Choices Across Borders

How competing priorities shaped U.S. foreign policy

9-12.US2.37 "Evaluate the factors that impacted relationships and policies with China, Russia, Latin America, and the Middle East."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB For China, Russia, Latin America, and the Middle East, underline one factor that shaped U.S. policy and circle a policy action linked to that factor.

What Shaped U.S. Decisions?

1. In 1972, President Richard Nixon traveled to China, where U.S. leaders had long refused formal diplomatic ties with the Communist government. Nixon wanted to widen a split between China and the Soviet Union, the United States' main Cold War rival. Trade also promised benefits, but strategic competition drove the opening. Washington formally recognized the People's Republic of China in 1979. Meanwhile, fear of Soviet nuclear weapons shaped decades of U.S. military spending and arms talks. After the Soviet Union broke apart in 1991, the United States worked with Russia to reduce nuclear stockpiles, although distrust did not disappear.

2. Closer to home, U.S. officials often treated Latin America as a front in the Cold War. In 1962, Soviet missiles placed in Cuba led President John F. Kennedy to order a naval quarantine, bringing the superpowers close to nuclear war. Fear of communist influence also drove U.S. support for anti-communist governments, including repressive ones. Yet security was not the only factor. U.S. businesses sought access to Latin American markets and resources, while people across the region demanded self-government. Policies meant to contain communism sometimes damaged U.S. relationships with those who saw American actions as interference.

3. In the Middle East, U.S. policy balanced several pressures. After Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, a U.S.-led coalition forced Iraqi troops out in 1991. Protecting the flow of oil and defending Kuwait's sovereignty both mattered to U.S. leaders. The United States also maintained a close alliance with Israel and supported negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. These commitments could conflict with ties to Arab states and with regional demands for self-rule. Across all four regions, leaders weighed security, economic interests, and political ideals differently. A policy that protected one goal could strain another relationship or make future cooperation harder.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did strategic competition matter more than trade in Nixon's decision to open relations with China?

2. How did the Soviet Union's breakup change U.S. policy toward the nuclear threat from Russia?

3. How could a policy meant to protect U.S. security damage relationships in Latin America?

4. Why might U.S. policy in the Middle East have been difficult to balance after Iraq invaded Kuwait?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine advising a president: Which single goal should guide U.S. policy toward two of the regions in the passage? In five sentences, name the two regions, use one historical example from each to defend your choice, and explain one risk of making that goal the priority.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

For China, Russia, Latin America, and the Middle East, underline one factor that shaped U.S. policy and circle a policy action linked to that factor. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did strategic competition matter more than trade in Nixon's decision to open relations with China?	**Nixon wanted to widen the split between China and the Soviet Union, the main U.S. Cold War rival. Trade offered benefits, but the passage identifies strategic competition as the driving factor.**
2	How did the Soviet Union's breakup change U.S. policy toward the nuclear threat from Russia?	**Fear of Soviet nuclear weapons had shaped U.S. military spending and arms talks. After the breakup, the United States worked with Russia to reduce nuclear stockpiles, though distrust remained.**
3	How could a policy meant to protect U.S. security damage relationships in Latin America?	**Fear of communist influence led the United States to support some repressive anti-communist governments. People who viewed those actions as interference could lose trust in the United States.**
4	Why might U.S. policy in the Middle East have been difficult to balance after Iraq invaded Kuwait?	**U.S. leaders wanted to defend Kuwait's sovereignty and protect oil supplies. They also had to consider how their alliance with Israel and regional demands for self-rule affected ties with Arab states.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Security should guide U.S. policy toward China and Latin America, but it should not excuse every intervention. Nixon's 1972 opening to China used a split with the Soviet Union to strengthen the U.S. position in the Cold War. In Latin America, Soviet missiles in Cuba made nuclear security an urgent concern in 1962. These cases show why leaders must consider threats before choosing diplomatic or military action. Still, making security the top priority can damage trust if the United States supports repressive governments or ignores demands for self-government.

Accept other well-supported priorities and region pairings. The response should connect a distinct example from each chosen region to one shared goal and identify a plausible cost or conflict.