



The U.S. and the World:
SS.7.CG.4.1
Domestic and Foreign Policy
READING #3

Name: _____

Date: _____



SS.7.CG.4.1 Benchmark Clarification 3: Students will define “national interest” and identify the means available to the national government to pursue the United States’ national interest.

Foreign and domestic policy is shaped by a country’s “**national interest**”. National interest refers to a nation’s economic, military, political, and/or cultural goals and ambitions. All government decisions are made in the national interest as seen by the current elected and appointed officials in charge of making such decisions. National interests may change over time.

The national interest of the United States includes:

- (1) Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of American people
- (2) Building and maintaining strong alliances and trade partners
- (3) Maintaining economic and political stability at home and abroad
- (4) Ensuring stable and reliable sources of energy
- (5) Promoting democracy and rule of law throughout the globe

There are three main ways that the national government may pursue the United States’ national interest and foreign policy goals.

The first means is through the use of **foreign aid**. Aid may be used to assist other countries who are in need and allows the United States to continue our influence abroad. Foreign aid may involve providing money but it may also include supplying a foreign ally with medical supplies, troops, or advice on a situation they are facing.

Another means available to the United States to pursue national interest abroad is through **military action**. At times, to promote or protect our national interest, the United States has had to formally or informally engage in wars and conflicts. The United States has seven branches of the military that it can use to protect our nation and its citizens.

The last main method available to the United States is our ability to enter **treaties** or **executive agreements**. Treaties are formal agreements between countries to accomplish a goal, such as ending a war. In the United States, while presidents typically negotiate treaties, the Constitution requires that the U.S. Senate must **ratify** the treaty. More commonly, heads of state from different nations will just make executive agreements, or informal deals.

national interest – a nation’s economic, military, political, and/or cultural goals and ambitions

foreign aid – resources provided to another nation for the purpose of assisting

military action – the use of troops and/or military forces

treaty – a formal agreement between nations to accomplish a goal

executive agreement – an informal agreement between the heads of state of various nations to accomplish a goal

ratify – to approve