

STUDY GUIDE

for the

2019

AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY CONTEST

Why Diplomacy and Peacebuilding Matter

Sponsored by:

American Foreign Service Association
United States Institute of Peace
Semester at Sea
National Student Leadership Conference

Deadline: March 15, 2019

First Place

- Educational Voyage with Semester at Sea
- Washington, D.C. visit for family to meet with State Department leadership and Presidents of AFSA and USIP
- Cash award of \$2,500

Second Place

- Scholarship to attend the National Student Leadership Conference's International Diplomacy Program
- Cash award of \$1,250

Honorable Mentions

- Certificate of achievement

INTRODUCTION

Now in its 21st year, the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA)'s National High School Essay Contest encourages students to think about how and why the United States engages globally to build peace, and about the role that the Foreign Service plays in advancing U.S. national security and economic prosperity.

For the second year in a row, the National High School Essay Contest focuses on an important aspect of operating in countries affected by or vulnerable to violent conflict: effective coordination of the many different foreign policy tools the United States has at its disposal. Whether you are addressing the prompt for a second year or are new to the contest, this contest will challenge you to expand your understanding of the role of the Foreign Service and other actors in foreign policy, identify case studies, and provide a sophisticated analysis in a concise manner. The U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), a sponsor of the contest, has developed this study guide in partnership with AFSA to provide a basic introduction to the topic and some additional context that can assist you in answering the question. However, you are tasked with developing your own unique response and, as such, this guide should only be used as a starting point to your own research.

In this guide, you will find: the essay question, prizes and rules for the contest; an introduction to foreign policy tools; key terms used in the field; examples of coordination in practice; and a list of other useful resources.



An Afghan officer leads members of Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Farah on a tour of the prison in Farah province, Afghanistan, April 24, 2012. Credit: Lt. Benjamin Addiso, U.S. Navy. PRT's are comprised of people from the State Department, USAID, and the U.S. Military.

NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY CONTEST

2019 TOPIC: WHY DIPLOMACY AND PEACEBUILDING MATTER

The United States has many tools to advance and defend its foreign policy and national security interests around the world—from diplomatic approaches pursued by members of the Foreign Service, to the range of options available to the U.S. military. In countries affected by or vulnerable to violent conflict, peacebuilding tools are important additions to the national security toolkit.

In such complex environments, cooperation across agencies and approaches is challenging, but it can also blend knowledge and skills in ways that strengthen the overall effort to establish a lasting peace. On the other hand, lack of coordination can lead to duplication of effort, inefficient use of limited resources and unintended consequences.

In a 1,000-1,250-word essay, identify two cases—one you deem successful and one you deem unsuccessful—where the U.S. pursued an integrated approach to build peace in a conflict-affected country. Analyze and compare these two cases, addressing the following questions:

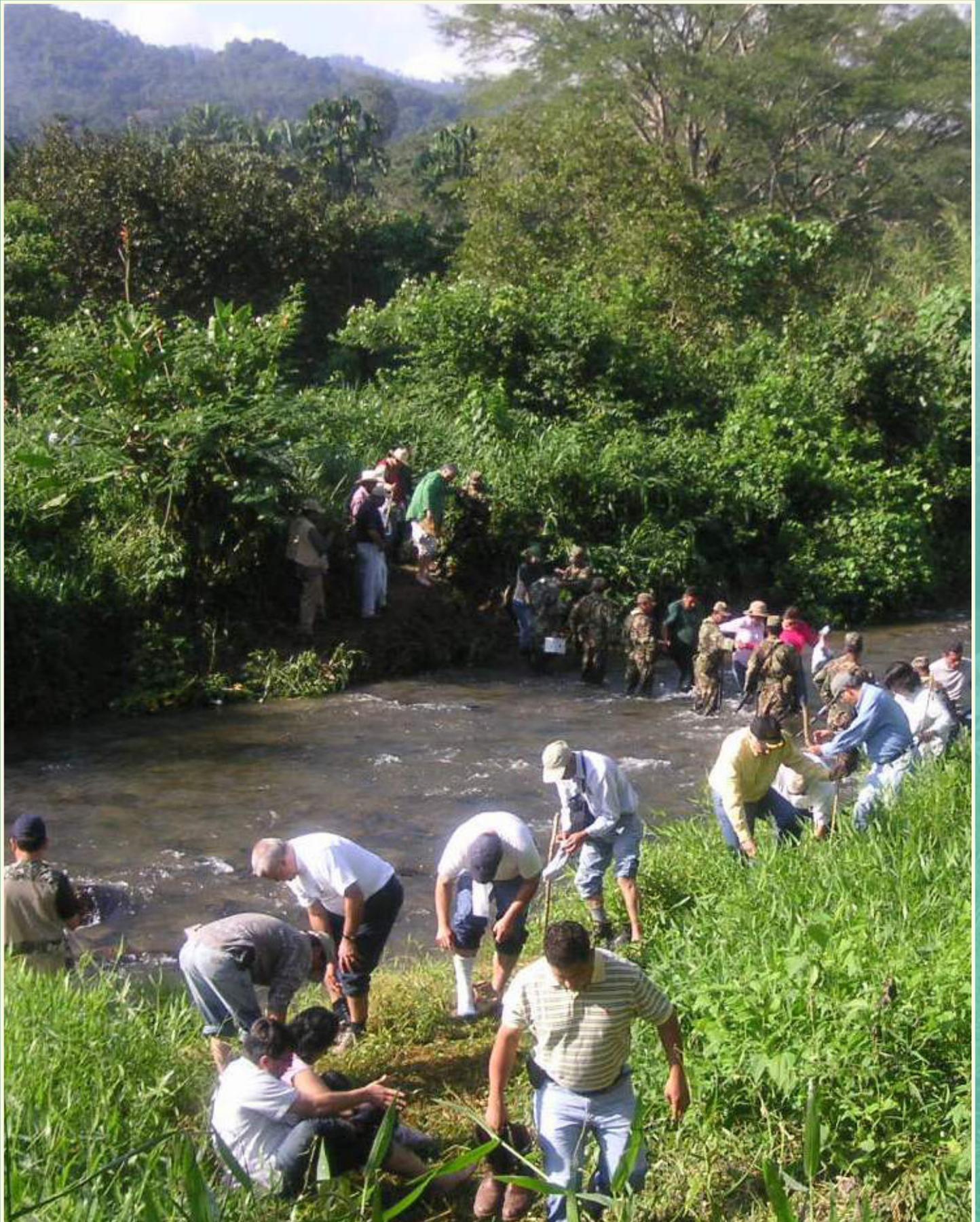
- What relative strengths did members of the Foreign Service and military actors bring to the table? What peacebuilding tools were employed? Ultimately, what worked or did not work in each case?
- How was each situation relevant to U.S. national security interests?
- What lessons may be drawn from these experiences for the pursuit of U.S. foreign policy more broadly?

FOREIGN POLICY TOOLS

The volume *American Negotiating Behavior* discusses how the presence of “competing centers of power” within the U.S. government allows the President to choose from a wide range of ideas, options, and strategies to address national security challenges (Solomon and Quinney, 308). For the purposes of this essay contest, you are challenged to look at three of these sets of options: diplomacy, peacebuilding, and military force. Below is a general introduction into each, including specific tools or characteristics each center has available.

Diplomacy

Diplomacy is a fundamental means by which a country’s foreign policy is implemented. In the United States, diplomatic efforts are led by the U.S. Department of State whose mission it is “to shape and sustain a peaceful, prosperous, just, and democratic world and foster conditions for stability and progress for the benefit of the American people



Foreign Service Officer Jason McInerney crossing river in Tegucigapal, Honduras, on the way to Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve to examine deforestation outcomes on land and people. Credit: American Foreign Service Association.

and people everywhere” (“About State”).

The key policies of the State Department tend to fall into five main categories:

- Protecting the United States and American Citizens
- Advancing Democracy
- Defending Human Rights
- Encouraging Economic Growth and Prosperity
- Promotion International Understanding of American Values and Polices (“Discover Diplomacy”)

The Role of the Foreign Service

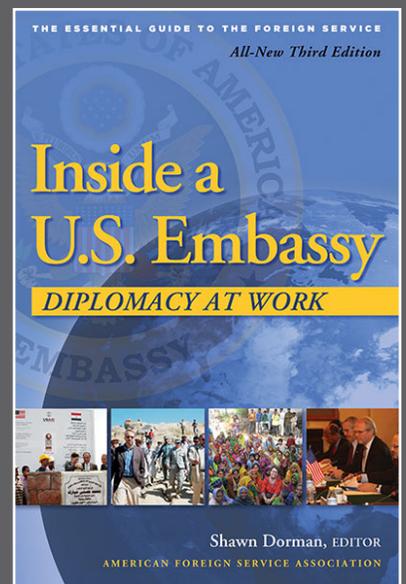
Diplomacy is put into practice by those working at embassies abroad – many of whom are **Foreign Service Officers** (FSO), a professional career track. Members of the Foreign Service at the U.S. Department of State are assigned to one of five “cones:” consular, economic, management, political or public diplomacy. In *Inside a U.S. Embassy: Diplomacy at Work*, AFSA provides snapshots of the important work each of these positions plays in embassies around the world:

- *Consular Officers* serve as the public face of the United States in an embassy, determining which foreign nationals should - and should not – receive visas for legitimate travel to the U.S. for business, tourism or education. They also provide support to American citizens travelling or living abroad.
- *Economic Officers* help anticipate economic trends and new opportunities for U.S. companies abroad. Their portfolio includes environment, science, technology, health and labor issues.
- *Management Officers* enable embassies to function, handling all of the human resources, budget, and real estate issues.
- *Political Officers* are subject matter experts who build relationships with local governments, media, non-governmental organizations, and think tanks. They report back events happening in country and provide analysis of how developments might impact U.S. policy objectives.
- *Public Diplomacy Officers* serve as the public relations team, delivering the story of the U.S. to people around the world. They must have awareness of all aspects of the embassy’s work and be prepared to advise on the best way to message it to local media, officials, educators and people (Adams-Smith, 215-220).

Over the many decades, the professionals of the U.S. Foreign Service have developed a concrete set of tools that help them pursue U.S. policy objectives. The Diplomacy Center at the U.S. Department of State highlights some specific tools with definitions from the Diplomatic Dictionary:

- *Bilateral*: Discussions, negotiations, or treaties between one state and another state or international organization.
- *Multilateral*: Discussions, negotiations, treaties and organizations involving more than two nations.

FEATURED RESOURCE: INSIDE A U.S. EMBASSY





DART Member Mike Davis speaks to Nepali Army and the community in Bhaktapur, Nepal to figure out where people may be trapped. Credit: Natalie Hawwa, USAID

- *Negotiations*: Discussions between two or more parties intended to reach a compromise on a specific topic.
- *Treaties*: Formal contracts between two or more political authorities, such as sovereign states, and usually approved by the legislature of the state.
- *Conventions*: A meeting to discuss a common purpose, especially relevant in describing a session meant to produce a written agreement. The word also refers to the written agreement itself.
- *Alliances*: Relationships formed amongst nations for mutual economic, political or security benefit, and can be multilateral or bilateral (“Diplomatic Dictionary”).

For more insights into the work of the U.S. Department of State, be sure to explore their [Discover Diplomacy](#) site.

Peacebuilding

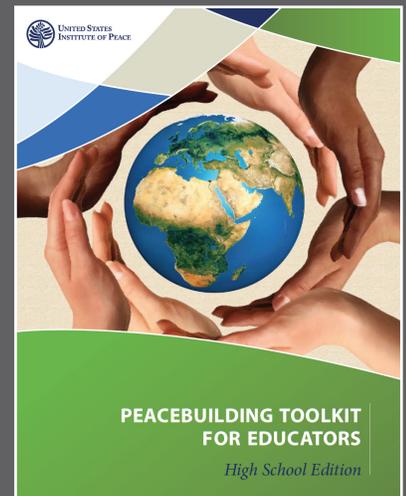
Conflict is often viewed as something negative, associated with violence, war and destructive acts. However, conflict is actually a natural part of life, and it can be managed in ways that promote positive outcomes, even in the most difficult circumstances, if the right tools are put into practice.

Peacebuilders have many tools and skills at their disposal, depending on the type of conflict they are facing. This is why **conflict analysis** is so essential: it allows for the necessary information-gathering that can really dissect and understand a conflict and identify the most effective responses. Conflict analysis helps organize complex environments, including parties, issues, relationships, perceptions, history, roots of the conflict, and structural impediments to a solution.

With this information in hand, it is possible then to assess what specific tools are most needed in any particular case. These include, but are not limited to³:

- *Communication* is a core concept in conflict management, and effective communication covers both speaking and listening. When one side in a conflict does not feel as though they are being heard, they may be reluctant to engage with other parties. By using active listening skills, parties in conflict can demonstrate that they want to understand the other party, and ultimately build trust.
- *Negotiation* is a regular part of everyday life, though it can be difficult to do well – especially in conflict zones and fragile states. It is the process of communication and bargaining between parties seeking to arrive a mutually acceptable outcome on issues of shared concern. Negotiation often involves exploring the difference between positions (what people want) and interests (what people need).
- *Mediation* has been used as an effective method of alternative dispute resolution in many contexts, ranging from neighbor disputes to conflicts between nations. It is a

FEATURED RESOURCE: USIP Conflict Analysis Worksheet



Included in the Toolkit is a conflict analysis worksheet to help break down the elements of a conflict



Street art produced as part of USIP's Peaceful Elections Campaign in Afghanistan.
Credit: U.S. Institute of Peace

mode of negotiation in which a mutually acceptable third party helps the parties to a conflict find a solution that they cannot find by themselves.

- *Facilitated Dialogue* is a conflict-intervention process that brings together various stakeholders in a conflict or around a problem or concern, to express, listen to, explore, and better understand diverse views in order to transform individual, relational, or structural drivers of conflict.
- *Reconciliation*: The long-term process by which the parties to a violent dispute build trust, learn to live cooperatively, and create a stable peace. It can happen at the individual level, the community level, and the national level. It may involve dialogue, admissions of guilt, judicial processes, truth commissions, ritual forgiveness, and sulha (a traditional Arabic form of ritual forgiveness and restitution).

The U.S. Institute of Peace and others working in complex environments use the above tools every day, sometimes working with unexpected partners or through creative means. Learn about how the peacebuilding toolkit is put into practice to prevent and resolve violent conflicts by exploring stories of [USIP's work in the field](#).⁴

Military

Beyond the direct use (or threat) of military action, the U.S. military has other ways it operates in conflict-affected and fragile states. The Peacekeeping & Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI) of the U.S. Army lists five “special competencies” that are illustrative of ways beyond military force that the U.S. military can be active in conflict-affected and vulnerable environments:

- Security Sector Reform
 - Mass Atrocity Response
 - Village Stability Operations (VSO)
- Governance & Participation
 - District Stability Framework
 - Demobilization Disarmament & Reintegration (DDR)
- Rule of Law
 - Protection of Civilians (PoC) / CIVCAS Mitigation
 - Responsibility to Protect (R2P)
 - Stability Policing / Police Reform
 - UN Policing
- Economic Stabilization & Infrastructure
 - Sewage, Water, Electricity, Academics, Trash, Medical, Safety and Other (SWEAT-MSO)
 - Reconstruction Planning (restoration of basic services)
- Humanitarian Assistance & Social Well-Being
 - Gender-Based Violence/ Gender Issues
 - Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) /Refugee management
 - Disaster Relief and Reconstruction Planning (“Special Competencies”)



USIP President Nancy Lindborg and Admiral Michelle Howard, U.S. Navy, meet to discuss women, peace and security at USIP headquarters. Credit: William Fitz-Patrick, U.S. Institute of Peace

OTHER KEY TERMS

In addition to the range of diplomatic, peacebuilding and military tools discussed above, a specialized set of terminology has developed related to working in countries affected by or vulnerable to violent conflict. Below are some of the key terms used by people working to resolve violent conflict around the world. These definitions are culled from across USIP resources.

Capacity Building: Enabling people, organizations, and societies to develop, strengthen, and expand their abilities to meet their goals or fulfill their mandates. Capacity is strengthened through the transfer of knowledge and skills that enhance individual and collective abilities to deliver services and carry out programs that address challenges in a sustainable way. It is a long-term and continuous process that focuses on developing human resources, organizational strength, and legal structures, and it involves all stakeholders including civil society.

Civil-Military Cooperation: A broad term that covers a variety of collaborative relationships between civilian and military actors in a conflict environment. Civilian actors may include government officials, staff from international organizations, and representatives of nongovernmental organizations. Civ-mil cooperation ranges from occasional informational meetings to comprehensive programs where civilian and military partners share planning and implementation.

Conflict transformation: A recently developed concept that emphasizes addressing the structural roots of conflict by changing existing patterns of behavior and creating a culture of nonviolent approaches. It proposes an integrated approach to peacebuilding that aims to bring about long-term changes in personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions. Recognizing that societies in conflict have existing systems that still function, conflict transformation focuses on building up local institutions as well as reducing drivers of conflict.

Multitrack Diplomacy: A term for operating on several tracks simultaneously, including official and unofficial conflict resolution efforts, citizen and scientific exchanges, international business negotiations, international cultural and athletic activities, and other cooperative efforts. These efforts could be led by governments, professional organizations, businesses, churches, media, private citizens, training and educational institutes, activists, and funders.

Peacebuilding: Originally conceived in the context of post-conflict recovery efforts to promote reconciliation and reconstruction, the term peacebuilding has more recently taken on a broader meaning. It may include providing humanitarian relief, protecting human rights, ensuring security, establishing nonviolent modes of resolving conflicts, fostering reconciliation, providing trauma healing services, repatriating refugees and resettling internally displaced persons, supporting broad-based education, and aiding in economic reconstruction. In a larger sense, peacebuilding involves a transformation toward more manageable, peaceful relationships and governance structures—the long-term process of addressing root causes and effects, reconciling differences, normalizing relations, and building institutions that can manage conflict without resorting to violence.

Positions versus Interests: Broadly speaking, positions are what parties say they want. Interests are what they really need. Interests are frequently unstated and may be difficult to identify. Often parties' interests are compatible, and hence negotiable, even when their positions do not seem to be. Focusing on underlying interests can help parties identify which issues are of most concern to them and to find solutions that might not be evident from their stated positions.



Ebola Treatment Centre in Nzérékoré, Guinea. Credit: Martine Perret, UN Photo

Whole-of-Government Approach: An approach that integrates the collaborative efforts of the departments and agencies of a government to achieve unity of effort toward a shared goal. Also known as interagency approach. The terms unity of effort and unity of purpose are sometimes used to describe cooperation among all actors, government and otherwise.

Examples of Cooperation

The previous sections of this study guide have provided an introduction to the range of tools that exist to help build peace and promote stability in fragile and conflict-affected states. The challenge is to consider what this looks like in practice:

Consider these two examples of the convergence of diplomacy, peacebuilding and military forces in conflict zones. What makes them successful or not? How effectively did the different actors on the ground work together and what difference did this make?

In 2007, the city of Mahmoudiya, Iraq went through a vicious cycle of violence between local Sunni and Shia tribes and Al-Qaeda insurgents. During the peak of the violence, the United States Army's 10th Mountain Division turned to USIP, who had been training Iraqi mediators in the region. In coordination with the Provincial Reconstruction Team for Mahmoudiya, U.S. Agency for International Development, and the State Department, USIP designed a three-day conference led by Iraqi mediators that involved 31 local Sheikhs, or tribal leaders, in a reconciliation process. As a result of these peace talks, the U.S. Army was able to reduce its presence by 80% and there has been relative peace in the region ever since.⁵ For more information, [watch this interview](#)⁶ with LTC William Zemp.

While on a use of force mission in Afghanistan, a U.S. Army unit also sought to deliver medical aid to the local community. They did not reach out to the U.S. civilian agencies like U.S. Agency for International Development, local non-governmental organizations, or the Afghan government during planning or implementation of the project. As a result, no one came to receive the aid and it led to resentment among the local population that the effort was not focused on increasing the Afghan government's ability to support its people (Ruf).

Please note that these are examples to get you started on your research. You are encouraged to identify other examples for your essays. If you choose to incorporate either of these, understand that the judges will be looking for in-depth research and for your own analysis of the actions taken. For other examples of cases you might wish to explore for your essay, see the Council on Foreign Relations' Global Conflict Tracker, which links to analysis on current conflicts and explores their comparative impact on U.S. interests.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Here are some additional resources that might be helpful as you start your research. Also, keep an eye on the USIP Public Education social media accounts (@buildingpeace...) as they will regularly share other resources that might provide further insights.

Inside a U.S. Embassy: Diplomacy at Work

This AFSA publication shows you what it is like to work in an embassy through profiles of actual FSOs and their experiences around the world.

USIP.org

USIP's website can provide further context for peacebuilding tools, interagency cooperation and examples of conflict management programs around the world.

The Foreign Service Journal

This journal covers foreign affairs from an insider's perspective, providing thought-provoking articles on international issues, the practice of diplomacy and the U.S. Foreign Service.

Foreign Aid Explorer

USAID's [interactive dashboard](#) allows you to explore military and economic assistance amounts by country or region.

The MLA Style Center

Per the essay contest rules, your citations and bibliography should follow the MLA Style. The Modern Language Association's website has a [quick guide](#) to works cited, guidance [on using notes](#), and [samples papers](#) using MLA Style. This study guide follows MLA guidelines on parenthetical citations, end notes, and bibliographies.

CONTEST RULES

Length: Your essay should be at least 1,000 words but should not exceed 1,250 words (word count does not apply to the list of sources). The word count must be included on the document you submit.

Content and Judging: Submissions will be judged on the quality of analysis, quality of research, and form, style and mechanics. **Successful entries will answer all aspects of the prompt and demonstrate an understanding of the role of Foreign Service.** The top five essays from each region will advance to the final round of judging that will determine the winner, runner-up, and honorable mentions. Essays must be the original work of the student. All decisions of the judges are final. Please note: participants in the 2018 contest may participate in the 2019 contest but no essays submitted for consideration in the 2018 contest will be accepted.

Sources: Standards of content and style from current edition of the **MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers** will be expected for (1) documentation of sources in the text of your memo; (2) the format of the list of works cited; and (3) margins and indentation. A bibliography following the MLA Handbook must be included. Essays should use a variety of sources—academic journals, news magazines, newspapers, books, government documents, publications from research organizations. At least three of the cited materials should be primary sources (a document, speech, or other sort of evidence written, created or otherwise produced during the time under study). General encyclopedias, including Wikipedia, are not acceptable as sources. Essays citing general encyclopedias in notes or bibliography **will be disqualified**. Websites should not be the only source of information for your essay; when you do use online sources they must be properly cited.

Submission:

- Fill out the registration form. All fields on the online form are required, including uploading a Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) file of your original work with a title, in English which should include a comprehensive list of sources consulted. Entries must be typed, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman or an equivalent font with a one-inch margin on all sides of the page.

- Teacher or Sponsor: Student registration forms must have a teacher or sponsor name. That person reviews the submitted essay and acts as the key contact between participants and AFSA. It is to the student's advantage to have a coordinator review the essay to make sure it is complete, contains all the necessary forms, is free from typographical and grammatical errors, and addresses the topic.
- Do not place your last name or your school's name on any of the pages of the essay. Only the registration form should include this information.
- Faxed submissions will not be accepted.
- Your essay will be disqualified if it does not meet the requirements or is submitted after the submission date of 11:59 p.m. EDT on March 15, 2019.

Eligibility: Students whose parents are not in the Foreign Service are eligible to participate if they are in grades nine through twelve in any of the fifty states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. territories, or if they are U.S. citizens attending high school overseas. Students may be attending a public, private, or parochial school. Entries from home-schooled students are also accepted. Previous first-place winners and immediate relatives of directors or staff of the AFSA, the U.S. Institute of Peace, Semester at Sea and National Student Leadership Conference are not eligible to participate. Previous honorable mention designees are eligible to enter.

Prizes: \$2,500 to the writer of the winning essay, in addition to an all-expense paid trip to the nation's capital from anywhere in the U.S. for the winner and his or her parents, and an all-expense paid educational voyage courtesy of Semester at Sea. Runner-up receives \$1,250 and a full tuition to attend a summer session of National Student Leadership Conference's International Diplomacy program.

Your essay will become the property of the American Foreign Service Association once it is submitted, and will not be returned.

Thank you for your essay submission and good luck!

PRIVACY POLICY: AFSA collects your information for this contest and for AFSA partners. You may be signed up to receive updates or information from AFSA and our partners. You may receive a message from our sponsor regarding their program offerings, with the option to opt-out. You will be notified if you are the winner or an honorable mention in June 2019. The names of winners and honorable mentions will be posted on the AFSA website in July 2019.

ENDNOTES

¹ While the definitions provided were sourced from the "Diplomatic Dictionary," they were originally identified via "What are the Tools of Diplomacy?"

² The U.S. Department of State's Diplomacy Center is available at <https://diplomacy.state.gov/discoverdiplomacy/>

³ Please note that the following definitions are generally agreed upon at USIP and can be found throughout a variety of USIP materials including the Peacebuilding Toolkit for Educators, Peace Terms, and special reports.

⁴ The most recent stories about USIP's work in the conflict zones can be found at [https://www.usip.org/publications?publication_type\[0\]=13](https://www.usip.org/publications?publication_type[0]=13)

⁵ This information is from USIP materials detailing the Mahmoudiya process.

⁶ This interview can be accessed at <https://www.usip.org/public-education/educators/ltc-william-zemp-partnerships-peacebuilding>

ABOUT THE SPONSORS



The American Foreign Service Association (AFSA), established in 1924, is the professional association and labor union of the United States Foreign Service. With approximately 17,000 dues-paying members, AFSA represents more than 31,000 active and retired Foreign Service employees of the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), Foreign Commercial Service (FCS), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), and Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG). Learn more at www.afsa.org.



The United States Institute of Peace works to prevent, mitigate, and resolve violent conflict around the world. USIP does this by engaging directly in conflict zones and by providing analysis, education, and resources to those working for peace. Created by Congress in 1984 as an independent, nonpartisan, federally funded organization, USIP's more than 300 staff work at the Institute's D.C. headquarters, and on the ground in the world's most dangerous regions. Learn more at www.usip.org.



Semester at Sea is a multiple country study abroad program open to students of all majors emphasizing comparative academic examination, hands-on field experiences, and meaningful engagement in the global community. A wide variety of coursework from 20-25 disciplines is integrated with relevant field studies in up to a dozen countries, allowing for a comparative study abroad experience that is truly global. Colorado State University is the program's academic partner. Learn more at www.semesteratsea.org.



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