

## Amerikan Dış Politika Öncelikleri ve Eyleme Zorlayan Koşullar

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### Öz

Bu çalışma, Amerikan dış politika karar verme sürecini ve altında yatan ilgili unsurları, bu süreçte Amerika'nın kimi zaman kenarda kalmayı, kimi zamansa harekete geçmeyi tercih ettiği kırılma noktaları oluşturan belirli olayları ele alarak aydınlatmaktadır. A.B.D, Amerikan dış politikasının, Amerika kıtası devletlerinin işlerine Avrupa devletleri tarafından müdahalede bulunulmamasına ilişkin tutumuna atıfta bulunan Monroe Doktrini'nin oluşturulmasının ardından, daha temkinli bir politika izleme yoluna gitmiştir. Buna karşılık, Amerika da, Avrupa kıtasında yer alan her türlü olay karşısında tarafsız bir tutum sergileyeceğinin ve bölgede ortaya çıkan hiçbir karışıklık ya da savaşa müdahalede bulunmayacağını altını çizmiştir. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma Amerikan yalnızlık politikasının en temel adımı olarak Monroe Doktrini'ni esas almaktadır. Ardından, Birinci Dünya Savaşı ile başlayarak – ki burada Amerika sınırı geçiş eylemi içine girmişti – çeşitli olayları ele alıp Amerika'nın karar verme sürecinde ve politikalarında yaşanan değişimleri ve bunların altında yatan temel unsurları incelemektedir. İkinci bir hadise olarak, Japonya'nın yayılmacı tutumu ve Amerikan donanmasına saldırısının sonucunda yaşanan Pearl Harbor olayı ile A.B.D, dış politikasında tarafsız bir tutum sergilemeyi bırakmış ve İkinci Dünya Savaşı'na girmiştir. Diğer taraftan, Amerika ve Sovyetler Birliği arasında tırmanmakta olan ve neredeyse tarafları bir nükleer savaşın eşğine getiren gerginliğin, Soğuk Savaş ile sonlanması fakat peşinden bir dizi krizi birlikte getirmesi belirtilmektedir. Bu krizlerden biri de, üçüncü bir olay olarak ele alınan, Amerika'nın temkinli tutumunu ve yalnızlık politikasını bir kenara bırakıp eylem içine girdiği Vietnam Savaşı'dır. Bununla beraber, ABD'nin belirli bir süre boyunca dışarıda yaşamakta olan gelişmelere karşı daha uzak bir tutum sergilemesiyle son bulan Vietnam Savaşı'nın doğurduğu tüm olumsuz sonuçlara rağmen, Saddam Hüseyin döneminde baş gösteren Irak krizi, Amerika'nın bu tutumunu sona erdirmiş ve Irak'a karşı iki askeri müdahale düzenlenmiştir. Bu çalışma, ABD'nin, El-Kaide saldırılarına karşı askeri operasyon içine girdiği bir diğer problem olarak Afganistan sorununa da değinmektedir. Tüm bu tarihsel olaylar haricinde, Rusya ve Amerika arasındaki gerilimin artmasına neden olan Kırım konusu da, güncel bir olay olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Kırım sorunu, henüz Amerikan dış politika tutumunda bir değişiklik yaratıp eylem içine girmesine yol açmamış, daha ziyade ABD'nin Rusya'ya uygulamış olduğu ekonomik yaptırımlar ile sınırlı kalmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Amerikan dış politikası, yalnızcılık ve karar alma

## American Foreign Policy Priorities: When To Engage In The Necessary Course Of Action

### ABSTRACT

This study highlights the U.S. foreign policy decision-making process – and its underlying relevant factors – by describing certain cases that constitute breaking points in American foreign policy decision making, when the U.S. demonstrated a preference for either remaining on the sidelines or engaging in action. Because the U.S. chose to remain cautious following the formulation of the Monroe Doctrine which addresses American foreign policy attitude on non-intervention of the European powers in the affairs of American continent nations. In return, the U.S. asserted her neutral stance toward any incident taking place in the European continent stressing that she would not interfere in any conflict in the region. As a result, the study focuses on the Monroe Doctrine as the primary initial step leading to American isolationism. Then, it addresses shifts in American decision-making process and policies and the factors underneath by focusing on several incidents beginning with the First World War where the United States crossed the border into action. As a second case, the Pearl Harbor incident comes into the picture when Japanese expansionist attitude and aggression against the U.S. navy at Pearl Harbor forced American foreign policy not to remain isolated and she entered the Second World War. Thirdly, growing tension between the U.S. and the Soviet Union which ended up in the Cold War, almost bringing both sides to the brink of a nuclear war, entailed a number of crises, one of them being the Vietnam War where America once again left her isolationist stance and engaged in course of action. Moreover, despite negative outcomes of the Vietnam case that led to a period of American isolation from outside affairs, the Iraqi crisis during Saddam Hussein's rule ended American cautiousness and resulted in two military operations. As a further factor constituting another problematic issue for the U.S. where she engaged in a military operation as a response to al-Qaeda attacks, the study focuses on the Afghanistan case. Besides such historical cases, the Crimean issue is dealt with as a current development that raised the tension between Russia and the United States. It has not yet initiated an American foreign policy shift and made her take action; rather the precautions have been limited to economic sanctions imposed on Russia.

**Keywords:** American foreign policy, isolationism, course of action

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### American Foreign Policy Priorities: When to Engage in the Necessary Course of Action

A historical incident is often the foundation for actors to undertake evaluations and engage in decision-making processes that either allow them to remain on the sidelines or lead them from contemplation into concrete action. When Julius Caesar and his army crossed the Rubicon River in northern Italy in 49 B.C., it meant the violation of an ancient Roman law that had forbidden any army from crossing the Rubicon. Thus, Caesar's violation of the Roman law signaled the onset of war. Following that historical incident, the phrase "crossing the Rubicon" meant that a border was being crossed from which there was no turning back: caution had run its course and action was impending. When a psychological Rubicon is crossed, people alter their mindsets from a "deliberative" (pre-decisional) to an "implemental" (post-decisional) stance. Actors with a deliberative mindset tend to thoroughly analyze different options to choose the most favorable, thereby internalizing a more rationality-based roadmap and a more objective attitude in relation to their judgments and decision-making processes (Levy, 2013: 5). Conversely, actors with an implemental mindset decide directly how to take action and follow the course of action chosen to achieve the goals that have been established. These actors focus on completing the assigned task and mostly oppose the introduction of other possible choices or decisions that might hinder them from realizing a determined course of action (Johnson & Tierney, 2011: 7).

The Rubicon clearly represents a psychological border between prudence, rationality, and objectivity, on one hand, and readiness to implement a course of action, on the other. In their foreign policy decision-making processes, international actors and decision makers decide on which bank of the river to establish themselves based on various factors, such as an actor's policy perspectives, perceptions and assessments of political developments, risk analyses and/or the presence of any threats against them or their interests – and even on personal and psychological traits (Oliveira, 2007: 15, 23) (Lavine, 2010) (Levy, 2003: 255) (Anderson & Bushman, 2002: 35-36) (Renshon, 2006: 205-210). The policy choices adopted by states to position themselves on one bank or the other of the Rubicon can produce a wide range of outcomes, from remaining isolated or neutral to implementing a course of action that will likely result in warfare.

In analyzing how the policy decisions of a nation like the U.S. can alternate between two extremes, it is important to recognize that certain circumstances have caused the U.S. to alter its foreign policy at various times throughout history. Analyzing U.S. foreign policy decision making and the manner in which a state's perceptions and attitudes can shift over time requires a historical overview and an exploration of the historical roots of American foreign policy decisions. To understand the basis of the foreign policy approach, one should assess the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, which served as a cornerstone in the history of American foreign policy by dictating American isolationism and disentanglement from Europe.

Formulated in an address by President James Monroe to the U.S. Senate in 1823, the Monroe Doctrine plays a substantial part in American history because this doctrine led the U.S. to adopt a relatively cautious strategy that eventually became full-blown isolationism. In the early 1820s, several European powers attempted to dominate the U.S. strategically, which led to a negative American reaction toward Europe. In particular, the U.S. was concerned about possible further colonial expansion by the European powers, which would undermine the future economic interests of the U.S. At the time, the American viewpoint held that the newly independent lands on the American continent should be protected against colonial advancement.

The Monroe Doctrine defined the perceptions of the U.S. regarding the rights and permissible activities of the European powers on the American Continent, asserting that the European powers would no longer colonize the southern or northern states of America and would have no right to interfere in the domestic affairs of those nations. It further provided that, from that point forward, the American nations would be guaranteed U.S. protection and that any type of hostile act against those nations would be taken as an act of aggression against the U.S. and would not be tolerated. In return, the U.S. vowed not to interfere in the European hemisphere and to remain neutral in any further conflicts in that region (Fensterwald, 1958: 114-116). By virtue of the Monroe Doctrine, the U.S. assumed the role of protecting North and Central American nations.

The content of the Monroe Doctrine suggests that it culminated in dividing the American and European continents by separating their spheres of influence and asserted that the American nations

(including the U.S.) had their own separate interests that were to be protected and maintained consistent with their own decision-making mechanisms. The Monroe Doctrine also established the U.S. policies of non-intervention and neutrality, which entailed an isolationist stance that became the cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy during the 19th century (Pillet, 1914: 131-133). In other words, the Monroe Doctrine turned into shorthand for American policy towards Europe.

Through the Monroe Doctrine, the U.S. also demonstrated its reluctance to participate in any European alliances or wars. Therefore, the Monroe Doctrine enforced American support for maintaining freedom and democracy by peaceful means rather than through warfare. Such an atmosphere created the conditions for the origins of American isolationism from Europe, which led to the development of long-term traditionalized behavior patterns in American foreign policy. It is entirely reasonable that the roots of such traditional patterns of U.S. policy as the isolationist stance toward Europe were cultivated in the Monroe Doctrine, which thereafter established a habitual policy attitude that was manifest at various times in U.S. history through American attachment to certain traditions. In certain cases, these cautious strategies resulted in U.S. detachment from European political affairs and developments and non-participation in any alliances. As a consequence, the U.S. maintained a deliberative position.

Conversely, analyzing U.S. foreign policy by discussing only the traditional policy attitude of the U.S. as embodied in the Monroe Doctrine would be inadequate because the analysis would be severely limited and would suggest that the U.S. lacked the initiative to cross the Rubicon and engage in a necessary course of action. On the contrary, in a new world order characterized by rising interdependence, it has become much more difficult for states to remain isolated from events beyond their own territories. Each country's national interests are intertwined with a multitude of components, including strategic interests that demand protection from geopolitical threats. People (and nations) want to feel that they are secure from internal or external threats, including economic threats. Economic well-being is no longer confined within a country's borders but extends to the outside world, where economic interdependence is also arguably increasing. In addition to security issues and economic conditions, other factors influence a state's perception of policy (Lavine, 2010: 39). For instance, a nation can attach great importance to its identity, self-image and values, and any threat against those elements that are integral to the nation raises concerns and can influence that country's foreign policy stance. In response to contributing causes such as threats to commercial and economic interests (Fordham, 2008: 163 – 165) or territorial integrity, the U.S. could be considered to have shifted its traditional policy stance by abandoning isolationism and engaging in action.

World War I constituted a historical watershed in which the U.S. abandoned the cautious strategy and isolationist stance that it had long pursued and crossed the Rubicon to a more implemental policy in undertaking a necessary course of action. Although at its onset, the U.S. was reluctant to engage in such costly warfare with devastating effects, the country could no longer maintain its isolationist policies by which it aimed to be the sole responsible actor in the less developed nations of the American continent. The remote geography of the U.S. and the nation's determination to refrain from influencing other nations' political affairs helped sustain U.S. foreign policy behavior to a certain extent (Schweller, 1993: 98) (Reiselbach, 1960: 645). The U.S. aspired to establish a new world order that included both an "Open Door" policy regarding economic expansion and no European interference in the internal affairs of American nations (Schuman, 1932: 883 – 884). Furthermore, the U.S. attempted to remain neutral in World War I to maintain trade relations with both sides fighting the war, seeking to maximize its economic interests. However, the German threat emerged as a major factor that thwarted American cautiousness. The U.S. had to respond to aggression by German naval forces against U.S. merchant ships and the lives of U.S. citizens. U.S. economic interests were jeopardized, and the American nation's self-image and prestige were at risk. Aside from those conditions, the 1917 Zimmermann notes sent to Mexico by the German Foreign Minister, in which Germany requested Mexican support for Germany in the case of a war with the U.S. in exchange for the return of lands previously lost by Mexico to the U.S., brought America to the verge of war. Those notes that reached U.S. President Wilson constituted an explicit threat against the territorial integrity of the U.S. As a consequence, the U.S. shifted from its traditional isolationist policy behavior and entered World War I.

Following World War I, and having been deeply affected by its heavy burden, the U.S. decided to return to isolationism and again attempted to condition its foreign policy attitude to refrain from intervening in international conflicts. However, avoiding worldwide political developments was not easy when they began to harm American well-being. Growing German power and expansionism in Europe were worrisome (Press, 2004/2005: 136). In addition, Japanese expansionist policies in the Pacific (James, 1906), which endangered American economic interests and culminated in the 1941 Japanese attack on the U.S. Navy at Pearl Harbor, prompted the U.S. to mobilize for war (Boyle, 1972: 41), requiring the total support of the American nation. Threats against U.S. economic interests and the presence of an outside aggressor impinging on U.S. territorial integrity – coupled with the growing fear of fascist expansionism in Europe – paved the way for a change in the U.S. foreign policy attitude from a deliberative approach to a more implemental stance. Consequently, the U.S. entered World War II, and the country emerged as the world's strongest and most reliable military and economic power. However, all those improvements were undermined by the escalation of tension between the U.S. and the Soviet Union that led to the Cold War, which almost resulted in nuclear war.

The Cold War period entailed a power struggle between those two actors over international dominance (Christie, Wagner, & Winter, 2001: 1) ((Renshon, 2006: 216 – 217) and engendered a number of crises, such as the Vietnam War, which was the longest war in American history. The U.S. was concerned that Vietnam might be the first nation in Southeast Asia to fall under the dominance of communism and that, following Vietnam, communism could spread individually to neighboring countries through a domino effect. (Christie et al., 2001: 7 – 8). This threat mobilized America to shift again toward the implemental side of policy and take action to prevent communist expansion, with great support from the American public. As far as the American nation was concerned, engaging in the necessary course of action would serve their national interests and restrain any threat against the American ideal of constructing democracy. Although the Vietnam War ended in disappointment, it is another instance in which the U.S. abandoned its isolationist policies to engage in action (Boyle, 1972: 41).

Following the negative outcome of the Vietnam War, the U.S. was obviously hesitant to intervene in the political developments of other nations and particularly to undertake military action in that regard. In addition, Americans began to question their nation's role in the new world order. Consequently, during the 1970s and 1980s, the U.S. retreated into its own shell and positioned its foreign policy on the deliberative side, which meant that it remained cautious and isolated from outside political affairs. This stance continued until American economic interests were threatened by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

As the U.S. was substantially dependent on oil resources in the Middle East and because Kuwait was a major oil supplier for the U.S., a dictator launching his forces into Kuwait rang American alarm bells. Under those circumstances, if Iraq's expansionist policy in the region had continued, then Saddam Hussein would have controlled a considerable portion of world oil and might have increased oil prices, which would have negative effects across the globe and harm U.S. economic interests. (Renshon, 2006: 211). Faced with a likely threat to regional and international stability and order, the U.S. administration shifted its foreign policy attitude, which had remained relatively removed from world affairs since Vietnam, and decided to address the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait by taking military action. Through its intervention, the U.S. would be maintaining U.S. economic and political interests that were at stake as well as supporting the U.S. position and role as a superpower in the post-Cold War world order. However, expelling Iraqi forces from Kuwait did not resolve U.S. problems, and the Iraq problem remained on the U.S. foreign policy agenda at the onset of the 21st century. In 2003, America initiated a second military operation in Iraq, which it had accused of possessing weapons of mass destruction. In fact, its hidden motive was related to the protection of American economic interests in the region. The Iraqi issue was handled by means of a change in American foreign policy attitude that again crossed the Rubicon to the side of implementation.

The Iraq issue was not the only problematic situation faced by the U.S. at the beginning of the 21st century. Afghanistan emerged as another major concern for America following the U.S. embassy bombings and the 9/11 attacks. The U.S. response to al-Qaeda, which was accused of undertaking the attacks on American soil, was a direct action aimed at eliminating all radical elements in the region. Al-

Qaeda's attacks put American national security in jeopardy and prompted American policymakers to resort to military action. Although operations in Afghanistan were positioned as the final U.S. engagement on foreign soil, there is the possibility that, in a world of rising interdependence, international political developments of particular concern to the U.S. might rapidly occur and lead the U.S. to shift from a policy of isolationism toward implementation in the pursuit of a necessary course of action.

For a long period, the U.S. has pursued a policy of isolation in world affairs. The foundation of this American stance originated in 1823 in the principles of the Monroe Doctrine, which created a division between spheres of influence of the New World and the Old World. America demanded European noninterference in the political affairs of the American nations. In return, the U.S. promised to refrain from interfering in political developments on the European continent. In addition, the U.S. announced its reluctance to interfere in any conflicts or wars in other parts of the world and emphasized a neutral approach to such situations. Thus, the U.S. clarified its vision of isolation, neutrality and disentanglement from alliances. Through such cautious strategy, the U.S. sought to maintain democracy in a new world order by peaceful means. This American perspective reveals that a traditional foreign policy pattern was established that shaped U.S. policy behavior for an extended period. Therefore, the U.S. initially positioned itself on the deliberative side of the Rubicon and cautiously approached political developments outside its borders because it had no intention to interfere in the affairs of other nations.

However, remaining on the deliberative side was not always easy, and the U.S. was unlikely to isolate itself entirely. U.S. geography, which includes the protection of vast oceans, was helpful to a certain extent. Although America was geographically distant from the conflicts, crises or wars occurring Europe, it was difficult to avoid their influence. Moreover, nations in a world of growing interdependence became more involved with one another and naturally attempted to maximize and preserve their interests. Thus, remaining isolated became more difficult. Moreover, circumstances change when a threat emerges against a nation's territorial integrity or against its economic or geopolitical interests that damages the essence of its self-image or affects the population's perception of how they are situated in the global system. Therefore, certain incidents in American history have compelled the U.S. to shift its traditional isolationist policies. In the face of those incidents, the U.S. had to re-evaluate its deliberative approach, weighing the possible outcomes before it was ready to cross the Rubicon to the implemental approach. In short, the U.S. mobilized and took those actions necessary to protect its national interests. Whenever U.S. economic or geopolitical interests, territorial integrity or self-image was jeopardized, the U.S. chose to abandon isolation.

In addition to the historical incidents described above, a recent development remains on the agenda. The Crimean issue has again raised the question as to whether the U.S. will continue a deliberative policy or cross the Rubicon to take action. The Crimean question has escalated into a major geopolitical crisis, increasing the tension between East and West concerning control over the region. Crimea has great strategic significance for Russia. The port of Sevastopol is home to the Russian Black Sea Fleet and critical to its naval power in the Mediterranean. Moreover, the region has historical and cultural ties with Russia and most of the Russian population in the region accepts that Crimea is part of Russia, which was given to Ukraine by Khrushchev in 1954 as an intra-national transfer within the Soviet Union. With such strategic significance and ties with Russia, Moscow sought to annex the region – which includes a Russian-speaking majority – and demanded a referendum. The referendum was conducted in March 2014, following the entrance of Russian forces into Crimea. The territory voted to join Russia.

As a matter of course, almost every state resorts to force when it comes to vital interests. At that point, the major question is whether Crimea is of vital importance for the United States. On the other hand, the United States would have explicitly declared her determination to respond with nuclear weapons against any Russian attacks to ally states on condition that Crimea possessed such a substantial importance for her. Even though the current situation prognosticates an undeclared war, the circumstances have not yet brought the United States to the brink of crossing the Rubicon and engaging in massive retaliation. Instead, US opted for means of flexible response and imposed economic sanctions on Russia and Russian participation in the G8 and the European Council was suspended as a result of this diplomatic pressure.

Actually, each of those methods evoke behavior pattern in international politics which falls into oblivion. For instance, the notion of strategy had once been identified as the skillful use of force. However, following the emergence of nuclear weapons, strategy has been expressed as “the art of not using force”. In other words, it has been stated as the art of using force by states as a means of threat without resorting to physical force, and carrying out major methods of deterrence in order to attain the desired outcome. Currently, it seems that the United States goes for putting the concept of strategy to use without resorting to physical power except for NATO member Turkey’s downing of a Russian warplane in November 2015, on the account that Turkish airspace was violated for 17 seconds.

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