

# Seven Questions on...

## the Nexus of Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics

*Daniel Bessner, Michael Brenes, Amanda C. Demmer, Aaron Donaghy,  
and Andrew Johnstone*

**Editor's note:** "Seven Questions On..." is a regular feature in *Passport* that will ask scholars in a particular field to respond to seven questions about their field's historiography, key publications, influences, etc. It is designed to introduce the broader SHAFR community to a variety of perspectives for a given field, as well as serving as a literature and pedagogical primer for graduate students and non-specialists. AJ

### **1. What drew you to this field and inspired you to focus on your specific area of domestic politics and foreign policy?**

**Daniel Bessner:** I became drawn to the field in a similar way to many scholars in my generation: the Iraq War. I was a first-year in college when the Bush Administration invaded Iraq, and this spurred my general interest in U.S. foreign policy. I had always been interested in history (at one point in high school, I was carrying around Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* from class to class) but the folly of U.S. foreign policy in the early years of the Global War on Terror pushed me in a particular direction. During my senior year of college, I interned at the Council on Foreign Relations, and the rest, as they say, is history.

**Michael Brenes:** I became intrigued with the relationship between social movements and U.S. foreign policy as an undergrad. I found it fascinating how the Cold War both limited and opened possibilities for domestic reform—I had a particular obsession with McCarthyism, the civil rights movement, and why fears of communism determined what was possible in both U.S. domestic politics and foreign policy.

I planned to write something on this topic when I entered graduate school. This was 2007, the year before Barack Obama's election and at a time when American conservatism seemed on the wane. Commentators were writing about "the death of conservatism." Then the Tea Party movement emerged during my second year of coursework, ending that line of argumentation. The growth of the Right during the Obama years made me interested in conservatives' views of government—how conservatives came to believe in "big government" on national defense, but little else. This is not a contradiction, but something that I felt had to be worked out in historical terms; and again, it spoke to my interest in the interconnections between domestic politics and foreign policy. My dissertation project evolved from there, and I ended up writing more about American liberalism than American conservatism, but these were the initial motivations.

**Amanda C. Demmer:** I started graduate school as an Early Americanist. I spent most of my early years—my entire M.A. and the first eighteen months or so of my Ph.D.—reading about and researching what our colleagues at SHEAR call the Early American Republic. I originally envisioned writing a dissertation exploring early U.S. diplomacy from the Jay Treaty to the annexation of Texas.<sup>1</sup> And then, for reasons I won't get into here, I ended up writing a dissertation and then a book about the Vietnam War that explores the American approach to U.S.-Vietnamese normalization from 1975 to 2000.

I had always been interested in American history, but I did not take a formal course on U.S. foreign relations until my first semester in graduate school. It was like someone turned on the lights. The domestic political history that I had learned about since elementary school made so much more sense, and I was hooked. In the persuasive works that I read and to my own mind, studying early U.S. foreign relations required centering U.S. domestic politics. The lines between the two were so blurry in the first decades after 1776 that to ignore one or the other was to miss a major part of the story. Beyond that early era, if there is one quintessential topic that seems to prove the rule that domestic politics matter to other conduct of U.S. foreign relations—that they really matter and can be decisive—it is the Vietnam War. So, as an early Americanist who jumped forward 200 years at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour to study of all things the Vietnam War, perhaps I had it coming.

For me, studying the role of domestic politics in U.S. foreign relations felt like not so much of a conscious choice but a necessity. The ties between the two seemed so strong and so obvious that neglecting the importance of U.S. domestic politics meant, to my mind, failure to fully understand U.S. foreign relations. I'll confess that it wasn't until I attended the 2015 SHAFR Summer Institute dedicated to this theme that I realized that it was possible to talk about centering domestic politics in U.S. foreign relations as "a field," and that the very premise of that field might be controversial to some.<sup>2</sup> My scholarly interests, institutional affiliations, and so much about my life have changed since then; my convictions about the necessity of examining domestic politics to understand U.S. foreign relations have not.

**Aaron Donaghy:** I have had a keen interest in foreign affairs ever since my early teenage years, when I watched a wonderful six-part BBC series called *The Death of Yugoslavia*. It charted the bloody destruction of that nation in the early 1990s, sprinkled with interviews from a range of political heavyweights, Balkan and Western. Quite apart from the sheer gravity of the conflict, I was struck by the power that politicians wielded and how policies were crafted. Why

were certain decisions made? Could the war have been avoided, or resolved sooner? What informed or motivated a particular course of action? However, my interest in international affairs really took off as an undergraduate, when I got the opportunity to devour books on the history of war and peace—I was particularly interested in the Cold War and the Second World War. The tragic events of 9/11 had taken place in my first week on campus, and the question of military intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan was soon looming large.

Domestic politics was placed second behind foreign affairs in terms of my initial scholarly interest. I chose the Falklands dispute between Britain and Argentina as my Ph.D. dissertation topic, with the aim of studying British diplomacy in the critical years prior to the 1982 War. I had expected to write a thesis framing the dispute within the context of global decolonization, the retreat from empire, British-Latin American relations, and pressure from the United Nations (the “international community”). Yet early in the course of my research it became abundantly clear that virtually every major decision taken by respective British governments during the 1960s and 1970s (whether Labour or Tory) was driven by domestic political concerns—the primacy of parliamentary and public opinion, influential lobby groups, electoral politics, and even the role of the media. I am sure that this informed my methodological approach as an early-career scholar. I have since concentrated largely on the history of American foreign relations, where presence of domestic politics is ubiquitous. My convictions on the importance of the foreign-domestic nexus have been reinforced by my recent research on the Cold War, and the administrations of Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan.

**Andrew Johnstone:** While I’m not “domestic politics” in the sense of conventional party politics, the overarching theme through all of my work has been an examination of the concept of public opinion and how it is understood, represented and manufactured.

But I guess I stumbled into it by accident. I have been interested in U.S. history since I was at school. When I was an undergraduate, I took a course on the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt and I was particularly fascinated by the debate over American entry into World War II. When I started my Master’s, I knew I wanted to do my thesis on that period, and I found a footnote in Warren Kimball’s book on Lend-Lease—*The Most Unsordid Act* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969) p.126, note 11—that said more work was needed on public opinion during this period, especially “interest groups and their influence.” I wondered if that was still worth investigating and my supervisor said why not e-mail Kimball and see if he still thinks that’s true. So I did. I was mildly terrified at the prospect of e-mailing a big name professor, especially as it was probably the second e-mail I ever sent (it was 1997). But he very graciously replied. My Master’s thesis was on the debate over Lend-Lease and I went back to that period for my second book.

While working on the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies for my last book, one thing that leapt out at me was the fact it used a public relations firm to help plan strategy, hone its message, and even staff its office. That got me interested in the relationship between public relations firms and U.S. foreign relations more broadly in the twentieth century, on which I’m just completing a book manuscript.

**2. Which scholars do you see as having laid the groundwork for the study of the nexus of foreign policy**

**and domestic politics in U.S. foreign relations?**

**DB:** Many scholars have laid the groundwork for the study of the nexus of foreign relations and domestic politics, so I’ll just state the books that have been most influential on me: Michael J. Hogan’s *A Cross of Iron*; Mary Dudziak’s *Cold War Civil Rights and War Time*; William Appleman Williams’ *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*; Joy Rohde’s *Armed with Expertise*; Joan Hoff’s *A Faustian Foreign Policy*; John Lewis Gaddis’ *Strategies of Containment*; Ira Katznelson’s *Fear Itself*; Ron Theodore Robin’s *The Making of the Cold War Enemy*; and Fred Logevall’s and Campbell Craig’s *America’s Cold War*.

**MB:** In my view, the origins lie in the revisionist school of historiography on the origins of the Cold War—scholars like William Appleman Williams, Lloyd Gardner, and Walter LaFeber. I see my own work as trying to respond to this tradition, although moving beyond its methodological limits and determinism—domestic phenomena do not determine all history, but they have priority in the topics I study. I also appreciated the “revisionists” efforts to connect politics and political economy to U.S. foreign policy.

In terms of my own work, in addition to the “revisionists,” my first inspirations came from scholars working on the relationship between the civil rights movement and U.S. foreign policy. Some scholars that come to mind include Mary Dudziak, Brenda Gayle Plummer, Penny Von Eschen, Thomas Borstelmann, Jonathan Rosenberg, and Michael Krenn. Further in grad school, I found the scholarship of Fred Logevall, Jeremi Suri, Alex Roland, KC Johnson, and Julian Zelizer particularly important. I also identify as a historian of U.S. political history as well, so I count some political historians as inspirations too: Lisa McGirr, James Sparrow, Jennifer Mittelstadt, Mark Wilson, and Judith Stein. I would also add political scientists like Ann Markusen and Rebecca Thorpe.

**ACD:** Instead of a strictly chronological response, I’ll instead describe how I encountered the field, given the trajectory I described above. I see groundwork as having been laid in two mutually supportive, but not always mutually aware, directions. There are those who identify as scholars of U.S. foreign relations who insist on the inescapable importance of domestic politics (these tend to individuals who study the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but not always), and scholars who study domestic politics but insist on the centrality of wider geopolitical and diplomatic contexts (who tend to be scholars who study pre-20<sup>th</sup> century topics, but not always).

Scholars who begin with what is usually perceived as a “domestic” event or topic and make persuasive arguments about the centrality of international contexts are wide ranging. A few that made a very strong impression on me are Peter Onuf’s “A Declaration of Independence for Diplomatic Historians,” Erika Lee’s “The Chinese Exclusion Example: Race, Immigration, and American Gatekeeping,” and Howard Jones’ *Blue and Gray Diplomacy*. After I switched topics/eras to studying U.S.-Vietnamese normalization, existing works like Michael Allen’s *Until the Last Man Comes Home* and Edwin Martini’s *Invisible Enemies* persuasively argued that domestic politics superseded nearly all other considerations.

**AD:** I will confine my answer here to my own lifetime, while acknowledging that scholars have long examined the foreign-domestic nexus in a broader sense. Revisionist historians such as William Appleman Williams (*The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*) typically focused their attention

on the internal sources of policy, or economic motives, rather than looking at American politics per se. Fredrik Logevall has pioneered the study of the foreign-domestic nexus in U.S. foreign relations over the past quarter-century. His excellent book (cowritten with Campbell Craig) titled *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity*, explained, clearly and persuasively, the reasons for much of America's external behavior in the post-1945 era, as well as the militarization of U.S. political culture. I am interested in causation and agency—the how and why questions of history—so I found this work highly instructive. Logevall's early research on U.S. policy toward Vietnam (particularly his first book, *Choosing War*) demonstrated how domestic politics and personal credibility were of paramount concern to President Lyndon Johnson during the critical phase of 1964-65, when the fatal decisions on military intervention were being made. More recently, Logevall has called on scholars to “recenter” the United States in the historiography of American foreign relations, in order to better understand the history of the U.S. in world affairs.

The late Walter LaFeber published a large body of work on U.S. foreign relations history, which often combined international analysis with a keen appreciation for the domestic political context in the United States. When writing of the post-1945 era, in particular, he emphasized the need to treat America as a unique actor in global affairs, rather than casting it as merely one nation among others on the international stage. Julian Zelizer has produced fine analyses on the close relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy, particularly the role of electoral strategizing and lobby groups. Thomas Schwartz and Jussi Hanhimäki have published excellent essays on the foreign-domestic nexus as a methodological approach, articulating the reasons why scholars must pay heed to developments at home and abroad when writing about the history of American foreign relations. More recently, Robert David Johnson has conducted outstanding work on the role of the U.S. Congress during the Cold War. Andrew Johns, meanwhile, has penned a series of fine studies on the influence of domestic politics with respect to U.S. decisionmaking and the Vietnam War, building on Logevall's earlier work.

**AJ:** I don't want to get into a detailed literature review here. But for me, the work of Robert Divine has been hugely important. His book *Second Chance: the Triumph of Internationalism in America during World War II* (New York: Athenium, 1967) was invaluable for my Ph.D. The way it examined the interplay between Franklin Roosevelt, Congress, interest groups, and the broader public set a standard for me. His other books on the Roosevelt years remain useful despite their age, notably *The Illusion of Neutrality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

When my friend Andrew Priest asked me back in 2011 if anyone had published a book on elections and foreign policy, we didn't think anyone had, only to find that Divine had in fact published a rather overlooked two volume project called *Foreign Policy and United States Presidential Elections* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974) back in the 1970s. That set an example for our 2017 book *U.S. Presidential Elections and Foreign Policy*. Whenever I think of a new idea, I usually double check that Robert Divine did not have it first.

### **3. Discuss how the field has evolved to include different approaches to analyzing the nexus of domestic politics and foreign policy.**

**DB:** The field, I think, has in the last three or so decades become much more conscious of itself in terms of the geographical scales it adopts. Put another way, the paradigm

wars of the 1980s revisionists versus post-revisionists, those who emphasized bureaucratic politics versus those who emphasized ideology, etc. have been displaced by a focus on geographical scale i.e., transnational, international, domestic. I believe a major goal for the field in coming years should be to integrate these various scales with a mind toward explicating what each scale illuminates and obscures, and how each relates to each other in terms of explaining why certain events/phenomena proceeded as they did, always keeping causality and the construction of causal hierarchies in mind.

**MB:** I think the field is best served by minimizing the demarcation between the “domestic” and the “international.” Daniel Bessner and I are editing a forthcoming collection of essays on the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy, and many of the scholars identify with the transnational turn but are also doing work that is grounded in domestic politics in some form. I'm thinking of scholars like Amanda Demmer, Vivien Chang, and Sarah Miller-Davenport, three of our contributors. As we say in our introduction, and as Bessner and Fred Logevall have stated in their article for *Texas National Security Review*, it is better to focus on the causal significance of domestic politics, when domestic politics have priority in U.S. foreign policy making and when they do not, rather than seek a study of domestic politics as the “alternative” to the transnational turn. I don't think the latter serves us well at a time when historians of U.S. in the World, however they identify as scholars, face a myriad of challenges given the state of the profession.

I'll add too that I think the field is simply ignoring this demarcation; there doesn't seem to be an altogether conscious effort to challenge the transnational turn through a domestic lens. This is a good thing. The academic books I've enjoyed the most in the past couple years focus on domestic politics, but also study transnational phenomena such as the role of migration, gender, or ideology in U.S. foreign policy. Here I'm thinking of scholars like Amanda Demmer, Amy Rutenberg, Stephen Wertheim, or David Allen.

**ACD:** One interesting point of evolution arises from the difficulties inherent in defining what we mean by “domestic.” In part, this is a geography question. Daniel Immerwahr and Brooke Blower problematize this issue brilliantly.<sup>3</sup> It is also a methodological question insofar as human beings often never fully conform to our categories of historical analysis.

The field has greatly benefitted, for instance, from the acknowledgment that domestic political actors can also act internationally and transnationally. For this reason, the label “domestic” is often replaced with “non-state” in more recent scholarship, especially in the fields that I know best, including human rights and postwar reconciliation.<sup>4</sup> This approach is very illuminating. Not every project requires (or can feasibly undertake) every type of methodology, but many human rights scholars embrace an inclusive approach, integrating research methodologies that we would identify with the international or transnational turns—research in foreign archives, using foreign languages when necessary—and using and foregrounding domestic political sources. This has been extremely profitable.

I'll share how this functioned in my own work on U.S.-Vietnamese normalization. Two of the most important advocacy groups I write about are the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association (FVPPA), an NGO run by members of the Vietnamese diaspora, and the Aurora Foundation, a human rights organization. Both

groups were founded by individuals born abroad who migrated to the United States. Both organizations utilized transnational networks to obtain information about those currently and formerly held in so-called “reeducation camps” in Vietnam. Both the FVPPA and the Aurora Foundation established close ties with U.S. policymakers, published widely read reports, and, I argue, exerted a definitive influence over U.S. policy regarding reeducation camp detainees, a population that did not garner a great deal of attention among the general U.S. public after 1975. By acting and working transnationally and internationally the FVPPA and the Aurora Foundation exercised a formidable, if focused, influence on U.S. policy. Scholars have shown many other groups operated in a similar fashion with equally significant results.

**AD:** The trend toward “bottom up” research has seen a number of excellent studies emerge on subjects such as human rights movements in the United States, as well as antiwar and antinuclear activism, and how they have shaped national identity. There has also been important work published in recent years on subjects such as ethnic lobby groups and the military-industrial complex. This is all to the good, and has informed my own research. However, in my opinion there has been a dearth of historical research on other critical aspects of the foreign-domestic nexus: partisan politics, the role of Congress and key committees, various special interest groups, and how electoral considerations shape foreign policymaking.

**AJ:** While there may be those who want to see more focus on politics in a traditional sense—parties, elections—I think the definition of domestic politics has broadened considerably in recent years. You can see the different approaches to it, and its influence on foreign relations, in books such as *The Cold War at Home and Abroad: Domestic Politics and US Foreign Policy since 1945*, edited by Andrew L. Johns and Mitchell B. Lerner (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2018). With chapters on Congress, elections, public opinion, religion, lobbying, human rights, and more, it shows the number of ways that domestic impulses help to shape U.S. foreign relations. I know Daniel Bessner and Michael Brenes are putting together a similar volume at the moment.

#### 4. What are some of the challenges faced by scholars working in the field?

**DB:** The major challenges faced by scholars working in the field is the collapse of the humanities generally and the historical discipline specifically. We are in a serious moment of crisis, and if we don’t band together as a field and disciplinewith workers across the university, both those who teach and those who do notI believe that our profession is doomed.

**MB:** The main challenge is the absence of fulltime, academic jobs that pay a living wage. It is hard for any historian to have their work read and respected if they cannot find work in the academy, or in a field that allows them to produce scholarship on a regular basis. Full stop.

**ACD:** The one that I suspect everyone participating in this forum will mention is that in many respects researching the influence of domestic politics sends scholars looking for the one thing that policymakers are (usually) loathe to admit on the record: that they are motivated by something else than pure “national interest.” Barbara Keys has persuasively dismantled the idea. Adhering to/acting in solely the “national interest” never was (or is) ever obtainable, which I think opens space for context and other priorities and/or affiliations to help carry the burden of proof.<sup>5</sup> Whether

it is acknowledging that nearly every foreign policy elite in the early republic was also a slaveholder, or that the early party system evolved partially but very explicitly about preferences for a specific approach to foreign policy/national alliances, scholars have shown that perhaps we’ve been looking for the smoking gun in the wrong places.

A second challenge to researching in this field is that greater attention to domestic politics often requires more focus on Congress. Even though Capitol Hill has often acted as a major player in foreign affairs (sometimes, perhaps, by omission), the papers of former members of Congress do not find their way into traditional diplomatic history archives. Congressional materials are decentralized, often housed in university libraries or state historical societies scattered throughout the country, which makes them harder to access both logistically and financially. At the same time, however, especially for scholars working in the United States, these materials might also be more accessible than those housed abroad.

**AD:** The field of U.S. foreign relations history has long been dominated by international-based studies to the comparative neglect of domestic politics. The respective turns toward international history, transnational history, and global history have been met with great enthusiasm in the academic arena, as scholars scour the globe in search of untapped foreign archives. Much of the work that has emerged has been excellent, and I frequently avail of it in my own research and teaching (the global Cold War, decolonization, and transnational human rights movements, for example). By contrast, political history has been somewhat marginalized. By “political history” I refer to the literal, not the abstract—almost any subfield of history is at least to some extent “political.” For example: the study of decisionmakers, policymakers, Congress, party politics, elections, and how they pertain to foreign policy. Indeed, as Fredrik Logevall and Daniel Bessner recently noted, academic historians have largely ceded this terrain to political scientists. It is a development that is both regrettable and ironic, given the deep partisan divisions that exist within America today, and the importance of looking to the past in order to better understand the world we now live in. Since 1945, the United States has been the dominant actor on the international stage by virtually every conceivable measurement. As events in recent years have shown, its political structures matter enormously—not only to Americans, but to those of us living in different parts of the globe.

In addition, there are certain logistical and methodological problems that confront scholars who are seeking to explore the foreign-domestic nexus. In my opinion there has not been nearly enough historical research conducted on Congress, key committees, leading senators, and their role in the foreign policy process. I suspect that part of the reason for this is the sheer time and cost involved. For example, senators typically donate their personal papers to their alma mater, which are spread across the entire nation (e.g., Frank Church at Boise State University, Bob Dole at the University of Kansas, Tip O’Neill at Boston College) and are usually not digitized. Younger academic researchers may not have the requisite funds to travel to far flung locations, not to mention the additional costs of accommodation. Moreover, the lack of academic positions in the political/diplomatic history subfield is unquestionably a major concern and one that has been well documented over the past few years. This has doubtless served as a deterrent to postgraduate students contemplating a Ph.D. dissertation on the foreign-domestic nexus—particularly a “topdown” study that focuses on presidential or administration decisionmaking.

Sources and methodology can also present challenges for historians examining the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy. Perhaps having learned from the Johnson and Nixon years, latter-day presidents and policymakers are extremely reluctant to leave documentary evidence of personal, partisan, or electoral motives in shaping a foreign policy decision. Yet, I firmly believe that this challenge can be overcome by sheer perseverance and hard work. Mining the records held at presidential libraries, the Library of Congress, and other private papers can—and frequently do—reveal startling information (if not always necessarily that one “gotcha” moment). The papers of the Chief of Staff, pollsters, key political advisers, and the Office of Congressional Liaison, for example, provide vital domestic context that can help us to better understand why certain policies were chosen at a particular time. (In my own research on the Carter and Reagan administrations, for example, I highlighted three key interrelated themes: risk, timing, and credibility.)

**AJ:** The biggest methodological challenge for those working on the biggest questions of power is probably the same one that it’s always been: finding causal evidence. The old line “nobody’s talking about it, but it’s on everybody’s mind” is the problem here. No policy maker wants to openly admit that their foreign policy might be driven by domestic political calculations. Foreign policy matters—especially those of war and peace—are supposed to be above that. So finding evidence is always going to be a challenge. For those working on public opinion, showing that public opinion matters, and why it matters (or is perceived to matter) is relatively easy. Assessing its importance and its influence is much more difficult.

I think the biggest broader challenge at the moment is the perception—perhaps the reality—that a focus on the influence of domestic political factors is unfashionable. In the aftermath of transnational and international turns, a focus on domestic politics seems to be swimming against the tide. For examples of criticism of the approach, see some of the responses to the 2020 piece by Daniel Bessner and Fredrik Logevall in the *Texas National Security Review* on re-centering the United States in the historiography of American foreign relations. I saw concerns that a focus on domestic politics will leave it as the only factor influencing American foreign relations, that it will lead to histories that support U.S. hegemony, or that it signifies American exceptionalism. I don’t think a focus on domestic politics necessarily does any of those things. OK, maybe it could, but it certainly doesn’t have to. A lot of the newer work in the area makes that very clear.

**5. What are some of the significant questions in the field that you feel need to be addressed in greater detail or, alternatively, which questions need to be reconsidered by contemporary scholars?**

**DB:** The most important questions that I think the field needs to address are the ones I gestured to in the third question above: how can we integrate transnational, international, and domestic histories to tell a larger story about the history of U.S. foreign relations, and how can we determine how the scales relate to each other in constructing causal hierarchies?

**MB:** I still think we need more work on the national security state and U.S. political economy, on the material foundations of U.S. foreign policy. Foreign policy making is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals in Washington, D.C. and is outside the purview of the public. Foreign policymakers often avoid accountability for their bad decisions—in fact, they are rewarded for them with new

appointments in subsequent administrations. Why do we allow this to happen as a democratic society? What are the structures, individuals, and networks that insulate foreign policy making during and beyond the Cold War? How have individuals and movements challenged the power of the national security state? Why does the United States continue to spend so much on national defense? How did the national security state expand in the post-Cold War period when it arguably should have retracted? Are there alternatives to the foreign policy “blob?” These are just a few of the questions I’ve asked myself over the years and I don’t think we have enough answers yet.

**ACD:** Based on the premise that a full understanding of virtually any topic requires attention to domestic politics, I’ll list some books that I would like to read that either don’t exist or are topics that haven’t been revisited in quite a while. The field would benefit from a more robust history of Washington, D.C.-based think tanks. Such projects might explore these organizations’ role in U.S. foreign relations and examine the often-revolving door between their ranks and policymakers. There is also much room for further investigation into the role of private citizens as diplomats. Here I’m thinking of everything ranging from military specialists acting as consultants to foreign governments to celebrities and other influential individuals spearheading U.S. initiatives abroad. I also think there is room to revisit most of the early U.S. treaties. The scholarship that exists is quite good but most of it is decades (often 50+ years) old and could certainly benefit from some fresh perspectives.

Thankfully, other scholars have been quite explicit in calling our attention to areas that need further study. I was recently reading the excellent bibliography George Herring wrote for his *Superpower Transformed* and he proposed a variety of ideas there as well (when in doubt, quote/reference George Herring). In their recent article, “Recentering the United States in the Historiography of American Foreign Relations,” Fred Logevall and Daniel Bessner also list quite a few areas that they see as needing further research. I’d encourage scholars, especially graduate students, to mine these resources for potential avenues of study.

**AD:** Firstly, I think it is vital to recognize that the American political system is, and has always been, fundamentally different (perhaps unique) to the rest of the world. Nowhere among major Western democracies is a political system so decentralized, where national security or foreign trade impact upon congressional districts across the country. Representatives and senators, career politicians, cater to the interest of their constituents as it pertains to foreign policy (e.g., an economic group, ethnic lobby, or industry), often with little regard for events overseas. Equally, the openness of the U.S. system facilitates the development of major grassroots (or “bottomup”) movements, which can find relatively easy access to political elites, compared, for example, to the parliamentary democracies of Western Europe. Additionally, there is no comparable nation that has an executive branch whose external policies operate against such legislative oversight—even if there has been some diminution in the powers of the various congressional committees post-9/11.

All of which means that we must pay close attention to the intertwined relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy. As I have already mentioned above, we require more historical research on the role of Congress in U.S. foreign policymaking (for better and worse). We also need a clearer understanding of key variables such as the rise of special interest groups and the military-industrial complex which ought to be fertile ground for historians working on the post-1945 era. Above all, though, I believe

we need to pay closer attention to the role of partisan politics and elections in shaping American foreign policy. Here, too, the United States is fundamentally unique, for the campaigning literally never stops. The perpetual electoral cycle has long made it incumbent upon candidates—both presidential and congressional—to grapple with the domestic implications of foreign affairs. For presidents who are seeking reelection, for example, election season often lends an urgency to craft of foreign policy. Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton—all are good examples of presidents who have consciously sought to adjust U.S. foreign policy on key issues as their reelection approached. Presidents and policymakers embark on course correctives, devise ways to reduce vulnerability, and attempt to align policy with the broad public mood. Studying the relationship between partisan politics, elections, and foreign policy will enable us to better understand the actions of those who wield power, and bring us closer to explaining the history of U.S. foreign relations. Perhaps nowhere is this element more important than on the issue of military intervention, especially in the post-1945 era, when America has been the world's foremost power.

**AJ:** Following on from the last question, Bessner and Logevall's *TNSR* piece listed seven different areas where a domestic perspective is especially illuminating, one of which was a focus on domestic politics in its narrower sense. But I would highlight two others because of the way they incorporate nonstate actors. First, they note the "peculiar evolution of the U.S. national security state" and the way that state was a "creation of a network of parastate institutions." As someone who has worked extensively on nonstate actors, it will surprise no one that I would encourage more work on how that network developed to provide a vast supporting cast for the U.S. government.

Second, they note how historians "have not explored fully the concatenation of political, economic, cultural, and ideological factors that have encouraged the United States to engage in what [Andrew] Bacevich has pungently referred to as 'permanent' or 'endless' war." To do so requires engaging (as they note) with the work that has come out of the cultural turn, and with a broader definition of politics. My current work on PR probably fits into this category.

**6. For someone wanting to start out in studying the nexus of domestic politics and foreign policy, what 5-8 books do you consider to be of seminal importance—either the "best" or the most influential titles?**

**MB:** This is tough, but if I was making a graduate syllabus and we only had 8 books to assign, I would say the following: Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire*; Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*; Fredrik Logevall and Campbell Craig, *America's Cold War*; Daniel Bessner, *Democracy in Exile*; Gretchen Heefner, *The Minuteman Next Door*; Amy Rutenberg, *Rough Draft*; Andrew Friedman, *Covert Capital*; and Jennifer Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State*.

These books cover a lot of ground, but still scratch the surface.

**ACD:** A fantastic place to start is Fred Logevall's "Domestic Politics" chapter in the 2016 edition of *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*. That chapter and Melvin Small's *Democracy & Diplomacy: The Impact of Domestic Politics on U.S. Foreign Relations, 1789-1994* (1996) are great overviews into the field. I see Small's book as particular pivotal, even twenty-five plus years on, insofar as it traces this theme over the full sweep of U.S. history, transcending the early-modern divide and pointing toward moments of

continuity and change.

Read together, Small's book and Logevall's chapter and excellent starting points. Beyond that, my recommendations would vary significantly by one's temporal/thematic interests. I'd welcome further conversations about this topic with any of my SHAFR colleagues.

**AD:** Some excellent introductory studies on the foreign-domestic nexus include: Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity*; Julian Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy: The Politics of National Security From World War II to the War on Terrorism*; James Lindsay, *Congress and the Politics of U.S. Foreign Policy*; Melvin Small, *Democracy & Diplomacy: The Impact of Domestic Politics in U.S. Foreign Policy, 1789-1994*; Walter LaFeber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad since 1750*; H. W. Brands, *The Devil We Knew: Americans and the Cold War*.

**AJ:** Here are four books on that survey the relationship between foreign relations and domestic politics, the public, Congress, and elections. It also includes three articles from the 2000s that all made the case for the importance of domestic politics.

Melvin Small, *Democracy and Diplomacy: The impact of Domestic Politics on U.S. Foreign Policy, 1789-1994* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)

Ralph Levering, *The Public and American Foreign Policy* (New York: William Morrow, 1978)

Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

Andrew Johnstone and Andrew Priest (eds), *US Presidential Elections and Foreign Policy: Candidates, Campaigns, and Global Politics from FDR to Bill Clinton* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017)

Jussi M. Hanhimäki, "Global Visions and Parochial Politics: The Persistent Dilemma of the 'American Century,'" *Diplomatic History* 27/4 (2003), pp. 423-447.

Fredrik Logevall, "A Critique of Containment," *Diplomatic History* 28/4 (2004): 473-499.

Thomas A. Schwartz, "'Henry, ... Winning an Election Is Terribly Important': Partisan Politics in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 33/2 (2009): 173-190.

**7. For someone wanting to teach a course on the nexus of domestic politics and foreign policy or add these considerations to an existing course on U.S. foreign relations, what core readings and/or media would you suggest?**

**MB:** It depends on the course, but I would say that including any of the books I mentioned would be great for a graduate class. I think if it is a course for undergraduates, it would be fun to teach it through primary sources, fiction, songs, and movies. Sources would include President Dwight Eisenhower's speech in 1957 announcing that federal troops would protect the "Little Rock nine"—Eisenhower essentially says it is a national security imperative, in addition to being a constitutional action. *Dr. Strangelove* is also a necessary movie, as would be Errol Morris' documentary, *Fog of War*. Novels by Graham Greene or Don DeLillo might also work. You could also teach this course through protest music from Woody Guthrie to Rage Against the Machine.

Now you have me thinking about possible courses to offer.

**ACD:** My answer would change dramatically depending on the temporal and thematic parameters of the course, and whether we're talking about an undergraduate or graduate course. I teach the Vietnam War regularly, as do many SHAFR members, so I'll grab a few titles off that syllabus, but, once again, I'm happy to chat with any SHAFR colleagues about these issues further.

While I draw my lectures from a variety of sources that consistently emphasize the connection between domestic politics and U.S. foreign relations, here are some readings that I regularly assign to students (undergraduates):

James Westheider, "African Americans and the Vietnam War," in Marilyn B. Young and Robert Buzzanco, eds., *A Companion to the Vietnam War*

Heather Marie Stur, "'She Could Be the Girl Next Door': The Red Cross SRAO in Vietnam" from her *Beyond Combat: Women and Gender in the Vietnam War Era*

Chester Pach, "'We Need to Get a Better Story to the American People': LBJ, the Progress Campaign, and the Vietnam War on Television," in Kenneth Osgood and Andrew K. Frank, eds., *Selling War in a Media Age: The Presidency and Public Opinion in the American Century*

David L. Prentice, "Choosing 'the Long Road': Henry Kissinger, Melvin Laird, Vietnamization, and the War over Nixon's Vietnam Strategy," *Diplomatic History* 40/3 (2016): 445-474.

Ken Hughes, "Fatal Politics: Nixon's Political Timetable for Withdrawing from Vietnam," *Diplomatic History* 34/3 (2010): 497-506.

Truong Nhu Tang, *A Vietcong Memoir: An Inside Account of the Vietnam War and Its Aftermath* (1986). I assign the entire memoir in my classes, but on U.S. domestic politics mattering not just to the USG but to the NLF/PRG, see especially 145-147

I also just recently read/reviewed Carolyn Woods Eisenberg's *Fire and Rain: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Wars in Southeast Asia*. The book is a treasure trove for many things, including the intersection of domestic politics/US foreign policy, and I will definitely be adding chapters to future iterations of my syllabus.

**AD:** In addition to the seminal works listed above in response to question 6, the following readings delve into certain key aspects of the foreign-domestic nexus: Eugene Wittkopf and James McCormick (eds.), *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence*; James Lee Ray, *American Foreign Policy and Political Ambition*; Andrew Johns and Mitchell Lerner (eds.), *The Cold War at Home and Abroad: Domestic Politics and U.S. Foreign Policy since 1945*; Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War*; Michael Armacost, *Ballots, Bullets and Bargains: American Foreign Policy and Presidential Elections*; Andrew Johnstone and Andrew Priest (eds.), *U.S. Presidential Elections and Foreign Policy: Candidates, Campaigns, and Global Politics from FDR to Clinton*; Aaron Friedberg, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America's AntiStatism and Its Cold War Grand Strategy*; Michael Brenes, *For Might and Right: Cold War Defense Spending and the Remaking of American Democracy*; Andrew Johns, *Vietnam's Second Front: Domestic Politics, the Republican Party, and the War*. For those interested in the late Cold War era there is also my own book: Aaron Donaghy, *The Second Cold War: Carter, Reagan, and the Politics of Foreign Policy*.

**AJ:** It depends on the course, obviously. The suggestions for the previous question would work well to address the concept in a broader sense. The suggestions below focus on particular historical periods that I teach—entry into World War II and the Vietnam War. These suggestions below vary from the broad to the more focused. But there are also numerous useful speeches that can be used in class. So much of Roosevelt's rhetoric from 1940-41 attempted to sway public opinion. Regarding Vietnam, I particularly like teaching Nixon's 8 May 1970 press conference and his visit to the Lincoln memorial the following morning.

Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979)

Stephen Casey, *Cautious Crusade Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, And the War Against Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

Richard Moe, *Roosevelt's Second Act: The Election of 1940 and the Politics of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Margaret Paton-Walsh, *Our War Too: American Women Against the Axis* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002)

Melvin Small, *At the Water's Edge: American Politics and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 2005)

Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999)

Andrew L. Johns, *Vietnam's Second Front: Domestic Politics, the Republican Party, and the War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010)

Sandra Scanlon, *The Prowar Movement: Domestic Support for the Vietnam War and the Making of Modern American Conservatism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013)

Notes:

1. Research on this topic resulted in: Amanda C. Demmer, "Trick or Constitutional Treaty?: The Jay Treaty and the Quarrel Over the Diplomatic Separation of Powers," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 35/4 (Winter 2015): 579-598.
2. This Summer Institute led to the publication of: Andrew L. Johns and Mitchell B. Lerner, eds., *The Cold War at Home and Abroad: Domestic Politics and U.S. Foreign Policy since 1945* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2018).
3. Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York, 2019); Brooke Blower, "Nation of Outposts: Forts, Factories, Bases, and the Making of American Power," *Diplomatic History* 41/3 (2017): 439-59.
4. On human rights, see Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Sarah B. Snyder, *From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Lauren Frances Turek, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations: Evangelical Influence on Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Relations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020). On postwar reconciliation, see Pete Millwood, *Improbable Diplomats: How Ping-Pong Players, Musicians, and Scientists Remade U.S.-China Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022); Hang Thi Thu LeTormala, *Postwar Journeys: American and Vietnamese Transnational Peace Efforts Since 1975* (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 2021).
5. Barbara Keys, "The Diplomat's Two Minds: Deconstructing a Foreign Policy Myth," *Diplomatic History* 44/1 (2020): 121.