Questions for POL 2020

Chose 5 of the following 6 questions. All questions carry count the same. Be sure to manage your time well: there is a lot to write in a short space of time. Good luck!

1. Identify and briefly explain the key components of US ideology, based on the Mabee and/or Bailey's lectures and/or other required readings. How have these components/values been institutionalized internationally?

Identifiser og redegjør kort for nøkkelkomponenter i den amerikanske ideologien. Bruk pensumlitteratur (slik som Mabee, osv.) og forelesninger (Bailey). Hvordan har disse verdiene/ideologiske komponentene blitt institusjonalisert internasjonalt?

It is Mabee that calls the American mindset an ideology, in Chapter 6 of his book. He calls this “American Exceptionalism” (or possibly, the “American creed”), and cites Seymour Martin Lipset’s five components of this: 1) liberty, 2) egalitarianism, 3) individualism, 4) populism and 5) laissez-faire (regarding the state’s role in the economy). In addition to these “core values” he adds anti-militarist and anti-statist views, and emphasis on economic freedom and what he calls a “peculiarly American capitalism.” In addition, he refers to the US as “liberal” throughout. Bailey lectured about the dominance of liberalism, with its emphasis on the individual, private property as scared and a limited role for the state (and a deep mistrust of the state which she also called “anti-statism”). The US has also been shaped by Protestantism, although this was used in class to support the anti-statism of American, and is discussed by Mabee as supporting the individualism of the US and the “moralistic” streak in American foreign policy. Bailey (and Hook and Spanier) also discusses American exceptionalism as the idea that the US is qualitatively different from other states, and the American sense of having a destiny as important components of US thinking. Schmidt also writes of the US that it “a quintessential liberal state” (pg. 14).

US values, especially liberal values, have been institutionalized in a number of international organizations and institutions that promote liberal economic values (first the Bretton Woods system and then the surviving bits of it) – such as free trade, limited state intervention in the economy (as sound fiscal policy, for example), and human rights. Examples of these are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations (UN). One could also say that the US role in the UN Security Council has institutionalized the US in its leading world role, and that NATO and other security arrangements which the US dominates also institutionalize this leading role of the United States. In a negative example, the anti-statism of the United States has also meant push-back against attempt to establish anything that looks like a world government (for example, treating the UN as the organ that has the right to decide what the US does or the International Criminal Court).

2. What are the three levels of analysis that can be applied in the study of foreign policy? Identify these three levels (or “images” as Waltz called them) and explain what they mean. Give an example of a theoretical approach to the study of foreign policy for each level.
Hva er de tre analysenivåene som kan anvendes i studiet av utenrikspolitikk? Gi navn på disse tre nivåene (eller, som Waltz sier, «images») og forklar hva de betyr. Bruk pensumlitteraturen for å gi et eksempel på en teoretisk tilnærming til studiet av utenrikspolitikk for hvert nivå.

Bailey organized the course around the concept of levels of analysis, or as Kenneth Waltz has termed them, the three “images”. Mabee has also adopted this approach, which he describes very briefly on page 85. The three levels/images are 1) the individual level; 2) the state; and 3) the international system. Explanations that depend on “human nature” and characteristics of individual leaders belong at the first level; explanations that have to do with national characteristics, structure, institutions and ideologies/mindsets belong at the second level, and systemic explanations belong at the third level. (In addition, the Schmidt article uses a similar approach but without using this terminology – he writes about systemic and “internal, domestic” explanations, and mentions “personalities of individuals”. Systemic level explanations are those that are explicitly international relations theories, especially realism (Schmidt covers offensive and defensive realism, the lecture covered neo-realism more generally). Bailey also talked about other IR theories, but these are less clearly attached to the systemic level: liberal internationalist theories, Marxist and constructivist theories. The international economic system could be connected to Marxist theories, but constructivism really works at the state level (ideals and identity). Liberals tend not to make a distinction between levels, and could arguably be placed any other levels (a reasonable argument is acceptable here).

Mabee places at the second level the study of the American state – the formal structures of government, institutions and traditions, groups inside and outside of government (cabinet, Congress, business leaders, media, etc), and ideology. Bailey included in the second level the government of the US, decision-making theories, and political culture (anti-statism, liberalism, Manifest Destiny and American exceptionalism).

There has not been much discussion of the first level, that of individuals, and it is enough to say that explanations that rely on human psychology or the personalities of individual leaders inhabit this level of analysis.

3. The US president has the lead in the making of US foreign policy, but although he is often called in the press “the most powerful man in the world”, he cannot act just as he pleases. Identify and discuss (briefly) three constraints (domestic or international) upon Presidential power.

Den amerikanske presidenten har mest å si når det gjelder utforming av amerikansk utenrikspolitikk. Men selv om pressen ofte kaller ham for “verdens mektigste person” kan han ikke bare gjøre som han vil. Identifiser og redegjør (kort) for tre begrensninger (innenriks eller internasjonalt) på presidentens makt.

This question is really probing to see if the student has a grasp on the checks and balances/division of power of the US government, but a variety of answers to this question are acceptable. Both
Mabee and Bailey has stressed that the US president has come to dominate the making of US foreign policy. However, that does not mean that the president is perfectly free to do just anything. The Congress controls the budget for example, as well as determining the size of the armed forces. Congress has also passed the War Powers Resolution, which is aimed at placing limits on the President’s use of force. While it can be argued that these have not functioned as many think they should, Presidents are still mindful of the reaction of Congress. What the president can actually do is very much a political question rather than one of a strict interpretation of what rules are in effect. For example, while Presidents have never formally accepted the validity of the War Powers Resolution, they have still sought resolutions from Congress before initiating major military operations (for example, authorization for the use of Military Force Against Terrorists, before the invasion of Afghanistan; and the Authorization for the Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002). This is because for significant operations, backing from Congress and the population at large is politically necessary. Congress (specifically the Senate) also has the power to ratify or reject treaties and while the president can to some extent rely on executive agreements with foreign powers that do not require ratification, this is politically impossible with respect to major treaties. In addition, the Senate has the power to approve (or not) the president’s appointees as ambassador. The Supreme Court has largely upheld the leading role of the president in foreign policy matters but has occasionally placed limits on the president, such as deciding that some constitutional rights should be extended to those held in Guantanamo Bay (Boumediene v. Bush, 2008). Other limitations on the President’s power include the difficulties of making the foreign policy bureaucracy perform as desired—either because it is slow, or because of internal dissention (Mabee, p. 111; here the lecture on Allison might be mentioned) — domestic opinion, the operation of interest groups, and American ideology. International constraints come from the power realities of the world: the US president has to balance many factors when making a decision about foreign policy, such as the reaction of other key international actors (for example, how will China react? Will NATO allies back us up?) and power considerations (does the potential target possess nuclear weapons?). It is also reasonable to argue that the realities of the international economic system place limits on US actions: certain actions endanger the dollar or international structures. (note: it would be a nice touch if a student were to note that during the “Unipolar moment” these restraints were at a relatively lower level, and US foreign policy become much more adventurous).

The Woodward book, Obama’s War, gives an account of decision-making from the perspective of those most closely involved in it. What decision was Obama trying to make? List five (S) key players (individuals and/or departments/agencies – aside from Obama!) involved in the process and discuss the tensions among them. (Note: the best answer will link individuals to their positions).

The decision was what strategy should be followed in Afghanistan. Obama first sent 17000 troops, but the most of the book is about whether more troops should be sent, and if so how many.

Many people are mentioned in the Woodward book! Here are some of the key agencies/department: the Vice President Joe Biden, the White House Staff (Emanuel, Axelrod, Gibbs); the National Security Council (Jones, Donilon); the Senior Adviser and Coordinator for Afghanistan-Pakistan (Lute); the National Security Council Staff (Lippert, McDonough); Assistant to the President for Counterterrorism and Homeland Security (Brennan); the Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications (Rhodes); Chairman, Interagency Policy Review of Afghanistan-Pakistan (Riedel); the Department of State (Clinton (Secy of State), Holbrooke (Spec. rep), (Amb to Afghanistan) Eikenberry, Patterson (Amb to Pakistan)), the Department of Defense (Gates (secy), Flourney (under secy); the Director of National Intelligence (DNI -McConnell and/or Blair); Director of the CIA (Hayden and/or Panetta); Commander, Central Command (Petraeus); Commander US and NATO forces McKiernan,/McChrystal/Patraeus); Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Carwright).

There are many tensions among these individuals and departments. In essence, all are fighting for the ear of the president, to protect their “turf”, and to get the decision they want. Here are some of the conflicts:

The DNI and CIA tried to cut each other of the loop in the turf war between these two agencies in the wake of the governmental organization following 9/11 (pp., 48-61, 16, 370+);

There were many tensions between the White House staff around the president on the one hand and the Pentagon and other agencies on the other:  

the White House tried to keep control over the process and was resented by everybody (Jones felt strongly about this, calling Emanuel, Axelrod, Gibbs, Lippart, & McDonnough the “water bugs” and accusing them of “malfeasance” for cutting off his access to the president);

d the White House criticized the Pentagon for producing inadequate reports that obscured what was really going on (how many troops?), for trying to force the president into a decision that suited it; and for failing to provide the president with the well-considered, realistic options of the sort he was looking for.

General Petraeus, worked with a columnist to comment on the policy required in Afghanistan, which angered the White House which saw this as public lobbying (and considered Petraeus to be a “Bush general”); Petraeus kept up a “back channel” to Republican senators such as Lindsey Graham). In general, the White House inner circle feared campaigns on the part of the military (in public or covertly) to force the president to take the decision they wanted.

DNI Blair and Emanuel clashed over what to include in the President’s Daily Brief (key information management issue).

There were also tensions among the Pentagon, the broader circle of WH advisors (who were not the President’s personal staff) and the inner circle of WH staff:
the JCS Chairman (Mullen) wanted the White House Staff to butt out of the business of the Pentagon;
newly assigned Central Command Commander McChrystal didn’t want the National Security Advisor telling him what to do (142);
Jones (NSC) takes offence at the military for demanding still more troops even after Obama had decided to send the first reinforcements (a Whisky Tango Foxtrot – WTF moment);
Jones and Mullen quarreled over how many troops should be sent (and whether there was a “cap” on the number) with Jones accusing Mullen of pursing his own line of policy in NATO (142)
McChrystal’s speech at the International Institute for Strategic Studies was taken by Jones to be evidence of that the military was out to cripple the president, and the White House saw it as further evidence that the military was attempting to fouce the president’s hand (1954-5)
McCrystal’s article in Rolling Stone suggested the general had nothing but scorn for the administration, and this gets him fired.

The COIN team (Petraeus + MCChrystal) and Gates fought hard to keep this strategy and an assessment that agreed with it; clashing with Vice President Biden who felt himself and expert in foreign policy and who felt that someone had to stand up to the military;
Secretary of Defence Gates was mistrusted by the inner WH circle because he was a Republican;
Secretary of State Clinton seemed to be distancing herself from the President and adopting Petraeus’s strategy. On the whole the DOS is a much smaller player in this game; Special representative Richard Holbrooke has no traction within the administration, and was widely distrusted by many.
Ambassador Eikenberry, a retired Army lieutenant general now the Ambassador in Afghanistan, alienated the military when he questioned their recommendations

The primary strategy was «containment», and George Kennan was understood to be its architect. Kennan’s idea, first sketched out in advice to the State Department in the “long telegram” and then in an article in the journal Foreign Affairs (“The Sources of Soviet Conduct”, 1947), was that the internal characteristics of the Soviet Union (a history of insecurity and unprotected borders, the
communist ideology (including the view of the historical inevitability of the victory of Communism) and the desire of Soviet leaders to retain power) made that country determined to overthrow the capitalist system, but also patient enough to have this as a long term goal. US policy then should be to stand up the Soviet and to “contain” its efforts to overthrow the west – the US policy should be long-term and equally patient. The Cold War was “fought” on several fronts, around the world and many features of today’s world can be traced back to it: the existence of NATO and probably the European Community, the transformation of Japan and Germany into viable democracies: the continued existence of an independent Taiwan; Korean divided between a Communist north and capitalist south; the after effects of the Vietnam War; the problems connected with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Russia; etc. There are many possibilities: the good answer should explain how the Cold War impacted the example given. Note: it is possible that NSC-68, authored by Paul Nitze, is given as setting the strategy, and this too is acceptable – since Kennan always complained that US decision-makers were not pursuing containment in the way that he thought they should.

6. Obama came into office in 2009 hoping to adopt a new approach to American foreign policy. What did Obama seek to do? How did his approach differ from that of the Bush administration? Did Obama succeed?

I am primarily looking for Obama’s desire to shift from a policy of unilateral action to one of multilateral action, the attempt to restore the US’s soft power, and to revive diplomacy as a major foreign policy tool. The president sought to rejoin the international community, as he thought that international institutions and law made the United States more secure; he sought to make the US more attractive by living up to democratic ideals at home; and announced that he would talk to countries with which the US had poor relations, such as Iran. He rejected the Bush administration’s claim to the right to make “preventative war” ( inaccurately termed “preventative war in the National Security Strategy from 2002) but also recognized that the use of force would sometimes be necessary. He rejected the idea that democracy could be imposed in a country from the outside. Yet, as Mabee notes, he retained the idea of “American exceptionalism” but seems to think of it more in terms of setting an example than as justifying a crusade. Bush’s approach was pretty much the opposite of this, especially in his first term: the US acted unilaterally, ignored the international community, dismissed international institutions and laws as an unnecessary infringement of the power of the US, and adopted a crusading attitude. It can also be said that Obama dropped the “war on terror” – at least by name – although he has continued many Bush era policies.

Did Obama succeed? The US has acted more multilaterally (Libya, for example) and has been less inclined to get involved in the Arab spring and especially Syria. But Obama cannot get major international treaties through the Senate, and he has been widely criticized for being weak, especially with respect to the Syria/ISIL situation. Initially, the restoration of the US’s reputation went well, with Obama’s speech in Cairo and other initiatives by Obama well received (cf the Nobel
Peace Prize). Over the longer term, the picture is more mixed. The US did resume talks with Iran, and may be on the verge of signing a treaty – but this is a relatively recent development – there were many years before this approach seemed to work; the “reset” of relations with Russia has not gone particularly well. Obama has continued and even expanded the program of drone strikes against suspected enemies in a variety of countries (especially Pakistan) and this is understood by many to be somewhat dubious under international law (disputed). The student might note that Obama had planned to “Pivot to Asia”, that is, pay more attention to Asia but developments such as those in the Middle East have made it difficult to give that region the attention the president feels it deserves.