

# U.S. foreign policy schools of thought

## ***Introduction***

The schools of US thought over foreign policy reflect deep-seated regional, economic, social, and class interests; they embody visions for domestic and foreign policy and express moral and political values and socio-economic and political interests.

## ***Wilsonianism***

Wilsonianism includes those who believe that the US has both a moral and a practical duty to spread its values throughout the world. It rests upon ideology and international law and is characterized by missionary zeal. Wilsonians support the spread of democracy abroad as a moral duty for the U.S (the shining city upon the hill) and as a practical imperative since they advocate that democracies do not fight each other, and therefore peace is safeguarded.

Moreover, they stand for the spread of free trade because, according to them, economic interdependence makes the cost of wars prohibitive. Lastly, they encourage collective security through multilateral organizations- mainly the U.N.

## ***Hamiltonianism***

Hamiltonianism sees the first task of the American government as promoting the health of American enterprise at home and abroad.

It is characterized by its commercial orientation, its absence of illusions about the frailties of human nature, and its willingness to consider ideas like the balance of power and the use of force in international relations.

Hamiltonians do not oppose multilateral forms of cooperation, but they use them to serve American interests. One of these interests is the freedom of the seas. No sea and no strait should be closed to American ships. Hamiltonians draw from the European way of perceiving foreign policy, and thus, it does not resonate with the broader public.

## ***Jacksonianism***

Jacksonianism represents a deeply embedded, widely spread populist and popular culture of honor, independence, courage, and military pride among the American people.

It combines individualism, democratic values, the will for self-reliance, and national honor with populism. Traditional Jacksonianism used to stand for an isolationist foreign policy.

Now, however, Jacksonians go against the U.S involvement in multilateral structures that aim to the "good of mankind." Moreover, Jacksonians stand for unilateral and decisive actions to secure national interests. Jacksonianism is more firmly entrenched in the heartland.

### ***Jeffersonianism***

Jeffersonianism sees the preservation of American democracy in a dangerous world as the most pressing and vital interest of the American people. It expresses American individualism and voices concerns over the preservation of the American Revolution acquis. Jeffersonians are afraid of the potential that the federal government abuses its power. Therefore, they would even like to see the constitutional restrictions on executive power tightened.

They also try to ensure foreign policy's constitutional conduct, arguing that excessive involvement overseas can compromise their democratic standards at home. Usually, Jeffersonianism does not influence the government's policy.

### ***Sources:***

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