

Methods for Pursuing National Interest

All government decisions are made in the **national interest** as the current Congress and president see it. National interest refers to a nation's economic, military, political, and/or cultural goals and ambitions. Our national interest may change over time as the balance of Congress shifts between political parties and new presidents take office. Their priorities and the issues that seem most pressing to them can vary greatly. Pursuing our national interest in the area of domestic policy, takes the form of everyday lawmaking between Congress and the president, executive orders, and rules issued by regulatory agencies. When pursuing our national interest in the area of foreign policy, Congress and the president have three main methods:

1. **Foreign Aid:** Aid is used to provide help or assistance to other countries in need. Some examples include but are not limited to: money, soldiers in a peacekeeping role, food, water, medical care, and/or advice and support on how to establish and/or maintain a democratic form of government.
2. **Treaties and Executive Agreements:** Treaties are formal agreements between countries to end wars or set new international laws, policies, and/or norms. While the president typically negotiates a treaty, the Constitution says that treaties must be ratified by the U.S. Senate. Oftentimes, when accomplishing foreign policy goals, formal treaties will not be used. Instead, presidents, acting in their role as head of state, will simply enter executive agreements with heads of state from other nations. In addition, to pursue its national interest, the United States will often help other disputing nations agree to treaty terms.
3. **Military Action:** Military action can be taken for the purpose of protecting the nation from attack, or protecting our citizens, vital interests, and/or allies abroad. Military action typically comes through the use of one or more of our seven military branches: the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, Coast Guard, and/or National Guard.

While sometimes one of these methods is used by itself, they are just as often used in some combination to achieve the ends we seek. Together, they each play an important role in ensuring our nation can continue to pursue its national interest effectively.