Policy and Power

Weighing presidential choices and their effects

USH.7.3 "Evaluate the presidential administrations from Reagan to the present, including domestic and foreign policy, programs, and legal rulings."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB For two presidents, underline a domestic action and circle a foreign action. Put a 1 beside a court ruling so you can consider how it affected policy.

Presidents, Policies, and Limits

1. In the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan cut taxes and increased military spending to strengthen the economy and challenge the Soviet Union. Lower taxes appealed to businesses, but federal deficits grew. His successor, George H. W. Bush, signed the Americans with Disabilities Act, expanding access to public life, and led a coalition that drove Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1991. In the 1990s, Bill Clinton signed a welfare overhaul and backed a North American trade agreement. Trade expanded, but some U.S. workers faced new competition.

2. After the 2001 attacks, George W. Bush invaded Afghanistan and later Iraq, arguing that force could protect U.S. security. He also signed the No Child Left Behind Act, which increased school testing. The Iraq war brought long-term costs and controversy. In 2006, the Supreme Court ruled in Hamdan v. Rumsfeld that Bush's military commissions lacked legal authorization. Barack Obama later signed the Affordable Care Act to expand health insurance and negotiated a nuclear agreement with Iran. Critics questioned the deal's ability to restrain Iran over time.

3. Donald Trump, president from 2017 to 2021 and again starting in 2025, cut taxes in his first term and raised tariffs on imports in both terms. Tariffs aimed to protect U.S. industries, but they could raise prices. Joe Biden signed a 2021 infrastructure law and sent military aid to Ukraine after Russia's 2022 invasion. The Supreme Court's 2022 Dobbs ruling ended federal constitutional protection for abortion, leaving states greater authority. That ruling reshaped domestic policy during Biden's term, although the Court, not Biden, made it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Reagan's tax cuts and George H. W. Bush's disability law address different domestic goals? What drawback does the passage name for Reagan's approach?

2. Evaluate George W. Bush's use of force after 2001. What goal did he claim, what cost does the passage name, and how did the Hamdan ruling limit his administration?

3. Compare Clinton's trade agreement with Trump's tariffs. What did each seek or achieve, and what drawback does the passage give for each?

4. Why should an evaluation of Biden's domestic record distinguish his infrastructure law from the Dobbs ruling?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose one president from the passage. Write a four- or five-sentence verdict on how well that administration addressed a domestic and a foreign issue, using two passage facts and explaining one trade-off or limit.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

For two presidents, underline a domestic action and circle a foreign action. Put a 1 beside a court ruling so you can consider how it affected policy. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Reagan's tax cuts and George H. W. Bush's disability law address different domestic goals? What drawback does the passage name for Reagan's approach?	**Reagan cut taxes to strengthen the economy, while Bush's law expanded access for people with disabilities. Federal deficits grew under Reagan.**
2	Evaluate George W. Bush's use of force after 2001. What goal did he claim, what cost does the passage name, and how did the Hamdan ruling limit his administration?	**Bush argued that force would protect U.S. security, but the Iraq war brought long-term costs and controversy. The Court ruled that his military commissions lacked legal authorization.**
3	Compare Clinton's trade agreement with Trump's tariffs. What did each seek or achieve, and what drawback does the passage give for each?	**Clinton's agreement expanded trade, but some U.S. workers faced new competition. Trump's tariffs aimed to protect U.S. industries, but they could raise prices.**
4	Why should an evaluation of Biden's domestic record distinguish his infrastructure law from the Dobbs ruling?	**Biden signed the infrastructure law, but the Supreme Court, not Biden, issued Dobbs. The ruling changed abortion policy during his term without being his action.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Obama's administration made progress on health care by signing the Affordable Care Act to expand insurance. His nuclear agreement with Iran sought to address a foreign security concern through negotiation. However, critics questioned whether the agreement would restrain Iran over time. Overall, both policies addressed important goals, but that uncertainty limits my verdict on the agreement.

Accept supported judgments that identify a domestic and a foreign action and explain a relevant trade-off or limit. Students should not credit a president with a Supreme Court ruling.