

## **American foreign policy**

A grand strategy of primacy aims to maintain America's position as the undisputed superpower in the international system. This strategy is based on the belief that peace among great powers and American security are dependent on a preponderance of US power. To preserve American primacy, the United States must be more powerful than anyone else and exercise leadership. While multilateralism has advantages, proponents argue that unipolar powers have the advantage of acting unilaterally to advance their own interests.

They recommend the United States act alone when necessary, such as when dealing with rogue states with weapons of mass destruction. Institutions like the United Nations are viewed with suspicion as they restrain rather than enabling American power.

The US struggles to mobilize its wealth for foreign policy goals, particularly in the area of foreign aid. During the Cold War, both Democratic and Republican administrations saw aid as a critical part of US strategy in the struggle against Communism. The Obama administration sought only \$56 billion in foreign aid, around one-ninth of America's military budget. The prestige of foreign aid within the US system has worsened in recent years due to the massive shift of resources and influence from the State Department (including USAID) to the Pentagon.

The militarization of US foreign policy structures has led to a shift from military to military contacts with key states, with less aid for development and more security-related or humanitarian aid administered by the US military. This has resulted in the US being heavily outspent by rival powers in certain parts of the world.

The preservation of America's alliances in Asia is essential to contain and deter China, as without them, the entire Pacific Ocean west of Hawaii would become a contested space, with the United States directly exposed to the risk of being pushed into its own hemisphere.

The United States, particularly in the post-Cold War context, has at times leaned heavily into unilateral conduct, especially when international consensus is

perceived as limiting or contrary to national interests. Notable examples include the 2003 military intervention in Iraq and the decision to withdraw from several multilateral agreements such as the Paris Climate Accord and the Iran Nuclear Deal under certain administrations.

The United States benefits greatly from its leadership position in the NATO alliance and its close bilateral alliances with the troika in the Western Pacific. Its naval, air, and ground troop bases in Europe, Japan, South Korea, and Australia provide flexibility and supportability in power projection across the Atlantic and Pacific.

The United States maintains robust strategic involvement in the Indo-Pacific through a web of bilateral alliances and strategic partnerships, including those with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Australia. These ties are reinforced by consistent military deployments and freedom of navigation operations, aimed at counterbalancing China's rise and preserving a favorable regional order.

There is currently an academic debate on whether the international system continues to have a unipolar structure<sup>1</sup> or, on the contrary, has evolved towards bipolarity or multipolarity. Going beyond the academic debates, the very hegemonic power since the end of the Cold War, the United States, is itself aware of a new reality. In its own national security strategies we find, since the first term of Barack Obama's administration, the realisation of China's rise, hence the famous 'Pivot to Asia' announced by Hillary Clinton in 2011, which predicted that the US strategic priority from now on would be competition with China.

To reduce China's geo-economic power, the US has adopted several measures. In the face of the IFR, to contain China's influence, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) was launched in 2023, connecting India, the Middle East and Europe. A trade war has also been launched, which gained momentum under Donald Trump's first term in office. In addition, the US is seeking to reduce its dependence on China - and that of its allies - in strategic areas and reverse China's centrality in supply chains through what is known as Friend Shoring. Competition is also intensifying especially in key sectors such as high-tech