

History of U.S. Foreign Policy

Dr. Westerman

2018-2019

All due on the first day of classes for the Fall OR Spring Semester

Welcome to History of U.S. Foreign Policy! I am very excited to spend this semester with you exploring how and why the United States acts the way it does on the world stage, and how and why American policy makers make the decisions they do. In order to properly prepare for this class, I ask that you do two things this summer. **Both are to be handed in on the first day of classes of the Fall or Spring semester, whichever semester you are enrolled.**

Part I

First, please **print out, read, and annotate** the attached articles from the magazine *Foreign Policy* and newspaper *The New York Times* about the Trump Administration's withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Agreement of 2015. One is critical of the withdrawal while the other is not. One puts this withdrawal in a historical context as it is written by a historian, while the other is more of a typical Op-Ed piece to examine the decision in a contemporary foreign policy and political context. **You will hand these annotations in on the first day of classes for up to 20 points.** I will be looking for clear and quality annotations to demonstrate that you actively read the essays and are in some sort of conversation with the reading. I'm looking to see how you read a sophisticated piece of historical writing.

As you annotate, consider these questions:

- 1) What is each author arguing? Circle each author's thesis.
- 2) What kind of evidence does each author use to support his point? How does each author frame his argument regarding politics, history, emotion, economics, etc. in the recent and past foreign policy decisions of the US?
- 3) Do you agree with one or the other's arguments more? Why or why not?
- 4) Annotate for any other interesting/confusing things you find as you read.

Part II

Over the summer, pay a little attention to news about U.S. foreign policy. For the first day of classes come in with **three different news stories about U.S. foreign policy from reliable news sources** (see below) and a **brief write up** (one typed paragraph of five sentences) answering the following question for each news story: *Why should the United States be concerned with this particular international issue/event? Only one news story can be about Iran.* The other two news stories must address U.S. concerns in other parts of the world. Please include a printout or clipped copy of the news story with each of your write-ups. This will count for **20 points**.

Reliable news sources: *The New York Times*, NPR, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Economist*, *The Washington Post*, BBC, or CNN (as a last resort).

Make sure to include a brief citation with author, title, news source, and date with each article summary.

Your Name: _____ I pledge: _____

From *Foreign Policy Magazine* (May 2018)

Trump's Terrifying Treaty of Versailles Precedent

The last time America withdrew from its own international security agreement, it led to the most devastating war in history.

By Jeremi Suri, Professor of History at University of Texas, Austin

President Donald Trump's unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the seven nation agreement to halt Iranian nuclear production — the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which his own country had largely designed — is a repudiation of traditional American diplomacy. But it also echoes an inauspicious American precedent.

In leaving the Iran deal, the United States is replaying its rejection of the Treaty of Versailles — a move that ultimately led to the most devastating war in history. The United States has been responsible for negotiating and enforcing some of the most enduring multinational diplomatic agreements of the 20th century, including the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922, the Bretton Woods Agreement of 1944, the United Nations Charter of 1945, the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949, and the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. Each of these agreements, hammered together by numerous countries with divergent interests, contributed to the peaceful, open international system that has benefited the United States and its allies by obliging all the parties to adhere to long-term commitments pertaining to their security. Each of these agreements would have been impossible without U.S. support and adherence. More than any other nation, the United States has been the author and enforcer of the liberal world order that makes capitalism and democracy, as we know them, possible.

But the Treaty of Versailles represents a dark blemish on this record. Building on President Theodore Roosevelt's pre-World War I proposal for a League of Peace, President Woodrow Wilson led efforts to craft a multinational settlement at the end of the war that would insure a "lasting peace." The League of Nations was the centerpiece of the treaty — an international body inclusive of all nations that would adjudicate disputes between them, encourage cooperation, and punish aggression.

The infamous rejection of the Treaty of Versailles by the U.S. Senate in November 1919, and again in March 1920, destroyed this dream. Appealing to U.S. war fatigue, anti-British sentiment, and a distrust of complex diplomatic agreements, a mix of Republican and Democratic lawmakers used their opposition to the settlement to score partisan points. Especially for Republicans who challenged Wilson, it proved beneficial politically to stoke domestic fears of foreign entanglements. Walls of separation sounded safer than new cooperative connections with former belligerents. Of course, the opposite was true. American isolationism delegitimized the Treaty of Versailles. Why would other societies invest in the agreement if one of its leading proponents, also one of the emerging world powers, refused to participate? Many observers appreciated the domestic politics behind the U.S. rejection of the treaty, but that only deepened long-standing perceptions that the United States was an unreliable partner. Why should others tie their hands if the United States acted as a free rider? In the decade after the First World War, U.S. actions encouraged unilateralism by other powerful actors, especially Japan, Germany, and the newly formed Soviet Union.

The leaders of these “revisionist” countries characterized the Treaty of Versailles as unfair “victors’ justice” — a continuation of the imperialist aggression practiced by Britain and France for more than a century. As early as 1922, Germany and the Soviet Union used this critique to justify military and financial collaboration in Eastern Europe that strengthened both governments and violated the terms of the settlement in the region. U.S. rejection of the treaty lent these claims more credibility, and for that reason ideas of collective security and liberal internationalism remained widely unpopular in Europe, Asia, and North America during the 1920s and 1930s.

These conflict-prone circumstances hurt Americans. A nonmember of the League of Nations, without any other alliances, the United States was unable to exert international influence comparable to its size and wealth. Economic sanctions, popular with President Herbert Hoover in response to Japanese expansion, were difficult to impose without coordination among diverse states. International arbitration, repeatedly promoted by the United States in China, was impossible to enforce when there was no international body capable of consistent implementation. And when the fascists invaded their neighbors, the countries defending the existing order, including the United States, negotiated in ad hoc and largely ineffective ways. Appeasement became the strategy of the lowest common denominator in a world with limited multilateral coordination.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized that the United States’ short-sighted unilateralism contributed to an even worse World War II. Before the United States entered the conflict, he emphasized multilateral commitments through his advocacy of an expansive “Four Freedoms” agenda and his signature on the Atlantic Charter in 1941. The United States won the Second World War, and then emerged triumphant in the Cold War, because Roosevelt and his successors from both parties led a postwar multilateral order after 1945, as they did not after 1919.

And nobody doubted that international agreements signed by presidents from one party would be honored by successors from the other side of the aisle. Ronald Reagan, for example, criticized SALT II and the Panama Canal treaties when running for president, but he adhered to both when in office. Reagan understood that international cooperation transcended partisanship, and a global leader must keep its word. Through the United Nations, Bretton Woods, NATO, and the Helsinki Act, Washington multiplied its sources of political, military, and economic power to deter and defeat communist adversaries. The United States cultivated more national strength and international support than ever before. It was the most responsible powerful actor in the Cold War.

This is no longer the case. U.S. military power has been challenged, and came up short, in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and numerous other places since Sept. 11, 2001. China has emerged as an economic peer competitor, often turning the global capitalist system to its advantage against the United States. And Washington has alienated allies that it needs, perhaps more than ever, to support its commitments around the globe, as well as its voracious consumers at home. Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, opposed by most of its allies, the United States has repeatedly torn apart the liberal international order that it created, acting in ways earlier presidents would have found profoundly irresponsible. And, after Trump’s rejection of the Iran deal, the world again, as after Versailles, has cause to wonder whether the United States will adhere to other security agreements (including NATO) that it has designed and promoted.

Another world war is unlikely in the near future, but we should expect more conflict, more violence, and more defeats for an isolated United States. A chaotic world will increase the United States' insecurity and will leave it with fewer sources of leverage over peer competitors, such as China, and revisionist threats, such as Russia. Breaking multilateral agreements diminishes U.S. influence in established institutions, it alienates those who might help Americans, and it emboldens those who wish to hurt them. It turns the United States into the enemy of international order; that is not only irresponsible, but it is also self-defeating.

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From *The New York Times* (May 2018)

A Courageous Trump Call on a Lousy Iran Deal

By Bret Stephens, *New York Times* Opinion Columnist

Of all the arguments for the Trump administration to honor the nuclear deal with Iran, none was more risible than the claim that we gave our word as a country to keep it. “Our”?

The Obama administration refused to submit the deal to Congress as a treaty, knowing it would never get two thirds of the Senate to go along. Just 21 percent of Americans approved of the deal at the time it went through, against 49 percent who did not, according to a Pew poll.

The agreement “passed” on the strength of a 42-vote Democratic filibuster, against bipartisan, majority opposition. “The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (J.C.P.O.A.) is not a treaty or an executive agreement, and it is not a signed document,” Julia Frifield, then the assistant secretary of state for legislative affairs, wrote then-Representative Mike Pompeo in November 2015, referring to the deal by its formal name. It’s questionable whether the deal has any legal force at all.

Build on political sand; get washed away by the next electoral wave. Such was the fate of the ill-judged and ill-founded J.C.P.O.A., which Donald Trump killed on Tuesday by refusing to again waive sanctions on the Islamic Republic. He was absolutely right to do so — assuming, that is, serious thought has been given to what comes next.

In the weeks leading to Tuesday’s announcement, some of the same people who previously claimed the deal was the best we could possibly hope for suddenly became inventive in proposing means to fix it. This involved suggesting side deals between Washington and European capitals to impose stiffer penalties on Tehran for its continued testing of ballistic missiles — more than 20 since the deal came into effect — and its increasingly aggressive regional behavior. But the problem with this approach is that it only treats symptoms of a failure for which the J.C.P.O.A. is itself a major cause.

The deal weakened U.N. prohibitions on Iran’s testing of ballistic missiles, which cannot be reversed without Russian and Chinese consent. That won’t happen.

The easing of sanctions also gave Tehran additional financial means with which to fund its depredations in Syria and its militant proxies in Yemen, Lebanon and elsewhere. Any effort to counter Iran on the ground in these places would mean fighting the very forces we are effectively feeding. Why not just stop the feeding?

Apologists for the deal answer that the price is worth paying because Iran has put on hold much of its production of nuclear fuel for the next several years. Yet even now Iran is under looser nuclear strictures than South Korea, and would have been allowed to enrich as much material as it liked once the deal expired. That's nuts.

Apologists also claim that, with Trump's decision, Tehran will simply restart its enrichment activities on an industrial scale. Maybe it will, forcing a crisis that could end with U.S. or Israeli strikes on Iran's nuclear sites.

But that would be stupid, something the regime emphatically isn't. More likely, it will take symbolic steps to restart enrichment, thereby implying a threat without making good on it. What the regime wants is a renegotiation, not a reckoning.

Why? Even with the sanctions relief, the Iranian economy hangs by a thread: The Wall Street Journal on Sunday reported "hundreds of recent outbreaks of labor unrest in Iran, an indication of deepening discord over the nation's economic troubles." This week, the rial hit a record low of 67,800 to the dollar; one member of the Iranian Parliament estimated \$30 billion of capital outflows in recent months. That's real money for a country whose gross domestic product barely matches that of Boston.

The regime might calculate that a strategy of confrontation with the West could whip up useful nationalist fervors. But it would have to tread carefully: Ordinary Iranians are already furious that their government has squandered the proceeds of the nuclear deal on propping up the Assad regime. The conditions that led to the so called Green movement of 2009 are there once again. Nor will it help Iran if it tries to start a war with Israel and comes out badly bloodied.

All this means the administration is in a strong position to negotiate a viable deal. But it missed an opportunity last month when it failed to deliver a crippling blow to Bashar al-Assad, Iran's puppet in Syria, for his use of chemical weapons. Trump's appeals in his speech to the Iranian people also sounded hollow from a president who isn't exactly a tribune of liberalism and has disdained human rights as a tool of U.S. diplomacy. And the U.S. will need to mend fences with its European partners to pursue a coordinated diplomatic approach.

The goal is to put Iran's rulers to a fundamental choice. They can opt to have a functioning economy, free of sanctions and open to investment, at the price of permanently, verifiably and irreversibly forgoing a nuclear option and abandoning their support for terrorists. Or they can pursue their nuclear ambitions at the cost of economic ruin and possible war. But they are no longer entitled to Barack Obama's sweetheart deal of getting sanctions lifted first, retaining their nuclear options for later, and sponsoring terrorism throughout.

Trump's courageous decision to withdraw from the nuclear deal will clarify the stakes for Tehran. Now we'll see whether the administration is capable of following through.