

# **OF SEA AND SHORE – THE AMERICAN GLOBAL PORT CITY’S INTERNATIONALIST APPROACH TO U.S. FOREIGN POLICY**

## **ABSTRACT**

United States’ historical geography, recent presidential elections, and congressional roll call voting reveal tangible differences among global port cities and the American hinterland. This sectionalism, generalized as “red” versus “blue” America, is the manifestation of the seaport’s traditional function at the crossroads of broader economic networks, whereby communities further inland are located on the international system’s relative periphery. Place shapes attitude. Due to the global port city’s maritime history, and subsequent role as entrepôt for goods, people, and ideas, Americans living in coastal metropolises approach U.S. foreign policy from an internationalist perspective.

With cartographic analysis and an interdisciplinary approach, this dissertation defines global port cities through demographic, ethnoregional, and economic measures. Three case studies are examined to test the connection between American global port cities and an internationalist world view - the debate over joining the League of Nations, the politics surrounding the Marshall Plan, and the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement. At each of these American 20<sup>th</sup> century diplomatic milestones when the United States was faced with clear choices between divergent foreign policy courses, the foremost American global port cities of New York, San Francisco, and Miami embraced collective security, nation building, and free trade proposals respectively while communities further inland gravitated towards nationalism and isolationism.

The global port city’s internationalist world view serves as a complementary lens that aids other analytical approaches seeking to understand the complexities of how U.S. foreign policy takes form. Given the magnitude of U.S. foreign policy decisions, any additional understanding into America’s political geography and diplomatic heritage is valuable. Reflecting on the Peloponnesian Wars, Thucydides observed that the Greek coastal community of Athens possessed unique qualities as opposed to its Spartan foe. Today, in uncertain and tumultuous times, insight into the particular attitudes and behavior of American global port cities might help us to better understand America’s past, and perhaps even help the United States chart a course for the future.