

**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. Why did the Cold War begin? Was it primarily the fault of the United States, or of the Soviet Union? Finally, was the US policy of “containment” primarily responsible for the way it ended? Why, or why not?

Answer: The Cold War began in part because the Soviet Union was led in the years after World War II by Josef Stalin, certainly one of the most violent and bloodthirsty dictators in the history of the world, whose state was based on an expansionist, aggressive, Marxist-Leninist ideology. On the other hand, the United States refused to recognize a certain symmetry between the determination of the Soviets to control Eastern Europe, and the equivalent determination of the United States to control Western Europe, and its own sphere of influence in Central America and the Caribbean.

Then, too, there are structural explanations of the onset of the Cold War. The size principle, positing the emergence of minimum winning coalitions, suggests that grand coalitions like that emerging at the end of World War II, are bound to fall apart. Balance of power theory suggests that any state like the Soviets after World War II, threatening to dominate the European continent, will provoke a counter-balancing coalition. And since the United States and the Soviet Union were so much more powerful than any rivals, the bipolar structure of the international system after World War was perhaps bound to make each state suspicious and antagonistic toward the other.

“Containment” might have brought the Cold War to a successful conclusion, from the American point of view. A conservative counter-view is that it was actually the more aggressive, assertive, “roll-back” policy of Ronald Reagan that brought the Cold War to an end, relying on such strategies as massive funding of the rebels in Afghanistan, the support of Solidarity in Poland, and flooding the world’s oil markets with Saudi oil, thus lowering the price, and depriving the Soviets of billions of dollars from their oil exports. A compromise view would be that containment successfully preserved “free world” interests for a sufficiently long

period of time that the Soviets became vulnerable to the “rollback” policy of Ronald Reagan.

2. How might a realist explain (in one brief paragraph) the involvement of the United States in the war in Vietnam, and the prolonged effort the United States made to avoid losing that war? What alternative explanation (in another brief paragraph) would be your favorite among the available options? Is that alternative more, or less persuasive or plausible than the realist explanation? Why?

Answer: A realist would assume that states make foreign policy decisions in the national interest defined in terms of power, and therefore emphasize that the United States saw important stakes involved in the struggle in Vietnam. In other words, US foreign policy makers concluded or calculated that a loss for the United States in Vietnam to North Vietnam and its allies in China and Russia would be of great benefit to the power of the Communist side of the Cold War. Conversely, that meant that a setback for the United States would constitute a significant setback for the United States in terms of power from which it would be difficult to recover. On the other hand, the founder of realism, Hans Morgenthau, consistently opposed US involvement in the war in Vietnam, arguing that there were no stakes involved there that were worth the costs that the United States would have to bear in order to assure victory in the war against North Vietnam. So he would be forced to explain the US decision to make such a prolonged effort in Vietnam as the result of a miscalculation that protecting US power required a determined effort to save the regime in South Vietnam

According to rational political ambition theory, in contrast, the major motive of leading decisionmakers in the United States for getting involved, and then making a determined effort to prevail in North Vietnam, had to do with the domestic political consequences that were anticipated to flow from a loss to North Vietnam. Democratic presidents were especially vulnerable to charges of being “soft on communism” if they failed to prevail against a communist regime like the one in North Vietnam. President Johnson was particularly concerned that he would be unable to implement his domestic agenda (the Great Society) if North Vietnam won, because he would be defeated by the Republican candidate in the next election. I personally feel that this second explanation is more persuasive, partly because even realists themselves are divided on the best “realist” explanation about US policy with respect to the war in Vietnam, and partly because accounts of decision making processes in the Johnson Administration in particular continually emphasize how the political antagonists that most worried Lyndon Johnson were Republicans in the United States, and not the Communists in Southeast Asia.

3. Describe briefly the impact of the US operation overthrowing the Arbenz regime in Guatemala in 1954 on the next two major US coercive (but covert) or military operations in Latin America. Was one of those next two operations responsible

for convincing Fidel Castro to convert to Communism? Why, or why not? In other words, did US hostility and opposition to Castro play a major role in turning him into a Communist?

Answer: The United States government decided to overthrow the Arbenz regime because he had expropriated substantial amounts of land belonging to the United Fruit Company, and/or because there were Communists in his government, and he had attempted to get military weapons from communist Czechoslovakia. The CIA organized rebel exiles from Guatemala, who invaded and successfully ousted the Arbenz regime.

So, when Castro came to power, and the United States government was inclined to overthrow the Castro regime, some key decisionmakers thought that giving Cuba the “Guatemala Treatment” was the best solution. That strategy failed in the case of Cuba, making the US government especially sensitive to the threat of another communist government coming to power in the Caribbean. This fear provoked the US intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965, when it appeared to some US analysts anyway, that communists were about to benefit from political unrest there, and either come to power, or bring to power pliant leaders who would cooperate with communists.

Probably the Bay of Pigs invasion did not convince Fidel Castro to become a communist. He did not announce that he was a communist before the Bay of Pigs invasion, but the biography of Castro by Tad Sculz demonstrates quite conclusively that Castro started to cooperate with communists from the moment he walked into Havana on New Year’s Day in 1959. Probably, Che Guevara, who had been in Guatemala in 1954, persuaded Castro that the US would organize an invasion against him were he to seize power in Cuba, and that he needed to attract the support of the Soviet Union were he to survive in power against US opposition. In short, Castro’s desire to remain in power led him to become a communist before he came into power in Havana.

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. Mancur Olson on “cultural explanations”

Answer: Olson argues that explanations based on unique cultural attributes (such as Germany has a high economic growth rate because Germans eat lots of sauerkraut) cannot be generalized to other cases, and therefore are not deserving of credence.

2. Relationship between Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, and the future of US foreign policy

Answer: According to Ferguson and Kotlikoff, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are heading toward the creation of a \$45 (or \$53) trillion dollar deficit in the US Federal Budget, because the elderly portion of the population will over the next 30 years increase so much faster than the younger, tax paying portion. This may well mean that the United States will in the not-too-distant future be able to afford expensive, nation-building efforts such as those currently underway in Afghanistan, and Iraq, not to mention Haiti.

3. Why the Cold War ended (according to Kenneth Waltz)

Answer: According to Waltz and neorealism, all great events in international politics can be explained by changes in the distribution of power within the system. In the case of the Cold War, it ended because of the dramatic change in the distribution of power caused by the internal collapse of the Soviet Union.

4. The most important reasons that both the Reagan Administration and the current Bush administration accepted huge Federal Budget deficits

Answer: It is possible that the Reagan Administration accepted, or even intentionally created huge budget deficits in order to hamstring any future Democratic administrations, making it impossible for them to launch any large, ambitious domestic spending programs. It is also possible that the Reagan Administration thought that the goal of undermining the Soviet Union with large defense expenditures designed to provoke budget-busting emulation was more important than balancing the budget. Additionally, it seems rather clear that the Bush Administration is relatively sanguine about large budget deficits, because those incurred by the Reagan Administration were in fact reduced and even eliminated in a relatively short time (by about 2000), thus proving (in their eyes) that “budget deficits don’t matter.”

5. How Article 5 of the NATO Charter was structured in such a way as to meet potential US objections (Thomas Schwartz)

Answer: First, in response to complaints from some American circles that the NATO Charter violated the UN Charter, Article 5 specifically refers to Article 51 of the UN Charter. Second, it preserves US flexibility, and shows respect for the right of Congress to declare war by asserting that the Parties to the Treaty shall in

response to attacks, take “such action as it deems necessary.” (In other words, it doesn’t really involve an iron-clad commitment by the signatories to a military response.)

6. The trend in the quality of life for the population of Latin America as a whole over the last 30 or 40 years. (Be as specific as you can regarding to which indicators you refer in order to respond to this item.)

Answer: According to data discussed in class on literacy, infant mortality, and life expectancy, there have been significant, even dramatic improvements in the overall, average quality of life in Latin America over the last 30 or 40 years.

7. The most important and concrete form of support that the People’s Republic of China offered and provided to North Vietnam during the middle 1960s period of the Vietnam War.

Answer: The Chinese stationed 300,000 troops in North Vietnam, thus freeing up the North Vietnamese Army to invade South Vietnam without leaving back substantial numbers of troops to guard against an invasion of North Vietnam by US ground troops.

8. “Democratic peace” position on the future of NATO

Answer. A supporter of democratic peace could argue that NATO isn’t necessary to preserve the peace in Europe, since the fact that all European states are democratic should be sufficient to do that. On the other hand, supporters of democratic peace might also argue that NATO will not fall apart, because democratic states form organizations on the basis of deeper, more long lasting cooperative ties than other states. Extending NATO to East-Central Europe might solidify democracy in that area, according to some supporters of democratic peace. But other advocates of democratic peace focus on the extent to which extending NATO might antagonize Russia, and provide anti-West, anti-Democratic elements there with useful ammunition.

9. A “two level game” explanation of US policy toward Cuba since the end of the Cold War

Answer: Originally, US policy toward Cuba was based on fears of Communism, and Cuban ties to the Soviet Union. Recently, however, since the end of the Cold War, the international level considerations have become much less important, and the domestic level input of Cuban exiles in Florida have become much more important in explaining the continuation of the embargo against Cuba.

10. The fate of the “Alliance for Progress.”

Answer: Kennedy launched this kind of “Marshall Plan” for Latin America in the wake of the failure of the invasion at the Bay of Pigs. It was supposed to support progressive, even leftist but democratic elements in Latin American states. This provoked more conservative elements, who managed to stage 16 anti-democratic military coups in the following 8 years. Thus a plan that was to solidify commitment to progressive democracy had the opposite impact from that which was intended.