

## U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

**SS.912.CG.4.2** Explain how the United States uses foreign policy to influence other nations.

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### 2023 BENCHMARK UPDATES

- Updated from SS.912.C.4.2
  - Changed from “~~Evaluate~~ the influence of American foreign policy on other nations and the influence of other nations on American policy and society.” to “Explain how the United States uses foreign policy to influence other nations.”
- Depth of Knowledge Changes within Benchmark
  - Changed from “Evaluate” to “Explain”
- Addition of Benchmark Clarifications
  - Benchmark clarifications are an addition to the 2023-2024 high school civics and government benchmarks. Benchmark clarifications are listed in the lesson summary below.

# Essential Teacher Content Background Information

*[Teacher Content Notes Not Appropriate For Student Use]*

## **This section addresses the following topics:**

1. Foreign Policy and the National Interest
2. Foreign Policy Methods
3. The Role of Government Agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Foreign Policy

## **1. Foreign Policy and the National Interest**

The term “national interest” refers to the set of priorities, goals, and principles that are vital to the security, prosperity, and general welfare of the United States both at home and abroad.

The national interest of the United States includes: ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the American people, our U.S. territories, and our allies; promoting economic stability and growth at home and abroad; maintaining political stability at home and abroad; ensuring stable and reliable sources of energy as well as reducing dependence on foreign energy sources; building and maintaining strong alliances and trade partnerships with other nations to promote stability, democracy, and the rule of law; maintaining the United States’ global leadership status in order to promote a world order that aligns with its values and interests.

While the emphasis the U.S. places on various aspects of our national interest can change over time in response to the priorities of different presidential administrations and/or changing circumstances both at home and abroad, what is viewed as in our “national interest” ultimately reflects our founding principles and the will of the American people as expressed through their collective votes.

The United States pursues its national interest through both foreign and domestic policy. Domestic policy refers to policies on topics such as health care, education, civil rights, economic issues, and social issues. These are topics that primarily impact citizen and non-citizen behavior inside the United States. Foreign policy, on the other hand, focuses on the United States’ relationship with other nations (i.e. international relations), and the factors affecting those relationships. Foreign policy is anchored in diplomacy, which takes place under the purview of the Secretary of State (a Cabinet-level position that oversees the Department of State).

## **2. Foreign Policy Methods**

At the foundation of any nation’s foreign policy is a clear sense of its national interests. As the United States works to pursue its national interest, it will inevitably face foreign policy challenges along the way. The policies of other nations also inevitably influence and impact U.S. domestic and foreign policy and society. This interconnectedness is always at the forefront of foreign policy decisions. As the United States enters international agreements, watches out for our own national security, and manages an economy in a global market, they must navigate the numerous relationships involved. When making foreign policy decisions, pursuing our national interest, and/or responding to international conflicts, there are five primary means the U.S. (and other nations) can employ in the pursuit of their objectives:

- A. Foreign Aid: Aid is used to provide help or assistance to other countries in need. Aid does not always have to be monetary. 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. Foreign aid usually, but not solely, comes under the auspices of the Department of State.

- B. **Military Action:** 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 use of one or more of seven military branches under the Department of Defense and/or Department of Homeland Security: the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, Coast Guard, and/or National Guard. Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution grants Congress the power to declare war. The United States has formally declared war only 5 times in its history. Other times, military action has been taken under the president's powers as commander-in-chief to engage troops in conflicts abroad to "...preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States."
- C. **Treaties and Executive Agreements:** Treaties are formal agreements between countries to end wars or set new international laws, policies, and/or norms. Examples include the Treaty of Versailles (1919); the Paris Peace Treaty (1947); the North American Free Trade Agreement (1994). While the president typically negotiates a treaty, the Constitution stipulates that treaties must be ratified by the U.S. Senate. Oftentimes, when accomplishing foreign policy objectives, 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 act as a mediator, and help other disputing nations agree to treaty terms. One example of this would be the U.S. role in facilitating the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt in 1978.
- D. **Economic Policies:** Economic policies provide the United States opportunities to enter trade agreements that benefit their economy and citizens. Economic tools and policies can also be used to influence international relationships. The United States can place economic restrictions such as sanctions or embargoes on nations in hopes to negatively impact their economy and change undesired behavior. Sanctions are penalties imposed on another country. An embargo is a type of sanction placed on trade that bans one country from trading certain items with another. Examples include various sanctions and embargoes between the U.S. and Cuba, Iran, and Syria over the years.
- E. **Intelligence Gathering:** The United States has three main agencies that gather intelligence to help drive foreign policy decisions. These three agencies include the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the National Security Administration (NSA).

### **3. The Role of Government Agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Foreign Policy**

Implementation of most foreign and domestic policy, falls to executive departments and independent agencies within the national government. Expanding the original four Cabinet departments, created under the administration of George Washington, additional Cabinet and executive departments have been established by acts of Congress to meet the nation's evolving needs and priorities. The Department of State however, has been around since the country's beginning. Established in 1789, it was originally called the Department of Foreign Affairs but renamed later that year. Thomas Jefferson served as the first Secretary of State.

In addition to the State Department, government agencies like the National Security Agency (NSA), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), play distinct but related roles in the formation and execution of foreign policy, often focusing on different aspects of international affairs.

The NSA, an intelligence agency of the United States, is primarily responsible for cybersecurity and

communication intelligence from around the world. It intercepts and analyzes electronic signals, such as phone conversations and internet communications, to provide insights into the intentions and capabilities of foreign governments and organizations. The NSA helps identify and assess potential threats to U.S. national security, including cyberattacks, terrorism, and foreign espionage. This information then informs foreign policy decisions related to national security. Intelligence gathered by the NSA can be used in diplomatic negotiations, providing leverage to support U.S. positions and objectives.

The CIA, another United States intelligence agency, analyzes information from various sources, including human intelligence, to provide assessments on global political developments and potential security threats. These assessments help policymakers make informed decisions. The CIA also carries out covert operations to advance U.S. foreign policy goals and support our foreign allies and partners. These actions are often of the utmost sensitivity and may not be publicly acknowledged for years afterwards- sometimes never. The CIA is also involved in counterterrorism efforts, including tracking and targeting terrorist leaders and organizations worldwide. The CIA works with foreign intelligence agencies and governments to gather intelligence, share information, and collaborate on security issues of mutual interest.

It is important to note that the NSA and CIA, though independent of each other, both report to the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), a cabinet-level position created in 2004 in response to the September 11 attacks.

NGOs are organizations that operate independently from governments but can still significantly influence foreign policy towards such ends as humanitarian assistance, development, peacebuilding, democratization, and environmental advocacy. NGOs bring diverse perspectives and resources to address various global challenges. The end of World War II brought with it an emphasis on the role of citizens in world affairs. The staggering loss of life and high casualties due to the war itself as well as the Holocaust brought attention to several issues to which citizens paid attention and shaped their political and civic behavior. Technology also contributed to increased citizen involvement on the world stage because new ways of learning about global issues became more prominent. Greater attention to international human rights issues, globalization and technology have fostered awareness and participation across a wide range of issues and concerns.

NGOs can be valuable partners in influencing foreign policy by providing expertise in addressing pressing global challenges. However, they also face criticisms related to accountability, sovereignty concerns, and potential biases. Collaboration between governments and NGOs can help offset some of these disadvantages and is sometimes necessary to achieve successful global policy outcomes.

## Lesson Summary

BENCHMARK		
<b>SS.912.CG.4.2</b> Explain how the United States uses foreign policy to influence other nations.		
BENCHMARK CLARIFICATIONS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will explain how the policies of other nations influence U.S. policy and society.</li> <li>Students will identify agencies of the U.S. government that contribute to its foreign policy agenda (e.g., National Security Agency, Central Intelligence Agency).</li> <li>Students will explain the advantages and disadvantages of how nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) influence foreign policy (e.g., United States Agency for International Development, Red Cross, American Woman Suffrage Association, Amnesty International).</li> <li>Students will explain how U.S. trade policy influences its relationships with other nations (e.g., China, Saudi Arabia).</li> <li>Students will explain how the use of embargos and economic sanctions by the United States has affected other nations (e.g., Cuba, Iran, Syria).</li> <li>Students will explain the U.S. response to international conflicts.</li> </ul>		
FLORIDA CIVIC LITERACY EXAM COMPETENCY CONNECTION		
<b>Competency 4:</b> Understanding of landmark Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation, and landmark executive actions and their impact on law and society		
OVERVIEW		
In this lesson, students will explain the tools of foreign policy that the United States uses to pursue its national interest, while studying how other nations as well as non-governmental organizations play a role in shaping U.S. policy.		
ESSENTIAL QUESTION		
What shapes the foreign policy of the United States?		
GOVERNMENT CONTENT VOCABULARY		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>alliance, ambassador, Amnesty International, Carter Center, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), diplomacy, diplomat, doctrine, domestic policy, embargo, embassy, espionage, executive agreements, foreign policy, humanitarian efforts, international conflict, international relations, military action, national interest, National Security Agency (NSA), non-governmental organization (NGO), peacekeeping operations, Red Cross, sanctions, trade, treaty, war, United States Agency for International Development</li> </ul>		
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES		
Close reading of text	Student presentations	Gallery walk
MATERIALS		

- Foreign Policy Packet
- Foreign Policy Definitions slides
- Foreign Policy Intro reading
- What is Foreign Policy? video (optional; external link)
- Day 1 Ticket Out The Door
- Agencies and NGOs That Deal With Foreign Policy slides
- Agencies and NGOs Poster Rubric
- Foreign Policy Examples Placards
- Methods of Foreign Policy reading
- Chart/Poster paper
- Art supplies
- Student digital device
- Timer (optional)

### **B.E.S.T. STANDARDS**

The grade in which this lesson is taught will determine the specific B.E.S.T. standards correlation.

Thematically, this lesson aligns to:

- ELA.C.4.1 Researching and Using Information
- ELA.R.2.2 Central Idea
- ELA.R.3.2 Paraphrase and Summarize
- ELA.V.1.1 Academic Vocabulary

## Suggested Student Activity Sequence & Pace

DAY	ACTIVITY SEQUENCE
DAY 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To begin the lesson, place students into pairs and pass out a “Foreign Policy Packet” to each student.</li> <li>Ask student pairs to work to define what is meant by the term ‘national interest’. Once the pair agrees on a definition, have them record it under the ‘my definition’ portion in the table at the top of page one of the packet.</li> <li>As pairs discuss and grapple with defining the term, circulate the room to monitor for engagement. <i>Teacher Note:</i> If students need additional scaffolding, you could ask them what is meant when someone says ‘do what is in your best interest’.</li> <li>Once students have had a few minutes to work out what they think the term means, solicit a few responses.</li> <li>Continue the activity by having pairs discuss and define the term ‘foreign’, recording their definitions on page one of the packet.</li> <li>After students brainstorm, ask students to share responses.</li> <li>Project the “Foreign Policy Definitions” slides, leading students to the understanding that the term ‘national interest’ refers to the nation’s economic, military, political, and/or cultural goals and ambitions. Explain that one of the primary responsibilities of the national government is to advance the national interest. Have students record this definition under the ‘class definition’ portion of the table.</li> <li>Then explain that ‘foreign’ has to do with other countries. Have students record this definition under the ‘class definition’ column.</li> <li>Explain to students that in this lesson they will learn about foreign policy and how the United States uses it to advance our national interest and influence other nations.</li> <li>Pass out the “Foreign Policy Intro” reading.</li> <li>Complete the reading as a whole class, modeling text marking strategies for students.</li> <li>After completing the reading, have students answer the questions and then list 3 examples of ways that the policies of other nations can influence the actions of the United States on page 1 of their packet. <i>Teacher Note:</i> If students need remediation, you could play the short video “<a href="#">What is Foreign Policy?</a>” to deepen their knowledge.</li> <li>End class by having students complete the “Day 1 Ticket Out The Door”.</li> </ol>
DAY 2	<p><i><b>Planning Note:</b> The day 2 and day 3 portions of the lesson call for students to work in six small groups to research a government agency or non-governmental organization (NGO) that deals with foreign policy. Depending on your class size and preferences, you could adjust by eliminating or duplicating one or more of the listed government agencies or NGOs.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin class by having students take out their “Foreign Policy Packet” from the previous day.</li> <li>Review page 1 of the packet, including the definitions of ‘national interest’ and ‘foreign’, as well as some ways that the policies of foreign nations influence the United States.</li> <li>Split students into six groups.</li> <li>Have students turn to page 2 of their packets.</li> <li>Explain that now they will learn about organizations that deal with foreign policy, both as</li> </ol>

	<p>part of the government and outside the government.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Display slide 1 of the “Agencies and NGOs That Deal With Foreign Policy” slides.</li> <li>Review the definitions with the students.</li> <li>Have groups develop a definition in their own words on page 2 of the packet.</li> <li>Have one or two groups share out the way they worded their definition, allowing other groups to revise their definitions in response to their growing understanding.</li> <li>Display slide 2 and review some examples with the students to help solidify their understanding.</li> <li>Display the third slide. Have one student read the advantages of NGOs, and another student read the disadvantages.</li> <li>While the advantages and disadvantages are read, have students fill in at least 3 of each on page 2 of their packet below the definitions.</li> <li>Explain to students that now each group will research a government agency or NGO.</li> <li>Pass out the “Agencies and NGOs Poster Rubric” to every student.</li> <li>Review the rubric with students.</li> <li>Explain to groups that their group will research the government agency or NGO that has been assigned to them.</li> </ol> <p><b>Teacher Note:</b> Assign using the six examples on slide 2. Assignments can be teacher-selected or student choice. Students should be able to find everything they need by using the agency/NGO official website.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the remainder of class, have students research their assigned agency or NGO.</li> <li>As students work, circulate and monitor progress, checking for engagement and offering assistance to groups as necessary.</li> <li>At the end of class, have students safely store their materials to complete the next day.</li> </ol>
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DAY 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin class by having students reassemble in their same groups from the previous day.</li> <li>Have students gather their materials and in-progress posters.</li> <li>Briefly review the expectations of the rubric again with the class.</li> <li>Have groups finish creating their posters according to the rubric.</li> <li>As students work, circulate and monitor progress, checking for engagement and offering assistance to groups as necessary.</li> </ol> <p><b>Teacher Note:</b> You may want to set a timer for this portion of the lesson. Using a timer, it is advised that you give students periodic warnings as to how much time is left as they finish their posters.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When time has elapsed or students have otherwise finished, have all students return to their seats.</li> <li>Direct students’ attention to page 3 of their “<a href="#">Foreign Policy Packet</a>”.</li> <li>Explain to students that each group is going to present their posters. While each group presents, their task is to fill in the information on page 3 of their packet: name of the agency or NGO, purpose or goal of the agency/NGO, and how the agency/NGO contributes to or influences foreign policy.</li> <li>Repeat the process of having each group present their poster while students take notes.</li> <li>If time allows at the end of class, lead a review of the ways that agencies and NGOs contribute to and influence foreign policy.</li> </ol>
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DAY 4

**Planning Note:** Prior to the start of class, print out and hang the “Foreign Policy Examples Placards” around the room.

1. Begin class by having students take out their “Foreign Policy Packet” from the previous days.
2. Call on one student to review the definition of ‘national interest’ from page 1 of the packet.
3. Explain to students that now that they have a deeper understanding of what drives foreign policy, and the agencies and non-governmental organizations involved with foreign policy, today they will learn about methods/tools that the government has for pursuing our foreign policy goals and responding to international conflicts.
4. Pass out the “Methods of Foreign Policy” reading.
5. As a class, complete the reading, either reading it to the students, or having students take turns reading.
6. Once you are done reading, have students take notes on the methods/tools on page 4 of their packets.
7. As a class, review the methods the government has for pursuing our foreign policy goals and responding to international conflicts, allowing students to share out responses.
8. Explain to students that for the final portion of this lesson, they will look at examples of how the United States’ foreign policy influences and impacts other nations. In essence, these methods in action.
9. Number students off into six new groups.
10. Turn students' attention to page 5 of their packets.
11. Explain to students that around the room they will find placards, each with a primary source that demonstrates an impact of U.S. foreign policy. As they circulate through analyzing the placards with their group, they will summarize the requested information on page 5 of their packets.
12. Assign groups to a starting placard.
13. Provide time for students to read their descriptions, examine visuals, and fill out the appropriate rows in their packet.
14. As students work, circulate and monitor progress, checking for engagement and offering assistance to groups as necessary.  
**Teacher Note:** It is recommended that you set a timer for each rotation.
15. After a predetermined amount of time, instruct groups to rotate to the next placard and repeat the process with a new source.
16. Once the last rotation is done, have all students return to their desks.
17. Lead a review of the information students noted from the foreign policy examples placards on page 5 of their packets.
18. As you discuss, allow students to revise their answers to reflect their growing understanding.
19. Checking for Understanding (Formative Assessment): Instruct students to write a well-crafted informative response using the following prompt:  
Prompt: Explain how the United States uses foreign policy to influence other nations.

## Government Content Vocabulary

Word/Term	Definition
<b>alliance</b>	a union between nations for assistance and protection
<b>ambassador</b>	a person sent as the chief representative of his or her own government in another country
<b>Amnesty International</b>	a worldwide human rights organization
<b>Carter Center</b>	a non-governmental agency founded by former President Carter the works to improve life for people in more than 80 countries by resolving conflicts, advancing democracy and human rights, preventing diseases, and improving mental health
<b>Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)</b>	an intelligence agency of the United States that analyzes human intelligence to provide assessments on global political developments and potential security threats and conducts covert operations in support of U.S. foreign policy goals and/or support of our allies
<b>diplomacy</b>	the work of keeping good relations between the governments of different countries
<b>diplomat</b>	a person employed or skilled in diplomacy
<b>doctrine</b>	the principles in a system of belief
<b>domestic policy</b>	a government's decisions about issues within the country
<b>embargo</b>	an official ban on trade or other commercial activity with a particular country
<b>embassy</b>	the residence or office of a country's ambassador
<b>espionage</b>	the practice of spying or of using spies, typically by governments to obtain political and military information
<b>executive agreements</b>	agreements between the U.S. and a foreign government that are made by the executive branch and do not require a formal treaty with Senate ratification
<b>foreign policy</b>	a government's decisions about relationships with other countries
<b>humanitarian efforts</b>	work focused on improving the health and happiness of other people
<b>international conflict</b>	a conflict between two different nations or groups
<b>international relations</b>	when countries have something to gain by working together to solve problems; countries may cooperate in order to avoid going to war or to manage a resource

<b>military action</b>	members of the U.S. military (Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, National Guard) are sent to another country to use force to stop a conflict
<b>national interest</b>	a nation's economic, military, political, and/or cultural goals and ambitions
<b>National Security Agency (NSA)</b>	an intelligence agency of the United States, primarily responsible for cybersecurity and communication intelligence from around the world
<b>non-governmental organization (NGO)</b>	a group that functions independently of any government working for such ends as humanitarian assistance, development, peacebuilding, democratization, and environmental advocacy
<b>peacekeeping operations</b>	enforcing a truce between countries or groups by an international military force
<b>Red Cross</b>	an international organization formed in 1864 to care for the sick and wounded in war and help relieve suffering caused by famine and other natural disasters
<b>sanctions</b>	a threatened penalty for disobeying a law or rule
<b>trade</b>	exchanging of goods
<b>treaty</b>	an agreement or arrangement between two or more countries
<b>war</b>	a conflict carried on by force of arms, as between nations or between parties within a nation; warfare, as by land, sea, or air
<b>United States Agency for International Development</b>	an independent agency of the United States government that is primarily responsible for administering civilian foreign aid and development assistance

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Florida Department of Education: Florida Civic Literacy Exam Homepage](#)

Florida Department of Education's Civic Literacy Reading List

- N/A

## ANSWER KEYS

Sample Answers: Foreign Policy Packet

Agencies and NGOs Poster Rubric

Written Response: Sample Scoring Rubric

## SOURCES

iCivics Lesson Plan – Foreign Policy: War & Peace and Everything In Between:

<http://www.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/foreign-policy-war-peace-and-everything-between>

U.S. State Department's website: <http://www.state.gov/>

United Nations websites: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en> and

<http://www.un.org/en/sections/what-we-do/deliver-humanitarian-aid/>

CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/military-deployments/>

U.S. National Interests from the U.S. Department of State:

[https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/general\\_foreign\\_policy/00\\_perf\\_1.pdf](https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/general_foreign_policy/00_perf_1.pdf) and

<https://2009-2017.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/perfrpt/2002/html/18996.htm>

NGOs: Advantages and Disadvantages: <https://www.gdrc.org/ngo/advan-disadvan.html>

What is Foreign Policy video from the National Museum of American Diplomacy:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSHIICl\\_AkY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSHIICl_AkY)

Seeing the Big Picture: U.S. Foreign Policy from 1920-2020 lesson materials from National Archives:

<https://www.archives.gov/legislative/resources/education/foreign-policy-1920-2020>

The U.S.-China Trade War: A Brief Recap from Statista:

<https://www.statista.com/chart/16280/china-us-trade/>