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FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

-HISTORY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE U.S.-

The official goals of the United States' foreign policy are described by the U.S. Department of State as being *“to create a more secure, democratic, and prosperous world for the benefit of the American people and the international community.”* Over the course of time, this approach to foreign relations has been the subject of much debate, criticism and praise both domestically and abroad.

American foreign relations first emerged on the world stage with the “Olive Branch Policy”, an attempt on the part of the newly formed United States to reconcile with Great Britain during the American Revolution. At the conclusion of the war, the new state increased its trade and political relations with various nations abroad, and thus America's international policy began to take shape.

Numerous defining moments in American foreign relations have occurred in various stages of its diplomatic history. From the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 that proclaimed European powers could no longer colonize or interfere with the affairs of the newly independent nations of the Americas, to the conclusion of World War I which saw the return to “isolationist” policies and the Cold War which focus on “containment”, America quickly became and continues to be a major player in world affairs.

Today, the United States has economic and diplomatic interest in every region of the globe. Only seven nations do not have recognized relationships with the U.S. including: Bhutan, Republic of China (Taiwan), Somalia, North Korea, Western Sahara (Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic), Cuba and Iran. Because the United States is one of the largest diplomatic presences of any nation in the world, its foreign relations with other countries will continue to be one of the most critical topics in media and politics around the world.

This collection of important foreign relations material is an essential tool in understanding the international policies and affairs of previous presidential administration, government officials and government agencies of the United States.

“America goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. She will commend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example.”

—John Quincy Adams, sixth President of the United States

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-SAMPLE ENTRY-

Foreign Relations, 1961-1963, Volume XIV, Berlin Crisis, 1961-1962 January-May 1961: Consideration of the Question of Germany and Berlin

Letter From Secretary of State Rusk to President Kennedy/1/
Washington, January 28, 1961.

/1/Source: Department of State, Central Files, 762.00/1-2861. Confidential. Drafted by Rusk.



Dear Mr. President: I am enclosing a brief chronology of the principal events relating to Berlin which have occurred since the ending of the first Berlin blockade in 1949. The period covered falls logically into two parts: that from the end of the blockade until November 1958, when the current "Berlin crisis" began; and the period of the crisis itself since that time.

The first period was characterized by the readjustment of relationships between the Western Allies and West Germany, between the Federal Republic and West Berlin, and between the USSR and East Germany. The last of these in particular set the stage for the Soviet efforts to dislodge the Allies from West Berlin which began in 1958.

Soviet tactics to force Western abandonment of Berlin which, with the measures taken by the West to counter them, dominate the second period, have gone through two general phases. The first was a direct threat to Allied access rights to West Berlin. This threat took the form of the stated intention of the USSR to sign a peace treaty with East Germany and turn over to the latter the control over Allied access to the city..../3/

/3/For an extract of Khrushchev's January 6 speech, including the statement on a separate peace treaty, see Documents on International Affairs, 1961, pp. 259-262.

Faithfully yours,
Dean Rusk

The Berlin Crisis began at the end of World War II, when the allied powers (the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union) divided Germany and Berlin, the former capital, into four occupation zones.

While the Soviet Union desired to have a peace treaty to unite Germany under Communist terms, President Kennedy refused to accede to his terms. In response, the Soviet Union blockaded Berlin in 1949 and in 1961 the East German government, with the support of the Soviet Union, closed its borders and build the one of the most iconic symbol of the Cold War, the Berlin Wall.

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