the U.S. withdrew from the deal in 2018, asserting that it failed to address Iran's broader regional activities and missile development.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is a multilateral agreement established in July 2015 between Iran and the P5+1 nation (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China) along with the European Union (EU), sought to allay apprehensions regarding Iran's nuclear program and ensure its peaceful nature. The agreement included pivotal provisions, such as limitations on Iran's nuclear activities, involving reductions in centrifuges and enriched uranium stockpiles to extend the country's "breakout time" – the duration needed to develop enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon. The JCPOA also implemented a stringent international inspection framework led by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to guarantee compliance with the agreed-upon restrictions. In return for adhering to these nuclear limitations, the P5+1 and the EU pledged to lift nuclear-related economic sanctions on Iran encompassing the release of previously frozen assets and the reintegration of Iran into the global economy ("Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action"). While the JCPOA aimed to diplomatically address global concerns about Iran's nuclear aspirations through monitoring and verification, its effectiveness faced challenges, particularly with shifts in the U.S. administration, contributing to ongoing controversy surrounding the agreement.

In retrospect, Donald Trump pledged to renegotiate the Iran nuclear deal during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. This agreement places the United States in a challenging position regarding a crucial contemporary international security matter. Trump argued that the JCPOA fails to act as a deterrent to Iran's potential development of nuclear weapons, in certain aspects, might even facilitate Iran's potential path to nuclear capabilities in the future. The ongoing adherence to the present agreement has the potential to significantly erode America's interests in the Middle East and its overarching global non-proliferation strategy (Kroenig 1). On May 8, 2018, the U.S. declared its official withdrawal from the JCPOA. Trump justified this decision as protecting America from bad deals, "The Iran Deal was one of the worst and most one-sided transactions the United States has ever entered into." ("President Donald J. Trump is Ending"). The withdrawal from the JCPOA marked a significant shift in U.S. policy towards Iran. President Trump argued for a more assertive stance against Iran's perceived malign activities. To counter Iran's threatening activities, Trump introduced the Maximum Pressure Campaign to exert unprecedented economic and diplomatic pressure on Iran, targeting its key sectors, including oil exports and banking.

According to Nuruzzaman, the 'maximum pressure' campaign on Iran encompassed several strategic objectives. Firstly, it aimed at economically strangling Iran by imposing severe sanctions, with the intent of dismantling the country's economic foundation and potentially inciting internal uprisings to challenge the ruling Islamic regime in Tehran. Another goal was to compel Iran to renegotiate the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA) by inducing economic hardship and citizen suffering, anticipating that widespread anti-government protests would ensue, ultimately bringing Iran back to the negotiating table on U.S. terms. Additionally, the campaign sought to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, a justification for the U.S. withdrawal from the

JCPOA, despite the deal's existing provisions designed to thwart Iran's path to nuclear weaponization (2-3). The re-imposition of harsh sanctions demonstrated Trump's strategy of coercive diplomacy; and the abandonment of the JCPOA undermined multilateral diplomacy and heightened tensions in an already volatile region. The consequences of these decisions may reverberate across the Middle East, contributing to a heightened state of regional insecurity and triggering a series of escalations between the two nations.

In response to the sanctions imposed by the Trump administration, Iran pursued a strategy of "maximum resistance". It has formulated its anti-containment strategy around the principle of "resistance," signifying its determination to withstand the pressures and threats emanating from the United States and its regional allies. While the notion of resistance against U.S. hegemony and opposition to Israel has roots dating back to the 1979 Islamic Revolution, it has evolved from a revolutionary slogan to a strategic concept. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei characterizes resistance as a "doctrine" with the goal of achieving "deterrence" across political, economic, and military domains. Khamenei asserts that the Islamic Republic has already attained this deterrence in the military realm. In response to the U.S. maximum pressure campaign initiated in 2018, there has been an escalating focus among top Iranian officials on the concept of resistance, culminating in the term "maximum resistance" to delineate their approach in contrast to the American maximum pressure policy (Azizi, et al. 7). Additionally, Iran steadfastly refused to engage in negotiations with the Trump administration, asserting that sanctions must be lifted as a precondition for talks. In an effort to mitigate the impact of the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal, Iran sought support from European nations; however, these endeavors faced significant challenges, resulting in Iran having limited alternatives (Nuruzzaman 3-9).

As a result to the U.S. withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear deal and the implementation of maximum pressure, which has been proven failure (Azizi, et al. 1), tensions escalated between the two adversaries. Key events included Iran's downing of a U.S. military surveillance drone in June 2019, alleged attacks on Saudi oil installations in September of the same year. Another prominent event that caused alarm around the world is the U.S. assassination of Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad on January 3, 2020 (Nuruzzaman 1). The killing of Soleimani has not weakened but, in fact, reinforced the unity between Iran and Shia Iraqi militia groups, fueling their resolve to oust U.S. military forces from Iraq (3). This blatant attack raised global concerns, as there were fears that Iran's potential retaliation against U.S. interests in the region could escalate into a more significant conflict.

Within the context of U.S.-Iran relations, Trump's decisions had far-reaching implications that reshaped the dynamics of the region. The withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal and the subsequent implementation of the Maximum Pressure Campaign marked a departure from the diplomatic approach of the preceding administration (Nazareth 22). The primary objective of these strategic shifts was to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions, contain its regional influence, and address what the Trump administration perceived as destabilizing activities. Azizi, Golmohammadi, and Vazirian in their article argue that Trump's measure of maximum pressure, which implemented over two years, has proven ineffective in changing Iran's regional conduct (1).

Diplomatically, the withdrawal strained relations with U.S. allies who remained committed to the Iran Nuclear Deal. European nations, in particular, sought to salvage the agreement, highlighting the emerging divergence in transatlantic views (Nuruzzaman 4; Nazareth 34). Meanwhile, within the Middle East, traditional geopolitical fault lines were

exacerbated, with regional actors aligning themselves based on their respective interests vis-à-vis Iran. The Trump administration's unequivocal support for regional allies, such as Israel and Saudi Arabia, further intensified regional rivalries.

In conclusion, the enduring legacy of Trump's Iran policy indicates the intricate nature of U.S. involvement in the Middle East, where strategic decisions carry lasting consequences for regional stability, diplomatic relations, and the overall trajectory of U.S.-Middle East relations. The impacts of the Maximum Pressure Campaign on U.S.-Middle East relations are multifaceted. While the approach aimed to reshape the balance of power in the region by constraining Iran, it also contributed to an escalation of conflicts, heightened militarization, and a more unpredictable geopolitical landscape. The Trump administration's approach in Iran exhibited interventionist tendencies through economic sanctions, military posturing, and diplomatic pressure. However, the refusal to engage in direct negotiations and the emphasis on unilateral actions could be seen as aligning with isolationist tendencies. The multifaceted approach, combining economic, political, and military tools, paints a complex picture of U.S. involvement in the region, showcasing a blend of interventionist and isolationist elements.

#### **4.2.2 Israeli-Palestinian Conflict during the Trump Era**

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, rooted in historical tensions and nationalist aspirations, emerged in the late 19th century and intensified during the British Mandate in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration in 1917 and subsequent events, including the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and several Arab-Israeli wars, shaped the conflict's contours. Occupation, settlements, and territorial disputes, particularly regarding the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, fueled ongoing animosities. Efforts to address the conflict, such as the Oslo Accords

in 1993, faced obstacles related to borders and security concerns (Erdogan and Habash 130; Falah, *The Geopolitics* 1357-1359). As the Trump administration took office in 2017, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict persisted as a deeply entrenched challenge, marked by unresolved core issues and a history of failed peace initiatives, with the situation on the ground remaining complex and tense.

President Trump's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict was marked by several significant policy decisions and diplomatic initiatives. The controversial decision by President Trump to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, announced in December 2017, marked a significant departure from longstanding U.S. policy and international consensus. Jerusalem holds immense religious and cultural significance for both Israelis and Palestinians, with both claiming it as their capital. The recognition was met with widespread criticism and concern, as it was perceived to undermine the delicate balance required for peace negotiations between the two parties. The international community, including key U.S. allies, expressed reservations about the decision as it violates the United Nation's resolution and international laws (Moten 6, 7). This decision met with global resentment as it departed from the longstanding consensus on the city's status; and it evoked fear that it could escalate tensions in the region and jeopardize the already fragile peace process.

During an official statement on Jerusalem, Trump criticized previous presidents for their reluctance to make this move, contending that such hesitation did not bring Israel and the Palestinians closer to a lasting peace agreement. While he presented the initiative as a "long-overdue step" to advance the peace process, Trump remained ambiguous about how recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital would contribute to peace. The Trump Administration similarly approached discussions regarding the right of return for Palestinian refugees displaced in 1948

by the Israeli occupation (Erdogan and Habash 134). The following year, in May 2018, the United States officially relocated its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This step finds its legitimacy in the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 which “provide for the relocation of the United States Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem” (“Jerusalem”). The decision represented a significant shift in U.S. policy, aligning with the prior recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. While fulfilling a campaign promise (“President Donald J. Trump Keeps His Promise”), the move sparked widespread condemnation from the international community and inflamed tensions in the already volatile Middle East.

The implications of recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital had far-reaching consequences, extending beyond diplomatic considerations. Palestinians, who aspire to have East Jerusalem as the capital of their future independent state, perceived the decision as a betrayal and a biased alignment with Israel. This stance complicated peace talks, leaving Palestinians feeling marginalized and disinclined to participate in negotiations. The move heightened tensions, sparking protests and unrest in the region. It not only impacted the peace process but also had broader implications for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Many Palestinians and Arab nations viewed the relocation of the U.S. embassy as a provocative action favoring Israel, jeopardizing the potential for a two-state solution. This decision strained U.S.-Palestinian relations, leading to protests and clashes.

In 2018, the Trump Administration made an announcement that it had completely terminated the funding provided by the United States to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). UNRWA's main role was to offer essential social services to approximately five million Palestinian refugees residing in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. The official statement from the U.S. administration indicated that the agency needed to

encourage the Palestinians to resume peace negotiations. This decision to cut funding to UNRWA by the U.S. has been interpreted as an attempt to eliminate the Palestinians' right of return, which has been a contentious issue in the peace talks. Some analysts have suggested that the Trump Administration may have aimed to undermine the refugee status of Palestinian refugees. Moreover, the U.S. has also halted all assistance provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. These actions were widely seen as a means of exerting pressure on Palestinian officials to engage in peace talks with Israel and the White House, particularly prior to the official announcement of the Middle East peace plan (Erdogan and Habash 134-135).

Furthermore, in January 2020, the Trump administration unveiled the "Peace to Prosperity a Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People." The plan, commonly known as "Deal of the Century" (DoC), was announced in two parts, with the economic section announced in Bahrain in 2019 and the political section announced in January 2020. The proposal was widely viewed by the Palestinian side as detrimental to their goal of self-determination and a just two-state solution to the conflict. The proposal was crafted and drafted by a team that had extensive contact with Israeli government officials and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu himself. The proposal stipulated raising \$50 billion for the implementation of the plan and advancing the economic well-being of Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip once they accepted the plan. However, the plan compromised basic inalienable Palestinian rights entrenched in international law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions (Falah, *The (Im)possibility* 8).

Additionally, the DoC proposed a two-state solution but included several contentious elements such as endorsing Israeli annexation of key territories. The plan provides that "the

Jordan Valley, which is critical for Israel's national security, will be under Israeli sovereignty.”

(13) Moreover, another major aspect that undermined the process of peace plan was the provision that proposes acknowledging Israeli sovereignty over unauthorized settlements:

Approximately 97% of Israelis in the West Bank will be incorporated into contiguous Israeli territory, and approximately 97% of Palestinians in the West Bank will be incorporated into contiguous Palestinian territory. Land swaps will provide the State of Palestine with land reasonably comparable in size to the territory of pre-1967 West Bank and Gaza. (12)

The implication of this provision is that a significant portion of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank would be incorporated into Israel, forming a contiguous Israeli territory. In contrast, a majority of Palestinians in the West Bank would be incorporated into a contiguous Palestinian territory, suggesting an effort to establish geographically connected and distinct areas for both Israelis and Palestinians. The mention of land swaps further indicates a mechanism through which the State of Palestine would receive land, compensating for the areas incorporated into Israel, with the goal of maintaining a territorial balance comparable to the pre-1967 borders of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Furthermore, the DoC recognized Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital, it provided that “Jerusalem will remain the sovereign capital of the State of Israel, and it should remain an undivided city” (17). It also endorsed Israeli sovereignty over settlements in the West Bank, and outlined a demilitarized Palestinian state with limited control over its security. The plan faced immediate rejection from Palestinian leadership, who viewed it as heavily favoring Israel and undermining their aspirations for statehood. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas,

who broke off contacts with the Trump administration in 2017 when it recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, insisted that a Palestinian state without East Jerusalem was impossible. He declared that "Jerusalem is not for sale" emphasizing that all Palestinian rights were non-negotiable. Hamas also rejected the deal, claiming it aimed to "liquidate the Palestinian national project." In response, thousands of Palestinian protesters staged a "day of rage" in the Gaza Strip ("Trump Middle East Plan"). Overall, Trump's decisions reflected a departure from traditional U.S. policy, favoring Israeli positions, and sparked debates on the viability of future peace negotiations in the region.

It is argued by Falah Ghazi Walid in his article *The (Im)possibility of Achieving a Peaceful Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* that President Trump's recent peace proposals, notably the DoC were criticized for compromising fundamental Palestinian rights as established in international law and UN Security Council resolutions. The proposals sidestepped crucial Palestinian concerns, neglected historical negotiations and potential solutions, and dismissed the Oslo Agreements in U.S. Middle East policy. By deferring key issues like borders, Jerusalem, settlements, and refugees to later negotiations, the plan unilaterally made decisions on behalf of the Palestinians, perpetuating Israeli occupation and diminishing Palestinian self-determination. The argument posits that these proposals primarily served Israeli interests and failed to address the conflict's complexities for a just and viable Palestinian resolution (8-9). Indeed, the U.S., through its proposals, lacks the credibility and leadership required to enact positive change in the region. Trump's authoritarian and unilateral tendencies and unwavering support for Israel have rendered the U.S. unfit to continue participating in peace negotiations.

To conclude based on what has been said, The U.S. foreign policy under the Trump administration in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be characterized as interventionist. The

administration actively engaged in proposing and promoting its own peace plan, known as the "Deal of the Century," which involved significant diplomatic efforts and initiatives. The administration sought to shape the resolution of the conflict by presenting a comprehensive proposal and encouraging negotiations based on its terms. Additionally, the relocation of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem exhibited a transgression to the U.N. resolutions. The status of Jerusalem is a sensitive and contested issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. International consensus, including United Nations Security Council resolutions, has traditionally recognized Jerusalem as a final status issue to be determined through negotiations between the parties involved. By unilaterally moving its embassy to Jerusalem, the United States took a decisive stance on this issue, intervening in a way that contradicted established international norms and disregarded the UN resolutions that emphasized the need for a negotiated settlement. This move was widely criticized as it prejudiced the outcome of future negotiations and complicated the prospects for a two-state solution.

#### **4.2.3 Trump's Counterterrorism Strategy in the Middle East**

Through this section we try to examine the "counterterrorism policies" implemented by the administration of Donald Trump in comparison to his predecessors. Following America's prolonged military engagements in the Middle East, many anticipated that the Trump presidency would mark a shift away from the costly overseas interventions that had defined the previous presidents. Thus, a closer examination of Trump's counterterrorism framework is needed to determine whether his policies represented a meaningful departure from past practices, or if they in fact maintained an interventionist posture in the pursuit of eliminating terrorist threats globally. By contextualizing Trump's counterterrorism efforts within the broader historical

trajectory, this analysis will shed light on the continuities and changes that characterized Trump's approach to combating extremism during his time in office.

During the first fifteen years of the War on Terror, Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama adopted counter-terrorism strategies that, despite their differing worldviews and threat perceptions, shared many methods and operations. Their approaches were fundamentally different from those of Donald Trump. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, George W. Bush launched the War on Terror, mobilizing all national power against al-Qaeda, jihadists, and terrorism. This included aggressive actions against terrorist networks and their supporters, beginning with the Taliban in Afghanistan, which had harbored al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. Bush reorganized homeland security, tightened border controls, and significantly increased funding for surveillance and the military. He also authorized controversial measures such as the establishment of "black sites" and the Guantanamo prison camp, where suspects were detained without trial and subjected to "enhanced interrogation techniques" like water boarding (Neuman, ch. 1).

Bush pursued a broader political agenda, believing that "tyranny" was the root cause of terrorism. He aimed to overthrow "hostile dictators" and promote democracies aligned with American interests in the Middle East. This strategy faced major challenges, particularly in Iraq. The overthrow of Saddam Hussein led to civil war, prolonged occupation, and widespread resistance to American-led "regime change." The deployment of over 150,000 American troops in the region not only diverted resources but also gave jihadist groups, including the precursors to ISIS, a new rallying point and battlefield (ch. 1). This demonstrates how the counterterrorism policies of the Bush and Obama administrations were consistent, in contrast to the more unilateral and disruptive stance adopted by Trump. Both Bush and Obama shared a consensus on

American values and an understanding that addressing the root causes of terrorism was necessary.

Conversely, Barack Obama, who criticized the “War on Terror”, aimed to shift the US approach to counterterrorism. He believed that the Iraq War and aggressive tactics had fueled terrorism. Obama sought to end foreign wars, work with international partners, and project a more humble and less aggressive image of America. He abandoned the term "War on Terror" and focused on targeting al-Qaeda and its affiliates. However, despite his rhetoric, Obama largely continued the counterterrorism policies of the Bush administration. He maintained laws and covert programs, increased drone strikes, and participated in military campaigns. The narrower focus on al-Qaeda may have led to underestimating the rise of the Islamic State. While Obama initially downplayed the threat, he eventually acknowledged it and formed a global coalition (Neuman, ch. 1). It is, thus, the main priority of the Obama administration was to rectify and undo the harm caused by the previous Bush administration's actions. Bush's wars of Afghanistan and Iraq had sparked a fierce reaction against US military involvement in the area. Because of this, one of the main goals of the Obama administration was to reduce the extent and prominence of American military participation in the Middle East. In this way, the Obama administration aimed to lessen US military presence and engagement in the area, as opposed to the Bush administration's more muscular interventionist strategy (Tayyar 10).

To comprehend Trump's doctrine, it is crucial to acknowledge his deep-rooted aversion to international commitments. Unlike Bush and Obama, he does not identify as an "internationalist" who believes in America's unique responsibility to safeguard the global order and uphold international institutions. Trump perceives minimal, if any, benefits for America in doing so. As far back as 1987, during his initial contemplation of a presidential run, he voiced dissatisfaction

through full-page advertisements, asserting that foreign nations were reaping "enormous profits" while America was protecting their access to global trade routes. He demanded that countries such as Japan and Saudi Arabia "pay their fair share" instead of burdening the United States. Nearly three decades later, he applied the same principle to counterterrorism efforts. In early 2016, Trump stated that the United States should assist nations threatened by "radical Islam" but emphasized the necessity of reciprocity, stating, "This must be a mutually beneficial relationship. They must also treat us well" (ch. 1).

During the 2016 election campaign, Trump strongly criticized the Iraq war and viewed the entire Middle East as a troubled region where American efforts would not guarantee positive outcomes. However, he is not a pacifist and believes in crushing enemies, emphasizing military power as the immediate demonstration of American strength. Trump has generally supported wars and interventions that have clear purposes and do not involve significant military, political, or financial commitments. His approach to fighting terrorism is primarily coercive, focusing on killing terrorists and demonstrating strength to gain respect from opponents. Trump's doctrine has been characterized as "Cheneyism" by some, referring to the bellicose views of Dick Cheney, Bush's Vice-President. Military aggression has been a core element of Trump's doctrine, as he has called for stronger military action and criticized both Bush and Obama for perceived failures in delivering quick military solutions. Trump has shown little interest in the root causes of radicalization or the underlying conflicts that empower jihadist groups. He has also advocated for the empowerment of autocrats, believing that strong leaders who curtail freedoms and suppress dissent can be part of the solution to combating terrorism. Trump's enthusiastic support for torture as a form of punishment and payback has been a notable aspect of his doctrine, driven by a sense of "an eye for an eye" justice rather than a focus on obtaining information (ch. 1).

Trump significantly altered the narrative of US counterterrorism policy. While Obama aimed to reverse the expansive War on Terror rhetoric of the Bush era, Trump's aggressive stance rejected Obama's more measured approach. During his campaign, Trump vowed to fundamentally reshape US counterterrorism efforts, criticizing the Obama administration's "politically correct" strategy and attributing the "rise of ISIS" to decisions made by Obama and Clinton. In November 2015, Trump introduced his plan for defeating the Islamic State, which had overtaken al-Qaeda as the main terrorist threat in Washington's view following its rapid territorial gains in Iraq and Syria. Emphasizing the substantial revenue ISIS generated from oil sales, Trump declared he would "bomb the shit out of them." In April 2016, he suggested seizing Iraq's oil to compensate American taxpayers for previous occupations, stating that historically, victors claimed the spoils of war, but all the US had received from Iraq and the Middle East was death, destruction, and significant financial loss. Despite some internal opposition, Trump institutionalized the term "Radical Islamic Terrorism," as highlighted in the 2018 National Strategy for Counterterrorism (Biegon and Watts 7).

Trump's "America First" foreign policy advocates for a more assertive use of military force against ISIS and al-Qaeda, while also emphasizing the need to prevent the US from being exploited in its counterterrorism efforts by allies, international organizations, or adversaries. This stance has raised concerns about the steadfastness of Washington's commitments to its NATO and East Asian partners. In 2016, Trump asserted that US allies must share the financial, political, and human costs of the significant security burden. He stressed that the countries the US defends must bear the costs of their own defense, warning that if they do not, the US should be ready to let these countries protect themselves. The "America First" approach is intended to convey a strong sense of nationalism, marking a clear departure from the internationalism of

previous administrations. However, this rhetorical shift often masks a more complex reality within Trump's individualistic political style (7).

Trump's views on Islam and immigration evolved over time. Initially, after the September 11 attacks, he did not make any connection between Islam and terrorism. However, his stance changed when he became involved in the "birther movement" and associated with Stephen Bannon and the alt-right. He began publicly speaking out against Islam and immigration in 2011, expressing strong hostility towards both. Furthermore, he portrayed Islam as a hostile and monolithic belief system, frequently linking it to terrorism. He consistently advocated for restrictions on Muslim immigration, sometimes failing to distinguish between legal and illegal immigrants or confusing them with second-generation Americans. His rhetoric aligned with the views of Bannon and the alt-right, who emphasized preserving America's "European identity" and opposed immigration and Islam (Neumann, ch. 1).

In his first week as president, Trump signed an executive order that banned all citizens from seven countries, including Iraq, Iran, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Somalia, and Sudan, identified by the Obama administration as "high risk" in relation to the Visa Waiver Program. The order also temporarily halted all refugee admissions and permanently suspended those from Syria. While the order did not explicitly mention "Islam" or "Muslims," the targeted countries were all predominantly Muslim. Given Trump's repeated campaign promises for a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States," it was clear the executive order was an attempt to fulfill that pledge, despite the order's lack of overt religious language. The Cato Institute documented at least 12 instances between Trump's election and inauguration where he reaffirmed his intention to ban Muslims from entering the U.S. based on their faith (ch. 4).

Upon signing the executive order, widespread chaos ensued at airports and border crossings, as relevant agencies like Customs and Border Protection had received no previous warning or guidance on how to implement it. The executive order was drafted by a small circle of Trump's "true believer" advisors such as Bannon and Miller, with minimal input from immigration, counterterrorism, or legal experts, or the departments and agencies responsible for implementing it. Even Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly was only brought in at the final stages, while the department's general counsel received the order less than an hour before it took effect. This lack of coordination and advance planning resulted in significant confusion and chaos on the ground when the hastily implemented order went into place (ch. 4).

The executive order had significant negative political consequences, undermining global perceptions of America and damaging relationships with key allies. While comprehensive polling is lacking, the order was overwhelmingly opposed in majority-Muslim countries. A New York Times journalist in Mosul reported that the only locals who welcomed it were supporters of ISIS, who saw it as proof that "America really does 'hate' Islam." For the Iraqi government, a close U.S. partner in the fight against ISIS, the ban was a big embarrassment. Members of Congress and Trump's Cabinet pleaded with him to remove Iraq from the list, so that Iraqis who had served alongside American forces, such as fighter pilots and translators, could continue traveling to the U.S. Senator John McCain argued the ban conveyed a bad signal to "thousands of Iraqi men and women" fighting with the U.S., and played into ISIS's hands while strengthening Iran's influence in Iraq (ch. 4).

A similar situation occurred with Chad. This African nation, which has a religiously diverse population with over 40 percent Christians, was included in the travel ban in September 2017. This decision was made despite Chad's longstanding alliance with the United States and its

active involvement in numerous missions against jihadist groups such as al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, and Islamic State. According to reports from the State Department, very few Chadians had joined terrorist organizations. Given the small number of immigrant visas issued to Chadians in recent years (40 in 2016; 24 in 2017), the decision to blacklist the entire country was widely criticized as "draconian" and "knee-jerk." Chad's government, which was not forewarned, stated that Trump's decision tarnished the country's global image and harmed the "good [bilateral] relations." Eventually, both Chad and Iraq were removed from the list, but not before causing significant—and entirely preventable—political damage (ch. 4).

The most serious issues were legal and constitutional. Shortly after the announcement, several states filed lawsuits against the federal government, leading to a nationwide suspension of the ban. The revised version, released in March 2017, aimed to address the initial problems by exempting dual nationals, green card holders, and those with valid visas. However, it was also struck down, prompting Trump to tweet that his administration should have reinforced the original ban, making it "far larger, tougher, and more specific" instead of adopting a "politically correct version." Many courts interpreted such statements as evidence of an intention to ban Muslims, with one appeals court concluding that the policy "[dripped] with religious intolerance, animus, and discrimination" (ch. 4).

The third, and final, version of the ban was issued as a Presidential Proclamation in September 2017 and upheld by the Supreme Court nine months later. This version was significantly more restrained than the previous Executive Orders. It included North Korea and Venezuela while removing Sudan, making the list of countries less explicitly focused on Muslims. It also no longer addressed refugee admissions, which resumed at a lower level the following month. Furthermore, it contained numerous exemptions imposed by the courts.

Citizens of banned countries who could demonstrate "bona fide" links to the United States, such as through family or business ties, were allowed to travel. Depending on the country, exemptions also applied to students, children, and individuals attending significant business or professional obligations (ch. 4).

As a result, the practical impact of the travel ban was less severe than initially anticipated. Visitors and immigrants, especially from Middle Eastern or African "countries of concern," had long faced travel restrictions to America. However, the burden of proof shifted more heavily onto the applicants: instead of American authorities needing to find reasons to refuse admission, citizens from the listed countries had to make a stronger case for entry. Additionally, given the Supreme Court's many caveats and its reminder that Presidents must "espouse the principles of religious freedom and tolerance," it was unlikely that Trump would recklessly expand the list or attempt to implement the kind of outright "Muslim ban" he had originally envisioned (ch. 4).

In his measures to counterterrorism, Trump has extensively utilized Special Operations Forces (SOF), including the Defense Department's Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), which carried out the October 2019 raid that resulted in the death of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. During his first week in office, Trump sanctioned a prominent SOF raid against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula located in Southern Yemen, which led to the death of a Navy SEAL and numerous civilian casualties. In May 2017, another Navy SEAL was killed during a raid against al-Shabaab, marking the first US combat fatality in Somalia since the 1993 Black Hawk Down incident. Throughout Trump's first year as president, SOF were deployed to at least 137 countries. This increased reliance on SOF prompted one analyst to assert that Trump was driving America's Special Forces to their limits (Biegon and Watts 9).

The strategy to defeat Islamic State developed by “the generals,” and followed by Trump until December 2018, was essentially a revised version of Obama’s plan. Initially, it was so similar that its release had to be postponed multiple times to make it appear “more different.” Ultimately, it reflected the generals’ more military-focused perspective but retained Obama’s primary assumptions and strategic efforts. Importantly, Trump seemed content to let the generals manage the campaign with minimal interference from him. Consistent with his philosophy, he believed his role was to permit the generals to perform their duties, which involved approving anything they deemed necessary to achieve the desired outcome (Neumann, ch. 6).

Similar to Obama’s strategy, the “Defeat ISIS Plan” aimed to dismantle Islamic State in its core regions, prevent its expansion, and protect the U.S. from terrorist attacks. Unlike Trump, who claimed the group could be defeated within weeks, the generals provided no specific timeline or end date. Instead, they presented the objective of defeating Islamic State as an ongoing priority requiring significant attention and resources, while also indicating the new administration’s intent to accelerate military operations. They preserved all the structures and partnerships established under Obama (ch. 6).

Until the end of 2018, Trump largely delegated the counter-Islamic State campaign to his “generals.” Apart from his unsuccessful attempts to get other countries to finance reconstruction, there is no indication that he was closely involved or interested in the developments. Earlier that year, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson delivered a detailed speech outlining America's objectives in Syria, which included not only defeating Islamic State and preventing the re-emergence of “ungoverned spaces,” but also establishing political institutions, resettling refugees, and countering the ambitions of Assad and his Russian and Iranian allies (ch. 6).

This situation changed dramatically on December 19, 2018, when Trump tweeted that "[w]e have defeated ISIS in Syria" and announced the withdrawal of American troops from the country. Several hours later, he released a short video asserting that the entire Islamic State had been defeated and that "our boys, our young women, our men, they're all coming back." Although subsequent messages were more cautious, and both Pence and Pompeo clarified that the mission remained unchanged, Trump's sudden declaration overturned the administration's policy and jeopardized many of the gains made since 2014 (ch. 6).

None of the generals agreed with Trump's assessment. During a Senate hearing in January 2019, intelligence community leaders, including Dan Coats, the Director of National Intelligence, and Gina Haspel, the CIA Director, whom Trump had appointed, publicly contradicted his view that Islamic State was defeated. They acknowledged Coalition gains but pointed out that "ISIS still commands thousands of fighters" and continued to "perpetrate attacks to undermine stabilization efforts and retaliate against its enemies." They predicted that reducing counter-terrorism pressure, such as pulling out of Syria, would enable the group to "strengthen its clandestine presence and rebuild key capabilities," including the ability to attack America and Western allies (ch. 6).

One of the most detrimental effects of Trump's announcement was its impact on local allies, particularly the Syrian Kurds. The United States effectively abandoned them despite their crucial role in recapturing Raqqa and other parts of north-eastern Syria. Although the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) had evolved into a formidable militia, recognized for their "tenacity and effectiveness," they still relied heavily on American air and ground support. Experts largely agreed that without this support, the Kurdish administration would likely collapse either internally or due to Turkish attacks. While this might address the issue of managing America's

Kurdish "protectorate," the Kurds viewed it as a significant betrayal. A Kurdish community leader in Europe expressed that many felt abandoned by their American allies, regretting their involvement in battles beyond their own territories. For the U.S. military leadership, abandoning the SDF represented not only a betrayal of the Syrian Kurds but also a damaging message to any future partners. This sentiment was so strong that both Mattis and McGurk resigned in protest (ch. 6).

Despite Trump's announcement of a full U.S. troop withdrawal from Syria, which was partly reversed later, his decision instantly changed the dynamic on the ground. For ISIS, it was the first piece of good news in years, as it indicated the pressure from the U.S. and the SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) that had nearly destroyed the group would soon diminish. ISIS predicted a return of chaos and instability, which it hoped would enable renewed radicalization and recruitment. The Syrian Forces immediately redeployed fighters away from the campaign against ISIS to counter a potential Turkish offensive, and announced plans to release thousands of foreign ISIS fighters. Kurdish leaders also sought a deal with Assad, hoping it would provide protection in exchange for extending the influence of Assad's Russian and Iranian allies across Kurdish territories (ch. 4).

Experts argued Trump's decision was neither urgent nor necessary, as the U.S. presence in Syria was small, relatively inexpensive, and had caused few American casualties. They believed Trump contradicted his own government's strategy and undermined the successful "by, with, and through" approach of partnering with local forces. There was no viable alternative plan offered, and concerns that the remaining U.S. troops would be exposed to greater risks (Neumann, ch. 6). By doing so, it seems that Trump's unexpected decision to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria undermined the successful campaign against ISIS, giving the terrorist group a

rare victory and spreading instability in the region. His unilateral and impulsive actions contradicted the established strategy, exposing remaining troops to greater risks and jeopardizing hard-won military gains. Rather than a thoughtful, long-term plan, Trump's counterterrorism approach appeared driven by a simplistic belief in brute force over nuanced partnership.

When assessing Donald Trump's Middle East counterterrorism programs, it becomes evident that there was a great deal of overlap with the strategies employed by his White House predecessors. Many of the long-standing American counterterrorism tactics in the area, such as drone strikes, special operations raids, and assistance for ally forces, were kept up by Trump. But Trump has occasionally tried to act in a more forceful, unilateral manner, as seen by the assassination of Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani in 2020. Tensions and the likelihood of violence increased as a result of this assertive stance, which marked an increase in US interventionism in the Middle East. Although Trump claimed to be departing from previous foreign policy, his actual counterterrorism measures showed more parallels than differences with the interventionist tendencies that have characterized American strategy in the region for decades.

### **4.3 U.S.-North Korea Relations: the Quest for Denuclearization**

#### **4.3.1 Historical Context of U.S.-North Korea Relations**

The U.S. engagement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), or North Korea) since the Cold War has been centered on the objective of achieving a nuclear-free Korean peninsula, aligning with the broader non-proliferation goals of American foreign policy and to prevent it from acquiring nuclear weapons and thwarting its efforts to share nuclear technology, knowledge, or materials with other nations. (Moore 10; Husenicova 65). This diplomatic

relationship is multifaceted, not only rooted in non-proliferation concerns but also influenced by the political system in North Korea. The U.S. foreign policy reflects a dual emphasis, encompassing the long-standing commitment to non-proliferation and a normative stance on human rights protection, democracy promotion, and the dissemination of liberal values. Beyond the immediate bilateral scope, the North Korean issue has far-reaching implications, impacting U.S. relations and interests in the broader Northeast Asian region. This includes its alliances with South Korea and Japan, as well as the intricate and delicate ties with the People's Republic of China (Husenícova 65). This multifaceted engagement has broader regional implications, influencing alliances and relations in Northeast Asia.

Over the past nearly 30 years, official diplomatic relations between the U.S. and North Korea have been absent, characterized by intermittent phases of either no contact or robust bilateral and multilateral talks. During periods of engagement, communication occurred through channels such as the Swedish embassy in Pyongyang, the New York or U.N. channel, and direct contacts involving high-level officials, former presidents, and special envoys. The U.S. approach to North Korea, regardless of the political party in power, has been shaped by various factors, including the enduring impact of the Korean War, the crucial security alliance with South Korea, concerns about North Korea's political system, and the persistent nuclear and missile programs despite international sanctions. Analyzing the evolution of relations, it becomes evident that no U.S. administration has introduced a proactive strategy or policy initiative to address the Korean Peninsula situation. Instead, the U.S. approach has been reactive, influenced by factors such as domestic partisanship, global priorities, and the positions of regional allies, notably China. Despite differences in reactions, there is a recurrent pattern wherein North Korea's actions prompt U.S. responses, leading to a range of options from military intervention to diplomatic

negotiations with uncertain outcomes (Husenícova 66-68). It is, thus, indisputable that the United States' nuclear policy toward North Korea since decades has been unsuccessful (Moore 10).

In the late 1980s, information about North Korea's nuclear activities, including the construction of a nuclear reactor, became known. The Reagan administration, aiming to ease tensions and aligning with South Korea's "Nordpolitik," instructed diplomats to engage in substantive discussions with North Korean counterparts. Talks began in December 1988, known as the Beijing talks. The subsequent Bush administration continued these talks, adopting a strategy of "comprehensive engagement" in 1991 to support North-South dialogue and prevent nuclear weaponization. The withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula in 1991 encouraged North Korea to sign the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Safeguard Agreements in 1992. However, high-level talks in 1992 did not yield progress due to disagreement among U.S. departments on incentives. The belief that economic liberalization and aid would motivate North Korea proved naive, contributing to ongoing challenges in U.S.-North Korea relations. In May 1992, North Korea submitted a declaration to the IAEA, admitting a reprocessing plant and plutonium extraction. Inspections revealed discrepancies, leading to calls for sanctions, which North Korea rejected. The situation escalated into the first nuclear crisis, marked by North Korea's nuclear program admission and the rejection of further talks in 1992, coinciding with a change in U.S. presidential leadership (Husenícova 68-69).

In the early 1990s, the Clinton administration's foreign policy toward North Korea was shaped by the post-Cold War liberal momentum, expecting North Korea to follow the path of democratization. Within two months of Clinton's presidency, North Korea announced its intention to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), leading to a three-month period of tensions. Special inspections, the Team Spirit announcement, and discussions

with allies prompted the U.S. to express willingness to reopen talks (Huseniceva 69-73). The initial nuclear crisis in North Korea occurred in 1993 when the country ceased collaboration with the IAEA. Despite having recently joined the NPT, which is overseen by the IAEA, North Korea's non-cooperation led to the IAEA bringing the matter to the UN Security Council (Moore 11). High-level talks in 1993 resulted in statements supporting peace and a nuclear-free peninsula, with North Korea suspending its NPT withdrawal. However, the situation escalated as North Korea started reprocessing, sparking discussions of a military solution. A crisis was averted after Jimmy Carter's visit to Pyongyang, leading to the Geneva talks and the Agreed Framework in 1994. The Framework aimed at substituting North Korean reactors, freezing activities, and normalizing relations. However, not all provisions were implemented, and relations fluctuated throughout Clinton's administration, influenced by U.S. debates on the agreement's impact and North Korea's leadership transition in 1997 (Huseniceva 69-73). During the later years of the Clinton administration, the 1994 Agreed Framework became uncertain, and its ultimate demise was sealed when George W. Bush was elected as the next president (Moore 12).

During George W. Bush's administration, the initial statements suggested a limited understanding of North Korea's situation. Despite this, there were indications of a continuation of talks, as confirmed by Colin Powell's speech in Seoul and President Bush's statements in 2001. The administration aimed for denuclearization, non-proliferation, and the implementation of the Agreed Framework, along with reductions in conventional weapons and cooperation on various fronts. However, relations strained after North Korea was labeled part of an "axis of evil." Talks resumed but faced challenges, escalating into the Second Nuclear Crisis. The U.S. insisted on North Korea halting all nuclear activities before resuming talks, while North Korea sought a non-

aggression treaty (Husenícova 73-76). Prior to the Iraq war, tensions between Pyongyang and Washington escalated when a North Korean diplomat informed a U.S. diplomat in Beijing about North Korea's uranium enrichment program in 2002. This revelation confirmed suspicions held by many American observers. Chinese observers initially doubted Pyongyang's claim but grew concerned about the deteriorating U.S.-North Korea relations. As a result, China proposed the Six Party Talks (6PT) initiative, involving China, North Korea, South Korea, the United States, Japan, and Russia, to address the North Korean nuclear issue (Moore 12, 13). Furthermore, the U.S. has demonstrated flexibility, exemplified by the 2007 agreement with North Korea and the October 2008 decision to remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, indicating sincere efforts on the part of Washington and positive steps in the correct direction (10). Although the administration initially avoided bilateral talks, they eventually resumed after North Korea's first nuclear test. The policy faced criticism for lacking a specific strategy and for its reluctance to engage in direct talks, a stance later reversed after the nuclear test

The Obama administration initially planned to continue talks with North Korea and supported the renewal of the Six Party Talks, but the second nuclear test and missile tests in April/May 2009 halted these plans. Despite naming a special envoy, Ambassador Bosworth, who visited North Korea at the end of 2009, the visit did not yield significant results or change in relations. In late 2010, American scientists visited North Korea and observed a new uranium enrichment facility. In 2012, negotiations resulted in the Leap Day Declaration, where North Korea agreed to suspend operations in the Yongbyon enrichment plant, allow IAEA inspections, and impose a moratorium on missile tests in exchange for food aid. However, the agreement failed after North Korea announced its intention to launch a satellite. Following this, the U.S. focused on sanctions through the U.N. Security Council and engaged in unofficial diplomacy.

Obama's policy, termed "strategic patience," did not achieve tangible results, with North Korea undergoing leadership transition, and the administration faced challenges in various areas, including the state of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs (Husenecova 76-77).

#### **4.3.2 U.S-North Korea Relations under the Trump Administration**

The first year of the Trump administration was characterized by a particularly strained relationship between the USA and North Korea. Expecting much from North Korea, the Trump administration was itself focusing on a "maximum pressure" approach rather than 'strategic patience', which meant more sanctions and isolation initiatives against the DPRK. ("History of Relations"). In August 2017, the U.S. issued a threat of "fire and fury" against North Korea. Trump declared that North Korea "will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen" if it threatens the United States (Baker and Sang-Hun). However, it proved ineffective in halting North Korea's nuclear and long-range missile testing. In retaliation, North Korea made a series of threats directed at U.S. territory, specifically Guam, as well as its allies Japan and South Korea. Notably, on August 29 and November 28, 2017, two missiles were launched over Japanese territory, and a nuclear test took place on September 3, 2017 (kim 122). Following these tests; President Trump escalated his threatening rhetoric. In an address to the U.N. General Assembly about the significant threat posed by rogue regimes possessing powerful weapons, he warned that "the United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, [it]will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea" (Nakamura and Gearan).

Nevertheless, on June 12, 2018, President Trump engaged in a meeting with North Korea's Chairman Kim in Singapore, resulting in the signing of a historic agreement addressing

various issues. Subsequently, on June 30, 2019, following the 2019 G20 Osaka summit, a one-day summit involving the leaders of the two Koreas and the U.S. was held at the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Notably, on June 30, Trump crossed the border, marking the first instance of a sitting U.S. president stepping onto North Korean soil. Additional talks between Trump and Kim occurred on February 27 and 28, 2019, in Hanoi, Vietnam, focusing on nuclear concerns. Despite these diplomatic efforts, President Trump was unsuccessful in his attempts during the 2018 and 2019 summits to achieve North Korean denuclearization in exchange for security assurances and economic assistance (Kim 122).

#### **4.3.2.1 The Singapore Summit**

President Donald J. Trump and Kim Jong-Un held their historic meeting in Singapore on June 12, 2018, marking the first-ever encounter between a sitting U.S. president and the leader of North Korea. The meeting culminated in the signing of a groundbreaking agreement. This accord outlined North Korea's commitment to the Panmunjom Declaration, previously signed by leaders of North and South Korea, and laid the groundwork for future bilateral relations (Kim 122). Following the summit, Trump and Kim set aside seven decades of hostility between their countries and made a collective commitment to a peaceful future and the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Trump celebrated the summit as a significant achievement, assuring the public that everyone could now feel safer, as the nuclear threat from North Korea had been eliminated (Grieco 12). The joint statement, issued on June 12, 2018, by President Trump and Kim Jong-Un encapsulates the following key points of consensus:

- Both the United States and North Korea outlined their commitment to establishing new US-North Korean relations in alignment with the aspirations of their peoples for peace and prosperity.

- Collaborative efforts will be undertaken to construct a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.
- In reaffirmation of the Panmunjom Declaration dated April 27, 2018, North Korea commits to actively pursue complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.
- Commitments are made by the U.S. and North Korea to the recovery of POW/MIAs remains, including the immediate repatriation of those already identified (Kim 123).

These outcomes marked a significant step in the diplomatic engagement between the US and North Korea, setting the stage for further negotiations and discussions on denuclearization and peace on the Korean Peninsula.

The inclusion of "security guarantees" in the preamble of the Singapore Summit Joint Statement (SSJS) is directly linked to Trump's subsequent decisions to suspend U.S. military exercises on the Korean Peninsula and refrain from imposing new sanctions. In return, North Korea is expected to maintain its suspension of nuclear and missile tests. This approach, known as "freeze for freeze," has faced criticism for creating uncertainty about U.S. leadership, legitimizing the Kim regime, suggesting that nuclear brinksmanship can yield results, and diminishing the reputation and negotiation power of the United States in future talks with North Korea. This has sparked significant domestic debate in the U.S. as Trump views the suspension of military exercises as a cost-saving measure while ensuring North Korea's compliance with missile and nuclear testing halts. Although U.S. Vice President Mike Pence clarified that certain training exchanges and readiness exercises with South Korea would continue, his comments were not contradictory to the President's stance (Lim 103, 104).

Trump subsequently declared the discontinuation of war game exercises between the U.S. and South Korean militaries. South Korean media hailed the U.S.–North Korean summit and

their agreements as a momentous event. However, it's crucial to recognize that the joint statement represents a non-legally binding agreement, acknowledged as a continued understanding between the U.S. and North Korea . Article 3 of the Singapore Joint Statement is particularly contentious, reiterating the Panmunjom Declaration and North Korea's commitment to complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The Inter-Korean Summit Meeting at the "Peace House" in Panmunjom on April 27, 2018, resulted in three key points of agreement:

- Reconnecting the broader relations of the nation for co-prosperity and independent reunification,
- Joint efforts to reduce military tensions and eliminate the danger of war on the Korean peninsula, and
- Active cooperation to establish a permanent and stable peace regime, addressing the historic mission of ending the armistice and securing lasting peace on the Korean peninsula without delay (Kim 123).

#### **4.3.2.2 The Hanoi Summit**

The second summit between Trump and Kim, held in Hanoi, Vietnam on February 27, 2019, ended abruptly as the leaders failed to reach an agreement on sanctions relief and denuclearization. According to Trump, Kim agreed to dismantle the nuclear facilities at Yongbyon in exchange for complete sanctions relief. However, Trump sought more substantial steps towards denuclearization and verification. North Korean officials disputed Trump's account, stating that Kim had only demanded partial sanctions relief. Both leaders left Vietnam early without signing a joint statement as planned, but expressed a willingness to continue talks. Trump characterized their parting as amicable, while North Korea's foreign ministry warned that it would not change its position (Council on Foreign Relations). However, this failure in signing

any agreement was explained by Trump who put the blame on his national security advisor, John Bolton, who had been held responsible for the failure because of his Libya solution proposal, Trump publically declared:

We were set back very badly when John Bolton talked about the Libyan model. And he made a mistake. And as soon as he mentioned that, the “Libyan model,” what a disaster. Take a look at what happened to Qaddafi, with the Libyan model. And he’s using that to make a deal with North Korea? And I don’t blame Kim Jong Un for what he said after that. And he wanted nothing to do with John Bolton. (qtd. in Sigal 13)

Trump expresses his strong disapproval of John Bolton's mention of the "Libyan model" during negotiations with North Korea. He argues that Bolton's reference to the Libyan model was a mistake and had negative consequences for the diplomatic process. He points to the fate of Qaddafi, the Libyan leader, who was overthrown and killed after abandoning his nuclear program. Trump suggests that Kim Jong Un's reluctance to engage with Bolton is understandable given the association with the Libyan model. It is important to note that this evaluation represents Trump's perspective and should be considered in the broader context of the complex dynamics surrounding U.S.-North Korea relations.

#### **4.3.2.3 The DMZ Summit**

After the 2019 G20 Osaka summit in Japan, Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in visited the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) on June 30, 2019, ahead of their meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. During the visit, Kim extended an invitation to Trump to cross the border line, and Trump briefly stepped into North Korea before returning to South Korea alongside Kim. In doing so, Trump achieved the distinction of being the first incumbent U.S. president to set foot in North Korea (Seung and Denyer). Despite several hours of

discussions, the three leaders did not reach any formal agreements during the DMZ summit. While it didn't result in specific accords, the event garnered significant global attention and could be characterized as a photo opportunity, orchestrated to capture an image of the three leaders together. The working-level negotiations between the United States and North Korea have reached a standstill.

The most recent round of talks, which took place in October 2019 in Stockholm, Sweden, concluded after just eight hours of discussions. The primary point of contention was the extent to which the United States would ease sanctions in return for Kim dismantling his primary nuclear facility. Since then, both countries have taken steps away from diplomacy: the US implemented new sanctions, while North Korea resumed testing short-range ballistic missiles, continued uranium enrichment, and expanded its nuclear arsenal (Greico 12). Following the three meetings between the US and DPRK, the North Koreans prioritize obtaining concessions from the United States and reinforcing the legitimacy of their nuclear capabilities over fulfilling Kim's 2018 commitments of "complete denuclearization" (Kim and Snyder 75).

Despite sustained efforts, the North Korean nuclear issue has persisted for six decades since the country, with support from the Soviet Union, initiated the construction of nuclear facilities in Yongbyon during the early 1960s. Over the years, every U.S. administration, from Clinton to Trump, has individually reached agreements with Pyongyang, either through bilateral or multilateral means. These include notable agreements such as the 1994 Agreed Framework, the Joint Statement of September 19 during the Six Party Talks in 2005, the short-lived "Leap Day Deal" of February 29, 2012, and the more recent Singapore Joint Statement in June 2018. However, despite the progress made through extensive negotiations and partial implementation, all of these prior agreements eventually collapsed (Lee).

To scrutinize, the historic U.S.–North Korea Summit, known as the Singapore Summit, marked a transformative moment in the strained relationship between the two nations, opening the door to a new era. However, despite its significance, the meeting left numerous critical questions unanswered, navigating uncharted territory, especially as the joint statement omitted key issues. Some of the unaddressed concerns include the lack of a clear plan for complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization, human rights considerations, the full lifting of sanctions on North Korea, and the provision of security guarantees for the country. Additionally, it's crucial to note that the Singapore Joint Statement lacks legal binding, allowing either party to disregard the entire agreement without facing consequences. Indeed, according to certain experts on North Korea, it was not unexpected that the summit in Hanoi between the United States and North Korea concluded without success. The divergent demands of the two countries created a nearly insurmountable challenge for reaching a new agreement, extending beyond North Korea's nuclear program to encompass broader issues. Washington insisted that Pyongyang unilaterally abandon its entire nuclear weapons program before any concessions would be considered. As per assessments from U.S. think tanks and analysts focused on a nuclear North Korea, the United States has four potential courses of action:

1. Provide economic assistance and security assurances contingent upon North Korea dismantling its nuclear program.
2. Employ a military strike targeting North Korean nuclear facilities.
3. Acknowledge North Korea as a nuclear-armed state.
4. Deprive the North Korean regime of financial resources.

Interestingly, the U.S., North Korea, and experts on North Korea anticipate that the U.S. will offer economic assistance and security assurances as incentives for North Korea to

dismantle its nuclear program and resolve the nuclear impasse. Over the years, U.S. presidents, including Bush, Clinton, Obama, and Trump, have entered into various agreements—some legally binding and others not to address the nuclear standoff with North Korea. However, none of these agreements have yielded positive results due to a fundamental divergence: the U.S. insists on North Korea completely, verifiably, and irreversibly eliminating all nuclear weapons before substantial rewards are granted, while North Korea expects economic assistance and security guarantees from the U.S. before taking such actions. Each available option the U.S. has for addressing the North Korea situation has its drawbacks, but embracing North Korea as a nuclear power through incremental agreements, often referred to as mini deals, might be the least unfavorable choice. Interestingly, both parties have regularly indicated their inclination towards a series of smaller agreements to ease the nuclear standoff, avoiding the need for either side to fully concede to the demands of the other all at once (Kim 125).

The pursuit of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula faced numerous challenges and obstacles throughout the Trump administration. One significant hurdle was the lack of a clear and detailed agreement outlining the steps for denuclearization and corresponding concessions. While the Singapore Summit in 2018 provided a broad framework, the absence of specific terms allowed for divergent interpretations, contributing to subsequent breakdowns in negotiations. Disagreements over the sequencing of actions whether sanctions relief should precede denuclearization or vice versa created a persistent deadlock. The Hanoi Summit in 2019, a crucial meeting between Trump and Kim, ended abruptly without a deal, underscoring the difficulty of bridging these fundamental gaps. Overall, President Trump's policy towards North Korea exhibited characteristics of direct engagement, negotiations, and high-level summits with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. The diplomatic initiatives, including the historic Singapore

Summit in 2018 and subsequent meetings, demonstrate an active effort to address the North Korean nuclear issue directly. However, the policy also involved the emphasis on economic sanctions and pressure as part of the "maximum pressure" strategy.

#### **4.4 U.S-Russia Relations: Complexities and Controversies**

##### **4.4.1 Historical Context to the U.S-Russia Relations**

The United States and Russia have a long and intricate diplomatic history, marked by periods of both collaboration and conflict. The historical relationship between the two nations dates back to October 28, 1803, when Russia recognized the U.S. as a sovereign nation, and formal diplomatic ties between the two countries were established in 1809. However, these relations were interrupted following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. President Woodrow Wilson instructed American diplomats in Russia to refrain from engaging in direct communication with representatives of the Bolshevik Government on December 6, 1917. While diplomatic relations were not officially severed, the United States withheld recognition and formal relations with the Bolshevik/Soviet governments until 1933. Normal diplomatic relations were eventually restored on November 16, 1933 (U.S. Department of State). Throughout the Cold War era, the United States and the Soviet found themselves in a strained and antagonistic relationship. As ideological adversaries, they championed conflicting political and economic systems, leading to proxy wars, arms races, and heightened geopolitical tensions. The hostilities between the two superpowers profoundly shaped the global landscape, marking an enduring and defining feature of international relations from the late 1940s to the early 1990s (See Chapter Two). Subsequently, on December 25, 1991, the United States recognized the Russian

Federation as the successor to the Soviet Union and established diplomatic relations on December 31, 1991.

During the Clinton administration (1993-2001), the United States and Russia witnessed a complex relationship following the cold war. In the early years, there was an initial sense of optimism and cooperation, the Clinton Administration supported the establishment of a strong market-based and democratic Russia as a crucial American interest. To achieve this goal, the administration's primary strategy involved providing assistance to help sustain the Russian Leader Boris Yeltsin in power (Rivera and Rivera 591). Bill Clinton in one of his articles, published on *The Atlantic*, stated: "When I first became president, I said that I would support Russian President Boris Yeltsin in his efforts to build a good economy and a functioning democracy after the dissolution of the Soviet Union". Clinton advocated for a liberal-internationalist perspective on foreign policy, emphasizing the belief that increasing the number of democracies would enhance global security. This approach necessitated a proactive commitment from the United States to shape Russia's internal transformation. The Clinton administration pursued a more interventionist policy compared to the preceding Bush administration, as it deemed Russia's progression towards a democratic system as crucial for a more favorable foreign policy outlook (Stent, *The Limits of Partnership* 15).

The administration also supported Russia's integration into the global economy and provided economic aid to help its transition to capitalism (Goldgeier and McFaul 12). However, tensions emerged over NATO expansion, with Russia expressing concerns about the alliance's enlargement into former Soviet territories. The relationship further strained with the NATO intervention in the Kosovo conflict (Kuchins 121), which Russia vehemently opposed. Another significant development was the revelation of Russian involvement in illicit arms sales, including

the transfer of nuclear technology to countries like Iran (Goldgeier and McFaul 158, 159). Nevertheless, efforts were made to maintain engagement, leading to the signing of the Moscow Treaty in 2002, in the era of Bush Administration, which further reduced strategic nuclear weapons.

When the George W. Bush administration (2001-2009) came to office, the United States and Russia experienced a mixed and evolving relationship. Initially, there was a period of cooperation, symbolized by President Bush's comment, following their first meeting in Slovenia in June 2001, that he had looked into Russian President Vladimir Putin's eyes and "found him to be very straightforward and trustworthy" (Goldgeier and McFaul 158, 159). Efforts were made to foster closer ties in May 2002 when Bush's visit to Russia resulted in the signing of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), which aimed to reduce the nuclear arsenals of both countries (Kuchins 124). However, tensions emerged as differences arose regarding missile defense systems, particularly the proposed deployment of the U.S. missile defense shield in Eastern Europe. In the final year of the Bush II administration, US-Russian relations reached their lowest point since the 1980s due to various factors. The conflict in Georgia in August 2008 worsened the situation, as tensions were already high regarding issues such as Kosovo's independence, NATO enlargement, and missile defense plans. However, the deterioration of relations had been happening over several years, despite an initial period of cooperation after 9/11. The lack of trust and diverging interests became apparent, despite the perceived close relationship between the presidents. The global economic crisis in September 2008 and the subsequent election of Barack Obama as president of the United States further diverted attention from the strained US-Russian relationship (Kuchins 125). The deterioration of bilateral relations

between the United States and Russia prompted the subsequent administration to embark on a reset of diplomatic efforts, effectively initiating a fresh approach to the relationship.

After the deteriorated relations in the Bush era, The Obama administration launched a “reset” intended to establish a more favorable and cooperative dynamic with the aim of improving the relationship after the 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict. The objective was to secure Moscow's support on critical matters aligning with the administration's agenda. The reset initiative showed initial achievements, such as the signing of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) and increased collaboration on issues like Iran and Afghanistan. However, the pace of progress gradually faded as differences emerged on critical issues. Vladimir Putin's re-assumption of the Russian presidency in 2012 signaled a shift towards a less cooperative relationship, as he believed that Washington had not adequately addressed Russian concerns, particularly regarding missile defense. In 2013, the US administration adjusted its expectations for progress in bilateral relations. However, in 2014, the bilateral ties between the United States and Russia, as well as between the West and Russia, reached its lowest since the Cold War due to Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region and its support for separatist movements in eastern Ukraine (Pifer 111; Kuchins 117). In response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and its subsequent actions in eastern Ukraine, the United States and the European Union downgraded political relations, substituting the intended June G8 summit in Sochi with a G7 meeting that excluded Russia. They also implemented visa and financial sanctions targeting specific Russian individuals, followed by more extensive sanctions on Russia's financial, energy, and defense sectors (Pifer 120). Additionally, there were disagreements over the Syrian civil war, with the United States supporting opposition forces and Russia backing the Assad regime (117).

Cybersecurity concerns, including Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, further complicated the relationship.

#### **4.4.2 The U.S-Russia Relations under the Trump Administration**

During his 2016 campaign, Donald Trump made a statement that raised doubts regarding his approach to the Crimea issue. He suggested that if he were elected president, he would recognize Crimea as Russian territory and consider lifting the sanctions imposed on Russia. In a press conference, Trump was asked by a journalist whether he would recognize Crimea as Russian territory, and whether he would lift sanctions against Russia, he stated: “we'll be looking at that. Yeah, we'll be looking” (Bump). This declaration drew significant attention and sparked controversy, as it contradicted the stance held by previous U.S. administrations and the international community, which considered Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 as a violation of Ukraine's sovereignty. Trump's position on Crimea and the potential lifting of sanctions against Russia reflected a departure from the prevailing consensus and raised concerns about the implications for U.S. foreign policy and relations with Ukraine and its allies.

Furthermore, in an interview on ABC News, Trump responded to questions about his stance on Crimea. He stated that the people of Crimea would prefer to be with Russia rather than their previous situation, and he believed this should be taken into consideration. Trump was asked to clarify his recent comment during a news conference where he suggested he was exploring the idea of officially recognizing Crimea as Russian territory. In response, Trump emphasized that if he were elected president, he would ensure that Russian President Vladimir Putin refrained from further incursions into Ukraine. He made it clear by saying, "He's not going into Ukraine." When asked about Russia's presence in Ukraine, including Crimea, Trump

acknowledged that Russia was already present "in a certain way." He criticized the Obama administration's handling of the situation, describing the region as a mess and pointing out the supposed weaknesses of NATO. Trump expressed the view that establishing a good relationship with Russia and obtaining their assistance in combating ISIS would be a positive outcome, emphasizing the potential benefits in terms of resources, lives, and overall stability (ABC News). Trump's presidential campaign witnessed his nuanced and uncertain stances on Russia, which generated inquiries and uncertainties regarding his intended approach towards Russia.

The initial actions taken by the Trump administration demonstrated a genuine effort to fundamentally reassess U.S. geopolitical priorities. This included embracing the "America First" principle, advocating for a return to a more traditional interpretation of state sovereignty, proposing a less interventionist and ideologically driven military policy, acknowledging the shifting geopolitical landscape towards the Pacific region, and perceiving China as the primary and rapidly expanding political, economic, and military threat to the United States. Trump, along with key figures from his administration like Bannon, Gorka, and Flynn, emphasized the need for a radical transformation in U.S. foreign policy objectives. This involved reducing the significance of NATO and Europe in general, while considering Russia as a potential ally and counterbalance to China in both East Asia and the Middle East (Korobkov 47). In this regard, Stephen Bannon, Chief Strategist and Senior Counselor to President Trump, stated that:

The economic war with China is everything. And we have to be maniacally focused on that. If we continue to lose it, we're five years away, I think, ten years at the most, of hitting an inflection point from which we'll never be able to recover... One of us is going

to be a hegemon in 25 or 30 years and it's gonna be them if we go down this path. (qtd. in Korobkov 47)

The relationship between the United States and Russia is largely shaped by their roles as global nuclear superpowers. Arms-control agreements have been a consistent aspect of this dynamic since the signing of the first Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) treaty in 1972. Despite initial intentions by President Trump to negotiate a major arms control treaty, his administration, particularly under Bolton's influence, took actions to dismantle longstanding arms-control mechanisms. The US withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 2019, allowing the possibility of deploying intermediate-range weapons. Additionally, the US exited the Treaty on Open Skies in 2020. The New START treaty, the last remaining agreement limiting strategic nuclear weapons, faced uncertainty as the Trump administration sought to include China in negotiations, but the effort proved unsuccessful, leaving the fate of New START unclear at the end of Trump's term. The administration participated sporadically in talks on strategic stability initiated during the Obama era, with a notable reluctance to address Russia's concerns about the US national missile defense program (Stent, Trump's Russia Legacy 60-61). Based on Trump's actions, it appears that he prioritized dismantling the existing arms control regime, withdrawing from key treaties, and pursuing negotiations that included China's nuclear weapons, the thing that ultimately yielded limited results.

The U.S.-Russia strategic stability framework, developed meticulously over several decades, now faces potential disintegration. Treaty violations and unilateral withdrawals have created a climate of mutual distrust. The Trump administration considers current arms control agreements inadequate for addressing the evolving security landscape, which now includes all

types of nuclear weapons, the development of new weapons such as hypersonic vehicles and space-based systems, and particularly China's modernization of its strategic nuclear arsenal. Additionally, the political framework for future arms control agreements involving both Moscow and Beijing is yet to be determined. An attempt by the Trump administration to involve China in trilateral arms control discussions was abandoned when China declined to participate. As of that time, ongoing bilateral negotiations are centered on a potential one-year extension of the New START Treaty (which can be extended for up to five years) and a one-year freeze on all nuclear warheads, both strategic and non-strategic. The specific verification processes for the nuclear freeze remain uncertain. This proposed one-year period is intended to provide time for launching future arms control negotiations that address a broader range of issues and could be renewed annually if progress is made. However, there is still considerable uncertainty regarding the Trump administration's negotiating priorities and strategy (Newlin, et al. 1)

In early October 2020, U.S. special envoy Marshall Billingslea outlined conditions for extending New START that Moscow has not agreed to, including a framework for a future agreement involving China, covering a broader range of nuclear weapons such as short-range tactical systems, and implementing stricter verification mechanisms. Following a meeting in Helsinki, Finland, the U.S. strategy seemed to shift towards securing a freeze on nuclear warheads, with the aim of announcing this agreement before the November 3 U.S. presidential elections, as a precondition for extending New START. Initially, Moscow stated that it would only agree to an extension without any preconditions. However, on October 20, Moscow indicated potential receptiveness to a one-year freeze on nuclear warheads to secure a corresponding one-year extension of New START (2).

To counter the Russian benefits and expansion, the U.S. launched a series of sanctions on Russian entities and individuals implicated in various activities, including election interference, the poisoning of the Skripals, and cyber attacks during Trump's presidency. The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), passed by the US Senate in July 2017, allowed for 'blocking sanctions' and 'sectoral sanctions.' These measures targeted individuals and entities linked to Putin, with 336 individuals and 536 entities facing sanctions since 2014. Congressional sanctions, unlike those from executive orders, proved difficult to remove and lacked incentives for Russia to alter its behavior. Despite numerous designations, Russia did not conform to the Minsk agreements or withdraw support for separatist forces in the Donbas, but the sanctions adversely impacted the Russian economy and had repercussions for US companies (Stent, Trump's Russia Legacy 61).

As the CAATSA sanctions were directed to the individuals, the primary concern for Russia's oligarchs is to avoid being named in the upcoming Treasury Department report, as inclusion could lead to personal sanctions against them. These wealthy individuals, collectively worth \$386 billion, are taking various actions to mitigate this risk, such as extensive lobbying, offering large sums of money to stay off the list, liquidating U.S. assets, and repatriating capital to Russia. Beyond the threat of personal sanctions, they are also addressing potential risks to their companies and other non-liquid assets. The U.S. State Department has warned that companies doing significant business with major Russian defense firms and intelligence agencies could face restrictions, prompting some Russian firms, like Alfa Bank, to reduce their exposure to the defense industry. While Russia's options for defending against CAATSA-related sanctions are extremely limited, the Kremlin is actively helping the oligarchs protect their non-liquid assets. Overall, the passage highlights the high stakes for Russia's wealthiest individuals and

their efforts to shield themselves and their businesses from the threat of U.S. sanctions (Zolotukhina 4).

Officially, the Kremlin is implementing undisclosed measures aimed to hedging the risks. Behind the scenes, President Putin is particularly focused on protecting those in his inner circle who might be named in the Treasury report and potentially targeted with new sanctions. Putin's goals include repatriating as much of the approximately \$1 trillion USD that Russia's wealthiest oligarchs have moved abroad and shielding his major financial backers from any CAATSA-related sanctions. To this end, he has instructed the country's central bank to develop "new mechanisms for returning capital to Russia." The Russian Ministry of Finance has announced plans to issue \$3 billion USD in Eurobonds for Russian investors wishing to repatriate funds. In response to Alfa Bank's withdrawal from defense sector lending, the Russian central bank has recently taken over Promsyazbank, designating it as the institution for defense sector financing. This move is expected to "exacerbate problems of ineffective procurement and increase the risk of corruption" within the sector. Despite this flurry of activity by the Russian government and oligarchs, CAATSA-related uncertainties remain, which will be detailed in the following section. The text will then explore potential consequences if Moscow's efforts fail or if CAATSA proves effective (4, 5).

By targeting two pillars crucial to President Putin's power—the defense sector and his close financial supporters—CAATSA has the potential to destabilize the regime. Such instability may not necessarily benefit Washington. A weakened Russia could become more aggressive, contrary to America's preference. Therefore, the U.S. may need to take action if Moscow becomes unable to finance its state debt. Such a situation could trigger another round of inflation and its associated negative consequences, which Washington would be prudent to avoid (5).

While Trump generally opposed sanctions, especially CAATSA, he did support sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. Despite his interest in promoting a high-level business dialogue with Russia, his denial of Russian election interference during the Helsinki summit undermined the effort. The working group intended for political and business dialogue faced challenges due to the fallout from Trump's statements and the limitations imposed by sanctions. The arrest of Michael Calvey, a US businessman advocating for closer economic ties, further strained relations. The attempt at a high-level business dialogue was deemed the 'right initiative at the wrong time,' reflecting the complexities and tensions in US-Russia relations during Trump's presidency (Stent 61-62).

Trump's recurrent criticism of the NATO Alliance, appealed the Kremlin interest in Trump's presidential bid and perceived as the main opponent by Putin. Trump consistently labeled NATO as 'obsolete' and accused most members of not meeting their defense spending commitments, suggesting the US should leave the Alliance. Tensions escalated during the July 2018 NATO summit, where Trump's unpredictability raised concerns about a potential US withdrawal. Ultimately, Trump affirmed strong support for NATO, urging allies to increase contributions. Despite Trump's skepticism, much of his administration recognized the importance of shoring up NATO against Russia. Vice President Pence and successive defense secretaries reaffirmed US support, with military reinforcement in the Baltic States and Poland. However, the unpredictability of the Trump administration has left a lasting impact on NATO, making other members aware of the uncertainty in US commitment to the Alliance (Stent, Trump's Russia Legacy 63).

Another issue that strained the US-Russian relations was the Russia's involvement in the Middle East, particularly in Syria. Both Russia and the U.S. aimed and cooperated to defeat ISIS,

but Russia focused more on anti-Assad groups. When Trump suggested withdrawing all U.S. troops from Syria, Putin agreed, emphasizing Russia's invited military presence. Although most U.S. troops left, a contingent stayed in the northeast, leading to a clash with Russian Wagner mercenaries near the Tabiya gas plant. Despite 200–300 reported Russian casualties, Russia denied the firefight. Trump's Middle East policy aimed to counter Iran, prompting the U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and imposition of sanctions, with Russia expressing criticism but having mixed feelings about Iran's role in Syria. Putin conveyed a desire for Iranians to leave Syria (Stent, Trump's Russia Legacy 65-66).

In retrospect, before Trump's presidency, US-Russia relations were already strained due to historical mistrust, differing strategic interests, and specific events like the Crimea annexation. The era of the Trump administration left a lasting mark on U.S.-Russia relations, characterized by a mix of collaboration, confrontation, and persistent controversies. As Angela Stent noted that the state of US-Russian relations had deteriorated to a greater extent at the end of Trump's presidency than when he assumed the office (67). One of the major features was the tumultuous state of arms control agreements. The withdrawal from the INF Treaty and challenges surrounding the extension of the New START Treaty demonstrated the fragility of established nuclear frameworks. Simultaneously, military actions in regions like Syria showcased the divergence in strategic interests, often leading to diplomatic deadlocks. In addition, the imposition of sanctions became a tool of choice for the U.S. in response to perceived transgressions, contributing to the overall complexity of the diplomatic landscape.

## **4.5 U.S.-European Allies Relations: Strains in Transatlantic Ties**

### **4.5.1 Historical Context to U.S-European Relations**

American perceptions of the EU's international role have been influenced by several historical factors. The strong cultural, political, economic, and social ties between the US and European countries have established a foundation of trust, shaping how Americans view the EU's role on the global stage. Additionally, the historical development of US-European relations has highlighted differences in economic and political policies, reflecting deep-rooted disagreements informed by history and society. Competition and convergence between the US and the EU in economic and political realms have further impacted American perceptions, with contrasting approaches to market operations and differing views on international order and stability shaping how the EU is perceived by the American public. These historical influences have played a significant role in shaping American attitudes towards the EU's role in world affairs, emphasizing trust, cooperation, competition, and shared values as key elements in the perception of the EU's international role (Stivachtis 64-76).

The examination of the history of US-European relations reveals that despite shared economic and political principles and the necessity to address common challenges together, there have been divergent policy pursuits between the U.S. and EU Member States. Disagreements are rooted in historical and societal differences, exacerbated by global developments. These differences are typically managed through transatlantic governance and crisis management processes.

Primarily, competition between the U.S. and EU is evident in the economic domain, where contrasting visions of market economy operation persist despite a shared preference for it. The EU leans towards a social market model with higher taxation and state involvement, contrasting with the U.S. However, areas of economic convergence are identifiable. Similarly, in politics, competition and convergence processes shape international order and stability pursuits,

involving economic, diplomatic, and security aspects. The EU and U.S. compete for global influence, reflecting divergent approaches to economic organization, political order, and values such as security and development. While the EU emphasizes 'soft power' and civilian roles, the U.S. favors military/hard power. Yet, core interests in stability, market economics, and democratic governance are shared between the EU and U.S. (Stivachtis 67, 68).

The military and financial alliance formed with France in 1778, which enlisted Spain and the Netherlands to combat the British, transformed the American Revolution into a significant conflict challenging British naval and military supremacy. This alliance enabled European settlers to overthrow British rule, leading to the establishment of the independent U.S. state. From the aftermath of the American Revolution until the Spanish-American War, U.S. foreign policy primarily focused on regional interests rather than global affairs. The key objective during this period was to prevent European interference in both domestic affairs and external relations. Consequently, President George Washington adopted a policy of neutrality during the war between Britain and France in 1793, further reinforced by his support for the Jay Treaty in 1795, aimed at averting war with Britain and fostering commerce (68).

In his "Farewell Message" of 1796, Washington cautioned against foreign entanglements, emphasizing the need for the U.S. to avoid involvement in European conflicts. This sentiment echoed the desire of early European settlers to strategically disengage from European powers and the broader European system. This viewpoint eventually underpinned U.S. policy under the Monroe Doctrine. By 1797, tensions escalated with France seizing American ships, leading to the Quasi-War of 1798-99. Thomas Jefferson envisioned the U.S. as a promoter of republicanism seeking to counter British imperialism. Jefferson's Embargo Act of 1807 reflected deep distrust of Britain, while conflicts with indigenous peoples supported by Britain hindered westward

expansion. The War of 1812, marked by a stalemate militarily, ended with the Treaty of Ghent in 1815. Despite challenges, the U.S. saw a surge in nationalism and improved relations with Canada after 1815 (68).

In response to the newfound independence of Spanish colonies in Latin America in the early nineteenth century, the U.S. introduced the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, denouncing European interference in the Americas and influencing subsequent American leaders. This period also saw internal turmoil over slavery in western territories, leading the U.S. to focus inward. Under Abraham Lincoln, the North mobilized its resources, ultimately prevailing over the South in the Civil War. Meanwhile, tensions with Britain and Canada persisted until the resolution of the Alabama Claims in 1872 (68).

The late nineteenth century witnessed the Spanish-American War, which ended Spanish imperialism and expanded U.S. territories. Modernization of the U.S. Navy, influenced by Alfred Thayer Mahan's sea power theories, established the nation as a major naval force. The U.S. transitioned to a global power, exemplified by the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine in 1904, asserting interventionist rights in the Americas. President Wilson's ambition to extend U.S. influence beyond the region reflected growing American power and global aspirations (69).

During World War I, U.S. neutrality shifted following German attacks on American interests leading to significant American involvement and eventual victory. Wilson's diplomatic efforts at the Versailles Peace Conference aimed at global peace and democracy, shaping U.S. foreign policy ideals. World War II marked the U.S. emergence as a superpower, with increased global interests and engagements. The Cold War era further solidified U.S. interventionist policies, as the nation led efforts against Soviet influence through military, economic, and

diplomatic means. The post-war period saw a transformation in U.S.-European relations, marked by mutual dependency and shared strategic goals amidst Cold War tensions.

The relationship between the EU and the US holds paramount significance in global politics, given their status as major economic and military powers. Beginning in 1953, their diplomatic ties evolved, with the EU playing a crucial role in post-1945 U.S. foreign policy. During the Cold War era, U.S. interests in Europe centered on countering Soviet influence and promoting European integration to prevent regional conflicts. Post-Cold War, the U.S. sought EU involvement in global affairs but maintained primacy in decision-making. Despite shared norms and values, disagreements have been common, reflecting deep-rooted historical and societal differences. The Marshall Plan and establishment of NATO underscored U.S. support for European reconstruction and security. However, divergence emerged during events like the Korean War, Suez Crisis, and Vietnam War, revealing discord in strategic approaches. The collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1980s ushered in a multipolar world, challenging U.S. dominance and prompting shifts in global alliances and priorities. Despite commonalities, differences persist, shaping their policy trajectories and influencing broader geopolitical dynamics (69).

#### **4.5.2 The U.S-European Relations under the Trump Administration**

Donald Trump's election marked a significant shift in US-EU relations. The Trump administration's approach differs greatly from previous administrations, including the Obama administration. Unlike the longstanding belief that a united Europe is crucial for global stability and prosperity, President Trump has frequently criticized the EU, describing it as an exploitative entity that gains unfair advantages in the free market, causing harm to American markets.

Additionally, he has expressed dissatisfaction with the EU's contribution to NATO. Trump's isolationist and utilitarian stance has created growing hostility between European leaders, institutions, and the White House, leading to challenges in maintaining the achievements of the transatlantic alliance in addressing global challenges (Eran, et al. 62).

In contrast to some European Leaders' approach in Europe, Trump has actively fostered widespread public opposition to global values, international agreements, open borders, and multiculturalism. Instead, he advocates for simpler, more direct solutions, including the use of force and the implementation of barriers to immigration and trade. He also demonstrates sympathy towards a "strong" and autocratic leadership style, reminiscent of Russian President Putin. Trump's worldview rejects the multilateral ideals upheld by the EU, which emphasize mutual benefits in international relations, and instead embraces a zero-sum game mentality, where one nation's gain is perceived as another's loss (63).

Trump holds a highly critical stance towards the EU, viewing it as a pan-national entity that erodes national identities and transfers power from the "people" to cosmopolitan elites. He commended Britain's departure from the EU and anticipates other nations to follow suit, arguing that the EU diminishes the distinctiveness of its member states, with a sentiment of "people want their country back." Trump perceives the EU as primarily benefiting Germany's economic interests at the expense of others. Prior to assuming office, his transition team engaged in discussions with European leaders about potential exits from the EU. Additionally, Steve Bannon pledged to cultivate bilateral ties with European nations as an alternative to dealing with the EU. Trump himself has made commitments to this effect, challenging the NATO alliance and questioning mutual defense obligations, suggesting a readiness to discard previous agreements

and alliances that he views as burdensome rather than advantageous, contrary to his predecessor's perspective (64).

After more than a year in office, Trump's foreign policy exhibits several key features, including the absence of a cohesive doctrine, reliance on short-term, improvised solutions, and the formulation of goals based on isolationist rather than global principles. Consistent with this approach, Trump has minimized American engagement in what he perceives as foreign matters across various fronts, such as exiting the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Paris Agreement on climate change, advocating for the renegotiation of trade deals with American neighbors, and halting talks for a transatlantic trade pact. These actions, particularly the withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, marked a significant shift according to European leaders, with Merkel asserting that "the days are over when we can depend on others." At the core of the discord between the US and Europe lie three key issues: transcontinental trade, resistance to Russian aggression, and the future trajectory of NATO (64).

Among these, transatlantic trade emerges as arguably the most pivotal. In 2016, the trade surplus between the US and the EU favored the EU by \$136 billion. Trump's fundamental strategy revolves around rectifying this trade imbalance. To achieve this, the US intends to levy tariffs on imports from Europe and revoke multilateral agreements that, in Trump's view, enhance the bargaining power of US trading partners. Additionally, Trump has threatened to impose a 100 percent duty on European dairy and other agricultural imports, while also considering raising tariffs on vehicle imports to 35 percent (65).

Contrary to Trump's protectionist stance, European leadership, led by Merkel, has rejected such rhetoric. Prior to the G20 summit in July 2017, Merkel asserted the need for

developed nations to pursue globalization that benefits all, explicitly opposing protectionism and isolationism (though not mentioning Trump by name). Even before her meeting with Trump in March 2017, Merkel emphasized her commitment to preserving free trade and a "strong Europe," even if it meant confronting Washington. Furthermore, in response to Trump's tariff threats, senior European officials, particularly Cecilia Malmström, the EU Trade Commissioner, cautioned that any increase in metal tariffs on US imports would prompt retaliatory measures, such as heightened tariffs on American agricultural products like whiskey and orange juice, aimed at affecting farming states in the US, Trump's primary political support base (65).

In contrast to Obama's focus on multilateral trade and negotiations like the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) aimed at eliminating tariffs between the USA and the EU, the Trump administration has adopted a unilateral, mercantilist, and transactional approach to trade. This is evident in the 2019 Trade Policy Agenda, which outlines three key points. Firstly, the administration criticizes existing trade agreements like NAFTA and the WTO for harming US economic growth and competitiveness. Secondly, it advocates revising US trade agreements and enforcing laws more aggressively to counter unfair practices, particularly from China. This includes asserting US sovereignty at the WTO by challenging its processes. Finally, the administration openly aims to rebalance all US trade relationships to better serve American interests, even if it means withdrawing from agreements like the TPP (Dimitrova 4).

President Trump views trade as a zero-sum game, where deficits indicate partners not playing by the rules. He accuses several countries, including some EU members, of unfair practices damaging the US economy. To address trade deficits, Trump advocates implementing high tariffs on certain products as a strategy of trade protectionism and economic nationalism, believing it will protect American industries and stimulate the US economy. Despite criticisms,

Trump's focus remains on rebalancing US trade relations, exemplified by his sharp criticism of Germany's trade practices (5).

The trade war initiated by the Trump administration initially targeted China due to concerns over its technology transfers, intellectual property policies, and innovation practices, which were deemed unfair and detrimental to US commerce under Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974. Trump's unilateral use of Section 301 sanctions bypassed international arbitration through the WTO, departing from past administrations' adherence to multilateral dispute resolution principles. Additionally, Trump invoked national security to impose tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, affecting not only China but also US trading partners like the EU (5).

On June 1, 2018, Trump imposed tariffs on EU steel and aluminum imports under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, citing national security concerns. This section empowers the President to adjust import levels through tariffs or quotas if they pose a threat to national security. In response, the EU imposed retaliatory tariffs on US products, leading to a potential escalation of reciprocal tariffs, as seen in the Boeing-Airbus dispute (5).

While the damage to EU-US trade relations may seem severe, given their significant economic ties, the transatlantic economy's high integration offers resilience against trade shocks. However, the resolution of trade frictions depends on both Trump's actions and EU responses. Former EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström emphasized the EU's need to respond to US actions while expressing a desire to de-escalate tensions and return to pre-sanction trade conditions. Yet, this resolution appears unlikely, especially if Trump secures a second term. In such a scenario, voluntary export restraints (quotas) on EU exports to the US market could emerge as a compromise solution to resolve trade disputes (5).

The divergence across the Atlantic extends to matters of national security, particularly in response to the Russian threat against the EU. President Putin has singled out the EU and NATO as the primary challenges to Russia's security and its political influence in Eastern Europe. To counter what is perceived as Western encroachment into its sphere of influence, Putin has pursued a campaign to destabilize Europe, employing tactics such as military intervention in Ukraine, bolstering forces along NATO borders, engaging in information warfare, and utilizing cyber tools to influence European elections, including those in France and Belgium (Eran, et al. 65).

The crux of the disagreement between European leaders and Trump lies in their differing assessments of the Russian threat. Europe regards Russian aggression as a direct menace to its security and the integrity of the EU. This sentiment was underscored by former British Foreign Minister Philip Hammond's assertion that Russia poses a threat to all, given its disregard for international norms. In contrast, Trump has expressed a desire to foster positive relations with Russia overall, particularly with Putin, whom he has openly admired. However, the Russian interference in the 2016 US elections has reinforced concerns about the Russian threat among US lawmakers, leading to the imposition of sanctions on Moscow with rare bipartisan backing, which Trump reluctantly accepted and signed into law (65).

The third issue at stake revolves around the future of NATO. President Trump has surpassed his predecessors in his critique of NATO. Not only did he brand the alliance as "obsolete" during his presidential campaign due to perceived inadequacies in counterterrorism efforts, but once in office, he demonstrated a willingness to condition US commitment to Article 5's mutual defense pledge. Trump emphasized that this would hinge on whether European allies had met their financial obligations, specifically NATO's 2 percent of GDP target for defense

spending. While the issue of equitable burden-sharing within NATO is longstanding, Trump's unprecedented threat to withdraw American forces from Europe if allies fail to increase their contributions sets him apart from previous US presidents (Dimitrova 2).

Trump's mercantilist view of the transatlantic security partnership stems from his zero-sum perspective on global politics. In this view, foreign relations are seen as straightforward transactions where the US has provided disproportionately more than its allies and received unfavorable deals in return from them and the broader global order. This perception of an unfair arrangement, demanding immediate renegotiation with a prioritization of American interests, has been the driving force behind Trump's rhetoric and actions. It has sparked significant apprehension in Europe regarding the US's stance on NATO's security posture.

Efforts by certain senior administration figures to moderate Trump's remarks, such as Vice President Mike Pence's assertion at the Munich Security Conference in February 2017 that the US strongly backs NATO and remains steadfast in its commitment to the trans-Atlantic alliance, did little to reassure Europeans. Trump's reversals on NATO have been remarkable. Initially declining to explicitly endorse Article 5 during his speech at the NATO summit in Brussels in May 2017, Trump surprised his national security advisors a few weeks later by affirming US support for Article 5 during a press conference. Despite Trump retracting his stance on NATO's obsolescence and acknowledging its role in counterterrorism efforts, he has consistently criticized allies for failing to meet the 2 percent defense spending threshold. Furthermore, during his address at the NATO summit in Brussels in 2018, he even suggested that member states should increase their military expenditure to 4 percent. However, perhaps the most startling of Trump's conflicting statements on NATO was reported by The New York Times. According to the newspaper, throughout 2018, Trump privately floated the idea of

withdrawing the US from NATO. This notion was met with strong opposition from his national security team, including then-Secretary of Defense James Mattis and former national security adviser John Bolton. They argued that an American withdrawal from the 70-year-old alliance would significantly diminish US influence in Europe, which could have long-lasting repercussions for US interests and potentially embolden Russia for decades. Reflecting these concerns, Congress took steps to counter any such move by the President. In January 2019, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a historic bipartisan legislation known as the NATO Support Act, aimed at preventing the US from withdrawing from the alliance without Senate approval (2, 3).

While Trump's criticism of NATO and European countries' involvement in the alliance is often highlighted in his tweets and speeches, the official documents present a slightly different perspective. For example, the National Security Strategy (NSS) issued by President Trump in December 2017 restated the US's dedication to Europe, emphasizing the vital importance of a strong and free Europe to the United States. The NSS stressed the shared commitment to democratic principles, individual liberty, and the rule of law, highlighting that a prosperous and stable Europe contributes to American security. The document reiterated the US's firm commitment to its European allies and partners, underscoring the significance of the NATO alliance and reaffirming support for Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. Similarly, the Secretary of Defense's National Defense Strategy (NDS) released in February 2018 emphasized NATO's strategic value in addressing primary threats to the US, particularly from "revisionist powers" like China and Russia. The NDS highlighted the importance of alliances and partnerships, which provide a durable strategic advantage, and emphasized the daily cooperation with allies in defending freedom and maintaining international order. These strategic documents unequivocally

reaffirm the US's commitment to Europe and underscore the significance of addressing Russia's re-emergence as a potential threat (3).

The significant disparity between President Trump's unconventional remarks and his administration's more conventional strategic policy documents prompts questions about the extent to which his controversial presidency is impacting the transatlantic security alliance. Some observers argue that Trump's transactional approach to NATO management poses "an existential threat" to the alliance, stemming not only from his inconsistent policy positions but also from fundamental beliefs about global politics. Conversely, some analysts suggest that Trump's influence on the transatlantic alliance should be kept in perspective, considering the historical tumultuous nature of the relationship. They point to past instances, such as the divide between the United States and certain allies like France and Germany caused by George W. Bush's unilateral decision to intervene in Iraq in 2003. From this perspective, even the current tensions between the US and EU member states may be viewed within the context of broader historical patterns of strain and disagreement within the alliance (3,4).

The current crisis in transatlantic relations, particularly regarding the Iran nuclear deal following Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is seen as stemming primarily from the power asymmetry between the United States and Europe. This is compounded by a shift in US priorities, where America is increasingly focused on avoiding entanglements in other regions, including Europe (4).

Although Donald Trump's aggressive language and "America First" strategy toward American friends in Europe signaled a clear departure from earlier presidential styles, the underlying policies frequently reflected more continuity than change. Trump's departure from the

Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA) and his discontent with the EU's NATO commitments matched long-standing Republican criticisms of burden-sharing and mistrust of multilateral agreements. Trump's unilateralism and repeated threats to "decouple" from Europe, however, markedly contrasted with the internationalist stance of his forerunners. The transatlantic relationship experienced severe turbulence as a result of this schizophrenic blend of isolationism and interventionism, which strained diplomatic relations and undermined trust in America's dependability as an ally. Although Trump gave the impression that he was upending the existing quo, his actions in Europe eventually revealed the conflict between America's global ambitions and its domestic political dynamics that has endured across multiple administrations.

## **Conclusion**

Based on what has been discussed in this chapter, the examination of the aforementioned case studies under the Trump administrations exhibited interventionist tendencies unlike the rhetoric Trump employed during the 2016 presidential campaign. The big image of Trump's foreign policy approach was mirrored through his actions towards certain countries. In the China-U.S. dynamic, trade tensions and diplomatic engagements revealed an active effort to reshape the economic relationship. Trump's unconventional approach, featuring tariff escalations, accusations, and the imposition of restrictions, reflected a departure from the established norms of international trade. This interventionist stance sought to address perceived imbalances but also triggered heightened tensions, contributing to a paradigm shift in global economic dynamics. The U.S.-Iran relations witnessed a withdrawal from the JCPOA and the implementation of a maximum pressure campaign, reflecting a strong interventionist stance which contributed to an escalation of conflicts, heightened militarization, and a more unpredictable geopolitical

landscape. Similarly, The U.S.-Israeli-Palestinian conflict indicated a blatant intervention through the unveiling of the "Deal of the Century" the deal through which the administration actively engaged in proposing and promoting its own peace plan without any cooperation with the Palestinian authority. The relocation of the embassy to Jerusalem was another transgression of the United Nations resolutions which inflamed the region and jeopardized the peace in the Middle East. Moreover, Donald Trump sought to distance the United States from costly overseas interventions associated with the "forever wars." However, his administration maintained a hawkish counterterrorism posture, relying heavily on drone strikes and special operations to target terrorist threats globally. While reducing large-scale military deployments, Trump's counterterrorism strategy continued to reflect an interventionist approach focused on eliminating terrorist groups through lethal force.

Likewise, the U.S. pursuit of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula faced numerous challenges throughout the Trump administration. One prominent obstacle was the lack of a clear and detailed agreement outlining the steps for denuclearization and corresponding concessions and disagreements over the sequencing of actions whether sanctions relief should precede denuclearization or vice versa created a persistent deadlock. Although the Trump's policy exhibited a direct engagement and negotiations, which includes active efforts to address the nuclear issue and emphasis on economic sanctions, the initiatives failed. In the same vein, U.S.-Russia relations, marked by sanctions and arms control complexities, portrayed an interventionist approach. Prior to the Trump Administration, the relations with Russia were already strained due to historical mistrust, differing strategic interests, and the Russian annexation of Crimea. At the same time, military actions in regions like Syria and the imposition of sanctions highlighted the divergence in strategic interests, often leading to diplomatic dead ends.



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## General Conclusion

This dissertation is an attempt to investigate the isolationist and interventionist approach of the U.S. foreign policy under the Trump Administration. The study concludes by providing a concise summary of the key arguments and events that were previously discussed in its chapters. The trajectory of U.S. foreign policy has been a dynamic interplay between isolationist tendencies and interventionist inclinations throughout its history, the aspect which reflects the nation's evolving approach to global affairs. The early years of U.S. foreign policy were marked by a strong inclination toward isolationism, shaped by key doctrines and historical developments. George Washington's Farewell Address in 1796 laid the groundwork for this approach, advising the nation to avoid permanent alliances and entanglements in foreign affairs. By doing so, Washington set a precedent for avoiding permanent alliances, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding the young nation's sovereignty. The events that took place during this period played significant role in shaping the development on the isolationist principle. The XYZ Affair, involving diplomatic tensions between the U.S and France, heightened concerns about foreign entanglements and contribute to a growing sentiment of isolationism. As a result of the U.S fears of becoming the pawn of the European nation, the passage of Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 further exemplified a desire to protect national security and assert control over foreign influences, solidifying the isolationist inclination during this period of time.

Additionally, the Monroe Doctrine, articulated by President James Monroe in 1823, reinforced the policy of non-intervention by warning European powers against meddling in the affairs of the newly independent nations in the Western Hemisphere. This doctrine holds great significance in U.S. foreign policy as it established the principle of non-intervention and non-colonization in the Americas, asserting U.S. influence and dominance in the region. It became a

cornerstone of American diplomacy, shaping U.S. relations with Latin American countries and laying the foundation for future U.S. foreign policy doctrines. However, the pursuit of territorial expansionism and the ideology of Manifest Destiny during the 19th century contradicted this isolationist sentiment. The push westward and the annexation of territories reflected a more interventionist stance in regional affairs signaling a willingness to engage in territorial acquisition and assert U.S. influence. Furthermore, Theodore Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine in 1904 asserted the U.S. right to intervene in Latin American countries to maintain stability, showcasing a dynamic and pragmatic approach, blending isolationist ideals with strategic interventions based on evolving geopolitical circumstances and national interests.

However, the twentieth century witnessed a remarkable evolution in the foreign policy stance of the United States, shifting from a doctrine of isolationism to active interventionism on the global stage. This transformation was profoundly influenced by significant events such as the First World War, the Second World War, and the gradual erosion of isolationist tendencies. The devastating impact of World War I shattered the illusion of geographic isolation, pushing the United States onto the global stage. The subsequent emergence of totalitarian regimes and the outbreak of World War II further compelled the U.S. to abandon its isolationist posture in favor of active intervention to preserve democratic values. In addition, the Cold War marked a sustained period of geopolitical tension, with the U.S. assuming a leading role in countering the spread of communism. The strategic imperative of containment led to extensive military engagements, covert operations, and alliances, reflecting a departure from traditional isolationist principles. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked a pivotal moment, leading the U.S. into a unipolar world order as the sole superpower.

Arguably, from the aftermath of the Second World War until the election of Donald Trump, the United States maintained an interventionist approach in its foreign policy. Throughout this period, the U.S. actively engaged in global affairs, involving itself in various conflicts and international initiatives. However, with the rise of Trump, there emerged a notable shift in rhetoric and tendencies towards isolationism, the thing that motivated us to conduct this research to analyze the inclination and change in the U.S foreign policy. Trump's questioning of traditional alliances and emphasis on an "America First" approach raised concerns about a departure from the interventionist trajectory the U.S. had been on for decades.

Indeed, the analysis of Donald Trump rhetoric during his 2016 presidential campaign showcased an immense inclination toward isolationism. Donald Trump's use of the "America First" slogan and emphasis on nationalism during his presidential campaign and in office resonate with longstanding sentiments deeply prevalent in American history. These sentiments, particularly rooted in isolationist movements like the America First Committee preceding World War II, find echoes in Trump's rhetoric. This highlights the cyclical nature of certain ideologies in U.S. foreign policy, as historical threads are woven into Trump's vision for the country and persisted from George Washington's Farewell Address in 1796 until the outbreak of World War II. Washington's address emphasized the importance of avoiding permanent alliances and entanglements in European conflicts. Similarly, Trump's rhetoric emphasized a desire to prioritize American interests and reduce international commitments. Both Trump and the early isolationists sought to protect domestic industries and jobs, while expressing skepticism towards international agreements and interventions. This historical parallel highlights the recurring tension between isolationist and internationalist impulses in the U.S. foreign policy throughout its history.

Analyzing Trump's speeches and policy choices uncovers a persistent pattern of economic protectionism and a departure from conventional free-trade principles. Trump's refusal of international trade agreements, efforts to renegotiate deals such as NAFTA, opposition to the TPP, and implementation of tariffs all illustrate a nationalist economic agenda encapsulated in the "America First" ethos. His focus on revitalizing domestic industries, generating employment opportunities, and restructuring trade partnerships signifies a shift away from the globalist approach embraced by previous administrations. By conducting a qualitative examination of his speeches, Trump's economic orientation emerges as a robust instrument that made a significant impact with a specific portion of the American populace. His pledges to prioritize American workers, re-evaluate trade agreements, and protect national interests played a significant role in his electoral victory. Nevertheless, these policies sparked discussions regarding the potential ramifications of protectionism, such as escalating global trade tensions and strained international alliances.

Moreover, Trump's prioritization of border security and immigration demonstrated a dedication to internal matters over global considerations. While expressing skepticism towards certain international alliances, Trump's rhetoric on military intervention and national security reflected a pragmatic approach rather than strict isolationism. In terms of counterterrorism, Donald Trump's strategy centered on addressing the perceived threat posed by groups like ISIS. This focus resonated with widespread public concern surrounding the activities of the Islamic State. Contrasting with the cautious and collaborative approaches of his predecessors, Trump's proposed tactics that leaned towards a more forceful and resolute response. His rhetoric and policy suggestions encompassed measures such as a temporary ban on Muslim immigration and an assertive stance against ISIS, indicating an interventionist perspective.

Furthermore, Trump's nuclear handling created an element of uncertainty and ambiguity, raising fears about possible changes to long-standing norms regarding nuclear weapons and his status in the international agreement of various types, such as NATO where he deviated from conventional U.S. foreign policy by emphasizing national interests over partnerships. The lasting impact of Trump's counterterrorism and foreign policy approach lies in the discussions it sparked concerning the nature of U.S. global leadership and the potential outcomes of adopting a more transactional approach to international collaboration. Essentially, the persistent motif of "America First" in Trump's campaign rhetoric encompassed a combination of isolationist inclinations, particularly concerning the economy and immigration, and a pragmatic interventionist approach to national security matters. These dual approaches exerted substantial influence on both domestic and foreign policy choices throughout his presidency. This synthesis of different perspectives highlights the intricate and adaptable nature of Trump's foreign policy rhetoric, rendering it resistant to easy categorization as purely isolationist or interventionist.

Through a more detailed examination of the case studies of the actual foreign policy decisions made by the Trump administration, it is apparent that they imply something distinct from the prevalent isolationist rhetoric during 2016 campaign. In fact, characterizing Trump's strategy to prevent decline and prioritize America's interests as isolationist would be inaccurate. Instead, Trump's policy could be seen as a more active in some aspects and it seeks to exert its global hegemony. The U.S-China relations, for instance, marked a departure from his predecessors' diplomatic norms and demonstrating more interventionist tendencies especially in the context the trade war. President Trump's unconventional approach, characterized by escalating tariffs, accusations, and the implementation of restrictions, signaled a departure from established international trade norms. This interventionist position aimed to address perceived

imbalances but also led to increased tensions, contributing to a significant shift in global economic dynamics. The confrontational trade policies underscored Trump's commitment to reshaping the economic landscape, challenging established norms, and prioritizing national interests in a manner that departed from previous administrations.

Likewise, the Trump administration policy in the Middle East demonstrates a complex dynamics of the U.S. involvement, where strategic decisions reverberate across regional stability, diplomatic relationship, and the broader course of U.S.-Middle East connection. The Trump administration's approach to Iran and Israeli-Palestinian conflict revealed interventionist tendencies. The repercussions of the Maximum Pressure Campaign on U.S.-Middle East ties are diverse. While the strategy aimed to reshape regional power dynamics by restraining Iran, it inadvertently fueled conflicts, heightened militarization, and created a more unpredictable geopolitical landscape through economic sanctions and military demonstration along with diplomatic pressure. In the same regard, The administration actively introduced and advocated for its own peace initiative, the "Deal of the Century," employing diplomatic channels to influence the conflict's resolution by presenting a comprehensive proposal and encouraging negotiations on its terms. Furthermore, the decision to relocate the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, a move considered in violation of UN resolutions, added complexity to the conflict. This action was criticized for disregarding established international norms, potentially biasing future negotiations, and complicating the prospects for a two-state solution, especially given the contentious status of Jerusalem in the conflict.

The study also finds that Donald Trump maintained much of the long-standing American counterterrorism strategies in the region, including drone strikes, special operations raids, and support for allied troops. However, as seen by the killing of Iranian leader Qasem Soleimani,

Trump has on occasion attempted to act in a more assertive, unilateral fashion. This forceful approach signaled an escalation in US interventionism in the Middle East and raised tensions and the probability of conflict. Trump asserted that his foreign policy would differ from past approaches, but his actual counterterrorism efforts revealed more similarities than differences with the interventionist tendencies that have characterized American strategy in the region for decades.

In another case, during the Trump administration there was a shift, towards involvement in dealing with North Korea and Russia. When it came to North Korea, President Trump chose to engage with Kim Jong Un through stakes diplomatic talks, a departure from the usual multilateral negotiations approach. This hands on strategy included diplomacy and discussions about denuclearization, in the Korean Peninsula. Although it didn't result in a solution it clearly differed from previous administrations and showed a strong interventionist approach. Similarly, In the case of Russia, the Trump administration's interventionist policy was characterized by a mixture of engagement and confrontation. On one hand, there were attempts to establish new relations and engage in bilateral cooperation, such as the 2018 Helsinki Summit between the two leaders, President Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin. On the other hand, the administration took a rigorous stance against Russian aggression, imposing economic sanctions and expelling Russian diplomats in response to issues such as the annexation of Crimea. This combination of engagement and confrontation illustrated an interventionist approach aimed at both seeking areas of cooperation and countering Russian actions seen as contrary to U.S. interests. Accordingly, the administration's interventionist policy towards Russia reflected a desire to address contentious issues while maintaining diplomatic channels open.

In the same vein, While Trump's aggressive rhetoric and "America First" approach toward traditional American allies in Europe signaled a clear break from previous presidential styles, his underlying policies often reflected more continuity than radical change. Trump's decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal and his criticism of Europe's NATO commitments aligned with longstanding Republican critiques of burden-sharing and skepticism toward multilateral agreements. However, Trump's unilateralist tendencies and threats to break with Europe contrasted sharply with the more internationalist orientation of his predecessors. The transatlantic relationship experienced severe turbulence as a result of Trump's stances, which strained diplomatic relations and undermined trust in America's reliability as an ally. Although Trump gave the impression that he was upending the existing quo, his actions in Europe eventually revealed the conflict between America's global ambitions and its domestic political dynamics that has endured across multiple administrations.

While conducting this research, there are numerous other interesting subjects that worth further research. Future studies could delve deeper into the long-time period implications of the Trump administration's policy to isolationism and interventionism. It might be interesting to have a look at how those policy stances influenced specific bilateral relationships as well as the global diplomacy and international order. Further, lights could be shed also on the effectiveness and sustainability of isolationist or interventionist approaches in achieving desired outcomes. In addition, the investigation of different reactions and responses of other countries and international actors to the United States' shifting foreign policy stance under the Trump administration would provide valuable insights into the dynamics of global power relations. Understanding these dynamics could make a contribution to a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of isolationism and interventionism on global governance and the

future trajectory of U.S. foreign policy. Additionally, further investigation is also suggested to explore Trump's rhetoric during his 2016 run for president with a focus on his populist messages aimed at the public and the reasons behind his positions on key international matters. This research path could illuminate how populism influenced his policy choices and why his communication style resonated with a range of supporters. Looking into the link between Trump's speeches and his policy actions could offer insights into how populist views impacted foreign policy decisions and influenced changes in America's involvement.

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