

U.S. SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE IN
THE 1980S: ITS ORGANIZATIONS AND OPERATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee is one of the most important forums through which senators seek to exert influence in the field of global affairs. In the 1980s, the Foreign Relations Committee remained as one of the most prestigious and powerful committees on Capitol Hill, however, its influence began to decline. Chairmen of Foreign Relations Committee Frank Church (D.-Idaho) and Charles Percy (R.-Illinois) were defeated for reelection, and the weakening leadership further damaged the committee's role in foreign affairs.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is the sole committee to recommend that foreign policy nominations and treaties submitted by the president be approved or rejected by the Senate. Except in 1981 and 1985, the Foreign Relations Committee failed to introduce foreign aid authorization resolution leading to a greater role of Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations in the foreign aid program. Also, in the field of arms sales and war powers, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee lost part of its power to the House Foreign Affairs Committee. This paper first examines the organizations of Senate Foreign Relations Committee and then analyzes factors contributing to the decline of the committee.