Who Decides Abroad?

Trace how the Constitution divides foreign affairs powers

USG.C.7.2.C "Identify and explain powers that the Constitution of the United States of America gives to the President and Congress to conduct foreign affairs."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline powers given to the President, circle powers given to Congress or the Senate, and number each place where the branches must work together. Use your marks to explain who can take each action and why.

A Dispute with Belvar

1. A fictional country, Belvar, begins stopping U.S. cargo ships near its coast. The President wants an agreement that will protect the ships without a fight. Under the Constitution, the President can negotiate a treaty with Belvar and nominate an ambassador to speak for the United States. The President also receives foreign ambassadors. But a signed treaty does not become binding simply because the President wants it. The Senate must give its advice and consent, with two-thirds of senators present voting to approve a treaty. The Senate also gives advice and consent before the President appoints an ambassador.

2. Belvar then threatens to block all American goods. Congress can regulate commerce with foreign nations, so it could pass a law changing the rules for trade with Belvar. If the dispute turns violent, Congress has the constitutional power to declare war. Congress can also raise and support armies, provide and maintain a navy, and decide whether to fund military operations. These powers let lawmakers shape the nation's choices, even when the President leads diplomatic talks. A trade law would need to pass both houses and be presented to the President, who could sign or veto it.

3. Suppose Belvar fires on a U.S. naval vessel. As commander in chief, the President can direct the armed forces in responding to the attack. Congress, not the President, holds the power to declare war and controls money for the military. The President cannot turn a military order into a declaration of war, and Congress cannot issue battlefield orders as commander in chief. The Constitution splits these responsibilities so that foreign policy involves both branches. A response to Belvar might combine presidential military direction, congressional funding decisions, and a treaty approved with the Senate's consent.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. The President negotiates a treaty with Belvar. Why can't the President make it binding alone?

2. If the President wants to appoint an ambassador to Belvar, what can the President do first, and what must the Senate do?

3. Which branch could change U.S. trade rules in response to Belvar's threat? Explain which constitutional power allows that action.

4. After Belvar fires on a U.S. naval vessel, how do the President's and Congress's military powers differ?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A fictional country, Ardin, offers a joint ocean research treaty, bans U.S. medical equipment imports, and sends an ambassador to Washington. In four or five sentences, propose actions by both the President and Congress that address this situation, and explain how the Senate limits one presidential action.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.7.2.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline powers given to the President, circle powers given to Congress or the Senate, and number each place where the branches must work together. Use your marks to explain who can take each action and why. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	The President negotiates a treaty with Belvar. Why can't the President make it binding alone?	**The Senate must give its advice and consent, with two-thirds of senators present voting to approve the treaty.**
2	If the President wants to appoint an ambassador to Belvar, what can the President do first, and what must the Senate do?	**The President can nominate an ambassador. The Senate must give its advice and consent before the President appoints that person.**
3	Which branch could change U.S. trade rules in response to Belvar's threat? Explain which constitutional power allows that action.	**Congress could pass a trade law because the Constitution gives it the power to regulate commerce with foreign nations.**
4	After Belvar fires on a U.S. naval vessel, how do the President's and Congress's military powers differ?	**The President, as commander in chief, can direct the armed forces. Congress can declare war and decide whether to fund military operations.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The President could receive Ardin's ambassador to begin talks about the equipment ban. The President could also negotiate the ocean research treaty. Congress could regulate trade with Ardin to press it to lift the ban. Before the President could ratify the treaty, two-thirds of the senators present would have to vote to consent to it.

Accept other relevant constitutional actions if students explain how they address Ardin's actions. Distinguish Senate consent to treaties from Congress's power to regulate foreign commerce.