



## We've Got to Work Together

Did you know there are almost 200 countries in the world? Each one has its own government, its own traditions, its own list of needs and wants. And since we're all here on the same planet, every country has to interact with other countries. There's no getting around it.

A country's strategy for dealing with other countries is called its **foreign policy**. A **policy** is a plan that includes an overall goal and the kinds of actions that are okay to take in order to achieve the goal. A policy is like a guideline. It determines what kinds of decisions will be made and what actions will be taken.

### Example: One Goal, Two Policies

Imagine that a country's goal is to have peaceful relationships with other countries. Policy A and Policy B, below, show that there is more than one way to achieve that goal. Both policies aim to gain peace, but the actions the country would take are very different—as are the likely outcomes!



**POLICY A**  
One policy might be to gain peace by talking. Under that policy, the government might decide to send people to negotiate with another country when there is a problem and come up with a compromise.

**POLICY B**  
A different policy might be to gain peace through military force. Under that policy, the government might decide to invade a country when there is a problem, throw out that country's government, and put in a new, friendly government.

### Looking Out for Number One

Has anyone ever told you they were doing something for your "best interest?" A country is always trying to act in its own best interest by trying to get other countries to act in ways that are beneficial and not harmful. A country's **national interest** is all the things a country believes would be for its benefit. National interest ties directly to a country's foreign policy.

For example, Country A might make deals with other countries over who can use water from a river so that Country A can have water for fields. Or, Country A might go to war with those countries to try to get all the water for itself. In another example, Country B, a wealthy country, might send money to help a poor country because it benefits Country B to have a world where other countries are stable. Or, Country B might ignore the poor country's problems and use the money to build homeless shelters for Country B's own people.

### In the "National Interest"

Here's a list of some issues that countries might consider part of their national interest:

- Environment
- Weapons of mass destruction
- Water rights
- Territorial boundaries
- Historical sites
- Hunger
- Spread of disease
- Trade
- Energy or food production

# Foreign Policy & Diplomacy

## Getting Involved... Or Staying Away?

A country's attitude about foreign policy will lie somewhere on a continuum between isolationism and internationalism. With a policy of **internationalism**, a country chooses to get involved in other countries' problems when there is a great need. With a policy of **isolationism**, a country focuses on its own problems and does not get involved in other countries' issues.



## All Alone in the World?



Maybe you've heard the expression, "It's a small world." Advances in technology make countries more connected with each other than ever before. That makes it harder and harder for countries to practice isolationism and ignore what is going on in the world around them. Most countries lean toward internationalism because they recognize that trouble in the world affects everyone. For example, an unstable country that does not enforce its internet laws can be a safe place for people who want to hack into computer systems around the world. To protect their own citizens, other countries might pressure that government to enforce its laws.

## Creating Foreign Policy in the United States

Each of the three branches has a role in shaping foreign policy. The executive branch, however, has most of the power to determine what our foreign policy is going to be.

### EXECUTIVE BRANCH

- President decides what the country's foreign policy is going to be on issues of national interest
- President negotiates treaties with other countries; signs treaties after approved by the Senate
- President may order the military to act under some circumstances
- The State Department, part of the executive branch, carries out foreign policies around the world

### LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

- Only Congress can officially declare war
- Senate must approve treaties
- Congress passes bills related to the President's foreign policy goals
- Congress influences foreign policy by supporting or opposing the President's goals; if opposed, the President might make policy compromises

### JUDICIAL BRANCH

- Reviews treaties to see if they are constitutional