

**SECOND MIDTERM EXAMINATION
POLITICAL SCIENCE 222
AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY**

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- I. (50%) Answer two out of the following three questions. Be brief. You can only afford to spend about 10 minutes on each answer. Cite assigned readings in your answers when appropriate.
1. In his Farewell Address, George Washington said: “Nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations, and passionate attachments for others should be excluded.” But he also argued that the country’s foreign policy should be based on the highest moral principles. Are such self-interested statements, and commitment to moral principles in foreign policy compatible? Why, or why not? Has the United States adhered consistently to Washington’s advice to steer clear of permanent alliances? In other words, has it been consistently isolationist, with obvious exceptions, even up to the current time?

ANSWER: George Washington in his address espoused “realist” sentiments, even though his address occurred well before the term “realism” acquired its contemporary meaning. Realists tend to feel that it is the duty of foreign policy makers to defend the interests of their constituents. Therefore, it is perfectly moral or ethical to recommend that they avoid permanent antipathy, or permanent attachment to any particular states, because the national interests of the United States are ever changing. The foreign policies of the United States ought to be as flexible as possible in the face of those changes, and not be “irrationally” rigid because of emotional, permanent antipathies or attachments to particular countries.

A common impression is that the United States, partly in response to Washington’s address, was mostly isolationist throughout the 19th century, right up until the First World War in 1914 (or 1917 when the United States actually entered that war.) This is a rather misleading image of the United States’ foreign policy. It has focused on foreign policy and its external international environment from its very beginnings. The original Articles of Confederation uniting the colonies, for example, were considered inadequate in no small part because they made it impossible for the colonies to deal effectively with potential foreign enemies. Of the

first nine US presidents, 6 had previously served as Secretary of State, and several more were generals in the country's wars or ministers and ambassadors to other countries. The United States was more dependent on foreign trade in 1790 than it is today. Foreign investment in the 19th century in the US built railroads, canals, and other important elements of the infrastructure. Virtually every president from George Washington to Woodrow Wilson sent American forces abroad, and/or faced crises with European powers. There were war scares with Great Britain throughout the nineteenth century, and European powers attempted to take advantage of the Civil War to exert influence or take over territory in the Western hemisphere. World War I ended any hint of isolationism, and even in the interwar period the United States was certainly not inactive in economic terms on the international scene. Since World War II, the United States has been the most influential country in the world, with interests and activities throughout the globe. The current Bush Administration has adopted some policies and steps such as its refusal to sign the Kyoto Treaty on global warming, refusing to ratify the International Criminal Court, missile defense, and refusing to sign a treaty on biological weapons that get it branded as "isolationist." But these policies are more accurately viewed as a tendency toward "unilateralism," or toward dealing with international issues on its own without becoming involved with international organizations or institutions, than a tendency toward "isolationism."

2. How and why did the United States become involved in the war in Vietnam? Why did it turn out the way it did?

ANSWER: The United States became involved in the war in Vietnam while the French were fighting a war there, after World War II, in order to hold onto their colony. By 1954, the United States was paying something on the order of 75% of the costs of the war for French. It refused, in the end, to prevent the defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu. But then it persuaded the South Vietnamese government to cancel elections, scheduled for 1956. Having played a key role in the creation of the state of South Vietnam, it then made a commitment to preserve it against the attempts to absorb it by North Vietnam. (From the point of view of North Vietnamese, they were merely trying to reunite their country.)

The United States made a determined effort to win the war in part because it saw the conflict there as part of the global contest with Communism. Many leaders in the United States felt that a victory for the Communists in South Vietnam would set a precedent that would be encouraging to communist-backed guerrilla based efforts at "national liberation" around the globe. (And in fact, in the wake of North Vietnam's victory in the war, communist led rebellions did succeed in places such as Cambodia, Mozambique, Angola, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua, for example.) However, perhaps the more basic reason for American determination in the Vietnamese war was domestic and political. President Johnson feared that if South Vietnam were "lost" while he was president, he and the Democratic party would be blamed for it (as they were, apparently, when China went communist in 1949), and

that as a result he would lose his Great Society programs (such as the War on Poverty), and that ultimately he and the Democratic Party would lose control of the White House. In other words, he was more concerned about the Republicans in the United States than he was the Communists in Vietnam.

The war turned out the way it did not only because the North Vietnamese fought with more zeal, but also because they received important support from two major powers, the Soviet Union and China. The Soviet Union provided a lot of military aid, and the Chinese stationed some 200,000 troops in North Vietnam to guard against any invasion of the North by the United States when the North sent its armed forces, in great strength, into the conflict in the South.

3. Describe briefly the most important ways in which the rational political ambition approach provides insight into US policy in Latin America and the Middle East. Then discuss briefly the most important signs that Latin America is becoming a potential “problem area” for US foreign policy (while policymakers devote much greater attention elsewhere). Finally, describe briefly the most important inter-connections between the Arab-Israeli Wars in 1956 and 1967.

ANSWER: One very clear application of rational political ambition theory to US policy in Latin America has to do with US-Cuban relations. As William LeoGrande points out, when Castro first came to power, he did, arguably, present a national security threat. Later, he sent troops to Ethiopia, and Angola, and supported various subversive efforts around Latin America. So the US embargo against Cuba was a response on the first level, or the foreign level game. However, by the 1990s, it was hard to argue that Castro did pose a national security threat. The Defense Department claimed, for example, that he did not. Yet the embargo continued. This was almost certainly more a response to domestic political considerations having to do with the Cuban vote in Florida, for example, or the second level of the “two level game” posited by rational political ambition theory.

The most important foreign policy considerations for the United States in the Middle East are oil, and Israel. Oil is a first level game consideration, and it pushes the United States in the direction of supporting Arab regimes, such as in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Israel is primarily a second level game consideration. The United States supports Israel primarily for domestic political reasons, even though that policy complicates enormously the international level game, antagonizing as it does each and every Arab state in the region. (Not to mention every Islamic state in the world.)

Latin American does show signs of becoming a problem area. Leftist Hugo Chavez is in power in Venezuela. “Lula,” another leftist, has come to power in Brazil. Argentina is an economic basket case, and is pointed to by critics of “globalization” around the world as an example of what happens to states that embrace globalization. Mexico is feeling ignored.

The war in 1956 made a hero out of Nasser, and led to the interposition of UN peacekeeping troops between Egypt and Israel. Nasser’s hero status became threatened by 1967, because Israel still existed. Nasser, accused of hiding in a cowardly way behind UN forces, ordered them to leave. Israel interpreted this as a step toward war, and launched a preemptive attack leading to a complete rout of several Arab states in 6 days.

II. (50%) Identify or respond to each of the following 10 items with respect to their importance for American foreign policy and/or their role in this course. Please answer them in your blue book in the order they appear below. If you do not answer a specific question, please put the number of that question in your blue book anyway, in the appropriate place. Restrict your answers to two or three sentences. References to the readings which discuss these items, will often serve to strengthen your answer, even if the rest of the answer is less than perfect.

1. The most important reasons why the United States entered World War I and World War II, according to Hook and Spanier.

ANSWER: Though it had a pressing national interest in preserving the balance of power in Europe in both cases, its leaders failed to realize this. They decided to enter World War I only because of Germany’s unrestricted submarine warfare, and World War II because of Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor.

2. Which author, among those assigned for this part of the course, said “Even if all politics has become global, economies remain local to a surprising extent.”? What evidence was adduced in support of this statement?

ANSWER: Kenneth Waltz made this argument. In its support, he points out that sectors of the American economy uninvolved in international trade employ 82 percent of Americans. (He also points out Krugman’s assertion that 90 % of the American economy produces goods and services for its own use.)

3. 1954 Geneva Agreement.

ANSWER: This treaty brought to an end the war France fought to hold onto Vietnam as a colony. It called for the reuniting of North Vietnam and South Vietnam in an election scheduled for 1956. Encouraged by the United States, South

Vietnam called off this election. Eventually, the United States defended South Vietnam from North Vietnamese “aggression” in the Vietnam war.

4. Which author or co-authors among those assigned for this part of the course said “Johnson had been the most powerful man in the world, and quite possibly he had the strongest will, yet a relative handful of VC had resisted and overcome his power and broken his will.” Is this a valid statement? Why, or why not?

ANSWER: Ambrose and Brinkley make this statement. It is not really valid, because the VC were supported starting in 1964 by a massive invasion of the North Vietnamese army, which in turn was supported energetically by the Soviet Union, and by 200,000 Chinese troops stationed in North Vietnam.

5. What was the American strategy in the war in Vietnam just before and just after the election of 1972? In other words, what did Secretary of State Henry Kissinger announce just before the election, and what significant event or events characterized the U.S.-North Vietnamese relationship during the month after the election, in December 1972?

ANSWER: Henry Kissinger announced just before the election that “peace is at hand” in Vietnam. After the election, Nixon ordered heavy bombing of North Vietnam.

6. Which author or co-authors among those assigned for this part of the course said “As a result, life expectancies fell between 1980 and 2000 in many poor countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa.” Evaluate the implications of this statement for the argument that in fact the gap in the quality of life between people living in rich states and those living in poor states in the world has grown smaller in recent decades.

ANSWER: Hook and Spanier say this. But it does not disprove the assertion that the gap in living standards between rich and poor nations closed during this time. Even for most sub-Saharan African states, life expectancies rose between 1980 and 2000, even though they did fall in some states.

7. According to Norman Podhoretz, what was the position of Secretary of State George Marshall toward US recognition of Israel when it was created in 1948? And which state in the world first recognized Israel, according to Norman Podhoretz?

ANSWER: Secretary of State Marshall was opposed to the recognition of Israel. Podheretz says that the Soviet Union first recognized Israel. (He is wrong about that.)

8. The main impact of the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 on the Palestinians and the PLO.

ANSWER: Before that war, Palestinians assumed that some day, conventional armies from Arab states would “liberate” Palestine and rid it of the Jews. After that war, they decided that this would never work, and that terrorism was their tool of last resort.

9. President Nixon’s “Cuban Missile Crisis.”

ANSWER: During the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the Russians threatened to send troops to Egypt to protect Egypt’s army from the Israelis. In response, Nixon put American troops on a world-wide “red alert.” He referred to this crisis as his “Cuban Missile Crisis.”

10. The connection between the Persian Gulf War, and the Oslo Peace Accords.

ANSWER: In advance of the Persian Gulf War, the UN passed resolutions insisting that Iraq relinquish control of Kuwait. It refused, and it was attacked and defeated by an American-led coalition of 500,000 troops, and then subjected to sanctions that may have led to the deaths of as many as 1 million Iraqis. After the 1967 war, the UN passed resolutions insisting that Israel relinquish control of the “occupied” territories. Israel controls them to this day, and the United States has never taken effective action to pressure Israel on the point. The double-standard became so acutely embarrassing after the Persian Gulf War that the United States made an especially energetic attempt to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, producing the Oslo Accords.