

Why Is the United States Active in “Middle Eastern” Affairs? Principles Underlying Post-World War II U.S. Foreign Policy

On October 6, 2001, President George W. Bush claimed that the goal of American foreign policy was to “defend not only our precious freedoms but also the freedom of people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear.” Examine the statements defining United States foreign policy during the second half of the twentieth century. Based on these statements, what are the fundamental principles of U.S. foreign policy? In your opinion, did President Bush make an accurate claim? Explain.

- National Security Council Paper Number 68 (January, 1950). “Our overall policy at the present time may be described as one designed to foster a world environment in which the American system can survive and flourish. . . . (T)he cold war is in fact a real war in which the survival of the free world is at stake.”
- George Kennan, Director, State Department Policy Planning Staff (*American Diplomacy: 1900-1950*. New York: New American Library, 1951). “Our own national interest is all that we are really capable of knowing and understanding, . . . the pursuit of our national interest can never fail to be conducive to a better world.”
- Eisenhower Doctrine (March , 1957). “The United States regards as vital to the national interest and world peace the preservation of the independence and integrity of the nations of the Middle East.”
- Carter Doctrine (January, 1980). “The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan could pose the most serious threat to the peace since the Second World War . . . The Soviet Union is now attempting to consolidate a strategic position, . . . that poses a grave threat to the free movement of Middle East oil. . . . An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”
- Reagan “Evil Empire” Speech (March, 1983). “There is sin and evil in the world and we’re enjoined by Scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might.”
- Clinton/ Albright Doctrine (May, 1996). Lesley Stahl of CBS television news was interviewing Madeleine Albright, United States ambassador to the United Nations, on “60 Minutes.” Albright maintained that United States economic and military sanctions against Iraq had yielded important concessions from Saddam Hussein. Stahl asked: “We have heard that half a million children have died. I mean, that’s more children than died in Hiroshima. And you know, is the price worth it?” Albright responded, “I think this is a very hard choice, but the price – we think the price is worth it.”
- Democratic Senator Zell Miller, Georgia (*NYT*, September 11, 2001). “I say, bomb the hell out of them. If there’s collateral damage, so be it.”
- George W. Bush (October 6, 2001). “Every nation has a choice to make. In this conflict there is no neutral ground. If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves. . . . We’re a peaceful nation. Yet as we have learned so suddenly and so tragically, there can be no peace in a world of sudden terror. In the face of today’s new threat the only way to pursue peace is to pursue those who threaten it. . . . We defend not only our precious freedoms but also the freedom of people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear.”

A Chronology of Western Intervention in the “Middle East”

Source: G. Fuller and I. Lesser (1995). *A Sense of Siege, The Geopolitics of Islam and the West* (RAND Study). Examine the list below. How would you respond to the charge that the history of United States involvement in the Middle East represents fifty years of imperialism?

- 1953. British and United States intelligence organizations overthrow Iran’s elected Prime Minister and restore the Shah to power.
- 1956. In response to nationalization of the Suez Canal, Great Britain, France and Israel invade Egypt.
- 1958. United States Marines sent to Lebanon to protect a pro-Western government identified with the Christian population but with little Islamic support.
- 1967. During the Six-Day War between Arab states and Israel, the United States supports Israel with military intelligence and supplies.
- 1973. The United States provides extensive military and intelligence support to Israel during the Yom Kippur War.
- 1974. The United States provides covert aid to Iraqi Kurdish rebels against the government of Saddam Hussein, which sought a closer relations with the Soviet Union and was hostile to Iran and the U.S. supported Shah.
- 1982. United States Marines in Lebanon to oppose Syrian forces following an Israeli invasion.
- 1985. United States air strikes against Libya in response to a terrorist bombing in Germany.
- 1986. During the Iran-Iraq War, the United States assists Kuwaiti oil shipping in and out of the gulf, clashes with Iran, and shoots down of an Iranian civilian airliner.
- 1990-1991. Following the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait, United States troops are sent to Saudi Arabia, attack and defeat Iraq, and subject the Iraqi people to a punishing economic embargo.
- 1992-1993. The United States military leads United Nation’s forces in Somalia on a humanitarian mission that becomes embroiled in a civil war.
- 1993. The United States continues air and missile strikes against Iraq which cause civilian casualties and supports exiled Iraqi opposition groups.
- 1995. Nine of thirteen United States supported United Nations peacekeeping operations, representing two-thirds of the U.N. troop and police strength, are either in Muslim countries or involve Muslim interests directly: the Sinai (since 1967); India-Pakistan (Kashmir since 1949); Cyprus (since 1964); Golan Heights (since 1974); Lebanon (since 1978); Iraq-Kuwait (since 1991); Western Sahara (since 1991); Yugoslavia (since 1992); Somalia (since 1992).
- In the second half of the 20th century, the United States either openly or covertly supported selected Middle East regimes in inter-Arab politics: Lebanon and Jordan against Nasser’s Egypt; the Shah’s Iran against Iraq; Iraq against Khomeini’s Iran; Kuwait against Iraq; Saudi Arabia against Nasser’s Egypt and Saddam’s Iraq; North

Yemen against South Yemen; Egypt against Libya; Morocco against Algeria; and Israel against all regional states.

Comparing Texts: Bush and bin Laden debate United States Air Strikes in Afghanistan A Statement by United States President George W. Bush

The following is an edited version of a videotaped statement by President George W. Bush explaining United States air strikes in Afghanistan, Oct. 6, 2001. Source: *NYT*, Oct. 7, 2001, B6.

The United States of America is a friend to the Afghan people. And we are the friends of almost a billion worldwide who practice the Islamic faith. The United States of America is an enemy of those who aid terrorists and of the barbaric criminals who profane a great religion by committing murder in its name.

Today we focus on Afghanistan. But the battle is broader. Every nation has a choice to make. In this conflict there is no neutral ground. If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril.

I'm speaking to you today from the Treaty Room of the White House, a place where American presidents have worked for peace. We're a peaceful nation. Yet as we have learned so suddenly and so tragically, there can be no peace in a world of sudden terror. In the face of today's new threat the only way to pursue peace is to pursue those who threaten it.

We did not ask for this mission. But we will fulfill it. The name of today's military operation is "Enduring Freedom." We defend not only our precious freedoms but also the freedom of people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear.

The battle is now joined on many fronts. We will not waver, we will not tire, we will not falter and we will not fail. Peace and freedom will prevail. Thank you. May God continue to bless America.

A Statement by Saudi-born dissident Osama bin Laden

The following is an edited version of a videotaped statement by Saudi-born dissident Osama bin Laden in response to United States air strikes in Afghanistan, Oct. 6, 2001. Source: *NYT*, Oct. 7, 2001, B7.

What America is tasting now is only a copy of what we have tasted. Our Islamic nation has been tasting the same for more than 80 years, of humiliation and disgrace, its sons killed and their blood spilled, its sanctities desecrated.

A million innocent children are dying at this time as we speak, killed in Iraq without any guilt. We hear no denunciation, we hear no edict from the hereditary rulers. In these days, Israeli tanks rampage across Palestine, in Ramallah, Rafah and Beit Jala and many other parts of the land of Islam, and we do not hear anyone raising his voice or reacting.

In a nation at the far end of the world, Japan, hundreds of thousands, young and old, were killed and (they say) this is not a world crime. To them it is not a clear issue.

I swear to God that America will not live in peace before peace reigns in Palestine, and before all the army of infidels depart the land of Mohammed, peace be upon him.

God is the Greatest and glory be to Islam.

Questions

1. President Bush states that America is a friend to the Afghan and Islamic people around the world. In your view, why is he making this point?
2. President Bush claims "We defend not only our precious freedoms but also the freedom of people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear." In your view, is this a legitimate claim?
3. Osama bin Laden claims that what "America is tasting now is only a copy of what we have tasted." In your opinion, what does he mean?
4. When bin Laden says Islamic people have faced "humiliation and disgrace" for more than 80 years, he is referring to the period just after World War I. In your opinion, why does he trace the start of this conflict back to that era?
5. What are bin Laden's conditions for peace between the United States and the Islamic world?

6. Both Bush and bin Laden call on God for strength and support. How do you respond to their invocation of God for their causes? Explain.