

# Global Discussion Questions

No decision in foreign policy is made in a vacuum, and the repercussions of any single decision have far-reaching effects across the range of strategic interests on the U.S. policy agenda. This GREAT DECISIONS feature is intended to facilitate the discussion of this year's topics in a global context, to discuss the linkages between the topics and to encourage consideration of the broader impact of decisionmaking.

1. Consider "Nuclear security" in the context of "U.S. foreign policy and petroleum." With the conclusion of the Iran nuclear deal, sanctions on Iran's oil export were lifted and the country returned to the global oil market. Assess the use of petroleum as an instrument of foreign policy in the case of the nuclear deal. What implications does Iran's reentry to the global market have for the U.S.' petroleum leveraging power?
2. Consider "Conflict in the South China Sea" in the context of "U.S. foreign policy and petroleum." To what extent are South China Sea disputes about oil and gas? How would the discovery of proved energy reserves in the central area of the South China Sea alter the landscape of the conflict? So far, China's contentions with freedom of navigation rights have been focused on military vessels. What would happen if this focus shifted to include commercial and energy shipping?
3. Consider "The future of Europe" in the context of "Trade and politics." The Brexit vote was in part a populist expression of dissatisfaction with globalization and free trade, and was peripherally informed by the euro crisis. Does protectionist sentiment on the national level pose an urgent threat to European unity? Is the idea of a single market without borders ultimately anathema to the survival of distinct national identities, or can the two support each other in enduring ways?
4. Consider "Latin America's political pendulum" in the context of "The future of Europe." The surge of populist leaders to power in Latin America in the 2000s is now on the ebb, even as populism gains traction in the U.S. and Europe. What accounts for these divergent trends? Does populism differ qualitatively in the former and the latter regions? Are there similarities between the circumstances of the 2000s in Latin America, and current circumstances in the U.S. and Europe?
5. Consider "Prospects for Afghanistan and Pakistan" in the context of "Latin America's political pendulum." What are the parallels between U.S. historical intervention in Latin America and ongoing intervention in the Middle East? Does continued U.S. presence in the Middle East reflect in the Latin American attitude toward Washington?
6. Consider "Saudi Arabia in transition" in the context of "U.S. foreign policy and petroleum." How does the U.S. "shale revolution" and decreasing dependence on foreign energy impact its relationship with Saudi Arabia? What are the U.S.' remaining interests in a "special relationship" with Riyadh? How is the reintroduction of Iranian oil and gas to global markets, a result of the nuclear deal, likely to affect regional dynamics?
7. Consider "Prospects for Afghanistan and Pakistan" in the context of "Saudi Arabia in transition." Under what circumstances might Afghanistan become the scene of an Iran-Saudi Arabia proxy conflict, in the manner of Yemen? What would be the consequences for the region? What role do the U.S. and NATO have to play in mitigating this possibility?
8. Consider "Conflict in the South China Sea" in the context of "Trade and politics." How would a trade war between the U.S. and China impact the security situation in the South China Sea? If trade and investment between the two countries deteriorated, would China feel freer to pursue its territorial claims? What options would the U.S. have to deescalate tensions?
9. Consider "Latin America's political pendulum" in the context of "Trade and politics." Latin America is experiencing a swing toward center-right governments that are open to greater economic ties with the U.S. At the same time, the new U.S. president campaigned for election on a broad promise that the U.S. would retreat from trade agreements and impose protective tariffs. What are the implications of this contrast for U.S.-Latin American relations? What about for Latin America's internal politics?
10. Consider "Prospects for Afghanistan and Pakistan" in the context of "Nuclear security." Is it an overstatement to consider Afghanistan a proxy war between nuclear powers India and Pakistan? If the U.S., frustrated by Islamabad's continued support for the Afghan Taliban, were to turn too far away from Pakistan and toward India, would it risk pushing Pakistan toward China? How great would be the danger of nuclear exchange in South Asia under those circumstances?