Safety Beyond Borders

How nations choose to protect their interests abroad

USG.C.7.2.A "Explain different philosophies nations pursue to protect their self-interests abroad, such as isolationism and internationalism."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the choices to pass the Neutrality Acts and join NATO. Circle the interests each choice sought to protect, then label each choice I for isolationism or N for internationalism.

Two Paths to Security

1 In the 1930s, many Americans feared that another European war would pull the United States into costly fighting. Congress passed Neutrality Acts that limited arms sales to countries at war. This approach reflected isolationism, a philosophy of avoiding political and military entanglements abroad. Supporters hoped distance from foreign wars would protect American lives and resources. Isolationism did not require ending all trade or ignoring events overseas. It meant limiting commitments that might draw the country into conflicts. Yet staying apart could also leave the United States with less influence over threats developing elsewhere.

2 After World War II, American leaders took a different path. The United States helped establish the United Nations in 1945, where countries could discuss disputes and cooperate on problems. In 1949, it joined NATO, an alliance whose members agreed to treat an armed attack on one member as an attack on all. These choices reflected internationalism, a philosophy of active engagement with other nations. Supporters argued that cooperation and shared security could reduce the chance of another devastating war. Such commitments might also require money, negotiations, or military action far from home.

3 Neither philosophy is a simple choice between caring about safety and ignoring it. Imagine a government deciding how to respond when fighting closes a major shipping route. Leaders who favor isolationism might avoid a foreign military mission to protect their troops and budget. Leaders who favor internationalism might work with allies to reopen the route, hoping to protect trade and prevent wider conflict. Either strategy can have costs: avoiding the mission may hurt access to goods, while joining it may put service members at risk. Nations often weigh these risks differently as conditions change.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Neutrality Acts reflect isolationism, and what interests did supporters hope to protect?

2. Why did joining NATO fit internationalism rather than isolationism? Explain the interest behind the choice.

3. In the shipping-route situation, how could an isolationist leader defend staying out, and what cost might follow?

4. In the same situation, why might an internationalist leader work with allies despite a risk?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A contagious disease is spreading in several countries, but it has not reached your country. In three or four sentences, recommend an isolationist or internationalist response, explain how it protects your country's interests, and identify one cost or risk of your choice.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.7.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the choices to pass the Neutrality Acts and join NATO. Circle the interests each choice sought to protect, then label each choice I for isolationism or N for internationalism. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Neutrality Acts reflect isolationism, and what interests did supporters hope to protect?	**They limited arms sales to countries at war, reducing commitments that might draw the United States into fighting. Supporters hoped to protect American lives and resources.**
2	Why did joining NATO fit internationalism rather than isolationism? Explain the interest behind the choice.	**NATO committed the United States to shared security with other nations. Supporters believed cooperation could help prevent another devastating war.**
3	In the shipping-route situation, how could an isolationist leader defend staying out, and what cost might follow?	**Staying out could protect troops and the budget, but a closed route might reduce access to goods.**
4	In the same situation, why might an internationalist leader work with allies despite a risk?	**Working with allies might reopen the route, protect trade, and prevent wider conflict, although it could put service members at risk.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would favor internationalism by sharing disease data and funding joint research with other countries. Cooperation could slow the outbreak before it reaches our country, protecting public health and trade. Funding the effort would use money that could otherwise support programs at home.

Accept responses that accurately connect a policy choice to a national interest and acknowledge a plausible cost or risk. Isolationist responses may include limiting foreign commitments while taking steps to protect public health at home.