

# DEBATE CLUB

## The US: From Democracy to Empire?

Topic 1	<b>US Role in World Stability</b>
Summary	Is the USA a threat to world stability or a political force for good?
Context	The USA has been described as ‘the world’s policeman’. But should we be that trusting of it? After all, the USA has notably failed in some areas to use its influence and resources for the common good, and its policy can fluctuate between isolationism and over-bearing intervention. Should the USA be feared or welcomed by the international community? The proposition should note that this isn’t about disliking Americans as individuals. This debate, when approached from a range of angles, can combine arguments about the USA’s political and military interventions in global affairs and arguments about its cultural influence around the world.
Motions	The US is a threat to world stability. The US is a guarantor of world peace and stability.
Useful Sites	<a href="#"><u>Historical and current perspectives on US territorial and cultural imperialism</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Americans against world empire</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Database of information on multinationals and their dangers</u></a> <a href="#"><u>PoliSci.com – political reference desk</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Stanley Foundation: Framing a New Global Vision</u></a> <a href="#"><u>Atlantic Council: Military Transformations</u></a>

Topic 2	<b>Bilateral vs Multilateral Aid</b>
Summary	Should the USA prefer to give aid money bilaterally (directly to individual countries or projects) or multilaterally (channelling it through United Nations agencies, World Bank, NGOs, etc.)?
Context	The giving of international aid has been taking place for decades, but the higher levels of international aid we know today are largely a phenomenon of the post-World War II era. Contrasting models of foreign aid giving are provided by programs like the Marshall Plan, involving bilateral aid arrangements with each of several European countries, and by the multilateral arrangements created by the Bretton Woods process (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank). Historically, bilateral aid dominates the foreign aid landscape. The major economic powerhouses—mostly former colonial powers and the United States—provide the bulk of foreign aid. Contributions by multilateral organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank have been controversial for their focus on economic development and the sometimes severe austerity measures they impose upon recipients. Because aid in both contexts is often tied to loans, critics have argued that aid has merely led to the dependence of developing countries on the developed world. Recently, countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom have increased their contributions to NGOs or non-governmental organizations that provide help with a variety of different needs in recipient countries. Despite these changes, citizens and politicians in both the United States and Europe seem to be experiencing an increased level of “aid fatigue,” questioning the value of the continued expense.
Motions	In its relationship with the UN, the USA should favour multilateral rather than bilateral aid. The US should render bilateral aid to foreign countries.

Useful Sites	<p><u><a href="#">Provides a series of links to summaries of arguments about the advantages and disadvantages of bilateral and multilateral aid packages</a></u></p> <p><u><a href="#">An extensive document by the Congressional Budget Office on the role of aid in international development, including a discussion of bilateral and multilateral models</a></u></p> <p><u><a href="#">An article by the UN Department of Public Information regarding the gradual shift of aid from major donor countries to NGOs</a></u></p> <p><u><a href="#">A centralized resource for aid reports on various recipient countries and regions and analysis of different aid formulas</a></u></p> <p><u><a href="#">Briefing paper with a detailed discussion of the history of aid and the strengths of bilateral and multilateral aid</a></u></p> <p><u><a href="#">The official website of the US government's aid granting agency</a></u></p>
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Topic 3	<b>UN Peacekeepers and the USA</b>
Summary	Should the United States participate in UN peacekeeping operations and, if so, should the United States permit its troops to serve as UN troops (rather than as US troops under an independent command)?
Context	<p>The United Nations has engaged in peacekeeping operations for several decades, most heavily in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The number of those operations dropped when US support became constrained by Presidential Decision Directive 25 that established specific and more restrictive criteria for US involvement. The UN Security Council later adopted similar criteria. The type of operations conducted by the UN has evolved from truce and cease-fire monitoring to more aggressive actions, such as disarmament of combatants, and more managerial operations, such as election monitoring.</p> <p>The Bush administration has sought to scale down US commitments to peacekeeping, reducing the number of troops in Bosnia and Kosovo and refusing to supply troops for the peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan (separate from those troops hunting Al Qaeda). While there have been occasional small-scale exceptions, most notably in the UN's Macedonia operation (under Clinton) and its operation in Georgia (under Bush), the US government has not been in the practice of allowing its soldiers to operate under UN command. This has even extended to the practice of not wearing Blue Helmets or UN insignia. While this attitude has some basis in actual public policy arguments, it is in part an acknowledgement of an attitude among many isolationists (and others) in the USA that the UN is a dangerous institution bent on the spread of world government at the expense of national sovereignty. These critics see the UN as a failed institution, full of corruption that US soldiers should not concede their identity to.</p> <p>This topic addresses the related questions of (1) should the United States participate in UN peacekeeping operations and (2) should the United States permit its troops to serve as UN troops (rather than as US troops under an independent command)? Regardless of how the proposition is worded (e.g. whether your debate specifically focuses on the wearing of "Blue Helmets") the two questions are closely related, as nearly every US discussion of peacekeeping involvement addresses the initial fundamental issue of whether it is appropriate for US soldiers to engage in nation-building or peacekeeping exercises.</p>
Motions	<p>The US should send US soldiers to serve in UN peacekeeping missions.</p> <p>US soldiers on peacekeeping missions should serve under UN command.</p>

Useful Sites	<p><a href="#"><u>Pages from America’s UN Mission, presenting myths and facts related to the US-UN relationship</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>A paper that argues why the United States is an ineffective peacekeeper, regardless of who is in command</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Congressional Research document that reviews US financial participation in peacekeeping operations and provides a good history of these operations</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Statement regarding the scandal with peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by an American organization with historical objections toward peacekeeping operations</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Links to a Congressional Research Service document advancing arguments about what the appropriate role of the United States should be in UN operations</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Useful article on the pros and cons of US involvement, as well as the involvement of other major powers</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>An example of advocacy by American groups who oppose the UN in its entirety, and peacekeeping involvement specifically</u></a></p>
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Topic 4	<b>USA leaving UNESCO</b>
Summary	Should the USA leave the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation?
Context	<p>The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation was founded on the 16th of November, 1945 and is based in Paris, France. Its stated goal is ‘to build peace in the minds of men.’ UNESCO has a humanitarian agenda – it pledges to work towards particular Millennium Development Goals, in particular, it wishes to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty in developing countries by 2015</li> <li>* achieve universal primary education in all countries by 2015</li> <li>* eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005</li> <li>* help countries implement a national strategy for sustainable development by 2005</li> <li>* to reverse current trends in the loss of environmental resources by 2015.</li> </ul> <p>However, the organisation is allegedly misused to promote particular political aims. The Reagan administration said that UNESCO “politicized virtually every subject it deals with, has exhibited hostility toward the basic institutions of a free society, especially a free market and a free press, and has demonstrated unrestrained budgetary expansion.” The USA withdrew from the organisation in 1983 and only rejoined in 2002 - a decision which surprised many both at home and abroad, and which remains controversial.</p>
Motion	Rejoining UNESCO was a mistake for the USA.
Useful Sites	<p><a href="#"><u>UNESCO</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>US State Department Vision Statement on Multilateral Diplomacy, including the decision to rejoin UNESCO</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Wikipedia (includes a list of all Directors-General)</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>The Heritage Foundation disagreed with rejoining and here presents a comprehensive case against</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Article against the USA rejoining UNESCO #1</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Article against the USA rejoining UNESCO #2</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>US Secretary of Education on the decision to rejoin UNESCO</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>United Nations Association of the USA</u></a></p>

Topic 5	<b>United States Foreign Policy: Isolationism vs Interventionism</b>
Summary	Should the US use its considerable power and influence to engage with, and perhaps shape, the global community - or should it focus only on its own domestic issues, needs and security?
Context	Isolationism is a form of foreign policy in which a state seeks to avoid all international entanglements, including political alliances, commitments, organizations, and trade agreements. There are usually two parts to such a policy. First is non-interventionism, meaning the state will not involve itself in international military alliances and will not engage in conflict except to protect its own vital interests. Second is protectionism, wherein the state sets up legal barriers to trade and to cultural exchange. The United States held to a policy of isolationism for most of its history ending permanently only in the 20th century with the Second World War and subsequent Cold War. A number of American politicians, scholars, and a growing number of concerned citizens have begun to advocate a return to isolationism. They cite the risks and costs of American involvement on the world stage and decry its position as de facto world police, which they see as not only an expensive endeavor, but also dangerous to the security of the state. They also argue that the dangers of its trade deficit brought on by a lack of trade barriers create the risk of the United States becoming the economic thrall of its creditors. Opponents of such views point out that the decades since the United States has become the primary actor on the world stage have been marked by an unprecedented degree of stability and prosperity across the globe, and that its withdrawal from world affairs might create dangerous disorder. They also cite the fact that the American economy, dependent on free trade, would contract and its people's standard of living would diminish should it pursue a policy of isolationism. Debates on this issue revolve around the issues of whether the United States has a moral right to withdraw from the international system, whether such withdrawal would be overly harmful to world security and stability, and whether it would be inordinately harmful to the United States' own society.
Motion	The U.S. should pursue an isolationist policy devoid of foreign intervention and foreign aid.
Useful Sites	<a href="#">Associated Press. 2007. "Bernanke Warns About Economic Isolationism". Available:</a> <a href="#">BBC News. "US trade deficit widens to more than \$50bn in May". 12th July 2011. Available</a> <a href="#">Buffett, Warren. 2003. "Squanderville Vs. Thriftville". Fortune. Available:</a> <a href="#">Daggett, Stephen. 2010. "Cost of Major US Wars". Congressional Research Service. Available:</a> <a href="#">Krol, Robert. 2008. "Trade, Protectionism, and the U.S. Economy". CATO Institute. Available:</a> <a href="#">Liptak, Adam. 2010. "Tea-ing Up the Constitution". New York Times. Available:</a> <a href="#">Lopez, Philippe. 2011. "US, Not China, Inspires World: Huntsman". AEP. Available:</a> <a href="#">McCoy, Alfred. 2010. "The Decline and Fall of the American Empire". The Nation. Available:</a>

Topic 6	<b>US support for Global Fund</b>
Summary	Should the USA increase its financial commitment to the Global Fund to better fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria?

Context	<p>AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis kill over six million people worldwide each year, most of them in poor countries with limited resources. As well as the direct human suffering and loss these three killer diseases bring, they also help to keep poor countries poor by greatly reducing the ability of sufferers to work productively, both in the labour force in support of their families or in education. AIDS in particular can devastate poor communities by killing mostly adults (over 3 million in 2002, and rising), leaving many orphans and overburdening social structures. In developed countries public health systems generally have the infrastructure and funding to treat those suffering from such illnesses, and to operate prevention strategies (e.g. the USA has allocated \$17.5 billion for Fiscal Year 2005 for domestic programmes against HIV/AIDS). Yet in the developing world such help is often either unavailable or unaffordable, and even in richer countries, able to pay for courses of antiretroviral drugs for HIV/AIDS costing thousands of dollars a year, there is still no vaccine against HIV.</p> <p>To address these challenges the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria was set up in 2002. Although independent of other international bodies such as the United Nations, it works closely with the World Health Organisation and UNAIDS to deliver programmes in over a hundred countries worldwide. To date (October 2005) the Global Fund has spent over \$1.5 billion on programmes which are treating an extra 220 000 people suffering from AIDS, as well as over 1 million people with malaria and 600 000 with tuberculosis. It is now seeking \$7.1 billion to fund programmes through to 2007. This money comes from donor states as well as private business and charities, but inevitably most is supplied by individual countries who pledged their support when the Fund was established.</p> <p>So far the United States has provided a third of the Global Fund's contributions (European countries have collectively donated just over 50%), but there is uncertainty as to whether the Bush Administration and Congress will provide an appropriate share of future funding. There is also controversy over American priorities in putting billions more dollars into US-run international anti-AIDS initiatives, which have been seen as by-passing the Global Fund and undermining its work through conflicting policies.</p>
Motion	The USA should increase its financial commitment to the Global Fund to better fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.
Useful Sites	<p><a href="#"><u>The Global Fund (with excellent links)</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>AIDSPAN (watchdog group for the Global Fund)</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>UNAIDS</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>World Health Organisation</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>All.Africa.com story on problems in Uganda #1</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>All.Africa.com story on problems in Uganda #2</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Friends of the Global Fight against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Foreign Affairs article on US AIDS Policy</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>AVERT.org on President Bush's AIDS initiative</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>US State Department on The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Office of the US Global AIDS Coordinator</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief: First Report to Congress</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Health GAP - NGO critical of US Policy on AIDS</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>United Nations Association of the USA comment on US policy to combat malaria</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>United Nations Association of the USA</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>UK Consortium on AIDS and International Development</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Clinton Foundation on bulk purchasing of drugs</u></a></p>

Topic 7	<b>Intervention of Failed States</b>
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Summary	Should the USA work together with the UN to prevent the collapse of third-world states?
Context	<p>Definitions vary, but a failed state is usually thought of as one where any government has broken down to the point where it can no longer provide any services to the people. Most importantly, this means that law and order has collapsed, with the government losing its monopoly over the legitimate use of force. Often large areas of the country are in the control of non-government forces, perhaps through civil war but often as a result of lawlessness and banditry. Recent estimates by Foreign Policy and the Fund for Peace (see web links) suggest that up to 2 billion people worldwide live in insecure states where government has either failed or is fragile, and are exposed to varying degrees of violence as a result.</p> <p>The most complete example of a failed state is perhaps Somalia, where no government has been able to take effective control of the country since the death fifteen years ago of Siad Barre, its dictator. Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cote D'Ivoire provide other commonly-discussed examples. States recovering from recent collapse could include Liberia, Sierra Leone and Angola, although in none of these is recovery certain, while Cambodia, Mozambique, Lebanon and East Timor provide examples of relative longer-term success after periods of failure. Today many observers are gloomy about the futures of countries including Zimbabwe, Nepal, Guinea, Afghanistan, Chad, Sudan, Bolivia and Iraq, as well as the Palestinian Authority.</p> <p>Civil warfare is a big element in the failure of states, but this can include situations where a government has lost control of a significant area of its territory but can function at least minimally effectively elsewhere - examples of this could include Russia (with Chechnya), Colombia, Sudan and the Philippines. The question of how the outside world should respond to such civil wars is addressed in another topic; this one will focus upon states in which widespread collapse of government institutions is threatened, and on whether and how the USA and global community should act to prevent failure.</p>
Motions	<p>The USA should work together with the UN to prevent the collapse of third-world states.</p> <p>The USA should do more to prevent failed states.</p>
Useful Sites	<p><a href="#"><u>Foreign Affairs</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Global Policy Forum with links a range of articles</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Centre for Defense Information resources centre on failed states</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Foreign Policy index of failing states, with links</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Global Guerillas - blog with good links</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Brookings Institution Paper</u></a></p>

Topic 8	<b>Reintroducing the Fairness Doctrine in Broadcasting</b>
Summary	Should the Fairness Doctrine be reintroduced in the USA?

Context	<p>Until twenty years ago broadcasters in the USA had by law to follow the federal government's "Fairness Doctrine". This rule, formally introduced in 1949, required radio and television stations to give "ample play to the free and fair competition of opposing views", so that listeners and viewers received a range of opinions and individual stations were not able to promote particular viewpoints to the exclusion of all others. The doctrine was also supported by Congress in legislation, although there is argument over whether this required the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to regulate broadcasters in this way, or simply allowed them to do so if they judged it necessary. A 1969 Supreme Court case found that the Fairness Doctrine did not infringe the constitutional freedom of speech.</p> <p>In 1987 the Reagan Administration's FCC judged that the Fairness Doctrine was an outdated and unnecessary interference in the broadcasting business and it was repealed. Congress made an attempt to reimpose it but President Reagan vetoed this and the doctrine has never been brought back since.</p> <p>Since the Fairness Doctrine was removed in 1987 talk radio has become much more prominent, bringing a brash and lively style of political debate into many American homes (and cars). Conservative viewpoints dominate their agenda, and hosts such as Rush Limbaugh make no attempt to hide their own political opinions or to provide a platform for views which disagree with their own. Such stations are now seen as hugely politically influential, with loyal audiences which they can mobilise to lobby, vote and protest on key issues. This was particularly seen in the collapse of immigration reform in 2007, when some Republicans as well as Democrats began to call for talk radio to be reined back, perhaps through the reinstatement of the Fairness Doctrine.</p>
Motion	<p>The Fairness Doctrine should be reintroduced to provide for "the free and fair competition of opposing views".</p>
Useful Sites	<p><a href="#"><u>Federal Communications Commission</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>National Public Radio (NPR)</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Columbia Journalism Review</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Economist article</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Rush Limbaugh</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Air America Radio</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Wikipedia entry with good links</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>PBS interview with Congresswoman Louise Slaughter</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>FAIR: Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>National Review article</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Pew Research Centre</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Centre for American Progress report</u></a></p>