
War with Iran Revisited

Link:

<https://stosselintheclassroom.org/both-sides-war-with-iran-revisited/>

Guide:

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

Analysis Questions:

1. What are the opposing ideas in these two videos?
2. In the PBS video, John Bolton said he doesn't think the U.S. needs to make the argument that Iran presented an imminent threat. What does it mean for a threat to be imminent? Should the presence of an imminent threat be the standard for attacking another country? Why/Why not?
3. Representative Thomas Massie read the following quote from James Madison: "The constitution supposes what the history of all governments demonstrates: that the executive branch of power is the most interested in war and most prone to it. It has accordingly, with studied care, vested the question of war in the legislature." What did Madison mean by that? Is it relevant today? Why/Why not?
4. John Bolton described the U.S. engagement with Iran as a "war of choice." What is a "war of choice"? Is the war with Iran a "war of choice"? Why/Why not?
5. Rep. Massie said that the 1973 War Powers Resolution may only introduce U.S. forces into hostilities if at least one of three conditions is met. What were those three conditions? Did the situation in Iran meet any of those conditions? Why/Why not?
6. John Bolton said that "the idea that somehow we were tricked into this doesn't give Trump enough credit." What did he mean by that?
7. Rep. Massie said: "We owe our military servicemembers a clear mission." What did he mean by that?
8. When asked if the Trump administration has a plan for the next steps in Iran, John Bolton said: "No, and I don't think it's possible to have a plan." What did he mean by that? Do you agree with him? Why/Why not?

9. Rep. Massie said American families want to know how the attacks on Iran will help them pay for groceries or pay for housing. Should these concerns take priority over war with Iran? Why/Why not?
10. John Bolton said that the Founding Fathers of the United States didn't have a plan when they changed the regime of the United States by signing the Declaration of Independence. Is this an accurate comparison to what's happening in Iran? Why/Why not?
11. Rep. Massie said a sustained war with Iran "will radicalize new generations of terrorists." What did he mean by that? Is this concern reasonable? Why/Why not?
12. John Bolton called Vice President J.D. Vance an "isolationist." What is an isolationist?
13. Rep. Massie said: "Some told us this war was about nuclear weapons, but six months ago we were assured our last strike on Iran decimated their nuclear program." If true, does this inconsistency call into question the argument that Iran was a nuclear threat? Why/Why not?
14. John Bolton argued that Iran is an international terror threat and stands in the way of peace in the Middle East. If true, does that justify going to war with Iran? Why/Why not?
15. Rep. Massie argued that Congress, not the president, has the power to declare war. If true, what are the advantages of this power being held by the legislative branch instead of the executive branch? What are the disadvantages?
16. Did these two videos share any common ground? Were there any points on which they agreed? If so, what were they?
17. Should one of the arguments we heard carry more weight than the other? If so, which one? Why?
18. Did you have an opinion on this topic before watching these videos? If so, what was it? Has your opinion changed? If so, how? What did you learn from these videos that affects your views on this topic?
19. What else would you like to learn about this topic?