

# Foreign Policy, Part I

While I favor Agorism, Voluntaryism, and Anarcho-Capitalism, I do have a solid knowledge base on the United States Constitutional Republic. This article will focus on normative foreign policy in this context, and later articles will deal with more philosophically palatable foreign policy questions. While I have studied politics and related topics intensely and broadly (my B.A. in Political Science represents the minority of my accumulated relevant knowledge), I do readily admit that I'm far from an expert on foreign policy. I'll be learning as I write.

Let's go through the U.S. Constitution, and see what we can learn along the way.

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3: "[The Congress shall have Power] To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations..." What should U.S. foreign policy on trade be? Laissez-faire. Free trade with all, for all. No tariffs, period. Why? Because:

- 1.) it's the right thing to do and
- 2.) it's better for the economy and
- 3.) as always, taxation is theft.

Perhaps you doubt me. Think about it this way: countries do not trade with each other, but individuals trade with other individuals in the same country and foreign countries. It is not within the purpose of government to give some individuals an economic advantage over others, even if those individuals reside in separate countries. This point segues into the second one with the observation that tariffs give one segment of the domestic population advantage over other parts. Let's take the recent steel tariffs for example. While they may have helped some domestic steel manufacturers by raising their foreign competitors' prices and thus encouraging American consumers to purchase more domestic steel and less foreign steel, the cost is passed on to the entire rest of the country who now has to pay more for steel than they otherwise would have. This artificial price manipulation is dangerous for the economy, in part because the increased cost of steel takes funds away from other endeavors, with limitless potential for helping the economy. Regarding the third point, (#TaxationIsTheft) I'll just refer you to this meme I stole from someone on Facebook.

**tax**  
/taks/ ◌  
noun

- a **compulsion**, contribution to state revenue, levied by the government on workers' income and business profits or added to the cost of some goods, services, and transactions.  
*synonyms*: duty, tariff, excise, customs, dues; More
- a strain or heavy demand.  
"a heavy tax on the reader's attention"  
*synonyms*: burden, load, weight, demand, strain, pressure, stress, drain, imposition  
"a heavy tax on one's attention"

**com·pul·so·ry**  
/kəm'pəlsərē/ ◌  
adjective

required by law or a rule; **obligatory**  
"compulsory military service"  
*synonyms*: obligatory, mandatory, required, requisite, necessary, essential; More

- involving or exercising **compulsion**; **coercive**  
"the abuse of compulsory powers"

**force**  
/fôrs/ ◌  
noun

- strength or energy as an attribute of physical action or movement.  
"he was thrown backward by the force of the explosion"  
*synonyms*: strength, power, energy, might, effort, exertion; More
- coercion or compulsion, especially with the use of **threat of violence**.  
"they ruled by law and not by force"  
*synonyms*: coercion, compulsion, constraint, duress, oppression, harassment, intimidation, threats; More

verb

- make a way through or into by physical strength; break open by force.  
"they broke into Fred's house and forced every cupboard door with ax or crowbar"  
*synonyms*: break open, burst open, knock down, smash down, kick in  
"the door had to be forced"
- make (someone) do something **against their will**.  
"she was forced into early retirement"  
*synonyms*: compel, coerce, make, constrain, oblige, impel, drive, pressurize, pressure, press, push, press-gang, bully, dragoon, bludgeon; More

**theft**  
/Theft/ ◌  
noun

noun: theft; plural noun: thefts

the action or crime of **stealing**.  
"he was convicted of theft"  
*synonyms*: robbery, stealing, thieving, larceny, thievery, shoplifting, burglary, misappropriation, appropriation, embezzlement; More

**o·blig·a·to·ry**  
/ə'blɪgətôrē/ ◌  
adjective

required by a legal, moral, or other rule; **compulsory**.  
"use of seat belts in cars is now obligatory"  
*synonyms*: compulsory, mandatory, prescribed, required, demanded, statutory, enforced, binding, incumbent; More

- so customary or routine as to be expected of everyone or on every occasion.  
"after the obligatory preamble on the weather he got down to business"  
*synonyms*: compulsory, mandatory, prescribed, required, demanded, statutory, enforced, binding, incumbent; More
- (of a ruling) having **binding force**.  
"a sovereign whose laws are obligatory"

**co·er·cive**  
/kō'ərsɪv/ ◌  
adjective

relating to or using **force** or threats.  
"coercive measures"

**threat**  
/Thret/ ◌  
noun

- a statement of an intention to inflict pain, injury, damage, or other hostile action on someone in retribution for something done or not done.  
"members of her family have received death threats"  
*synonyms*: threatening remark, warning, ultimatum  
"Maggie ignored his threats"
- a person or thing likely to cause damage or danger.  
"hurricane damage poses a major threat to many coastal communities"

**steal**  
/stēl/ ◌  
verb

gerund or present participle: stealing

- take (another person's property) **without permission** or legal right and without intending to return it.  
"thieves stole her bicycle"  
*synonyms*: purloin, **thieve**, take, take for oneself, help oneself to, loot, pilfer, run off with, abscond with, carry off, shoplift; More

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Article 1, Section 8, Clause 10: "[The Congress shall have Power] To define and punish Piracies and Felonies committed on the high Seas, and Offenses against the Law of Nations..." The "Law of Nations" does not refer to International Law as some may suppose. Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England — an authoritative tome on common law with which the Founders were intimately familiar and to which they referred frequently — explains it. "The law of nations is a system of rules, deducible by natural reason, and established by universal consent among the civilized inhabitants of the world.... offences against the law of nations can rarely be the object of the criminal law of any particular state. For offences against this law are principally incident to whole states or nations.... The principal offences against the law of nations ... are of three kinds; 1. Violation of safe-conducts [as in war]; 2. Infringement of the rights of ambassadors; and, 3. Piracy." There's more involved in the "Law of Nations," including the Law Merchant (a fascinating topic about which I'll write one day) but this is the most relevant part for our purposes today. This clause touches slightly on foreign policy. Essentially, the U.S. should courteously refrain from violating the customs of international interactions as well as provide for discouraging the small possibility of their citizens doing the same. In the context of a Constitutional Republic, this is all good and proper.

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 11: “[The Congress shall have Power] To declare War, grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water...” Here we have a power that is over-used and a power that is under-used. Congress has not declared war since World War II, but the U.S. has been at war somewhere all but five years since then. If the country is going to be at war, make it official. Or not, I guess. The Constitution provides for making it unofficially official. The Letters of Marque and Reprisal is probably the most underutilized of all the Congressional powers. This clause empowers Congress to commission privateers and mercenaries to go after enemies for profit. Congress should not be going to war willy-nilly all the time. After 9/11, Congress could have put a billion dollar bounty on Bin Laden and saved a few trillion dollars and untold human lives.

Article 2, Section 2, Clause 2: “[The President] shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties ... and he shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls....” This section deals rather directly with foreign policy and diplomatic relations; it is the part that George Washington famously cautioned about in his farewell address. As we know, a system that depends on persistent suppression of human nature dooms itself from the start. We now have many “entangling alliances,” even though the first man in charge understood the danger and explicitly warned future leaders in a permanent record! The lesson about human nature here is more important than the lesson about treaties.

That’s pretty much all I could find in the Constitution about foreign policy. In the next part of this series, I plan to discuss why the U.S. should recognize Liberia diplomatically.