



Appendix

The First 100 Days During a Global Health Crisis

No matter who wins the 2020 presidential election, the next president will be sworn in during an unprecedented set of national crises. At the time of this report's publication, more than 215,000 Americans have lost their lives to the coronavirus, a deadly record that cannot be undone.¹ If current projections hold, more than 400,000 Americans will have died from COVID-19 and millions more will have been infected before Inauguration Day. Meanwhile, as states and localities have boosted medical capacity to respond to coronavirus outbreaks, other Americans have gotten sicker.² Patients with cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes have not been receiving the health services they need—often because of shortages of diagnostics and medicines or because planned treatments were delayed.

Even if America is fortunate enough to already be at the end stages of the brutal coronavirus pandemic, the next president will face the worst U.S. economy since the Great Depression.³ The Treasury is significantly depleted.⁴ Millions of people have lost their loved ones, their jobs, and much of their net worth. State budgets are under severe stress, buckling under an economic and health burden that the federal government has failed to relieve.⁵ By January 2021, the United States will likely have tried several unprecedented fiscal stimulus efforts to keep the national economy going, but unemployment will almost certainly still be high and entire industries will remain decimated. Meanwhile, the rise of telework, the demise of retail, the inequities in the gig economy, and the rise of automated manufacturing will all portend major, unpredictable changes to industries that will never return to the way they were before the pandemic.

Another challenge will be the international consequences of the Trump administration's failure to lead and organize the world in responding to the pandemic. President Donald Trump's uncoordinated travel bans and his bullying of competition for scarce medical resources undoubtedly made the crisis worse, but it has also harmed the willingness of U.S. partners to collaborate on collective solutions.⁶ The next administration will face severely damaged relationships while at the same time dealing with crucial problems that must be addressed collectively. Nations will need to work together to develop and distribute a vaccine globally to more than 7 billion people and then set about putting in place an international architecture to prepare for the next pandemic. They will also need to rebuild their economies in a way that creates a healthy global economy that works for everyone. It is essential that the next administration takes up the frayed mantle of American leadership and marshals international responses to these challenges.

Finally, the next administration will face these challenges as the ongoing pandemic and crippling mismanagement continues to severely hamper the ability of essential institutions—including the White House itself—to respond. By January of 2021, critical national security and foreign policy institutions will have faced nearly a year of strained and limited operations. Diplomats, whose very jobs are to interact with foreigners, have had to delay or cease operations as more than 6,000 officials and their relatives left their diplomatic posts to return to the United States.⁷ The intelligence community, which has limited ability to operate remotely from classified systems, has adopted reduced staffing to permit social distancing, requiring staff to report for duty on alternating weeks and reducing its capacity by half.⁸ The U.S. Department of Defense initially limited operations sharply and then implemented a phased approach to reducing those restrictions; however, it saw sharp spikes in coronavirus cases following its decision to lift travel restrictions and shelter-in-place orders, making additional interventions to contain the spread more likely in the future. Moreover, exposure at White House events led to decisions by key Department of Defense officials to quarantine.⁹ Whatever the final months of 2020 hold for these national security institutions, they will undoubtedly continue to strain under the circumstances, with important consequences for the next administration.

The next administration will also face a historically hollowed-out and underequipped National Security Council (NSC) staff. Unlike some parts of the Executive Office of the President, the NSC staff traditionally depends heavily on career civil servants on detail from other executive branch departments and agencies. Those officials, deemed “holdovers” by the Trump administration, provide critical continuity, offering significant substantive expertise and institutional knowledge that is important for a smooth transition between presidential administrations.¹⁰ The Trump administration, however, saw record-setting turnover during its first term, with significant upheaval occur-

ring in the NSC staff. Of particular consequence given the ongoing pandemic, national security adviser John Bolton disbanded the NSC directorate tasked with global health coordination.¹¹ The next administration will take office with an NSC that lacks this critical competency.

At the time of this writing, serial turnover within the NSC staff has included four national security advisers, six deputy national security advisers, three chiefs of staff and executive secretaries, three senior intelligence directors, three senior directors for Europe and Russia, three senior directors for Africa, and three homeland security and counter-terrorism advisers.¹² This extraordinary rate of turnover has caused a cascade of departures in less senior jobs, with a notable decrease in the level of expertise among some of the staff that remain. Finally, President Trump instructed his fourth national security adviser, Robert O'Brien, to make major staff cuts at the NSC in fall 2019. More than 40 NSC staff were immediately returned to their home agencies, with an additional 20 percent reduction expected by the end of 2020.¹³

Against this backdrop—with an ongoing public health and economic crisis, a nation divided, and weakened institutions to lead the response—the next administration will need to take decisive action in the first 100 days to reassure the nation and face the coronavirus challenge. Looking ahead, it will also need to begin preparing for the next crisis even as it is responding to this one.

The next administration must take immediate action in the following key areas:

1. Governance.
2. Vaccine manufacturing and distribution.
3. Global cooperation.
4. Preparing for the next global health emergency.

Governance

In a moment of crisis, the most obvious need is for organized, accountable leadership and an unambiguous decision-making process. The next administration will need to establish trustworthy, transparent mechanisms for the coronavirus pandemic response and ensure that the public is well-informed and empowered to make good decisions for themselves and their families.



QUICK WIN: Name a White House coronavirus response coordinator. As an initial step, the next president must establish and communicate clear, actionable guidance to the federal departments and agencies. To do so, they will need to identify a single responsible official to oversee, prioritize, and coordinate government response and recovery plans.



QUICK WIN: Immediately restore the White House National Security Council Directorate for Global Health Security and Biodefense. The directorate, which was established by the Obama administration before being eliminated by the Trump administration in 2018, should be tasked with coordinating U.S. government efforts and capacities to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease threats.¹⁴



QUICK WIN: Restore the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) coronavirus task force. As the United States reached 190,000 coronavirus deaths in September 2020, the Trump administration shut down the task force that USAID had set up to tackle the still-ongoing pandemic. The next administration should immediately restore USAID's coronavirus task force and leverage it to oversee and distribute global aid related to the pandemic.

- **Support immediate budget measures to shore up the pandemic response.** Federal financial resources can help speed up response and prevention efforts.
 - **Increase global health funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).** The next administration should reverse the declining budget for CDC's global health security activities by supporting a \$250 million increase in emergency funding for CDC's global health program, which is used to fund global disease detection, global health security collaborations, and field epidemiology and laboratory training.

- **Reestablish USAID’s PREDICT program.** In 2019, USAID announced that it would end its PREDICT surveillance program for emerging infectious diseases.¹⁵ The program was established to identify and combat viruses with the capacity to generate global pandemics. The next president should direct the reestablishment of the program and include funding for the program in their FY 2022 budget.

- **Establish a “lessons learned” commission.** The next administration should establish a presidential commission to investigate the facts and circumstances that led to the failures of the coronavirus pandemic response; the lessons that should be learned from those events; and the institutional, administrative, and legislative measures that need to be taken to prevent such failures in future global health emergencies.

- **Direct a review of coronavirus-related government contracting and supply distribution and hold corrupt actors accountable.** The quantity and speed of the flow of money and contracts associated with the coronavirus response are a rich target for corrupt actors, and the current administration has done little to promote transparency and accountability for the issuance of public funding. The next administration should commit to the highest levels of transparency, including by making data regarding past and future coronavirus contracts publicly accessible. The president should also direct a review of coronavirus-related government contracting and supply distribution; and the U.S. Department of Justice should investigate any instances of corruption and self-dealing that are uncovered.

Vaccine manufacturing and distribution

Vaccine manufacturing and distribution will be a critical element of returning to a normal way of life. Yet unprecedented government action and coordination will be required to accelerate the time frame for when most Americans can expect to be vaccinated. A number of potential constriction points—including cost, distribution, supply chain requirements, and delivery mechanisms—may impede the manufacturing and distribution of an eventual vaccine. Moreover, the Trump administration’s lack of leadership and action has caused needless delays, questionable decisions, and a lack of transparency regarding vaccine manufacturing and distribution planning. While the Center for American Progress’ comprehensive COVID-19 vaccine plan offers a broad assessment to inform planning efforts, it is also important to emphasize the following immediate steps, which rely on the president’s national security and foreign policy authorities.¹⁶

- **Map the nation’s vaccine manufacturing capacity to identify critical gaps.**

Pharmaceutical manufacturers around the world are scrambling to secure supply chains and manufacturing capacity in an uncoordinated race that is locking up manufacturing capacity. The next administration, led by the coronavirus response coordinator, should immediately map the nation’s manufacturing capacity to provide visibility for manufacturers up and down the supply chain and to identify—and close—critical gaps.

- **Use the Defense Production Act (DPA) to coordinate manufacturing capacity and supply chains.**

Armed with a comprehensive understanding of the nation’s manufacturing capacity and critical gaps, the next administration should use the Defense Production Act fully to ensure that U.S. manufacturers are prioritizing American purchase orders—and to require manufacturers with capacity to use their facilities and contracted capacity to produce essential vaccine components, even if that means producing another manufacturer’s vaccine.

- **Task the White House coronavirus coordinator and the NSC global health directorate to develop a coordinated and transparent vaccine distribution plan.** The U.S. government needs a thorough and coordinated plan that Americans can trust for how vaccines will be distributed once they are available. This plan will need to be developed in close coordination with the international community, including countries who play a critical role in vaccine testing and manufacturing. Who receives the vaccines first domestically will need to be prioritized under a rolling immunization protocol developed by the CDC. Other departments and agencies—including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Department of Defense, and the U.S. Postal Service—could help enable the delivery and supply of vaccines. Internationally, the U.S. Department of State will lead efforts to ensure global coordination of vaccine distribution to ensure the strategic deployment of vaccines to high-risk populations. USAID will have a role in distributing vaccines to developing countries. The pressures to get the vaccine out will be extraordinary, and the next administration will need an efficient, equitable plan that is grounded in scientific advice, guided by strategic national interests, and transparent to the American people.

Global cooperation

The coronavirus pandemic demonstrates that America's security and prosperity is inextricably tied to what is happening in the rest of the world. When the United States withdraws from the world, it creates unavoidable risk to America's security and prosperity. As this crisis has unfortunately made clear, the United States cannot ensure the safety of its citizens nor the stability of its economy without partnerships with other nations and global cooperation. The next administration should signal an immediate shift by committing to work with international partners to build countries' capacities to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease threats.

- **Rejoin the World Health Organization (WHO) and embrace the Global Health Security Agenda.** Americans are safer when America is engaged in strengthening global health. Yet as the world struggled in 2020 to contain the pandemic, the Trump administration announced its intent to end its 72-year-old membership in the WHO.¹⁷ The exit will not take effect until July 2021, giving the next president an opportunity to reverse course. In the first 100 days, the next president should commit to rejoining the WHO and take an active role in global health preparedness and response. The United States should also embrace the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), a network launched in 2014 to respond to the global threat of infectious diseases such as coronaviruses, influenza, Ebola, and others.¹⁸ Endorsed by the G-7, the GHSA focuses on transparently reporting outbreaks, coordinating rapid responses, bringing together medical expertise, and building global capacity to respond to infectious diseases.
- **Call for bold, united leadership from the G-20.** The G-20 should be leading the world out of the coronavirus crisis, but following a single meeting in March 2020, the group has fallen silent. The next president should demand an early summit in 2021, urging G-20 leaders to convene virtually to discuss enhancing the global response. At the summit, the United States should support the suspension of debt payments from the poorest countries until December 2021 so that they can channel more of their scarce financial resources toward vital emergency relief efforts. The United States should also commit direct cash support to development banks and support WHO efforts to ensure that any new vaccine will be available to even the poorest countries.

- **Champion multilateral initiatives with global capacity.** The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization—now known as Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance—represents another important innovation. It is seeded with \$750 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and run by a board comprised of both donor and recipient national governments; international institutions such as the World Bank, the WHO, and UNICEF; and various civil society organizations, technical and industry representatives, and independent individuals.¹⁹ Governments, private corporations, and foundations have donated some \$2.7 billion to Gavi. Given the economic impact of COVID-19, which will cramp government spending for at least a decade, such public-private arrangements will be more necessary than ever to bring appropriate resources to bear on these problems. The next administration should encourage and support these initiatives.

Preparing for the next global health emergency

The COVID-19 pandemic is not an isolated event. Once the U.S. response to the coronavirus has stabilized—and perhaps even before then—the administration will need to begin preparing for the next global health emergency. The crisis has sent shock waves through governments, civil society, and the private sector; we must do better next time. The next administration will need not only to regain control of the coronavirus response but also to make strategic investments to ensure that the United States is better prepared for the next global health emergency.

- **Invest in U.S. supply chain resilience.** Supply chain networks designed for low-cost and minimal inventory pose a major risk for disruptions. Investments in resilient supply chains will enable manufacturers to meet changing market demand. Building on the assessment of vaccine manufacturing capacity discussed earlier in this section, the next administration should conduct a broad review of the U.S. health care supply chain to identify and remedy weaknesses that could become critical choke points in a future pandemic response. The review should include recommendations for developing domestic capacity to supply components with a high risk of supply disruption.
- **Reform the Strategic National Stockpile.** The Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), originally established in the late 1990s by the Clinton administration, was renamed and realigned following the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks to focus on localized bioterror threats. It was not designed for a nationwide pandemic. However, new and reemerging infectious diseases are on the rise and are the most likely and foreseeable situations necessitating the use of SNS resources in the future. The next administration should reform the SNS, retooling it toward pandemic needs and entering into strategic contracts with manufacturers to support the domestic market for critical goods and to ensure the shelf life of existing supplies. The next administration should also prioritize requests for adequate funding for the SNS to adapt to this expanded mission.

- **Pursue international cooperation initiatives.** The coronavirus pandemic has revealed that hard-won advances in global peace and security are fragile. The next administration, working through the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, should pursue bold multilateral action in the G-20 and the United Nations to urge member states to cooperate, share best practices in virus containment and response, coordinate measures to protect critical medical supply chains, and apply pressure to prevent states from using violence to contain the virus or as a pretense for other activities.

Conclusion

As of this report's publication, the coronavirus pandemic has caused almost 75 times as many deaths as 9/11. The immediate damage to the U.S. economy resulting from the pandemic will also be record-breaking—in the trillions of dollars. As the consequences to public health and safety become clearer, the next administration must realign its national security priorities to make safeguarding the health of the American population a key part of the country's national security going forward. Even when this pandemic is behind us, our approach to national security cannot return to a pre-COVID-19 state.

Endnotes

- 1 Alexa Lardieri, "Key Model Predicts More Than 410,000 Coronavirus Deaths in the U.S. by January," U.S. News & World Report, September 4, 2020, available at <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2020-09-04/key-model-predicts-more-than-410-000-coronavirus-deaths-in-the-us-by-january>.
- 2 World Health Organization, "COVID-19 significantly impacts health services for noncommunicable diseases," Press release, June 1, 2020, available at <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/01-06-2020-covid-19-significantly-impacts-health-services-for-noncommunicable-diseases>.
- 3 Heather Long and Andrew Van Dam, "U.S. unemployment rate soars to 14.7 percent, the worst since the Depression era," *The Washington Post*, May 8, 2020, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/05/08/april-2020-jobs-report/>.
- 4 Scott Horsley, "Fed Goes All Out To Keep Economy Alive During Coronavirus Shutdown," NPR, April 6, 2020, available at <https://www.npr.org/2020/04/06/826894304/fed-goes-all-out-to-keep-economy-alive-during-coronavirus-shutdown>.
- 5 Sage Belz and Louise Scheiner, "How will the coronavirus affect state and local government budgets?," Brookings Institution, March 23, 2020, available at <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/03/23/how-will-the-coronavirus-affect-state-and-local-government-budgets/>.
- 6 BBC News, "Coronavirus: US travel ban on 26 European countries comes into force," March 14, 2020, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-51883728>.
- 7 Jessica Donati, "Unprecedented Number of U.S. Diplomats Return Home," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 1, 2020, available at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/unprecedented-number-of-u-s-diplomats-return-home-11585788812>.
- 8 Warren P. Strobel and Dustin Volz, "Spies, Unable to Telework, Adapt Their Access to U.S. Secrets," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 6, 2020, available at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/spies-unable-to-telework-adapt-their-access-to-u-s-secrets-11586177533>.
- 9 Amanda Macias, "U.S. military coronavirus cases surge as Pentagon lifts travel restrictions," CNBC, July 2, 2020, available at <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/07/02/coronavirus-update-military-covid-19-cases-spike-as-pentagon-lifts-travel-restrictions.html>.
- 10 John Gans, "At the National Security Council, Trump loyalists are at war with career aides," *The Washington Post*, November 21, 2019, available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/inside-the-national-security-councils-war-between-trump-loyalists-and-career-aides/2019/11/21/0a5c0f52-0be1-11ea-bd9d-c628fd48b3a0_story.html.
- 11 Deb Riechmann, "Trump disbanded NSC pandemic unit that experts had praised," Associated Press, March 14, 2020, available at <https://apnews.com/ce014d94b64e98b7203b873e56f80e9a>.
- 12 Kathryn Dunn Tenpas, "Crippling the capacity of the National Security Council," Brookings Institution, January 21, 2020, available at <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2020/01/21/crippling-the-capacity-of-the-national-security-council/>.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Riechmann, "Trump disbanded NSC pandemic unit that experts had praised."
- 15 U.S. Agency for International Development, "Reducing Pandemic Risk, Promoting Global Health," available at <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1864/predict-global-flyer-508.pdf> (last accessed September 2020).
- 16 Tophir Spiro and Zeke Emanuel, "A Comprehensive COVID-19 Vaccine Plan: Efficient Manufacturing, Financing, and Distribution of a COVID-19 Vaccine" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2020), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/healthcare/reports/2020/07/28/488196/comprehensive-covid-19-vaccine-plan/>.
- 17 Zachary Cohen and others, "Trump administration begins formal withdrawal from World Health Organization," CNN, July 8, 2020, available at <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/07/politics/us-withdrawing-world-health-organization/index.html>.
- 18 Global Health Security Agency, "About the GHSA," available at <https://ghsagenda.org/home/about-the-ghsa/> (last accessed September 2020).
- 19 Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, "Home," available at <https://www.gavi.org/> (last accessed September 2020).