

MASTER'S THESIS

Revolution or rediscovery?: Post-World War Two American foreign policy at a crossroad

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REVOLUTION OR REDISCOVERY?

**POST-WORLD WAR TWO
AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY
AT A CROSSROAD**

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ABSTRACT

The thesis reviews the existing scholarly explanations of American foreign policy and then offers a different interpretation. The study reexamines the changes that occurred in American foreign policy conduct after World War Two which coincided with the onset of the Cold War. Most historians claim that isolationism was the fundamental principle of American foreign policy, originated by George Washington and later restated by Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe. Both the Second World War and the Cold War showed that isolationism was no longer workable and so rendered the advice of the Founding Fathers obsolescent. American leaders realized that a new foreign policy was needed and they turned to internationalism--the antithesis of isolationism. The transformation began in 1947 through the Marshall Plan, or the European Recovery Program (ERP), which successfully transformed American foreign policy from isolationism to internationalism. In view of this change, historians have argued that the changes brought by the Marshall Plan constituted both a departure from Washington's advice and a revolution in American foreign policy. However, some of the assumptions are groundless. This thesis will offer a different interpretation and show that the changes in the late 1940s constituted a rediscovery of Washington's wisdom rather than a departure or a revolution.

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