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The First 100 Days

Toward a More Sustainable and Values-Based
National Security Approach

By the CAP National Security and International Policy Team October 2020

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Introduction and summary

Regardless of who wins the November 2020 presidential election, the president will be sworn in during an unprecedented set of national crises—most urgently, a pandemic that has had a profound effect on the daily lives of all Americans and has left more than 215,000 dead. With the nation still grappling with the educational, social, and public health consequences of the coronavirus, the next administration will take office during the worst economy since the Great Depression. The next administration will also have to lead a nation badly divided—one with little faith that government can be held accountable or effectively address issues such as structural racism and economic inequality.

Meanwhile, the president who takes office in 2021 will lead a country diminished in the eyes of the world. While the Trump administration was embracing nationalist, authoritarian politics and badly mishandling the pandemic, the world moved on without us, and “America first” increasingly meant “America alone.” At precisely the moment when the United States needed to be working alongside its allies and partners to solve global challenges such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and rising authoritarianism, the Trump administration retreated from advancing U.S. interests and defending our values to instead hiding behind fake walls and empty bravado. The next administration and its national security team face the immense challenge of reversing this dynamic and reviving the United States’ sense of purpose in the world.

Yet January 20, 2021, will also bring tremendous potential for positive change. This potential lies not in America’s past but in its present. The extraordinary mobilization against structural racism and injustice that followed the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis has shown the world that there is a United States still worth identifying with. The next administration has the opportunity to demonstrate that democracies are the most responsive to the needs and aspirations of everyday citizens. And it should seize that opportunity to promote a democratic renewal at home and abroad.

If a new administration takes office in January, Americans’ hopes for a new and better day will be high, and the world will be watching for early signs of what the next four years will bring. Behind the scenes, the president-elect’s transition team will have been preparing for months to transition from campaigning to governing—

recruiting and vetting top personnel, reviewing a daunting inbox, and deciding how to implement the president-elect's policy priorities across the federal government. And if President Donald Trump is beginning a second term, all eyes will be looking to see whether and how his governing style changes as the incumbent who is no longer constrained by reelection concerns.

In January 2020, the Center for American Progress set out to consider what a progressive national security agenda could look like in either scenario. CAP convened experts from across the national security policy, legislative, and advocacy community to examine the top policy challenges and opportunities that a new national security team will likely confront and to consider concrete ways to advance progressive ideas in the first 100 days of a new administration. As this group considered what would be necessary to advance such a progressive national security vision, it became clear how much rebuilding of U.S. capacity and international credibility would need to happen as a prerequisite to progress. Because, regardless of who wins in 2020, the president and his national security team will have to govern during an ongoing pandemic, with hollowed-out institutions, strained global alliances, a worsening climate crisis, and a much more competitive world. The COVID-19 crisis has revealed that national security is about far more than just defending against traditional security threats or negotiating diplomatic agreements. It is also about safeguarding Americans and their way of life. The COVID-19 crisis has also shown that principled U.S. leadership at home and abroad still matters, that international cooperation is essential, and that without that leadership, the world struggles to galvanize collective action, with awful results.

Yet even before the COVID-19 pandemic, U.S. foreign policy and national security badly needed to reorient itself to better address the challenges of this century, correct a grievous imbalance of priorities, end the wars that have spanned two decades, and connect more directly to what the American people actually want. The next administration will face an important opportunity to reorient U.S. foreign policy to meet this moment. In doing so, it will need to put democratic values at the center of its foreign policy and prioritize working with our democratic allies and partners to tackle the world's most urgent challenges—whether it is rising authoritarianism and democratic back-sliding, rapid technological change, or the complex economic and security challenges posed by China. Given the growing competition between democratic and authoritarian systems and its direct impact on the global order, intensive action will also be needed to strengthen the foundations of our collective democracies so that we can more effectively shape the direction of that order. In the past,

the United States has risen to these moments by renewing its approach at home and abroad—and it can do so again. With this vision in mind, the past few years have clarified some important shared ideas across the progressive community, including the need for a return to American diplomacy and less militarization of our foreign policy; the strategic importance of living our values at home and abroad; the importance of the fight to defend the democratic world; the urgency of restoring faith in our national security institutions; and the need to focus on the challenges facing the next generation, not the past.

Over the past several months, the CAP National Security and International Policy team worked to develop an actionable plan that could serve as a roadmap for the early days of a willing administration—the first executive actions, human capital and budget investments, and policy initiatives. When considering how to scope this plan, we identified five key pillars of action that not only reflect the reality of the world that the next administration will confront but also the progressive values that are necessary to put the United States on a more principled and sustainable path internationally:

1. Rebuilding and modernizing our national security institutions to provide the tools and resources necessary to meet today’s national security challenges.
2. Living our democratic values at home and abroad and prioritizing the defense of those values.
3. Ending the current wars responsibly and leading with diplomacy—not military action—to resolve conflicts.
4. Recalibrating our global relationships, including with U.S. allies, competitors, and adversaries.
5. Tackling global challenges such as climate change, migration, arms control, corruption, and the need to build a new multilateralism that advances the collective good.

The next president and his national security team will need to prioritize among these pillars and align them with his domestic policy priorities. As CAP built this 100-day plan, we were mindful that the line between domestic and foreign policy is no longer as stark as it once was. Challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and competing effectively with China will require substantial domestic action. This plan touches on what necessary steps the United States must take at home to put it on stronger footing in the world, including investing in its economic competitiveness, strengthening its democracy, and taking bold steps on climate change. CAP will continue to deliver additional bold, progressive ideas in these areas in the months ahead.

This plan is by no means exhaustive. It will, of course, take more than 100 days to end wars, reinvent institutions, tackle global challenges, reset relationships, and bolster democracy. This plan is designed to be a starting point and a constructive contribution of concrete and actionable ideas, not a rigid prescription. CAP does believe, however, that these ideas go a long way toward reorienting U.S. foreign policy and national security toward a more progressive path.

The past four years, and many before, have demonstrated that the United States needs to take a different approach to the world to better advance our interests and defend our way of life—an approach that prioritizes democratic values, delivers real results for the American people, and tackles big, global challenges head-on. There will be a natural impulse to take an incremental approach during these unprecedented times, but this is precisely the moment to take bold, necessary action. CAP hopes that this plan will contribute to a meaningful shift.



Rebuilding and Rebalancing Our National Security Tools and Institutions

Today's U.S. foreign policy tools and institutions are in serious need of repair. At the same time, America's overreliance on the military to solve most problems is increasingly disconnected from the national security challenges we face. It is time to reexamine what it means to keep America safe and what we need from our national security institutions to do so. This chapter lays out recommendations to rebuild and restore trust in our national security institutions and rebalance our national security tools to end the cycle of overreliance on the armed forces to manage problems that should be handled by civilian agencies.



Over the past 20 years, U.S. national security and foreign policy tools and institutions have become increasingly ill-suited to advancing U.S. interests around the world. This problem has been exacerbated over the past four years. Not only has victory been elusive¹ in theaters of active conflict, but the deadliest² and costliest³ national emergencies of the past two decades—including hurricanes Katrina, Sandy, Irma, Maria, and Harvey, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic—have raised new questions about what it means to protect the homeland from its most common and foreseeable threats. Meanwhile, increasingly intense competition with China and a revanchist Russia are presenting new challenges with the potential to transform how we think about our security. At the same time, new national security challenges such as climate change, rapid technological change, migration, and rising authoritarianism are also stressing U.S. national security institutions' ability to respond.

The military is not equipped to solve all or even most of these problems. Yet it is the only national security institution that has come out of the past decade stronger than it was before. Since 9/11, the role of the military in national security policymaking has steadily increased⁴ and has led to military issues competing with and often dominating economic, political, and diplomatic priorities, with dismal consequences. By investing disproportionately in the military as the United States' primary foreign policy tool, we have chronically underinvested⁵ in other national security institutions, creating a cycle of overreliance on the armed forces to manage problems that should be handled by civilian agencies. Meanwhile, for these and other reasons, the United States now finds itself underinvested—or entirely unequipped—to address problems that the military alone cannot solve.

This cycle must not continue in the next administration. In a world with today's range of international problems, we must abandon an approach which defines American national interests primarily in terms of security from foreign threats and instead reexamine our understanding of U.S. national interests both domestically and abroad. Only then can we recalibrate our national security tools to better advance these interests. Doing so will require us to answer hard questions about how best to keep our nation secure. How do we assess and prioritize the threats facing the United States? And because the meaning of U.S. national security has evolved, what are the consequences for the tools we use to protect and defend the United States?

An honest answer to these questions will require a significant rebalancing of our national security tools. Most obviously, this will require enhancing the status and influence of diplomacy and development in Washington, restoring the U.S. Department of State's overall primacy in foreign policymaking, and reestablishing the State Department as the lead for U.S. engagement around the world. At the same time, merely shifting the balance

of power or the investment of resources to favor the State Department will be insufficient on its own to modernize America's foreign policy. A comprehensive approach will require a decisive pivot away from the military as the foreign policy tool of first resort and toward meaningful investments in economic, diplomatic, and multilateral tools. It will require the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to use the tools they have—and the new tools and funding they receive—more effectively. It will require the development of new tools to confront emerging threats that the military, however powerful, cannot address. It will also require the next administration to wrestle with difficult questions about how to bring our national security tools and institutions into better alignment with our national security needs.

The next administration will also need to rebuild—and remodel—our national security institutions. Attacked from the outside and hollowed out from within, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and the intelligence community, in addition to the State Department and U.S. foreign aid organizations, are also severely diminished after a decade of sequestration and austerity and, more recently, mismanagement during the Trump administration.⁶ As a consequence, the next administration will face the most severely weakened⁷ national security institutions in a generation. Rebuilding these institutions will require visionary leadership, skilled management, and thoughtful restoration to make them stronger and more effective institutions than they were before.

Merely returning to the pre-Trump status quo will not be enough. Instead, institutional investments and reforms must adapt and creatively reorient these institutions for a new world. The public health crisis caused by COVID-19 has exposed major deficiencies in the institutions meant to keep Americans safe; hampered by inept leadership at the top, these institutions have largely failed to protect Americans from the greatest and perhaps most foreseeable threat to our security in the past 20 years. The next administration will need to establish a wide-ranging and innovative agenda and mobilize skilled leaders to modernize how our national security institutions are staffed, how they operate, and the tools they use to implement the president's foreign policy.

The next administration will also need to reexamine core assumptions about what institutions and policies keep America safe and secure. This should include a wholesale reexamination of the mission, structure, and role of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with the goal of realigning the department's activities to today's threats. Finally, the next administration will need to consider whether, in today's world, continuing to increase the amount of resources America spends on its military is justified.

The next administration will need to drive significant reforms to refine and reimagine how our national security tools are used to protect the nation. This will take time, but a next administration can make important strides in its first 100 days in three key areas:

1. Restoring trust and recommitting to the rule of law.
2. Rebuilding and modernizing our national security institutions, workforce, and processes.
3. Signaling a meaningful shift toward a diplomacy-first foreign policy.

The recommendations that follow provide a range of options for advancing these goals.

Restoring trust and recommitting to the rule of law

American institutions—in particular, our law enforcement and national security institutions—are facing a crisis of trust. During the past four years, the Trump administration has consistently and methodically undermined the missions of our national security institutions and questioned the motivations of career public servants. The current administration has taken unprecedented actions to contort national security institutions into vehicles to serve personal rather than national interests, starting with the misplaced push to purge⁸ the so-called “deep state” from the government and continuing with the abuse of presidential authority to seek political favors⁹ from foreign governments. In recent months, the current administration has also inappropriately used the uniformed military and federal law enforcement agencies to suppress¹⁰ peaceful protests. In doing so, the Trump administration has violated long-standing norms against the use of national security institutions for political purposes and undermined the nonpartisan nature of the national security mission. Taken together, these actions have systematically undercut¹¹ the rule of law, rebuffed¹² congressional oversight, and upended¹³ decades of precedent that were the result of bipartisan reforms in the post-Watergate era.

During the past four years, the Trump administration has also hollowed out our national security workforce. Career officials and experts have been publicly attacked¹⁴, pushed out¹⁵ of their jobs, and cruelly undermined¹⁶ at the hands of political leaders. Many experienced career public servants have chosen to leave¹⁷ government service altogether rather than have their advice ignored, their work politicized, and their motives questioned. Some have been forced out. Those who remain have seen their institutions buckle under political pressure as they pursue their missions in the face of tremendous stress and uncertainty. The next administration must have a plan to reestablish norms, restore trust, and instill confidence with the experts that remain.

The Trump administration’s actions have also exposed dangerous weaknesses in our institutions, especially around civilian control of the military and the independence of our intelligence and law enforcement agencies, which serve as a necessary check on the power of the executive branch.¹⁸ These norms need to be reestablished and strengthened.

Overall, the next administration should publicly and persistently prioritize responding to the crisis of trust by restoring integrity—the commitment to the public good and freedom from undue political influence—and a commitment to the rule of law to our national security institutions. By doing so, the next administration can begin to reestablish the trust that Americans should have in their government and the confidence that the national security workforce should have in public service.



QUICK WIN: Issue a presidential directive on day one underscoring trust and commitment to rule of law in our national security institutions.

On the first day of the next administration, the president should address the crisis of trust by issuing an executive order on restoring integrity to our national security institutions. This executive order could address broader issues, but at a minimum it should:

- › Reaffirm that our national security institutions will work to serve the interests of our country, not partisan political interests.
- › Recommit to the rule of law and reinforce the administration’s respect for the role of other branches of government in overseeing the conduct of national security and foreign policy activities.
- › Direct national security leaders to normalize relations with Congress and respect its oversight function.
- › Announce that the Office of Government Ethics’ rules will be treated as binding on executive branch employees in national security and foreign policy roles.
- › Announce a strict, zero-tolerance policy for executive branch employees in national security and foreign policy roles, including political appointees, who violate laws and policies that prohibit using their positions for political or financial gain for themselves or others.
- › Direct the use of available hiring authorities to offer new opportunities to career civil servants who were pushed out or inappropriately reassigned during the prior administration.
- › Reinforce the independence of inspectors general in national security departments and agencies by announcing that all nominees will be selected from individuals recommended by an independent committee. Consider supporting a for-cause removal limitation for new inspectors general.



QUICK WIN: Direct leaders of national security departments and agencies to issue messages on trust and commitment to rule of law upon assuming office.

Incoming department and agency leadership should use their first communications with their career workforces to reinforce trust and integrity and reaffirm a commitment to the rule of law and the national security mission. These messages should reiterate the president’s commitment to governing for the benefit of national—rather than personal—interests,

express a clear commitment to transparency and independent oversight, and convey that the only loyalty required of civil servants is loyalty to the U.S. Constitution. These messages should also seek to reestablish key norms within each department and agency. For example, the secretary of defense should announce new initiatives to depoliticize the military, including restrictions on the use of military titles, uniforms, and other insignia for political and other nonmilitary purposes.



QUICK WIN: Swear in key intelligence and law enforcement appointees at their home agencies. The next administration should reaffirm the unique independence of intelligence and law enforcement missions by swearing in the attorney general and director of national intelligence at Main Justice and Liberty Crossing, respectively, rather than at the White House. The chair and ranking representatives from key oversight committees should be included in each swearing-in ceremony, reinforcing the president's commitment to respecting Congress' oversight function.



QUICK WIN: Resume regular press briefings at the White House, the State Department, and the DOD. Restoring trust in national security institutions will require more transparency and accountability to the public. The next administration should immediately resume regular press briefings at the White House and at the departments of State and Defense to ensure the public has access to a steady stream of reliable information about the conduct of U.S. foreign policy.



QUICK WIN: Replace politically appointed inspectors general at national security departments and agencies. Given efforts to exert undue influence over inspectors general over the past four years,¹⁹ the next administration should immediately replace politically appointed inspectors general with their career deputies and select permanent officials from among candidates recommended by an independent committee, once established.



QUICK WIN: Appoint a diverse slate of foreign service officers to key ambassadorships. Major campaign donors are often rewarded with coveted ambassadorships. While some of these high-level campaign donors may have experience that makes them well equipped to serve in these posts, many do not. The practice of awarding these positions to unqualified donors can often appear corrupt and undermines the professionalism of the foreign service. To restore trust and reinforce a commitment to installing qualified officials to key national security posts, the next administration should announce a diverse slate of foreign service officers to key ambassadorships before naming any other ambassadors.

Rebuilding and modernizing our national security institutions, workforce, and processes

The deadliest²⁰ and costliest²¹ national emergencies in the past two decades—including hurricanes, floods, fires, and the COVID-19 pandemic—have laid bare major flaws: The institutions charged with protecting Americans are not calibrated to protect us from our most common and foreseeable threats. Meanwhile, increasingly intense competition with China and a revanchist Russia as well as new national security challenges such as climate change, rapid technological change, migration, and rising authoritarianism are stressing our national security institutions’ ability to respond. Modernizing our national security institutions will require new national security tools for the future—as discussed in the “Tackling Global Challenges” section of this report—strategic investments in the national security workforce, and better coordination across the structures that are already in place.

The next administration will also need to innovate: reinventing structures and processes, modernizing legacy systems, establishing new policy and implementation mechanisms, and identifying and attracting a workforce with a diversity of skills and experiences to creatively respond to threats that legacy national security tools alone cannot address. It will need to improve the National Security Council (NSC) staff to transform the post-Cold War, post-terrorism national security apparatus of the past into the all-threats national security enterprise of the future. Doing so will require the next administration to confront—and overcome—bureaucratic hurdles to innovation.

The next administration will also inherit a national security workforce in serious need of modernization.²² A diverse workforce is a strategic asset, yet today’s national security workforce is not only unrepresentative of the United States’ diversity, but it is also less diverse²³ than the rest of the federal government. This must change. The next administration must improve talent pipelines and remove bureaucratic barriers to human-capital reforms—hurdles that have stymied past efforts to invest in talent programs. It will also need to invest in its most important asset—its people—by prioritizing management skills and experience in making national security appointments.

Modernizing our national security institutions will require dedicated focus over time, but important progress can be achieved within the first 100 days to set the next administration on a promising course for the future.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Direct a high-level review of the Department of Homeland Security's mission focused on reorienting the department to today's threats

Created after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, DHS is the result of the largest reorganization of government in more than half a century. Today, DHS has five main missions, but its overwhelming focus has been on two: preventing terrorism and immigration enforcement. The next administration should direct a high-level review of DHS's mission, focused on reorienting the department and reprioritizing its activities to better align with today's threats. This review should consider whether current circumstances warrant changing DHS's approach to homeland security, including how it is staffed and what it prioritizes in pursuit of its strategic goals and statutory responsibilities.



QUICK WIN: Issue an executive order on improving diversity in the national security workforce.

The diversity of the American people is one of our greatest assets as a nation, yet our national security agencies do not reflect this diversity and are even less diverse²⁴ than the rest of the federal government. The next administration should issue an executive order on improving diversity in the national security workforce. This executive order should:

- › Direct national security agencies to recruit and support strong candidates that reflect the breadth of talent, skill, and experience found in the diversity of the American people.
- › Commit to gender parity and racial equity in making national security appointments.
- › Restore transgender individuals' eligibility for military service. Particularly in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark case²⁵ *Bostock v. Clayton County*, the next administration's DOD should restore Obama administration guidelines²⁶ on the ability of LGBTQ people to serve in the U.S. military and commit to defending these policies in court.
- › Revoke executive order (EO) 13782,²⁷ which reversed the Obama administration's federal contracting regulations that prevented discrimination against LGBTQ employees. These protections should be restored.
- › Revoke EO 13950,²⁸ which the Trump administration used to prohibit workplace diversity, racial justice, and bias training for federal employees and contractors.

- › Make the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce its own Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) required for promotion to the Senior Executive Service. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) should elevate the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce by making the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce a stand-alone ECQ rather than a subcomponent of the ECQ on leading people.
 - › Require annual reporting on diversity statistics by department and agency, accompanied by explanations of programs designed to close diversity gaps.
- **Address racism in military policy and in military and veterans communities.** These issues need to be addressed head-on in the early days of the next administration.
 - Direct the secretary of defense to rename military bases, revise military branch policies, and eliminate insignia and memorials that are white-nationalist symbols or vestiges of the Confederacy.
 - Revoke EO 13933,²⁹ which the Trump administration issued to prosecute the vandalism of Confederate monuments and memorials; and review EO 13934,³⁰ which the Trump administration sought to use to set new standards on monuments and statues.
 - Task the secretaries of defense and veterans affairs to conduct a review to identify actions that can be taken to respond to white supremacy in the military and in veteran communities.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Direct the OPM to launch a human capital initiative aligned to current or emerging threats

Since 9/11, the U.S. government has made major investments³¹ in counterterrorism and in Middle East and South Asia expertise to address the security challenges that have dominated U.S. national security policy. It is imperative that U.S. departments and agencies now make strategic investments in developing deep expertise in other areas to ensure agencies and their functions are appropriately resourced with the skill sets needed to confront current strategic challenges, especially with great power competitors such as China, Russia, and other key regional powers. The COVID-19 pandemic also highlights the need to invest in expertise in nontraditional security threats such as global pandemics, climate change, and corruption. The next administration should launch a major human capital initiative that is aligned to current and emerging threats. This initiative should include a review of skill and expertise deficits identified during recent climate and global health emergencies and recommendations for hiring incentives and expedited clearances to close identified gaps.

- **Establish a recurring, principals-level meeting focused solely on national security human capital and talent to provide a forcing mechanism for progress on the administration’s goals.** This quarterly, principals-level meeting should track progress and milestones related to the administration’s human capital initiatives, including achieving gender parity in national security appointments, improving diversity in the national security workforce, and expanding the pipeline of qualified, diverse professional talent in national security recruitment and hiring.



QUICK WIN: Prioritize management skill and commitment to the federal workforce in hiring for senior political appointments. In recent years, U.S. national security institutions have been severely mismanaged. The next administration should prioritize management skill over other qualifications in making senior political appointments by asking standard questions about leveraging diversity and commitment to the federal workforce of all candidates for senior appointments.

- **Appoint a chief technology officer in each national security department and agency.** As technology increasingly shapes our threats as well as our defenses, it is time to rethink the role technology plays in our national security institutions. What was once an enabling tool is now a central focus of national security policymaking. That shift should be reflected in our organizational structures. The next administration should install senior executive-level chief technology officers to serve as part of the executive management teams at each national security department and agency. These officers, whose responsibilities should be separated from general IT support functions, should focus on innovation, policy, and digital delivery, cybersecurity, and evaluating the strategic risks and opportunities for technology to advance department and agency missions.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Improve the function of the National Security Council staff

The Trump administration’s haphazard attempts³² to reshape the NSC staff under four national security advisers in as many years have had dismal results. Almost from the start, experienced career officials serving in NSC staff posts were branded as holdovers and excluded³³ from critical decisions. Many found their tours of duty abruptly ended, and several were expelled in retaliation³⁴ for complying with valid congressional subpoenas. The Trump administration’s structural changes proved to be strategic errors, most notably its decision to disband³⁵ the Global Health Security and Biodefense Directorate and fold what remained of it into the Counterproliferation and Biodefense Directorate, also known as the WMD Directorate, that oversees man-made disasters.

That decision left the current White House without an obvious coordinating body for managing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The next administration should prioritize targeted changes to the structure and organization of the NSC staff to resolve legacy issues, reorient its focus toward modern national security threats, and set the NSC as an institution on a sustainable course for the future. Further, any right-sizing of the NSC should flow from an actual prioritization of our national security objectives and be relevant to the new challenges we face.



QUICK WIN: Reestablish the Global Health Security and Biodefense Directorate in the NSC staff. This position was eliminated³⁶ early in the Trump administration but will be critical to coordinating the U.S. response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.



QUICK WIN: Disband the Border and Transportation Security Directorate in the NSC staff. The Trump administration has used the Border and Transportation Security Directorate—previously known as the Transborder Directorate—to advance his Muslim ban, asylum restrictions, and other harmful immigration policies. The office should be disbanded and its responsibilities assumed by other regional and functional directorates.



QUICK WIN: Designate an Office of Security and Technology Policy (OSTP) liaison or task force within the NSC staff. Almost every national security department and agency is investing in technology tools and grappling with the policy implications of matters that cut across technology, national security, and the economy. Today, those efforts are disconnected from each other and from broader national policy objectives. To unify those efforts, the next administration should designate an OSTP liaison to the NSC staff to coordinate national security efforts in this critical area. This liaison or task force should lead on cross-cutting issues such as 5G, quantum computing, and artificial intelligence (AI). The goal of these efforts should be to leverage the government's significant purchasing power, efficiencies associated with shared services, and interoperability benefits and best practices.

Signaling a meaningful shift toward diplomacy-first foreign policy

U.S. national security is no longer guaranteed simply because we have the world's most powerful³⁷ military. Faced with a crippling global pandemic and the rise of great-power competition, the next administration will begin during the first and only global crisis bereft of American leadership. Diplomacy and development tools—maligned and severely underutilized during the past four years—will be critical to restoring, to the extent possible, America's leadership role in the world. At the same time, the strategic focus of the U.S. military will need to be reexamined and better aligned with U.S. national interests. Any serious effort to put diplomacy at the center of our foreign policy must address the enormous disparity³⁸ between our investments in the military and our investments in diplomacy. In the first 100 days, the next administration should signal a meaningful shift toward a diplomacy-first foreign policy. But far from merely pouring more resources into the State Department, the next administration will need to strategically reexamine how to strengthen, modernize, and realign our other national security tools, including by shifting defense resources toward today's threats and carefully narrowing the use of hard-power tools.

The Center for American Progress has long recommended³⁹ the creation of a unified national security budget to drive integrated thinking about the best application of our resources to address the threats we face. We renew that recommendation here, noting that the arguments in favor are even more compelling today than they were more than a decade ago when the recommendation was first made. Though it will not be easy, the time is right for the White House and Congress to work together to drive integrated thinking about the security challenges we face and the best application of our resources to address them. With emerging climate, cyber, and global health threats on the rise, and national security institutions poorly aligned to respond to them, it is now more important than ever that the administration and Congress consider the national security budget holistically if they want to start doing the rebalancing that policymakers have long said they want to do.

The most urgent and obvious imbalance is the chronic underinvestment in the State Department. Today's State Department is outflanked by the DOD by nearly every measure. The DOD has more resources, more capacity, and more influence within the national security bureaucracy than its diplomatic counterpart. This imbalance, which has been a feature of national security policymaking since the Cold War, has been dramatically accelerated in the past four years. Today, the military commands more than 15 times⁴⁰ the resources that are invested in the State Department—a fact that is increasingly difficult to justify in a world in which threats such as COVID-19 or climate change cannot be addressed with military strength. The next administration should try to fix this imbalance.

But investing resources alone will not be enough. The State Department and U.S. foreign aid organizations will also need to become more efficient and effective. They will need to fix their organizational weaknesses so that their success is enabled by, rather than hindered by, their systems and processes. The State Department will need to finally adapt to changes in technology, which have negated the department's traditional source of power: its control over the flow of information between foreign capitals and Washington. It will also need to make—and win—the argument that America is strongest when it is working in partnership with other nations. This will require the State Department to make serious changes, rethink its value proposition, and bring its structure and processes into alignment with its unique advantages.

Finally, a next administration would be wise to reassess the use of American hard-power tools. For too long, the executive branch has overrelied on hard security as a first impulse rather than a last resort. This has led to the misuse⁴¹ of these tools and contributed to claims that America is failing⁴² to live by its values. The next administration should independently review the use—and abuse—of hard-power tools and establish modern guideposts around the use of military and intelligence activities to ensure their future use is narrowly tailored to clear national policy goals and better aligned to today's threats.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Task the secretary of state to develop a National Diplomacy Strategy

As an initial step toward rebalancing defense and diplomacy, the next administration should task the secretary of state with developing a National Diplomacy Strategy. This strategy would establish clear, new priorities for the State Department, articulate a new role for the department in implementing the president's National Security Strategy,

and provide a defensible rationale for investments. The development and release of a National Diplomacy Strategy would send a signal to our allies and partners—and to the State Department workforce itself—that the department is on a trajectory to play a larger and more consequential role in U.S. foreign policymaking in the years ahead.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Signal meaningful resource shifts in the president's FY 2022 budget

As one of the first critical tasks in the first 100 days, the president's FY 2022 budget will provide an important signaling opportunity. The next administration should take advantage of this to signal a strategic shift in national security resourcing, proposing meaningful reductions in the defense budget and meaningful increases in State Department funding.

- **Propose to fund 1,000 new State Department full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to rebuild U.S. diplomacy.** The State Department has been gutted⁴³ over the past decade, first due to austerity and budget sequestration and more recently as the Trump administration sought to cut the department's budget and push out public servants en masse. A next administration should request an increase of 1,000 FTEs to grow America's diplomatic presence overseas and begin rebuilding a more diverse State Department workforce, aligned to emerging or underresourced threats as defined in the OPM human capital initiative, discussed above. Half of these slots should be reserved for climate-related positions, as discussed in the "Tackling Global Challenges" section of this report.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Propose a consolidated national security budget

Today, decisions about resourcing America's national security institutions are siloed. America's offensive, defensive, and preventive tools are all funded through separate and distinct appropriations processes with no opportunity to consider trade-offs or propose realignments strategically. The next administration could drive integrated thinking about the security challenges we face and the best application of our resources to address them by proposing a consolidated national security budget that is transparent about the trade-offs embedded in our current resource allocations. An integrated national security budget should call for serious realignments between the DOD and America's civilian institutions of diplomacy and development.

- **Task the OMB director to propose a consolidated national security budget** and establish a working group with Congress to develop it for FY 2023.
- **Phase out the use of the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) account and propose targeted reductions to the Pentagon's budget.** The OCO account has been used to fund operations addressing new contingencies. Yet, over time, these new contingencies have become⁴⁴ regular operations. The Pentagon and Congress have used this account to avoid making hard choices about the budget. The defense budget should prioritize investments in capabilities that are most likely to deter provocative action from China and Russia and reexamine its other investments.
- **Reverse the militarization of foreign policy by transferring DOD security assistance programs back to the State Department.** After the Vietnam War, the State Department was put in charge of security assistance, as providing military equipment to a foreign country is fundamentally a foreign policy decision. Over the past two decades, the DOD has developed its own duplicative⁴⁵ security assistance budget and bureaucracy. This effort now mirrors the State Department's long-running \$6 billion security assistance system.⁴⁶ The dramatic growth and expansion of the DOD's aid programs has eroded the State Department's control and oversight of security assistance policy and therefore over U.S. foreign policy. A next administration should transfer the DOD's \$8 billion budget over to the State Department. The State Department's existing programs ensure hand-in-glove coordination with the DOD, as the DOD implements State Department's programs.
- **Seek an increase to USAID's budget, with a significant focus on global health and climate change.** The developing world has an urgent need for health care assistance, particularly related to the coronavirus response. China and Russia have used high-profile health assistance as a public diplomacy tool⁴⁷ to build better bilateral relations and to undermine the United States and Europe. There is both an urgent humanitarian and geopolitical need to provide greater assistance. Providing assistance to hard-hit countries and regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, Central America, Southeast Asia, and the Balkans, can help these regions respond to the crisis and can help the United States build and strengthen diplomatic ties.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Restore the status and influence of the State Department in national security policymaking

The budget imbalance in national security leaves the State Department under-resourced and badly positioned to lead an effective U.S. foreign policy. A next administration must seriously invest in rebuilding the State Department's resources, personnel, and status within U.S. national security and foreign policy.



QUICK WIN: Establish a presumption that the State Department chairs working group-level interagency meetings. Task the State Department to chair working group-level interagency meetings, with NSC staff as vice chairs, especially where meetings are focused on policy implementation. The State Department should also be tasked to lead the development of policy options papers and implementation plans.



QUICK WIN: Create a larger role for the State Department in setting national intelligence priorities. Prioritize setting new intelligence priorities within the first 100 days as an early signal of strategic realignment to elevate national security threats such as global health, migration, and climate change as tier-one presidential intelligence priorities. In doing so, create a larger role for the State Department in setting these priorities by requiring the concurrence of the secretary of state before revisions are presented to the president.

- **Launch a review of personnel to strengthen the State Department.** The Trump administration's efforts to gut the State Department have depleted its ranks. The next administration should launch a 100-day review to recommend immediate steps that the administration can take to strengthen the State Department. The review should be led by the undersecretary for management, who should be among the earliest appointees. The review should consider:
 - The department's structure and policymaking processes, including the undersecretary positions and which bureaus report to them.
 - Key talent acquisition priorities for the department, including how to improve the ability of mid-career professionals to enter the State Department at ranks commensurate with their abilities; how to give State Department officers the ability to take long leaves of absence to obtain an advanced degree, gain private sector experience, or work for nonprofit organizations; and how best to make the foreign and civil services complementary pillars to promote U.S. foreign policy.
 - How State Department and USAID leadership coordinate on foreign assistance as well as how to deliver such assistance most efficiently.
 - How to refine and strengthen the role of the Global Engagement Center.

- **Launch an effort to immediately recruit high-quality State Department employees.**

Concurrently with the review of personnel, the secretary of state can direct some immediate changes to ensure a high-quality pipeline of talent to meet the talent acquisition priorities identified by the 100-day review. These immediate steps could include:

- Leverage Section 308(a)⁴⁸ of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 or the OPM’s pending rule⁴⁹ on promotion and internal placement to recall retired diplomats at the same rank they left with who were forced out in the past four years.
- Fully utilize Schedule B⁵⁰ hiring authority to increase the number of technical and scientific specialists in the State Department. This will be essential to ensuring that the department has the expertise it needs in a variety of technical areas such as cyber, climate, tech, AI, health, biosecurity, and economics and finance.
- Task the Bureau of Global Talent Management to develop a proposal to establish a national diplomatic corps in high schools and colleges, modeled after the ROTC, to develop a reliable pipeline of skilled and diverse foreign service officers.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Restore civilian control of the military

The secretary of defense needs to establish greater civilian control of the military by prioritizing the Title 10 authority⁵¹ of the Office of the Secretary of Defense on war planning, budget, policy, and capabilities. The next administration should restore civilian control by clearly establishing the direction and limits under which the armed forces should operate.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Signal a realignment of defense resources toward emerging threats

The secretary of defense should signal early and often an intent to realign defense resources and focus to combat rising competitiveness threats, both traditional and nontraditional, from China and Russia.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Narrow the use of hard-power tools

The Trump administration has taken advantage of a bloated DOD budget, often using military force to accomplish political aims such as in its use of the military at the U.S. southern border. A next administration must review U.S. hard-power tools and reassess where the military should be focused.



QUICK WIN: End military deployment to the southern U.S. border. President Trump's rare and controversial use of the military⁵² to support DHS missions was legally questionable, costly for taxpayers, and wholly unnecessary. The next administration should rescind EO 13919⁵³ ordering some reservists to active duty and immediately end military deployments to the southern U.S. border; it should also revoke EO 13767,⁵⁴ which the Trump administration used to strengthen enforcement at the border, increase deportations, and build the border wall.



QUICK WIN: End the 1033 program. The military surplus equipment transfer program, known as the 1033 program⁵⁵, established in 1997, has allowed the transfer of more than⁵⁶ \$7.4 billion in military equipment and goods, including armored vehicles, rifles, and aircraft, to state and local law enforcement agencies. This has led to no measurable reduction in crime or improvement in police safety. Weapons of war do not belong in American communities. A next administration should end the transfers of military equipment and vehicles under the 1033 program as a step toward reducing overly aggressive policing.

- **Support legislation limiting the use of the Insurrection Act.** The Insurrection Act⁵⁷ invests full authority in the president to determine that circumstances warrant its use, with no legislative, judicial, or executive branch checks on its use. As became clear during protests following the death of George Floyd, the lack of any limits on the use of the Insurrection Act allow it to be wielded for undemocratic and even unconstitutional purposes. The next administration should support legislative efforts⁵⁸ to put in place appropriate checks on abuse of this authority, including an explicit prohibition against invoking the act against peaceful assembly, and require congressional notification and authorization, court findings to invoke the act over the objection of governors, and certification by the attorney general and/or the secretary of defense that conditions necessitate its use.

- **Announce an independent review of covert action and set modern limits on intelligence collection activities.** Announce an independent review of covert action over the past three presidencies, exploring the policy goals, risks assumed, and policy gains achieved. The next administration should commit to reforms in the use of covert action and make some of the findings public. Relatedly, the next administration should set new boundaries around intelligence collection activities by adding a dimension to the National Intelligence Priorities Framework (NIPF) that indicates the level of invasiveness, or risk, that policymakers are willing to assume in the conduct of intelligence activity related to the priority.
- **Establish new parameters and strategic objectives for arms sales.** American weapons should not be used to commit human rights abuses at home or abroad. Today, U.S. arms sales support⁵⁹ illiberal and abusive regimes and flood⁶⁰ police departments in the United States with excess military-grade equipment. A next administration should conduct a review of U.S. arms sales policy and establish guidelines to halt and prevent further sales when a partner's behavior no longer serves U.S. national security interests. The new policy should embed higher human rights standards into sales decisions and significantly increase the training and doctrine development required in order to ensure that American equipment is used legally and effectively. Partners that violate American standards for use, including end-user license agreements, should be held accountable.

Conclusion

A next administration must begin its term prepared to rebuild—and improve—hollowed-out national security institutions. At the strategic level, doing so will require leaders to articulate a coherent rationale for U.S. engagement in the world—that America’s security and prosperity is inextricably linked with the rest of the world and that the leadership role we play in global affairs offers clear dividends to the American people. To enlist congressional and public support for these efforts, the president will need to better connect the conduct and goals of foreign policy to the lived experience and domestic needs of the American people. National security experts have often remarked that the barriers between domestic and foreign policy have fallen,⁶¹ but our public discourse has not kept pace. Most Americans have an incomplete understanding,⁶² at best, of what the United States is trying to achieve in the world and how it affects them. This deficiency has allowed overly simplistic but easily digestible populist strategies—such as an America-first strategy—to take hold. A shared understanding about the aims of foreign policy that directly ties America’s domestic strength to its strength abroad will be essential to making—and winning—the argument for meaningful institutional reform.

But restoring these institutions will not be enough; they must also adapt for the future. As the next administration rebuilds, it should prioritize efforts in the first 100 days that restore integrity to our national security institutions and workforce and modernize both for the future. It should also endeavor to signal a meaningful shift toward an economic and diplomacy-first foreign policy that is better aligned with today’s national security challenges. Significant reforms to refine and reimagine how our national security tools are used to protect the nation will take time, but a president can make important strides in the first 100 days to set our national security institutions on a sustainable course for the future.

Prerequisites for a functional national security enterprise

The actions below are critical prerequisites for modernizing how our national security institutions do their work. They should be considered together with the broader initiatives undertaken by the next administration in the first 100 days.

- **Prioritize the development of a unified system for security clearances.** Backlogs and waiting times for security clearance applications create barriers to recruiting the best officials to serve in U.S. national security. Resolving this backlog and facilitating a unified system will be critical to rebuilding a hollowed-out national security workforce and bringing in new talent.
- **Launch a unified national security directory for the executive branch.** One of the simplest and most impactful things the next administration could do to improve interagency coordination is to make it easier for national security employees to connect with each other via a contact directory. This basic business requirement enables employees to identify who does what across the community. Yet the national security infrastructure does not have one. A unified national security directory would facilitate greater cooperation, even if it needs to be classified to mitigate the security risk.
- **Simplify the White House visitor process for U.S. government employees attending NSC meetings.** The current system for processing visitors into the White House is understandably complex, but USG employees attending NSC staff meetings should be able to be cleared and screened more efficiently than non-U.S. government visitors. Reforms to the White House visitor process could achieve significant time savings if senior officials no longer had to arrive up to an hour before each meeting. The next administration should immediately seek to improve the function and efficiency of the official visitor process.
- **Announce an immediate initiative to modernize the USAJobs website.** The government's online recruiting portal, USAJobs, is outdated and ineffective in recruiting top talent to U.S. government employment. A next administration should prioritize overhauling the application portal, making it a priority project for the U.S. Digital Service.
- **Propose and support significant investments in State Department and USAID IT infrastructure.** Outdated technology hampers modern, effective diplomatic capabilities. Modernizing the State Department and USAID's infrastructure will be essential to elevating these agencies' stature within the U.S. foreign policy decision-making process.
- **Ensure Joint Worldwide Intelligence Communications System (JWICS) email access and Tandberg systems at every workstation for all cleared State Department personnel.** One of the most consequential impediments to State Department leadership is its inability to easily and effectively access the IT systems in wide use by their defense and intelligence counterparts. The next administration should resolve this disparity by installing JWICS email access and Tandberg secure videoconferencing systems at the workstations of every cleared State Department official.



New executive orders or policies recommended in the first 100 days:

- Issue a presidential policy directive underscoring trust and integrity in our national security institutions.
- Create an executive order on improving diversity in the national security workforce.
- Task the secretary of state to develop a National Diplomacy Strategy.
- Create an executive order to reinstate reporting requirements on counterterrorism activities, increasing the transparency of U.S. operations.
- Issue a presidential policy directive to tighten the policy and legal boundaries for direct lethal action in U.S. counterterrorism operations.



Executive orders or policies recommended for rescission or removal:

- **Executive Order 13767:** Used by the Trump administration to strengthen enforcement at the border, increase deportations, and build the border wall
- **Executive Order 13782:** Permits discrimination against LGBTQ employees by reversing the Obama administration's federal contracting regulations
- **Executive Order 13919:** Used by the Trump administration to send troops to the southern U.S. border
- **Executive Orders 13933 and 13934:** Deployed by the Trump administration to protect Confederate monuments and set new standards for monuments and statues

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Living Our Democratic Values

Protecting human rights and upholding democratic values has been a perennial goal for presidents of both major political parties in the United States. Yet the current administration has abandoned our democratic allies and values by embracing authoritarian leaders, enabling corruption, and engaging in a transactional foreign policy. The next administration must take immediate steps to reverse harmful policies and halt human rights violations in U.S. domestic and foreign policy, demonstrating through words and deeds a renewed commitment to living our values.



Over successive administrations, the United States has strived—however imperfectly—to uphold democratic values. Yet the current administration has actively undermined those values, damaging America’s democratic institutions and attacking the very idea of universal human rights.¹ President Donald Trump has coddled dictators and repudiated America’s most reliable treaty allies.² In the process, his administration has hobbled America’s ability to pursue its founding principles at home and abroad. Rebuilding America’s support for democracy and respect for human rights will take serious time and energy, and the next administration must get started immediately in January 2021.

The damage that the next administration will need to repair is immense. It is hard to overestimate the harm that the current administration has inflicted. From daily attacks on the free press³ to intervening in Justice Department investigations⁴ to using the Oval Office to promote private business interests,⁵ the Trump administration has assaulted fundamental norms that American presidents and leaders have long upheld. It has sought to disenfranchise voters and violate the basic human rights of minorities, women, immigrants, migrants, and LGBTQ individuals.⁶ The president has repeatedly fanned the flames of xenophobia and racism,⁷ and he has encouraged violence against people who were peacefully protesting against structural racism in America.⁸

At the same time, the current administration has pursued a transactional foreign policy bereft of values. This has severely weakened U.S. influence, undermined America’s standing and credibility in the world, and hampered its capacity for doing good. Russian President Vladimir Putin intervened in the 2016 election to help Trump win,⁹ and later, Trump was impeached for attempting to extort Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to help him with his reelection campaign.¹⁰ Trump has repeatedly praised and expressed an affinity for dictators—including Kim Jong Un,¹¹ Vladimir Putin,¹² Abdel Fattah el-Sisi,¹³ and Xi Jinping¹⁴—while disparaging democratic allies. Moreover, Trump’s administration has dismissed a wide range of international institutions and efforts designed to advance human rights, from withdrawing from the U.N. Human Rights Council¹⁵ to walking away from the Global Compact on Migration¹⁶ to bullying the International Criminal Court (ICC).¹⁷

This cumulative damage has only exacerbated the challenges faced by the United States and others around the world. Trump’s rise to power is part of a broader wave of populism that swept across other countries. Meanwhile, authoritarian governments such as China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia have felt emboldened to assert their influence abroad and have increased their efforts to undermine democracies and liberal norms around the world.¹⁸ As populist and authoritarian forces have grown, democracies have

experienced setbacks.¹⁹ From Turkey to Hungary to Thailand, strongmen leaders have gutted democratic norms and institutions in countries that were once seen as ascendant democracies. While this downward trend existed before the Trump administration, it only accelerated once these backsliding democracies received a green light from the president of the United States.²⁰

Intensifying all of these challenges has been the inability of international institutions to adequately tackle the world's biggest challenges. From the coronavirus pandemic and climate change to the ongoing civil war in Syria and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the U.N. Security Council and other international organizations, hamstrung by the loss of effective U.S. leadership, have been largely unable to forge solutions. While much of the fault lies with governments not empowering institutions and preventing them from acting, the failure of 20th century international institutions to effectively tackle the world's biggest problems, regardless of the reasons, has further sapped confidence in them.

While the longer-term consequences of the coronavirus pandemic remain unclear, authoritarian governments are already attempting to take advantage of the absence of U.S. leadership. China is trying to act like a leader in responding to the crisis through propaganda abroad and censorship at home.²¹ Russia and China are both aggressively advancing disinformation meant to undermine democratic governments.²² And leaders in dozens of countries are taking advantage of the crisis to tighten their grip on power.²³ Meanwhile, even in more advanced democracies—including the United States—minorities are under siege and people are continuing to lose faith in the ability of governments to solve today's biggest problems.²⁴ If democratic leaders do not get their acts together in tackling the pandemic, this global health crisis could also become a global democracy crisis.

It is as important as ever to remember why it is in America's interests that other countries uphold human rights and protect democratic institutions. Democracies are more likely to grow their economies sustainably over time, less likely to fight wars with one another, and more likely to protect human rights.²⁵ A world with more democracies is a safer, more just, and more prosperous world.

In its first 100 days, the next administration—whether under a President Donald Trump or a President Joe Biden—should therefore prioritize the following efforts to put the United States on a path to living its values at home and abroad:

1. Strengthen American democracy and protect human rights at home.
2. Defend our democracy from foreign interference.
3. Put democratic values and human rights at the center of U.S. foreign policy.
4. Leverage democratic allies and partners.
5. Tackle corruption around the world.

The recommendations that follow provide a range of options for advancing these efforts.

Strengthen American democracy and protect human rights at home

Structural problems with America's democracy have taken a steep toll in recent years, from police brutality, racism, and inequality to criminal justice practices to perceived and actual voter suppression—all of which undermine confidence in the fairness and justice of democratic institutions. Persistent and worsening political polarization has ground congressional cooperation to a halt and prevented even overwhelmingly popular legislation from passing. Americans are right to wonder whether their government can serve their interests. According to public polling, Americans' satisfaction in their style of government is at a record low, rising from less than 1 in 4 dissatisfied citizens in 1995 to more than half of the country today.²⁶

The next administration must be prepared to demonstrate to Americans that the government can once again work for them, beginning by launching an ambitious effort to strengthen democracy and human rights at home. It must pursue bold policies designed to address structural problems such as police brutality, racism, and inequality. It must take steps to make it easier for citizens to vote and clean up both legal and illegal corruption that drowns out the interests of ordinary Americans. And it must put forward a leadership team that reflects America in all its diversity and engages all citizens in tackling long unresolved injustice and achieving the nation's full potential.

Restoring confidence in U.S. democracy is inextricably linked with efforts to strengthen and restore America's role in the world. Structural racism and systemic police brutality, which were at the root of the mass protests that erupted in 2020 in response to the murder of George Floyd, not only violate people's human rights but also create weaknesses and divisions in democracy that can be exploited.²⁷ These violations are made worse when they are sanctioned by U.S. leaders, as they were when President Trump violently dispersed peaceful protesters in front of the White House who were exercising their right to freedom of speech. In recent years, this administration has also punished, rather than protected, those seeking safety from persecution, separating families in an ill-advised campaign to deter migrants from America's southern border and denying them lawful asylum. Closing America's doors to those seeking to flee persecution and poverty erodes the model that America has long striven to be.

Strengthening American democracy and respecting human rights at home will require reversing many of the current administration's policies and forging new large-scale initiatives to address the human rights violations that weaken American democracy. The United States must improve its own record on human rights if it intends to be a global leader—and it should want to do so. Democracies that respect human rights lead to a safer, more prosperous world. The next administration must therefore refine its focus on protecting the homeland to more fully account for the broader needs of human security, such as child care, health care, work, and education—which the coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated are essential to the nation's broader health and security.



QUICK WIN: Use the president's first address to Congress in January to call for strengthening democracy at home and defending democratic values abroad. The next administration will need to address the deep challenges it faces as a result of systemic racism, an economic downturn, and an ongoing global pandemic. The first speech before Congress will provide an ideal opportunity to make a powerful connection between what it will take to strengthen the union and improve America's global position in a more competitive world, where democracy is receding and authoritarianism is on the rise.

- **Take action in the first 100 days to tackle multiple overlapping crises and challenges to U.S. democracy at home.** Challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, a hard-hit economy, economic inequality and other systemic inequities, the climate crisis, and dangerous attacks to the U.S. democratic system by elected leaders all pose a threat to the stability of the United States. Early presidential and legislative initiatives on these issues in the first 100 days will reassure U.S. allies and partners and improve America's credibility abroad.



QUICK WIN: Immediately change existing U.S. policies that violate human rights. The next administration will need to demonstrate in actions and words a real commitment to protecting and promoting human rights at home, including by reversing problematic policies of the current administration. The Center for American Progress has written extensively on many of these topics, such as the need to end the domestic gag rule;²⁸ rescind the illegal "Muslim travel ban" restrictions (executive orders 13769 and 13780);²⁹ halt family separation and other abusive tactics at U.S. borders and end attacks on asylum-seekers, including Executive Order 13841;³⁰ and restore protections for LGBTQ patients in health care settings.³¹

Defend our democracy from foreign interference

Foreign interference in U.S. elections continues to be a serious threat to the integrity of America's democratic process.³² In attacking elections, America's adversaries are seeking to diminish the confidence of U.S. citizens in the processes that are at the very core of U.S. democracy. In 2016, election interference was not only tolerated but also invited by then-candidate Trump.³³ In 2020, any election interference by foreign actors should be met with a decisive response.

The next administration should draw a sharp contrast between the passive response to election interference in 2016 and an active response to any interference in 2020. Doing so will require the next administration to be prepared not only to investigate any foreign interference but also to advise the public about it and respond. Careful plans and principled frameworks for publicly disclosing foreign interference efforts and deterring future actions should be developed in advance to aid decision-making. Above all, the next administration should stay laser-focused on restoring Americans' faith in the electoral process.



QUICK WIN: Convene the National Security Council (NSC) to address foreign interference. Pursuant to Executive Order 13848, the director of national intelligence will need to offer an assessment on foreign interference within 45 days of the election.³⁴

The president should convene the National Security Council—possibly as the first NSC meeting—to consider intelligence and response options for any interference that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) identifies.



QUICK WIN: Issue a declaratory statement on foreign interference and outline consequences for it. The next administration should issue an early statement that condemns any foreign interference in U.S. elections and explains that the administration will treat it as an adversarial act that significantly affects the relationship between the United States and the interfering nation's government. The statement should outline how the administration will leverage all appropriate instruments of national power to impose substantial and lasting costs on state perpetrators.



QUICK WIN: Express support for bipartisan legislation on election interference. Smart, bipartisan bills that would strengthen deterrence and provide funds to prevent election interference have languished in Congress.³⁵ The next administration should express support for bipartisan legislation on election interference and tell the next Congress to pass these bills and send them to the president for signature.

- **Announce a regulatory agenda to address the harms created by new technologies and large technology companies.** In the first 100 days, the next administration should develop a broad domestic agenda to address and regulate the harms created by new technologies and large technology companies, with a focus on privacy, disinformation, competition, and new regulatory models. This new domestic technology agenda should be developed in conjunction with a new international agenda in order to ensure an aligned approach to technology at home and abroad.
- **Implement National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) provisions to: 1) create a counter-malign influence center at ODNI; 2) create a social media data center; and 3) appoint a counter-foreign interference coordinator.** These provisions represent a significant step toward addressing key vulnerabilities in U.S. democracy and countering interference from an increasing number of state actors. The next administration should take immediate steps to implement these efforts as part of broader efforts to prevent and deter future election interference.
- **Establish a clear mission for the Global Engagement Center and mobilize it for action.** While the Global Engagement Center has had a rocky start, it still has great potential to lead U.S. interagency efforts to proactively address foreign adversaries' attempts to use disinformation and propaganda to undermine U.S. democracy and interests.³⁶ Poor leadership and high turnover have hampered the effectiveness of this promising center. The next administration should establish a clear mission for the Global Engagement Center and mobilize it to focus not only on identifying foreign interference but also on coordinating efforts to expose adversarial false narratives publicly, helping Americans and other audiences understand the need to be vigilant about the threat of disinformation.
- **Convene a high-level meeting with tech companies on ways to enhance cooperation while protecting privacy and free speech.** Technology companies clearly play an important role in today's political environment. The next administration should convene an early meeting with relevant companies to discuss opportunities to enhance cooperation and protect privacy and free speech. This meeting could be timed to coincide with the opening of ODNI's Social Media Data and Threat Analysis Center established by the 2020 NDAA.

- **Announce a public-private partnership on digital literacy and civic education.**

Simple policy solutions that would increase digital literacy and civic education among the American population could help weaken attempts by U.S. adversaries to sow discord in U.S. democracy.³⁷ The administration should announce a public-private partnership to kick-start these programs, with the goal of increasing awareness of gaps in digital media literacy and protecting future elections.

Put democratic values and human rights at the center of U.S. foreign policy

As the next administration works to address challenges to democracy at home, it will also need to dramatically reset its approach abroad. Past debates on U.S. foreign policy have centered on a false competition between values and interests, but they are mutually reinforcing. Indeed, democratic values should be a primary driver of U.S. national security strategy in a century that could largely be defined by a contest between democratic and authoritarian systems.

Unfortunately, the current administration has failed to grasp the competitive power of American values. Instead, the Trump administration has cozied up to dictators and autocrats and pursued purely transactional relationships with America's democratic allies.³⁸ Moreover, it has questioned the very idea of universal human rights³⁹ and abandoned vulnerable groups while they were under threat.⁴⁰ The Trump administration has walked away from multilateral forums such as the U.N. Human Rights Council,⁴¹ all while gutting funding for global health, development, and human rights bodies that sought to help vulnerable communities.⁴²

Putting democratic values and human rights back at the center of U.S. foreign policy should not be confused with discredited notions of regime change or of America seeking to reshape the world in its image. Humility will be essential to a renewed U.S. approach. In fact, it will be important to acknowledge that while the United States can still serve as an important catalyst for action, other allies and partners may be able to more effectively lead on many of these issues.

In the first 100 days of the next administration, there are some key steps that can be taken to center U.S. foreign policy around democratic values in order to secure a more democratic and just world.⁴³



QUICK WIN: Use the occasion of Human Rights Day on December 10, 2020, to issue a statement to signal a new approach to human rights. This statement from the president or president-elect should include an affirmation of the U.S. commitment to international organizations and agreements that promote human rights, including an announcement of intent to rejoin the U.N. Human Rights Council, sign the migration and refugee compacts, reengage with the U.N. LGBTI Core Group⁴⁴ and the Equal Rights Coalition,⁴⁵ and bring U.S. advocacy in line with promoting these rights in all international forums.

- **Prioritize defending democracy as a vital national interest in the next administration's National Security Strategy.** The National Security Strategy (NSS) is the key mechanism for outlining the president's top national security priorities. The next administration should prioritize defending democracy and pushing back on authoritarian competitors as a vital national interest and a strategic priority worthy of serious effort and investment. Doing so will signal a strategic shift from the 2017 NSS, which did not prioritize defending democracy, and will send a strong message to the American people, to Congress, and to foreign constituencies.



QUICK WIN: Disavow the approach outlined by the final report of the State Department's Commission on Unalienable Rights. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo used the commission's report to wrongly suggest that prioritizing certain human rights, namely freedom of religion and property rights, over others is "desirable" in U.S. foreign policy.⁴⁶ This is a profound and dangerous misunderstanding of the interconnected nature of universal human rights and their role in U.S. foreign policy. The next administration should disavow Pompeo's current approach, emphasize that it is not intended to guide future U.S. policy, and reaffirm the commitment of the United States to the interconnected and interrelated understanding of universal human rights. The next administration should also review and consider rescinding Executive Order 13926, which calls for the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development to prioritize international religious freedom in diplomacy and programming.⁴⁷

- **Take immediate action to support the forcibly displaced.** Worldwide, some 79 million people are currently displaced because of conflict or persecution—marking the highest total since World War II.⁴⁸ Rather than lead the world in responding to this need, President Trump has used statutory authority to unilaterally ban broad categories of people from entering the United States, targeting individuals from Muslim-majority countries,⁴⁹ asylum-seekers,⁵⁰ large classes of immigrants and nonimmigrants,⁵¹ and others. Each year, the Trump administration has also allowed fewer and fewer refugees to be admitted into the United States by setting record-low targets in the annual presidential determination process.⁵² Addressing the worst refugee crisis of this century will require a comprehensive response that extends well beyond the first 100 days; however, to signal an immediate policy shift, the next administration should take the following actions:



QUICK WIN: Sign the migration and refugee compacts. Although the Trump administration has not done so, 180 countries signed the agreement on migration and 181 countries signed the agreement on refugees, pledging to support efforts to reduce the causes of migration and reaffirming the rights of asylum-seekers.⁵³ Signing these compacts would send an important signal that the United States intends to support international efforts to protect the forcibly displaced during a time of unprecedented global need.

- **Rescind entry bans and revise Section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.** The president should rescind existing entry bans imposed by presidential proclamation and work with Congress to rewrite Section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act—8 U.S.C. 1182(f)—to provide important substantive, procedural, and temporal checks against future presidential abuses such as those contained in the National Origin-Based Antidiscrimination for Nonimmigrants (NO BAN) Act.⁵⁴
- **Protect and promote women’s rights.** The next administration must prioritize women’s health and rights at home and abroad, including by rolling back the current administration’s attacks on reproductive health and committing the United States to fully protect and uphold sexual and reproductive health and rights—such as abortion, contraception, and breastfeeding—in international treaties and documents, funding, and policy statements.



QUICK WIN: End the Global Gag Rule (also known as the Mexico City policy). This rule restricts U.S. global health funding from organizations who work on reproductive rights.⁵⁵ The Trump administration adopted an expansive Global Gag Rule that covered all U.S. health funds, affecting billions in foreign aid and preventing millions of women and families from accessing critical health services. The next administration should stand up for women’s health and rights by rescinding the rule. Moreover, it should support the Global Health, Empowerment, and Rights (HER) Act, which would permanently ban the Global Gag Rule.



QUICK WIN: Clarify the Siljander Amendment. The administration should issue a presidential memorandum or executive order clarifying the Siljander Amendment (1981) and defining what qualifies as lobbying for or against abortion.⁵⁶ The amendment can bar U.S. foreign aid from any activity that could be constituted as lobbying. The executive order should clarify that interpretation should be extremely narrow in order to allow for greater access to abortion and reproductive health across all U.S. assistance.

- **Support and defend democratic voices.** The United States should work together with international partners to strengthen international norms regarding the rights of citizens to mobilize peacefully for greater human rights and engage in nonviolent protest against their respective governments. Specifically, the next administration should 1) include in its first budget a request that Congress expand funding for the National Endowment for Democracy, the National Democratic Institute, and the International Republican Institute, all of which invest in and work to strengthen democracy worldwide; and 2) work with international partners to launch an effort to develop principles for supporting peaceful protest movements, which would include efforts to deter and punish states that violently crack down on their own people.



QUICK WIN: Encourage the secretary of state to meet with civil society nongovernmental organizations on all trips.

Civil society is under threat in countries around the world, from autocracies to backsliding democracies.⁵⁷ In addition to providing robust assistance to civil society organizations abroad, the next administration should immediately announce a commitment that all senior officials—including the president, vice president, and secretary of state—will meet with civil society organizations and representatives on foreign trips, whenever possible. This would send an important signal that the United States supports civil society everywhere and that America’s relationships with the people of each country are just as important as its relationships with the governments.



QUICK WIN: Lift sanctions on the International Criminal Court. While the United States has always had a fraught relationship with the ICC, the Trump administration has treated the court like an enemy, authorizing sanctions against ICC personnel involved in cases against Americans.⁵⁸ As a first step toward engaging constructively with the ICC, the next administration should immediately revoke Executive Order 13928.⁵⁹

- **Build a stronger bureaucratic infrastructure to elevate democracy and human rights concerns across the government.** To elevate the importance of democracy and human rights in U.S. foreign policy, the next administration will need to establish a strong infrastructure to ensure that these issues remain elevated in the interagency policy process.



QUICK WIN: Reestablish a democracy and human rights directorate within the NSC staff.

The next administration should restore the directorate on democracy, human rights, and development in the National Security Council. The NSC staffs of the Obama, Bush, and Clinton administrations had directorates explicitly tasked to cover human rights and democracy to ensure that they remained a focus at the White House. This directorate should cover a broad mandate including human rights, democracy, development, and foreign assistance issues.



QUICK WIN: Make the assistant secretary for democracy, human rights, and labor an early appointment. After Cabinet-level positions are announced, the next administration should quickly announce the nominee for assistant secretary of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. Announcing this position immediately would signify the importance of human rights in U.S. foreign policy. President Trump did not announce a nominee for the office until June 2019, 2 1/2 years into his administration.

Leverage democratic allies and partners

The president must immediately begin working closely with democratic allies and partners. Whether with treaty allies in Europe and Asia, democracies in Africa and Latin America, or multilateral organizations such as the Community of Democracies, the more the United States engages with its democratic friends around the world—including by showing tough love when these countries or organizations fall short of upholding democratic principles—the more effective the United States will be in ensuring that it addresses global challenges in ways that uphold core values.

The Trump administration has abandoned one of America's strongest assets in foreign policy: its democratic allies. From criticizing these allies⁶⁰ to shunning multilateralism,⁶¹ the current administration has unilaterally undermined America's ability to pursue foreign policy goals alongside the world's most capable partners. The next U.S. president will need democratic allies, whether to respond to the global economic devastation of the pandemic or to confront China's destabilizing behavior.

The next administration will have to move quickly. Some actions in its first 100 days must aim to prove to democratic allies that America will once again respect its partnerships with democracies, whether by prioritizing democracies in meetings and travel, reaching out to them to chart new directions on key issues, or just saying the right things in speeches.

The president will also have to move quickly to establish new patterns of cooperation with democracies in order to adapt to a world that is rapidly changing. As populism erodes democratic institutions and norms toward majoritarianism and as authoritarians push their influence abroad, America must pursue a new level of cooperation with the world's democracies with the goal of both bolstering the strength of individual democratic systems and strengthening alignment among democracies on key global challenges.

In addition, the next administration will have to look for new ways to strengthen America's capacity to help its democratic allies by working with Congress to prioritize foreign assistance and other support to democracies.

- **Host a global summit of democracies.** In the first 100 days, the president should announce that the United States will convene a first summit of democracies in 2021 to signal solidarity with the world’s democracies and the key role that the United States intends to play in prioritizing its relationships with democracies. The Community of Democracies can provide the main vehicle through which to organize this summit, which will have the added effect of bolstering a key institution for democracies to coordinate and address key challenges.⁶² Civil society organizations from around the world—which participate in the Community of Democracies processes—should be invited to join this summit. The agenda for this first meeting should be focused on protecting democratic elections and systems from outside influence, sharing lessons learned, and developing common policy ideas to prevent future interference. To avoid giving elected authoritarians a free pass, it may also be worth considering excluding democratic countries, such as Hungary and Poland, that are slipping with respect to protection of minorities, judicial independence, or press freedom.
- **Launch a Democratic Strategic Advantage Initiative.** The president should announce his intention to create a Democratic Strategic Advantage Initiative to prioritize and organize U.S. foreign assistance to support democracies, and he should include the proposal in the next budget. This initiative would authorize the U.S. government to amplify and better synchronize U.S. economic and security assistance and commercial investment packages. For example, in addition to increased economic assistance, the United States should coordinate its current tools for security assistance—from arms sales or grants to military training to technology transfers—in order to give democracies a strategic edge over authoritarian adversaries. And in addition to supporting democracies with packages that include all relevant tools of U.S. statecraft, the administration should request that Congress include as part of the initiative a separate set of foreign assistance funds for democracies—like Congress does for the Millennium Challenge Corporation—in part to resist the need for trade-offs in the budget process with assistance to other, nondemocratic countries. While it will take time to work with Congress and relevant agencies to establish the details, the administration should begin that process immediately and signal that the United States will prioritize countries that are transitioning to democracy—or have recently done so—for special support from the United States.

- **Prioritize principal-level trips to democracies.** The president, vice president, and secretary of state should make their first trips of 2021 to democratic allies. This will send the right message about the values and partners that the next administration prioritizes.
 - **Prioritize early engagement with Mexico, Canada, and Europe.** Traditionally, a president’s first meeting with a foreign leader in Washington, D.C., is with the leader of Mexico, and the first foreign trip is to Canada. The next president or president-elect should flip this script, underscoring the importance of America’s partnerships with its closest neighbors by hosting the Canadian leader in D.C. and taking a daytrip to meet with his Mexican counterpart before inauguration if possible to do so safely with COVID-19 restrictions. Post-inauguration, the president’s first international trip should be to Europe, and in the first 100 days pending public health guidelines, the president should announce that he will attend the annual East Asia and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summits in the fall.
 - **The Cabinet should prioritize engagement with democracies in the first 100 days.** To emphasize the importance of America’s democratic alliances, the vice president and secretary of state should take trips to Asia and Europe in the first 100 days, with one going to each region. Specific recommendations can be found in a later section of this report on “Recalibrating U.S. Global Relationships.”

Tackle corruption around the world

For more than four decades, the United States has been perhaps the most prominent advocate for and enforcer of anti-corruption norms and transparency standards in the international system. Under the current administration, however, the United States has ceded its leadership position and moral authority in the global fight against graft.⁶³ Since the beginning, the Trump administration has slashed funding for vital anti-corruption programs,⁶⁴ rolled back key regulations and initiatives related to political and corporate transparency,⁶⁵ and allowed governments in places such as Guatemala and Honduras to quash popular anti-corruption initiatives in the name of security cooperation.⁶⁶ Most egregiously, the president sought to extort the leader of Ukraine—a country that has long struggled with entrenched corruption—into conducting a politicized investigation into former Vice President Joe Biden, in effect exporting his own corruption to a vulnerable geopolitical partner.⁶⁷ New revelations suggest that the president also appealed to Chinese President Xi for trade concessions to advance his personal political agenda.⁶⁸ All of this has occurred against the backdrop of the president's unprecedented use of his official position to enrich himself, his family, and his friends.

To reverse this damage to the global fight against graft, the next administration will need to act decisively and innovatively to make anti-corruption a major foreign policy priority, one that draws on the full suite of U.S. capabilities—diplomacy, foreign assistance, financial regulation, intelligence, and law enforcement—in order to meet the myriad threats that corruption poses to U.S. interests at home and abroad.

- **Champion new anti-corruption legislation.** The United States should act forcefully to clean up its own act and ensure that American entities and assets do not become a sink for the proceeds of foreign corruption. To that end, the next administration should push new anti-corruption legislation that creates a federal beneficial ownership registry, requires more detailed reporting of cross-border transactions, extends the federal bribery statute to foreign officials who receive bribes from U.S. persons and firms, and closes gaps in the Bank Secrecy Act and related anti-money laundering legislation that exempt certain transactions, such as real estate, from scrutiny.⁶⁹

Importantly, the next administration should also strongly advocate for legislation to ban political spending by U.S. corporations that have an appreciable amount of foreign ownership and/or control, as detailed in a prior CAP publication.⁷⁰

- **Stand up an interagency task force on corruption.** The next administration should stand up an interagency task force on corruption within the first 100 days, co-led by the U.S. departments of State and Treasury, and task it to 1) assess how corruption by authoritarian competitors is being used to undermine U.S. interests and subvert democracy; and 2) develop a strategy to combat those activities. This global anti-corruption strategy should:
 - **Use U.S. financial power to promote global transparency.** Signal a more aggressive use of the “special measures” of Section 311 of the Patriot Act to target jurisdictions and entities that serve as major centers of illicit finance despite being formally compliant with global anti-money laundering standards⁷¹ and expand use of the Global Magnitsky Act to sanction corrupt actors in alignment with broader, strategic anti-corruption objectives.⁷²
 - **Create a rapid-response action fund for anti-corruption.** U.S. foreign assistance related to anti-corruption is both too small and too inflexible to meet the rapidly evolving threats that corruption poses to global peace and security. To that end, the next administration should work with Congress to create a rapid-response action fund to support overseas anti-corruption efforts, either by passing the Countering Russian and Other Overseas Kleptocracy (CROOK) Act currently before Congress or through stand-alone legislation.⁷³



QUICK WIN: Establish an anti-corruption coordinator at the State Department. This office could be modeled after the sanctions coordination office under the Obama administration, led by a senior ambassador-level coordinator. The office would be charged with coordinating and advancing U.S. anti-corruption policies as well as working with allies and partners around the world.

Conclusion

Living our democratic values at home and abroad is crucial to demonstrating movement toward a more progressive national security. In order to signal a meaningful shift in U.S. foreign policy, the next administration should use its first 100 days to restore human rights protections, rebuild democratic norms, and root out corruption.



New executive orders or policies recommended in the first 100 days:

- Issue a declaratory statement on foreign interference and outline consequences for it.
- Revise Section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act to prohibit discrimination in immigration and entry into the United States.
- Clarify the Siljander Amendment (1981) to narrowly interpret what qualifies as lobbying for or against abortion.
- Launch a Democratic Strategic Advantage Initiative to prioritize and organize U.S. foreign assistance to support democracies.



Executive orders or policies recommended for rescission or removal:

- **Executive Orders 13769 and 13780:** Impose illegal “Muslim travel ban” restrictions
- **Executive Order 13841:** Justifies the separation of families in immigration detention
- **Executive Order 13926:** Prioritizes religious freedom in diplomacy and foreign assistance programming
- **Executive Order 13928:** Imposes sanctions on the International Criminal Court
- **Global Gag Rule (also known as the Mexico City policy):** Restricts reproductive rights in U.S. foreign assistance

Endnotes

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Ending the Wars Responsibly

The president who takes office in January 2021 will face ongoing U.S. military involvement and humanitarian crises around the world, particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq but also in armed conflicts across the Middle East. Despite conflict fatigue at home, ending direct U.S. military involvement will not “end the wars” and will lead to profound consequences for innocent civilians. A more responsible approach will require a commitment to lead with diplomacy, enhance transparency, and develop a more sustainable and resilient approach to ongoing threats, including terrorism.



In the nearly two decades since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the United States military has been involved in constant combat operations across the Middle East. The 2003 invasion of Iraq, the nearly constant regional turmoil, and ongoing missions in Afghanistan and Syria have all contributed to a sense that the United States is now engaged in “forever wars” and there appears to be no end or “victory” in sight.

There are very real consequences to this continuous engagement. Next year will mark two full decades of the U.S.-led wars—conflicts that have cost nearly 8,500 American and coalition lives and led to hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths in the broader Middle East and South Asia.¹ More than \$1.9 trillion of American taxpayer money has been spent fighting in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria over the past 20 years.² Moreover, the United States will spend up to \$1 trillion more providing medical care and other benefits to those who have borne the burden of these wars.³

Beyond the human and financial costs of these conflicts, there continue to be serious questions about the effectiveness of U.S. strategy—especially with respect to U.S. counterterrorism efforts. Terrorist threats have endured and evolved over the past two decades despite massive U.S. investment and prioritization. While the United States obliterated the core al-Qaida organization that attacked the United States on September 11, new threats sharing the same ideology emerged in Yemen,⁴ West Africa,⁵ Iraq, and Syria.⁶ Even more notable, violent white supremacist terrorism has killed as many Americans in the United States since 9/11 as has Salafi-jihadi terrorism.⁷ Nonetheless, the shadow of 9/11 still looms large for many Americans, as do terrorist attacks by Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaida-linked terrorists in places such as France and Germany.⁸ Like the United States, many of these countries also struggle to counter violence perpetrated by far-right extremists.⁹

President Barack Obama attempted to turn the page on the “war on terror” during his presidency, arguing that the United States had to “define the nature and scope of this struggle, or else it will define us.”¹⁰ But the rise of new terrorist threats such as the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, as well as the persistence of existing ones such as al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, obstructed this goal. While the Obama administration ultimately surged and then withdrew most U.S. troops from Afghanistan, a persistent Taliban threat and a fractured Afghan government prevented the complete drawdown of U.S. military forces. At the same time, wars, conflicts, and crises impinging on U.S. interests continued or erupted in places such as Syria, Ukraine, and Venezuela.

The Trump administration has done little to resolve these conflicts or responsibly end direct U.S. military involvement in places such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. Instead, the administration has come perilously close to embroiling the United States in another war thanks to its “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran and its strike on Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani. Civil wars in Syria and Yemen continue, while Iraq struggles to find stability nearly three years after the conventional military defeat of the Islamic State group. Even the administration’s Afghanistan agreement appears fragile, with implementation stalled amid a surge in Taliban attacks.¹¹

The next administration will face a number of ongoing or potential conflicts, including:

- **Ongoing direct U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq:** When the next administration begins, tens of thousands of American military personnel will likely remain in or near these active combat zones. Even if the Trump administration’s withdrawal agreement with the Taliban were to proceed as planned, the United States would likely still have thousands of troops deployed in Afghanistan in January 2021. Likewise, thousands of U.S. troops will likely remain deployed in Iraq and Syria to continue the fight against the remnants of the Islamic State group and to assist local forces.
- **Continued confrontation with Iran:** As a result of the Trump administration’s withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement, Tehran is now closer to a nuclear weapon than it was just a few short years ago. Moreover, Iran remains a destabilizing force across the Middle East, supporting proxies and prolonging conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen.
- **Ongoing conflicts and humanitarian crises in Libya, Yemen, and Syria:** Barring unexpected diplomatic breakthroughs, conflicts in Libya, Yemen, and Syria will almost certainly continue into January 2021. Though U.S. involvement remains indirect, these conflicts implicate U.S. national interests and reflect wider geopolitical challenges involving Russia, Turkey, and, in the cases of Yemen and Syria, Iran.
- **A persistent and evolving terror threat:** The threat of terrorism from groups such as the Islamic State and al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula remains a significant security challenge for the United States, its allies, and its partners around the world. Though these two particular groups have seen their power decline substantially over the past several years, they remain able to take advantage of conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Yemen—and the pandemic could present greater threats moving forward. Meanwhile, the threat of violent white supremacy is on the rise in the United States and around the world.

The overmilitarization of U.S. foreign policy over the past two decades has failed to end these conflicts. The next administration will confront all of these enduring challenges and conflicts, except in an even more unfavorable geopolitical environment. The current administration's actions have fractured U.S. alliances, damaged its diplomatic capacity, and left American credibility in tatters. Making matters worse, the United States and the world will still be in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and face deep economic challenges when the next administration begins in 2021.

It is important to acknowledge that it will not be possible to “end the wars” in the first 100 days of the next administration. The national security team, whether new or incumbent, will also need to recognize that ending direct U.S. military involvement will not end these conflicts. Even if American troops were to leave Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan on the first day of the next administration's term in office, these conflicts would continue to rage with profound consequences for innocent civilians. However, the next administration can begin to set the conditions necessary to resolve these conflicts and put U.S. strategy on a more balanced and sustainable footing. This will need to take place in the context of a dramatic reorientation of U.S. foreign policy toward addressing modern challenges—including climate change, China, and the resurgence of authoritarianism.

To reorient American foreign policy and set the conditions necessary to resolve these legacy conflicts successfully, the next administration should start work immediately on four main lines of effort:

1. Lead with diplomacy to resolve legacy conflicts and avoid new wars.
2. Implement a more sustainable and resilient counterterrorism approach.
3. Ensure that all U.S. military operations are transparent and accountable to the American people.
4. Take better care of the generations that served in our wars.

The recommendations that follow provide a range of options for advancing these goals.

Lead with diplomacy to resolve legacy conflicts and avoid new wars

Wars will not end or be prevented without smart, principled diplomacy as the leading edge of U.S. foreign policy and national security strategy. In recent years, U.S. national security decision-making and public discourse on conflicts has been overly framed around troop levels and American involvement rather than what the United States should or should not do to help bring these conflicts to sustainable conclusions.¹² Those serving in uniform need to have confidence in their purpose, as well as a clear understanding of their mission and what diplomatic ends they are working toward.

Real diplomacy has largely taken a back seat in the Trump administration. Pragmatic diplomacy with Iran has been abandoned for an ineffective and dangerous “maximum pressure” campaign that has not worked.¹³ Instead, it has damaged U.S. interests, left key international allies caught in the crossfire, failed to address Iran’s destabilizing behavior, and increased the chances for yet another major military conflict in the Middle East.¹⁴ Even with respect to Afghanistan, where the administration seems intent on ending U.S. military engagement largely for political purposes,¹⁵ it has been inconsistent in its support for peace efforts, with the president himself often undercutting his own negotiators and sending counterproductive signals to the Taliban and the Afghan government.¹⁶ Meanwhile, U.S. policy on Syria remains a confused muddle of objectives and mismatched means,¹⁷ and the administration is missing a huge opportunity to recalibrate the U.S. relationship with Iraq in the wake of the defeat of IS, instead subjugating Iraq policy to Iran policy.

To make matters worse on the diplomatic front, the Trump administration has spent the past four years actively dismantling the U.S. Department of State and reducing America’s diplomatic capacity to its lowest point in generations.¹⁸ Senior foreign and civil service officers have departed, often after being pushed out or sidelined. The next administration will be faced with the challenge of restoring international faith in U.S. diplomacy while, at the same time, confronting a massive human capital deficit to execute that diplomacy. Recalibrating the United States’ approach will take longer than 100 days, but the next administration can take some definitive early steps to chart a new course.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Task the secretary of state to lead a rapid and wide-ranging 90-day interagency policy review of U.S. involvement in existing conflicts

The goal of this review should be to examine policy where the United States is either militarily involved or where instability affects U.S. national security interests. Putting the secretary of state in the lead, rather than the White House, would empower the State Department and ensure that U.S. interagency efforts are aligned with, and support, diplomatic goals. The broad goal of this review would be to examine how to rebalance U.S. strategy across these conflict areas. This review should include the following:

- A careful examination of long-term U.S. national interests and policy objectives in these conflict areas in the context of broader U.S. domestic and national security challenges
- An evaluation of the effectiveness of current national security tools and resources being used—or not used—to advance those interests
- A U.S. diplomatic game plan to advance long-term, peace-building efforts in key areas of conflict—such as Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya—with an eye toward what is realistic and sustainable
- High-level outreach to the country’s closest allies and partners for insight into U.S. policy successes and failures, expectations, and burden-sharing
- Engagement with on-the-ground stakeholders in countries where conflicts persist—for example, nongovernmental organizations, U.N. agencies, and local civil society organizations



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Launch a comprehensive review of U.S. foreign and security assistance in key conflict areas

This review would be led by the secretary of state and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) administrator, in coordination with the secretary of defense. Its goal would be to produce a long-term U.S. assistance strategy that better supports peace-building and civil society, rather than prioritizing arms sales or legacy security assistance programs that have done little to stabilize or resolve the underlying causes of these conflicts. This should be done in tandem with the policy review outlined above

as well as efforts to ultimately design and release a National Diplomatic Strategy in 2022. (see the section on “Rebuilding and Rebalancing Our National Security Tools and Institutions” in this report) This review should provide the next administration with concrete options to shift U.S. foreign and security assistance toward more effective, sustainable objectives that better reflect U.S. values and long-term interests.

- **Work with Congress to prioritize passing a State Department authorization bill.**

Congress has not passed State Department authorization legislation since 2002.¹⁹ New authorizing legislation would offer both the next administration and the next Congress an important opportunity to reexamine and prioritize the role of the State Department in U.S. foreign policy. The next administration should work directly with Congress to design and pass such a bill. The development of a National Diplomatic Strategy that outlines U.S. diplomatic priorities would be helpful in promoting a coherent narrative to congressional authorizers.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Issue a presidential policy directive in the first 100 days outlining a new U.S. policy toward Iran that de-escalates tensions and generates better conditions to advance U.S. interests through diplomacy

The next administration will need to take early tangible steps to accomplish this goal. This effort must include unilateral steps, but more importantly, it should involve direct coordination with allies and partners around the world. Leading up to this new directive, the administration should undertake the following steps:

- **Revoke the Trump administration’s National Security Policy Memorandum (NSPM) 11 on day one of the next administration.**²⁰ The next administration should signal an immediate shift in its approach toward Iran by revoking the policy withdrawing the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran’s nuclear program.
- **Task the director of national intelligence with an assessment on the current status of Iran’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs and its compliance with the JCPOA.** It will be essential to have an accurate picture on the status of Iran’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs to inform its strategy on reentering the JCPOA. The United States should also engage the International Atomic Energy Agency on the status of Iran’s compliance.

- **Launch immediate secretary of state consultations with the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council plus Germany (P5+1) to craft a way forward for the United States to reenter the JCPOA and to bring Iran back into compliance.** The goal of this effort should be to leverage U.S. reentry into the deal within a broader negotiating agenda, including extending some nuclear constraints under the JCPOA as well as imposing limitations on Iran's ballistic missile capability. As part of an agreement by Iran to return to compliance with the JCPOA, the United States should consider sanctions waivers, including on oil.
- **The secretary of defense should undertake a regional posture review with the objective of right-sizing U.S. military presence in the Middle East.** The Trump administration's decision to augment the U.S. military presence in the Middle East has been relatively ineffective in deterring Iran. Rather, Iran and its regional proxies have actually increased the scope of attacks by targeting oil tankers in the Gulf and Saudi oil facilities.²¹ While the United States should ensure that it is capable of defending its allies and interests in the region, a reduced and more sustainable U.S. force posture is both necessary and achievable, especially in light of other competing national security priorities.²² Any reduction in U.S. forces should be paired with a more focused investment in Gulf defense, in line with the 2015 U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council summit declaration.²³
- **Explore and support nascent dialogue between Iran and the Gulf.** The next administration should send early signals to U.S. Gulf partners that it supports their stated desire to de-escalate tensions with Iran. While the United States playing a public role in dialogue may not be desirable, the next administration should conduct quiet outreach to establish a shared understanding of the situation in the Gulf, chart a path forward for de-escalation, and ensure effective diplomatic coordination of these efforts—perhaps supported by the P5+1 mechanism.
- **Appoint a U.S. special envoy for Yemen.** In recent months, key U.S. partners in the Gulf have signaled their desire to de-escalate tensions with Iran and wind down their direct military involvement in Yemen.²⁴ However, these partners lack the capacity necessary to coordinate the unwieldy diplomacy among the various players involved in Yemen's internal conflict. The next administration should take advantage of these favorable conditions and make an early push for a coordinated diplomatic strategy to bring about a sustainable end to the fighting in Yemen. It should choose a high-level envoy—or, alternatively, select a senior diplomat with regional experience—to serve as the assistant secretary for Near Eastern affairs. The president and secretary of state should empower this envoy to engage with the various parties involved in Yemen,

ranging from the United Nations' own special envoy and various U.S. regional partners such as Oman, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia to the multiple internal factions vying for power in Yemen.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Reach a new strategic understanding with Iraq

U.S.-Iraq relations have suffered from a U.S. strategy that has treated the partnership and Iraq's own stability as subordinate concerns to its pressure campaign against Iran.²⁵ This strategy distracts from the fight against IS, risks the expulsion of U.S. forces, neglects civilian aspects of U.S. policy, and badly damages ties. This, along with the advent of a favorably disposed new Iraqi prime minister, presents the opportunity to reset ties. The next administration should articulate that America's mission in Iraq is centered around fighting IS and helping Iraqis achieve stability and sovereignty—not to “watch Iran” or “take the oil.”²⁶ The next administration should put the U.S.-Iraq relationship on a new footing by undertaking the following actions in its first 100 days:



QUICK WIN: Invite Iraqi leaders to Washington. The next U.S. administration should make a point to welcome key Iraqi leaders and work with Congress on a strategy to leverage U.S. nonmilitary assistance to push the Iraqi government to help resettle the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who remain displaced and provide stability in formerly IS-held areas to help prevent a resurgence.

- **Renegotiate a smaller, more sustainable U.S. troop presence in Iraq and multilateralize the security mission.** The United States should seek to reach a new understanding—directly or indirectly via Iraqi politicians—with Tehran and Iranian-backed Iraqi militias regarding the U.S. troop presence in the country. While missions such as support for the elite Counter-Terrorism Service should remain U.S.-led, the United States should work with NATO allies and partners to multilateralize other elements of the security mission, including the training of Iraqi army and police units. This could allow for a smaller troop presence reached in agreement with Iraqi officials, while also lowering tensions with Iran.
- **Expedite special immigrant visas for Iraqi and Afghan translators.** The United States should immediately announce this priority effort. This early move would demonstrate a commitment to reversing anti-Muslim policies and would also signal that America is not abandoning the Iraqi and Afghan people.

- **Incentivize Iraq-Saudi rapprochement.** Diplomatically, the United States should also seek to deliver on the promise of recent Saudi rapprochement with Iraqi national leaders, completing the transition from promising diplomacy to delivering on the pledge to help Iraq's young and fast-growing population find opportunity.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Implement a responsible strategy on Afghanistan that prioritizes long-term support for the Afghan people

The next administration will likely see a peace process in midstream, with early decision points on the deadline for withdrawal of all U.S. forces by May 2021. The national security team will need to assess a range of factors when deciding how to best proceed regarding U.S. military presence as well as U.S. financial support for the Afghan government. Bringing U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan to a close should be a priority, but any strategy will also need to adequately address the risks to the Afghan people as well as long-term stability in the region. While progress will take longer than 100 days, there are some key early steps that the next administration should take, including the following actions:



QUICK WIN: Host a leader-level secure video conference with the Afghan government. The goal of this initial summit would be to reinforce a long-term U.S. commitment to the Afghan people and communicate expectations for continued diplomatic progress on power-sharing.

- **Consider keeping in place the U.S. special envoy for Afghanistan and announce the administration's intent to remain committed to the February 2020 U.S.-Taliban agreement.** This could allow for greater continuity in peace negotiations.
- **Plan to end significant U.S. military presence in May 2021 in accordance with existing U.S.-Taliban peace agreements, continued review of the threat environment, and other pressing national priorities.** The next administration should plan to continue reductions to the U.S. military presence pursuant to existing U.S.-Taliban peace agreements, provided that conditions allow it.
- **Commit to a multiyear U.S. foreign and security assistance package for Afghanistan beginning in the FY 2022 presidential budget submission to Congress in February 2021.** The FY 2022 presidential budget submission should demonstrate a clear commitment to U.S. foreign and security assistance for Afghanistan.

- **Use the G-7 summit in summer 2021 to announce a major international compact to provide long-term support to Afghan women.** The United States has historically played an important role in protecting and supporting rights for Afghan women and girls since the beginning of the conflict in 2001. But recent U.S. actions and policy have failed to prioritize their concerns or guarantee women’s rights during peace negotiations.²⁷ The next administration should use the next G-7 summit to pledge to protect gains made for women and girls in the country, ensure that women are meaningfully represented in future talks, and announce a plan for long-term support to Afghan women.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Reset on Israel-Palestine issues

The unresolved conflict between Israelis and Palestinians presents an insurmountable obstacle to Middle East stability—and stabilizing the Middle East could allow the United States to responsibly reduce its own direct military commitments to the region. While progress on Middle East peace is unlikely in the first 100 days, the next administration should take immediate steps to reset U.S. policy on Israel-Palestine with the goal of generating better conditions for peace negotiations, ensuring that U.S. policy is aligned toward advancing long-term U.S. interests, and promoting the security, prosperity, and dignity of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. Improving the lives of Israelis and Palestinians on the way to resolving the broader conflict between the two peoples would go a long way toward stabilizing the wider Middle East and North Africa. Moreover, it would help America better calibrate its engagement with a focus on diplomacy.

- **Act to immediately restore U.S. assistance to the Palestinian Authority.** The next administration should reverse the current administration’s cuts to funding for the Palestinian Authority and programs designed to help the Palestinian people. In addition, it should work with Congress to ease or lift existing legislative restrictions on this assistance and create positive incentives for diplomatic progress. As it restores bilateral aid to Palestinians, it should do so in a way that avoids reinforcing anti-democratic tendencies among some Palestinian leaders and addresses the concerns expressed by the Palestinian leadership about corruption.
- **Reopen the U.S. mission to the Palestinian Authority and appoint a senior foreign service officer to head it.** After President Donald Trump moved the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, the State Department shuttered the consulate in East Jerusalem that for decades served as the United States’ main point of contact with the Palestinians.

The next administration should reestablish a diplomatic mission to the Palestinian Authority and appoint a senior diplomat to lead it. At the same time, it should work with Congress to build bipartisan support for steps to allow the Palestine Liberation Organization to reopen the diplomatic mission in Washington that was closed by the current administration.

- **Ensure that regional diplomatic progress does not leave the Israeli-Palestinian conflict behind.** The next administration should use American leverage with all parties to create positive incentives that help make resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a just and equitable manner a key factor in U.S. diplomacy with countries in the region. Stepped-up regional diplomacy should seek to improve the lives of Israelis and Palestinians alike, while also keeping open the path toward a negotiated agreement.
- **Work with Congress to fully resource the Global Fragility Act.** As it copes with multiple crises demanding high-level attention, the next administration should fully fund the Global Fragility Act passed by Congress in December 2019. The legislation authorizes \$1.15 billion in funding over five years, dedicated to supporting programs to prevent conflicts before they start and the United States and others feel compelled to intervene.²⁸

Implement a more sustainable and resilient counterterrorism approach

For the United States to move effectively beyond “forever wars,” the next administration will have to wrestle with how best to confront and manage a persistent and evolving terrorism threat. The Obama administration made important gains by wiping out core al-Qaida structures and by imposing greater transparency, stricter decision-making processes around direct action, and accountability—even when controversially seeking congressional authorization to strike chemical weapons in Syria. Over time, the Obama administration also implemented a more targeted approach, building the capacity of partner countries around the world to take on terrorism threats as they emerged, rather than through large U.S. military ground operations.²⁹

Unfortunately, much of this progress with regard to decision-making on use of force, transparency, and accountability has been reversed under the Trump administration.³⁰ Despite its stated desire to get the United States out of endless wars, the Trump administration has set the political and security conditions for greater conflict by expanding the authority of the military to conduct increased operational targeting against a broader range of terrorist groups. At the same time, the administration’s decisions have made the country less safe—decisions such as demoting the homeland security adviser position at the White House and leaving the U.S. Department of Homeland Security without several rungs of permanent leadership.

The next administration will be confronted with an exhausted counterterrorism strategy. After more than two decades of counterterrorism operations worldwide across three administrations, the metrics for success remain unclear and the strategic impact has been uneven. Incidents of terrorism remain high for a few countries, mostly those with active hostilities, but have decreased substantially in Western countries. Yet the conditions that give rise to terrorism persist across the globe, especially in the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa. The next administration will need to examine whether the threat justifies the scale of U.S. counterterrorism infrastructure, resources, and operations that has dominated U.S. national security strategy since 9/11.

Meanwhile, the devastating human consequences inflicted by both terrorists and ongoing counterterrorism operations continue to mount. Although the Trump administration has reduced its transparency in reporting civilian harm, casualties have likely gone up.³¹ While the Pentagon admitted to killing 132 civilians last year in U.S. operations,³² estimates from independent watchdog groups were much higher. For example, when airstrikes in Somalia tripled from 14 in 2016 to 45 in 2018,³³ the Pentagon claimed no civilians were killed, while Amnesty International documented at least 17 deaths.³⁴ And in Afghanistan, the United States and its allies killed more civilians than the Taliban in the first half of 2019,³⁵ while overall civilian casualties remained above 10,000 for the sixth year in a row.³⁶ Meanwhile, U.S. support for security partners that use American weapons and equipment to enable civilian harm is not even officially counted—such as in Yemen, where the civilian death toll surpassed 1,100 last year.³⁷



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Announce a high-level policy review, led by the vice president, on the future U.S. counterterrorism strategy, with the goal of generating options for a more sustainable and resilient approach

This policy review should assess the terrorism threat in the context of other pressing national security challenges. In addition, it should seek to right-size U.S. strategy, resource allocation, and decision-making processes while still preserving adequate capacity to defend the homeland from attacks.

- **Task the secretary of state, the director of national intelligence (DNI), the secretary of homeland security, and the secretary of defense with a U.S. Counterterrorism Structure and Posture Review to streamline U.S. counterterrorism efforts.** This review would examine ways to streamline U.S. counterterrorism infrastructure across the U.S. government and present options to the president within 90 days. There are currently multiple overlapping counterterrorism missions and infrastructure across the U.S. government that not only produce duplicative efforts but also generate incentive structures to sustain this overweighted effort in comparison to other national security challenges.
- **Launch a presidential study directive (PSD) to develop options to improve U.S. resilience to terrorism.** This PSD should explore how to improve crisis communications, increase civic engagement in the aftermath of terror attacks, harden critical infrastructure, reform the Department of Homeland Security’s mission, and strengthen local law enforcement capabilities.

- **Use a presidential speech on the 20th anniversary of 9/11 to announce a new U.S. counterterrorism strategy that prioritizes sustainability and resilience.** This speech could coincide with a leaders' summit in New York that would announce a new global compact on counterterrorism prioritizing intelligence, law enforcement, international cooperation, and resilience over military action. The policy reviews above would inform this speech.
- **Stand up a White House-led task force to develop a U.S. government (USG)-wide policy blueprint in the first 100 days for countering violent white supremacy at home and abroad.** Attacks by violent white supremacists are on the rise at home and abroad.³⁸ The next administration must examine the threat and determine a USG-wide strategy for countering this challenge that would involve elements of law enforcement, intelligence, civil liberty protections, education, and international diplomacy. This review should include members of the National Security Council (NSC), Domestic Policy Council, and other White House offices in order to ensure a broad U.S. policy approach.

Ensure that all U.S. military operations are transparent and accountable to the American people

From Vietnam to Libya to Yemen, successive administrations have struggled to provide adequate transparency to the American people about the ways in which the United States uses military force.³⁹ This lack of transparency inhibits accountability, as reflected in the existing legal frameworks that justify the use of force. When America uses force in a way that is not transparent and accountable, it undermines U.S. national security.

These problems predated the Trump administration, but the Trump administration has made them worse. From pardoning convicted war criminal Eddie Gallagher and changing authorities for counterterrorism operations to an overall lack of transparency on the part of the U.S. Department of Defense, the Trump administration has made it much more difficult for Americans and the world to trust that the U.S. government is executing the use of force responsibly and in accordance with the rule of law and international norms.⁴⁰

Acting transparently, legally, and with express congressional authorization is a critical predicate for the development of policies that are sustainable, effective, and garner the widest possible support from the American people and the international community. When administrations disregard these guardrails, they risk drifting into and failing to extract the United States from imprudent wars, while also undermining constitutional design in ways that erode the legitimacy of U.S. foreign policy at home and abroad. Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, undisclosed drone strikes, and the assassination of Gen. Soleimani all seed deep suspicion about U.S. activities, fuel anti-Americanism, and isolate America from the rest of the world.

The next administration will have much work to do to reestablish confidence that the United States will exercise use of force in accountable and transparent ways. It will have to move quickly to restore trust with the American people and foreign partners, reassuring them of America's ability to lawfully and transparently employ its military for essential operations. This effort will require working closely with Congress and publicly announcing new initiatives in the first 100 days.



QUICK WIN: Reinstate reporting requirements on counterterrorism activities

(Executive Order 13732). The next administration should immediately reinstate the part of Executive Order 13732—issued by President Obama and revoked by President Trump through Executive Order 13862—that requires public reporting on the casualties caused by counterterrorism strikes.⁴¹ This information is important for transparency and ensures that all U.S. agencies involved in counterterrorism have visibility into the effects of their actions.



QUICK WIN: Appoint a senior civilian reporting directly to the secretary of defense to conduct investigations into civilian deaths as a result of U.S. military operations.

This official would be responsible for oversight of U.S. policy on civilian casualties and would provide the mandate to improve the standards for investigations into these incidents.



QUICK WIN: Standardize the Defense Department's monthly publication of U.S. casualties in named military operations.

Transparency in U.S. operations and resulting civilian harm is critical to helping the United States and the public learn from mistakes and improve U.S. practice. Regular publication would demonstrate the next administration's commitment to transparency and taking civilian harm seriously.

- **Work with Congress to repeal and replace the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force.** Any authorization should seek to impose strict geographical and targeting limits with clear sunset and renewal provisions. The goal should be to more tightly bind use of force to regular affirmations of public consensus via congressional debate and votes. The next administration should send a strong signal by expressing its willingness to be more bound by Congress on use of force. It should pursue this legislative push in tandem with its diplomatic strategy reviews in order to reinforce a shift in U.S. strategy toward diplomacy.
- **Tighten the policy and legal boundaries for direct lethal action in U.S. counterterrorism operations.** During the Obama administration, the Presidential Policy Guidance served as a set of procedures and guidelines for approving use of direct force—both lethal and nonlethal—against terrorist targets.⁴² In 2017, however, the Trump administration took steps to loosen many of these procedures and guidelines.⁴³ The next administration should review the status of current procedures and set out strict policy criteria for use of lethal direct action against designated terrorist targets, ensuring that nonlethal direct action is prioritized, that the authorities for direct action are not designated at any level below the secretary of defense, that there is an extensive policy review and accountability process, and that any lethal action meets the highest possible standards.

- **Launch an NSC-led review of civilian harm in U.S. military operations and security partnerships.** The review should include procedures to mandate assessments of a security partner’s capacity, capability, and political will to protect civilians in military operations before providing U.S. security assistance. It should also consider what conditions on training, equipment, and other support can be put in place based on partner forces’ commitment to and performance on key civilian protection indicators. In addition, the review should explore the use of “positive conditionality” with partners in order to incentivize better civilian protection behavior.⁴⁴
- **Review the current administration’s rewriting of the U.S. Conventional Arms Transfer Policy.** The next administration should review NSPM 10 to ensure that it prioritizes human rights protections and provides guidance against transferring weapons to states with concerning human rights records.⁴⁵

Take better care of the generations that served in our wars

Since September 11, 2001, more than 3 million men and women in uniform have deployed overseas in support of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria.⁴⁶ According to official Department of Defense statistics, more than 53,000 members of the U.S. Armed Forces have been wounded in action in these conflicts,⁴⁷ with more than 1.2 million post-9/11 veterans now receiving service-connected disability payments.⁴⁸

As a result, the annual budget of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has risen from \$48 billion in FY 2001 to \$243 billion in FY 2021—the second-largest budget of any federal agency, greater than the combined budgets for the State Department, the USAID, the Justice Department, and the entire U.S. intelligence community.⁴⁹ This rapid increase in VA funding can be attributed to a number of factors, including the aging of a large cohort of Vietnam War veterans, increasing use of the VA by all generations for health care, increased general health care costs, new programs such as the post-9/11 GI Bill, and vastly increased use of VA health and benefits programs by post-9/11 veterans as compared with their predecessors.

Mandatory benefits payments required by law, such as disability and the GI Bill, comprise nearly half the VA's budget. The cost of running the VA's massive health care system of 150 hospitals and more than 800 clinics dominates the other half of the budget.⁵⁰ Due to past commitments and policy decisions—and a national obligation to fulfill these commitments—the VA's budget will likely continue to expand. Although the total national veteran population continues to shrink as a consequence of the move to a smaller all-volunteer force, the proportion of veterans using the VA for health care or benefits continues to increase. As a result, future administrations will likely need to continue increasing the size of the VA budget for the foreseeable future.



QUICK WIN: The president should consider appointing a female combat veteran to be the secretary of the Veterans Administration. Since the VA was elevated to Cabinet status in 1989, the post has been held by 10 men. Once confirmed, the new VA secretary should prioritize issues of health and access for women veterans, who make up the fastest-growing segment of the veteran population.

- **Take VA privatization off the table.** Once confirmed, the next VA secretary should make a public statement—whether in a major speech, policy directive, or other appropriate vehicle—that privatization of the VA is no longer under any sort of consideration by the department or its leadership. This determination should be appropriately reflected in the new VA secretary’s budget proposals and documents, which should seek a more appropriate balance between direct care and purchased care.
- **Immediately begin filling the 50,000 positions that are currently empty in the VA and develop a plan for rebuilding the VA’s aging infrastructure.** At the end of 2019, the VA had 50,000 empty positions, leaving VA facilities understaffed.⁵¹ Moreover, much of the VA’s infrastructure needs to be rebuilt; as of 2018, for instance, the average VA building was 55 years old.⁵² Filling these slots and renewing the VA’s infrastructure will enable it not only to expand veterans’ care but also to better fulfill its congressionally mandated fourth mission of contributing to national preparedness.
- **Continue increased remote mental health care, with a focus on suicide prevention and improving access to underserved populations.** The VA has been a leader in telehealth technology and use for years, making it well-positioned to leverage such technology for treatment of patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic, the VA and many other mental health providers have moved to remote care via videoconference services.⁵³ These remote services should be continued when the pandemic subsides and should be leveraged to more fully reach those veterans that the VA does not serve adequately today, including rural veterans or veterans who live far from VA facilities. According to the most recent VA statistics, on average, more than 16 veterans committed suicide every day in 2017—and the suicide rate for veterans was 1.5 times the rate for nonveterans that year.⁵⁴ To help combat mental health challenges among veterans and military personnel more broadly, the next administration should also expand mental health coverage to cover National Guard and Reserve military personnel even if they have not served on active duty.
- **Better serve veterans with “bad paper” and reform the process.** Veterans with “bad paper”—some form of discharge other than an honorable discharge—are disproportionately at risk for unemployment, suicide, and homelessness, among other issues.⁵⁵ The next VA secretary should continue to expand VA health care and crisis support for these veterans, recognizing that many of these discharges were likely affected by underlying causes such as PTSD or military sexual trauma.⁵⁶ A new VA secretary should affirm that the government’s obligations to these veterans does not stop because of these actions.

Conclusion

The next administration will not be able to responsibly end direct U.S. military involvement in conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria in its first 100 days in office. With or without direct U.S. military involvement, many of these conflicts will almost certainly persist for some time. But with these initial steps, the next administration can signal its intent to privilege diplomacy and conflict resolution in U.S. policy and put American strategy on a more sustainable global footing.



New executive orders or policies recommended in the first 100 days:

- Task the secretary of state with leading an interagency policy review of U.S. involvement in existing conflicts.
- Launch a comprehensive review of U.S. foreign and security assistance in key conflict areas.
- Launch a high-level policy review, led by the vice president, on a future U.S. counterterrorism strategy that prioritizes sustainability and resilience.
- Issue a presidential policy directive outlining a new U.S. policy toward Iran that de-escalates tensions.
- Reinstate reporting requirements on civilian casualties resulting from counterterrorism activities—formerly Executive Order 13732.
- Issue new Presidential Policy Guidance to tighten policy and legal boundaries for direct lethal action in U.S. counterterrorism operations.



Executive orders or policies recommended for rescission or removal:

- **2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force** should be repealed and replaced to more tightly bind use of force to regular affirmations of public consensus via congressional debates and votes.
- **National Security Policy Memorandum 10** (“Regarding U.S. Conventional Arms Transfer Policy”) should be reviewed and rewritten to ensure that U.S. arms transfer policy prioritizes human rights concerns effectively.
- **National Security Policy Memorandum 11** (“Ceasing United States Participation in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action”) should be rescinded to signal an immediate shift in U.S. policy toward Iran.
- **Executive Order 13862**: Revokes certain reporting requirements on U.S. counterterrorism activities. These requirements should be reinstated.

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Recalibrating U.S. Global Relationships

America's international reputation has suffered greatly from the current administration's abandonment of alliances, disregard of democratic values, and mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic. The next administration will need to make a concerted effort to rebuild relationships with democratic allies and partners, offering a new vision for global engagement with democratic values at its core. The following chapter provides recommendations to restore democratic partnerships, compete more effectively with adversaries, and recalibrate relationships to fit today's challenges.



America's global position is no longer unrivaled. Democracy is under siege, international institutions are under strain, rapid technological transformation has unintentionally benefited autocrats, and America's image has been greatly tarnished. Over the past four years, the world has not stood still and waited for America to sort out its own dysfunction. The next administration will represent an America whose reputation and alliances have been badly battered.

Since 2017, the United States has regularly been absent on the world stage, skipping important international meetings and ignoring key global efforts. When the Trump administration has been engaged, it has mostly sought to obstruct progress. Instead of leading, America has become a country that others have to manage or work around, while authoritarian and illiberal regimes leverage America's absence to their benefit.¹ As a result, the international community has grown increasingly accustomed to a world without U.S. leadership.

America's abdication of global leadership has led to little progress in addressing major global challenges, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic worsened, no cohesive global policy was put forth—in part because of a lack of U.S. leadership and an incompetent response by the Trump administration. While the United States has struggled with its own mistakes, much of the world—in particular long-standing U.S. allies—has struggled without America's ability to build coalitions to galvanize action and organize global responses.²

America's competitors and adversaries will not be eager to see the United States try to lead again. China and Russia have sought to expand their influence and fill some of the gaps that America's retreat has left. These rivals seek a less-liberal world in which they lead—not one in which America, in partnership with democratic allies, drives global action.³ The United States should demonstrate that a liberal democratic system is the best form of government. While the emergence of this renewed competition has brought comparisons to the Cold War, proving the efficacy of liberal democracies requires neither a dangerous arms race nor constant military interventions.

Ultimately, the next administration cannot pretend the past four years never happened. The world has dramatically changed, and a broad recalibration of U.S. foreign policy must take place. There is no way to return to the status quo of a few years ago, nor should the next administration embrace such an effort. The United States needs to look at its global relationships—with democratic allies, adversaries, or even more-challenging partners—in an entirely new way.

This recalibration must entail rebuilding relations with democratic allies and partners, recommitting to America’s liberal democratic principles, and offering a positive global vision that seeks bold action to address the world’s most pressing challenges. First and foremost, this recalibration will also require emphasizing U.S. global relationships that align more directly with our democratic values. It will require action to position the United States to compete internationally and deliver results for the American people. And finally, it will require bold shifts on legacy relationships that no longer serve U.S. interests.

In addition to the long-term repairs the next administration will need to undertake, prioritizing action in the first 100 days is critical. Where the next administration spends its time and focus—whether on presidential trips, meetings, or initiatives, virtual or otherwise—will signal its priorities to the world. The recommendations that follow do not cover every corner of the globe, and certainly not every important relationship. Rather, they are an attempt to strategically recalibrate U.S. efforts overall. To support long-term U.S. national security interests and better align U.S. foreign policy in support of democratic values, in its first 100 days, the next administration should:

1. Prioritize democratic allies and partners.
2. Compete more effectively with China.
3. Stand up to Russia.
4. Recalibrate relations with backsliding allies, toxic partners, and long-standing adversaries.

The recommendations that follow offer a wide array of options and approaches for advancing these goals.

Prioritize democratic allies and partners

The next administration must first embrace a bold approach and vision that puts democratic values at the forefront of U.S. foreign policy.⁴ To do this, the United States should seek to rebuild and revive existing relationships with its traditional democratic allies as well as build stronger ties with other democracies around the world.

America must reengage its allies and partners with humility while leading by example. The next administration will have to earn the trust of the world, which will require acknowledging the United States' democratic shortcomings and human rights failures at home. Instead of dictating to allies or immediately making new demands, the next administration will need to listen and strive to build more durable partnerships, including restoring trust with the United States' closest friends. The administration will also need to humbly reengage with multilateral institutions.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Reimagine the trans-Atlantic relationship

The trans-Atlantic relationship is in crisis, and it is largely America's own doing. The Trump administration has essentially abandoned Europe, taking an overtly hostile approach to NATO and the European Union.⁵ This abandonment has left some of America's key allies shaken, looking for ways to move forward without the United States. A fundamentally new approach is needed to revive the trans-Atlantic relationship. The United States will need to do more than just recommit to the NATO alliance. It should seek to build a new strategic partnership with the EU.⁶ As a part of this reimagining of the trans-Atlantic relationship, the next administration should take the following steps in the first 100 days:

- **Plan for the president's first overseas trip to be to Europe, when safe to do so, with a first stop in Brussels to visit the EU and NATO headquarters.** This trip would signal the importance of democratic allies and values. The president should give a speech before the European Parliament to lay out a bold new vision for trans-Atlantic

relations, expressing a desire to launch a new U.S.-EU partnership. The speech should announce U.S. support for European integration and call for the United States and Europe to forge common approaches to key global issues such as climate, pandemic response, China, and the shared threats of rising authoritarianism and democratic backsliding. A president's declaration to collaborate with Europe to lead on climate action, in particular, would reinforce the administration's message of returning to global leadership and repairing trans-Atlantic relations.

- **Develop a new trans-Atlantic agenda.** The president should announce the establishment of new joint U.S.-EU working groups on climate, post-COVID-19 economic recovery, China, election interference, technology, and digital trade, with the goal of issuing a new trans-Atlantic agenda at the next U.S.-EU Summit.
- **Send a high-profile delegation, led by the U.S. vice president, to the Munich Security Conference to announce a new set of U.S.-NATO initiatives.** The annual Munich Security Conference in February will be an early chance for the next administration to signal its commitment to the NATO alliance as well as launch a series of new U.S. initiatives to strengthen and modernize the alliance. This could include launching a NATO investment initiative—a mixture of grants and loans that would incentivize former Warsaw Pact NATO members to retire their aging and decrepit Soviet/Russian equipment and would bring these countries into compliance with U.S. sanctions against Russia's defense industry.



QUICK WIN: Announce an end to the trade war with the EU. On day one, the next administration should announce they will work to end the trade war with the EU.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Embrace Mexico early and often

Mexico is a critical, strategic, and longtime U.S. partner and needs to be treated as such, especially following the contentious and nativist rhetoric of recent years. Mexico is also the United States' top trading partner. North American supply chains are key to U.S. manufacturing and resilience. The integration of U.S. and Mexican energy supply chains has critical implications for energy security and climate change, and Mexican agriculture and agricultural workers are critical to U.S. food security. Although the southwest U.S. border is temporarily closed for nonessential travel, in normal times, more people legally enter the United States from Mexico than from any other country, making it a key de facto partner on COVID-19 resilience. It is also a critical partner for managing migration—from the Americas as well as from around the world—into the United States.⁷

Helping Mexico build up its capacity to manage this migration and to provide asylum and host refugees in a fair and humane manner will be critical in the coming years. To do so, in its first 100 days, the next administration should:



QUICK WIN: Meet with the president of Mexico before Inauguration Day. The president should then also make an official trip to Mexico in the early months of the administration.



QUICK WIN: Prioritize the nomination of a U.S. ambassador to Mexico as part of the first slate of nominations in the early days of the administration. The appointee should also be immensely qualified and an expert on the country with strong ties to the U.S. president.

- **Ensure that the secretaries of state, homeland security, energy, and commerce each visit Mexico within the administration's first 100 days or convene virtually if health restrictions prevent travel.** The secretaries should coordinate their visits to pursue a productive and forward-looking policy agenda.
- **Announce a set of joint U.S.-Mexico initiatives on migration and COVID-19 response.** To ensure public safety and maintain the flow of commerce and people that supports both economies, the United States and Mexico will need to follow the advice of public health experts, closely coordinate with each other, and make sure that long-established cross-border lifestyles are not affected or become a factor in contributing to the spread of the virus. The United States should also announce a new set of assistance—financial, logistical, and more—to help Mexico manage its migration in a humane way. This would include building up Mexico's internal asylum system, building up capacity on the Mexican side of the U.S. border, and encouraging a humanitarian rather than a solely enforcement-based response on Mexico's southern border.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Place U.S. alliances in the Asia-Pacific on a stronger foundation for the future

The Trump administration's approach to America's allies in Asia has been upside down; the administration has treated our democratic allies with disdain while embracing authoritarian leaders who are working to erode their countries' democratic institutions. President Trump's approach to South Korea has bordered on hostile, with repeated attempts to extort our ally for more money, ridicule the importance of the alliances and the U.S. troop presence, and often cut Seoul out of diplomacy with North Korea.⁸

Australia and Japan, while not suffering nearly as badly as other U.S. allies around the world, have had dustups with the current Trump administration and been the targets of tariffs. To facilitate putting U.S. alliances on a stronger footing for the future, the next administration should prioritize the following steps in the first 100 days:

- **Plan a joint visit of the secretaries of state and defense, when safe to do so, to top U.S. democratic allies in the Asia-Pacific: Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, and New Zealand.** The primary goal of the trip will be to reassure these core allies and listen to their concerns about the trajectory of key challenges facing the region. It will be a chance for the next administration to move away from the transactional approach of the current administration.



QUICK WIN: Immediately suspend cost-sharing negotiations with Japan and the Republic of Korea until after an assessment can be made on the future of U.S. defense strategy. While burden-sharing is important for the sustainability of our alliances, the Trump administration has attempted to use these negotiations to extort U.S. allies for political purposes. The next administration will need to reexamine its defense strategy in the region, prioritize long-term cost-sharing agreements that are fair, and address the concerns of Japan and Korea, as well as the United States.

- **Announce support for fully funding the Pacific Deterrence Initiative in the FY 2022 budget submission.**⁹ Earlier this year, the U.S. Senate passed the bipartisan Pacific Deterrence Initiative—a multibillion-dollar, multiyear fund to improve U.S. deterrence against China. The administration should demonstrate support for this effort by including funding for this initiative in its FY 2022 budget request.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Actively engage with African nations

The African continent has historically been a low priority for U.S. foreign policy. Yet the continent is home to about half of the world's fastest-growing economies, with 20 African economies expected to expand at an average rate of 5 percent or more over the next five years. Also expanding is Africa's population, which is expected to double from 1.2 billion to 2.4 billion by 2050.¹⁰ From climate change and pandemic responses to cybergovernance, African countries will play a significant role in the future of global affairs. What happens in Africa does not stop at the water's edge, as recent examples with piracy, migration, and Ebola demonstrate. In a crowded policy landscape, Africa offers both opportunities and challenges. The United States would

be wise to partner with African nations on trade, investment, and innovation and should prioritize support to African democracies. The United States should also work bilaterally and multilaterally with African nations to prevent and mitigate threats from terrorism, criminality, epidemics, and mass migration. The next administration must engage with African countries and people in productive partnerships that are based on mutual respect for democratic principles and inclusive growth. To advance such a vision, in the first 100 days, the next administration should:

- **Release a presidential policy directive on U.S. policy toward Africa.** This policy directive should outline a new U.S. diplomatic, security, and economic approach to the African continent that prioritizes sustainable development, including a focus on clean energy development and support for countries to adapt to climate change impacts.
- **Send a high-level U.S. delegation to visit key democratic African countries.** The next administration needs to send a strong signal after the current administration's neglect. Once travel is permitted, the vice president should lead a high-level U.S. delegation to visit key democratic African countries to signal a new era in productive relations as well as signal America's renewed commitment to democracy.
- **Announce that the White House will host the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit in 2022 and regularize every four years.** A U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit has not been held since 2014. Announcing the intention to restart these summits will demonstrate a high-level commitment to furthering ties between Washington and African capitals. The priorities for the summit should include trade, investment, and innovation and should underscore America's commitment to the continent's people, democracy, and security.

Compete more effectively with China

The next administration will confront not only an extraordinarily contentious U.S.-China relationship but also a largely ineffective national strategy when it comes to delivering results for the American people. The next administration should take stock of the U.S. approach, engage with allies and partners, and fashion a more collective approach to dealing with the challenges that China presents. The Trump administration's approach to China has made American prosperity and security contingent on Beijing's willingness to change its behavior; has failed to work with allies and partners to form a common cause; and has failed to make much-needed investments at home that would enable the United States to compete over the long term. To recalibrate this dynamic, the next administration must signal a complete shift to a more effective U.S. strategy. To implement such a shift in the first 100 days, the next administration should:



QUICK WIN: Prioritize nominating a U.S. ambassador to China in the first slate of ambassadorial nominations. A trusted adviser to the president who is in full agreement with the next administration's approach to China policy should be among the early slate of ambassadorial nominations.

- **Engage key U.S. allies on China to solicit their input on a new U.S. strategy and begin laying the groundwork for a more collective approach.** The president should also send a top U.S. national security team—including senior directors for Asia and China from the National Security Council, U.S. Department of State, and U.S. Department of Defense—to Europe, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada in the first month of the next administration—or, pending health restrictions, convene virtually. The goal of these meetings should be to seek allied input and alignment before any new U.S. China strategy is released.
- **Develop and roll out a new U.S. strategy on China.** Given the scale of the challenges presented by China, the United States should launch a White House-led policy review on China beginning on day one. At the 100-day mark, this group should present the outline of the new China policy to the president, with buy-in from allies and key stakeholder groups.

- **Stand up a new White House-led Task Force on American Competitiveness to design and implement a National Competitiveness Initiative.** The objective of the task force should be to design a multiyear plan to improve U.S. economic competitiveness in order to better compete with China and other economies that are engaged in advanced manufacturing, including action to direct and fund basic research, bridge the gap between research and industrial applications, transfer new technology to small and medium enterprises, and support workforce development for noncollege workers. The restoration of manufacturing jobs as a good source of middle-class incomes—and development of the green technology that will be needed to deal with climate change—should be central goals. This task force should be led by domestic staff but cut across the Executive Office of the President and include representatives from the Domestic Policy Council, the National Climate Council,¹¹ the National Security Council, the Council of Economic Advisers, the National Economic Council, the U.S. Trade Representative, and other relevant departments and agencies. This task force should work in close cooperation with the U.S. Congress, labor groups, the business community, and the academic community.
- **Launch a new, more multilateral trade approach on China.** The next administration should seek to break from the unilateral trade war launched by the current Trump administration and instead design and implement a more multilateral approach to more effectively address China's egregious economic and trade behavior. This could include taking collective action at the World Trade Organization, including by filing a nullification and impairment case against China. It could also include launching a reconsideration of multilateral and bilateral trade agreements to make them consistent with domestic steps needed to restore U.S. manufacturing competitiveness and to incorporate labor and environmental standards in an effective manner. The next administration should carefully consider how to leverage any reduction in U.S. trade tariffs against China to support this more collective approach.



QUICK WIN: Send an early, supportive U.S. signal to both Hong Kong and Taiwan. The next administration should consider some early policy moves in support of Hong Kong and Taiwan. Examples of the moves could include high-level U.S. official engagements with Taiwanese officials, the granting of Temporary Protected Status and special immigration status to the people of Hong Kong, presidential-level statements of support for democratic rights, and other diplomatic initiatives.



QUICK WIN: Invite Chinese human rights advocates to the White House for a meeting with the president. This meeting should address ways to pressure China on its atrocious treatment of millions of Uighur Muslims currently in concentration camps. This meeting should also serve as a vehicle for the next administration to announce U.S. sanctions against individuals and entities that contribute to the repression of Uighurs in China.



QUICK WIN: Rejoin the World Health Organization, the U.N. Human Rights Council, and the Paris Climate Agreement and engage more actively in these and other international forums. China is currently taking advantage of the U.S. absence and lack of initiative in multilateral institutions. The next administration should immediately reengage and seek to rejoin international forums in order to counter China's influence.

- **Raise the bar on China's climate change commitments.** U.S. withdrawal from the Paris agreement and backtracking on climate change action has ceded reputational and substantive leadership on climate to China. The next administration should pair ambitious domestic policies with coordinated international initiatives to raise the standards for China to achieve on its own actions. As part of their domestic climate policies, for example, the United States and the EU could both agree to adopt a carbon border adjustment tax, which would increase the import price of Chinese goods produced using high-emission processes. Early action in the first 100 days on both domestic and international coordination on climate change would help shift the dynamic toward greater U.S. leadership.

Stand up to Russia

Russia is actively seeking to undermine the United States and its democratic allies, especially in Europe, and there are few boundaries Russia is not willing to cross. Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia has declared itself an adversary of the United States and should be treated as such.¹² The Trump administration has spent the past four years enabling Putin to advance his international agenda, sowing discord and division among democracies and international institutions. The next administration will need to end that pattern and establish new redlines in the relationship. To deter Russia, costs need to be imposed for its belligerent behavior and gross violations of international law. While there will be little room to reset relations or remove sanctions, that does not mean the United States should not engage with Russia, particularly on areas of potential cooperation, including arms control and extending the New START Treaty. However, there will need to be a dramatic shift in the U.S. posture toward Russia. The next administration will have to engage democratic allies to jointly protect against destabilizing acts and interference, including illicit financial flows emanating from Russia. (see the “Living Our Democratic Values” section of this report) In the first 100 days, the next administration should:

- **Announce new sanctions against key Kremlin backers and pledge to fully implement U.S. sanctions laws.** The Trump administration has failed to adequately implement the 2017 sanctions legislation against Russia. Instead, the administration has rolled back sanctions against key Russian oligarchs. The next administration should send an immediate message to the Kremlin’s oligarch backers, many of whom keep their funds in the West, that doing so has a price. The administration should also review and assess past sanctions and make recommendations for additional action. Existing illicit finance tools at the U.S. Department of the Treasury could also be used to expose kleptocrats who pursue the Kremlin’s agenda in democracies.
- **Directly engage the Russian people with a presidential video address.** While taking a harder line against President Putin’s government, it will be important to continue to try to engage and enable people-to-people contacts with the Russian people and avoid xenophobic treatment of Russians in the United States and around the world.

- **Send a show of support to the intelligence community by visiting the CIA’s Russia House.** The Trump administration has attacked the intelligence community and frequently dismissed its work related to Russia. Once such a visit is possible, or virtually, the president should meet with CIA staff and the National Intelligence Council and thank them for their efforts, making it clear that the next administration highly values their work.



QUICK WIN: Announce U.S. opposition to Russia returning to the Group of Eight (G8). The next administration should make an early announcement that it will oppose any Russian reentry into the G8.

- **Call for Russia to be suspended from Interpol.** The United States should work to suspend Russia from Interpol for abusing the organization for political purposes.



QUICK WIN: Send a presidential letter to Putin that reestablishes redlines. The president should send a letter to President Putin to lay out U.S. concerns with respect to Russia’s destabilizing and illegal behavior, including its interference in the U.S. presidential elections, its ongoing foreign election interference, as well as its destabilizing actions in places such as Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, and Libya. The letter should also signal that the U.S. vice president will be the designated point person for managing the U.S. relationship with Russia, distancing it from the president.



QUICK WIN: Execute a major U.S. military exercise on the Russian periphery. The U.S. Department of Defense should conduct a major military exercise in the first 100 days to underscore U.S. resolve to defend U.S. allies and deter Russian aggression.

- **Work with Congress to make Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty an independent nongovernmental organization.** This would allow for it to receive a direct appropriation from Congress that will ensure its integrity and independence. It would also enable it to deliver truthful information to the Russian people—and others on the continent—on their government’s policies and conduct.

Recalibrate relations with backsliding allies, toxic partners, and long-standing adversaries

The next administration should signal to adversaries that it is open to dialogue—but not at a cost to U.S. values or national security interests. U.S. engagement should be strategic and purpose driven, whether on relations with North Korea and Iran or on other issues such as arms control negotiations with Russia. Ultimately, engagement cannot be an end in and of itself or driven by narrow domestic political purposes. It must be targeted toward a tangible goal of advancing U.S. national security. Instead of engaging adversaries right away, the next administration should seek to strengthen its global position, increase its leverage, and coordinate with allies before offering abrupt and ill-thought-out diplomatic overtures.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Deleverage the United States from Turkey

The next administration should work to actively deleverage itself from its relationship with Turkey, especially on security matters. While Turkey will remain a major player in both the Middle East and Europe, the next administration should send early signals that it will be taking a new approach. In the first 100 days, the next administration should:

- **Remove U.S. nuclear weapons from Turkey.** President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has sought to chart a more independent course with less deference to traditional Western security partners. He has adopted a transactional approach toward relations with the United States and Europe and deepened ties with Iran, China, and Russia. Turkey is choosing a more independent, assertive path. The next administration should recognize this reality and adapt. That does not mean lurching to a purely punitive approach—but given the depth of corruption and autocracy in Turkey, it does mean the United States should work to reduce its reliance on Ankara. As a first step, the next administration should work to quietly remove all nuclear weapons from Incirlik Air Base. And it should be done immediately, without a lengthy interagency review, to allow the administration to attempt to rebuild relations from a more realistic foundation.

- **Launch a broad U.S. policy review on Turkey.** This review should address all dimensions of the relationship, including security, economic, and diplomatic relations. The goal should be to craft a more realistic and updated strategy for dealing with a more assertive Turkey that is willing to take unilateral action and defy alliance norms.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Reset U.S. relationships with Gulf partners

The United States has had long and complicated relationships with many of its Gulf partners, especially Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar. The Trump administration has essentially written a blank check to some of these partners, resulting in disastrous consequences for U.S. interests, deepened humanitarian crises, and long-term moral implications for U.S. policy.¹³ While practical cooperation will be necessary to deal with everything from Iran's destabilizing behavior to Arab-Israeli peace, and even COVID-19, the next administration should take stock of whether U.S. interests are being well served by the status quo and take some early steps to signal a new approach. In the first 100 days, the next administration should:



QUICK WIN: Suspend U.S. military assistance and arms sales to Saudi Arabia related to the war in Yemen. The next administration should immediately suspend arms sale and U.S. military assistance, in line with bipartisan congressional legislation, to countries engaged in the destructive war in Yemen that has resulted in untold devastation and civilian atrocities. It should also suspend U.S. operational and targeting support to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.



QUICK WIN: Dispatch the secretary of state to visit key Gulf partners. The next administration should task the secretary of state with engaging on a new regional diplomatic strategy, including expressions of U.S. support for emerging Gulf-Iran diplomatic channels, conflict resolution and humanitarian relief in Yemen, efforts to mend the rift within the Gulf Cooperation Council, and expanded Iraq-Gulf ties.

- **Launch a review of U.S. military posture in the Gulf region to consider how to more effectively and sustainably deter Iran in the context of other global priorities.** It is increasingly clear that more U.S. military presence in the region is not necessarily deterring Iran. This review should assess the U.S. military footprint with an eye toward a more defensive posture that provides necessary core deterrence but that relies more heavily on Gulf partners' self-defense.

- **Convene deputies to recommend options for holding Saudi Arabia responsible for the death of lawful U.S. resident Jamal Khashoggi.** The next administration should hold a deputies-level meeting to consider U.S. government intelligence and other information regarding the 2018 death of U.S. permanent resident and journalist Jamal Khashoggi and recommend options for taking punitive steps to hold responsible Saudi leadership accountable.

New U.S. policy principles for North Korea and Iran

In addition to the actions described in this section, the next administration should strive for greater stability in its relationships with North Korea and Iran. The following principles should guide the next administration's efforts.

North Korea

- Signal a willingness to engage North Korea diplomatically, but don't agree to a summit absent meaningful diplomatic progress.
- Engage Seoul on new diplomatic way forward.
- Support North-South diplomacy.
- Jump-start trilateral coordination between the United States, Japan, and South Korea.

Iran

- Prioritize principled diplomacy.
- Leverage U.S. reentry to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.
- Deescalate tensions.
- Support Gulf-Iran rapprochement.

Conclusion

At the start of this new decade, the United States will need to restore, reset, and reexamine its relationships with its democratic allies and partners, with authoritarian challengers, and with toxic partners and long-standing adversaries. A new, principled approach will require better alignment with democratic values, partnerships to halt aggression from U.S. adversaries, and relationships that prioritize shared values rather than shared interests.



New executive orders or policies recommended in the first 100 days:

- Launch a policy review and develop a new U.S. strategy on China.
- Create a Task Force on American Competitiveness to design and implement a National Competitiveness Initiative.
- Release a presidential policy directive on U.S. policy toward Africa that prioritizes sustainable development and a focus on adapting to climate change.
- Launch a broad policy review on Turkey.

Endnotes

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Tackling Global Challenges

Climate change, unprecedented human migration, new technologies, and an ongoing pandemic are just some of the issues the next administration will face from its first day in office. Working with international partners to tackle these problems will be essential to achieving meaningful progress. The next administration will need to return to multilateralism—with renewed commitments to rebuild the trust that was lost over the past four years—to tackle this growing list of global challenges.



The Trump administration has shredded the idea that the United States is willing to work with others to address shared challenges. This abandonment of international collaboration could not have come at a worse time, with the world confronting a series of pressing, era-defining challenges that demand cooperative responses. The pandemic has starkly illustrated the need for multilateral cooperation and reminded the world of the importance of international institutions. Unfortunately, the global response has too often been hamstrung by U.S. intransigence—it is the first global crisis in a century in which the United States has failed to play a leadership role. Beyond the pandemic, the next administration must recognize that long-term, transnational trends will severely stress governments and societies in the decades to come and focus on addressing the root causes of these stressors. Rather than retreat to our respective national corners, the United States needs to humbly recommit to international cooperation.

Climate change represents the greatest threat to humanity, bringing sweeping changes to our world and our societies and threatening security and stability in a range of ways. The interaction of the damage wrought by the effects of climate change with demographic trends and resource scarcity poses direct threats to U.S. national security and will undermine countries' capacity to maintain stability. Countries will face shortages of food and water and struggle to protect the basic livelihoods of vulnerable citizens, with the crisis disproportionately affecting the poor, women, children, and Indigenous communities. Changing environmental conditions will continue to disrupt rural livelihoods, contributing to decisions to migrate and further stressing overcrowded urban areas that are themselves being affected by climate change. More frequent and severe natural disasters will spark acute crises and displacement, straining governments' ability to respond. The worse this disruption becomes, the greater the risk of state collapse or violent conflict within and between states.

Along with a changing climate, unprecedented human migration will define the global landscape for the next U.S. administration and in the decades to come. While most people move in search of better economic opportunities, the United Nations reported that more than 79 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide today.¹ Nationalist governments and xenophobic leaders around the world routinely flout the international system set up to support refugees and asylum-seekers. Whatever moral suasion the United States once wielded as a major receiver of refugees has been lost as the Trump administration has vilified refugees and migrants, dramatically reduced refugee resettlement, and enacted policies that systematically violate human rights.

The challenge is acute and close to home. For example, more than 5 million Venezuelans have fled their country since 2015, with some 2 million more expected to flee in 2020.² Endemic violence, corruption, and poverty—exacerbated by climate change—in the Northern Triangle of Central America continue to drive out-migration from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. The next U.S. administration will have to address migration in the Americas, including any increase that may occur at the U.S.-Mexico border, with humane policies that allow people to exercise the right to seek asylum. These policies must also promote safe, legal, and orderly paths for those who wish to reunite with family abroad or seek out greater opportunity. Further afield, the Syrian refugee crisis continues to outstrip the international response, with some 6.7 million Syrians forced to flee the country and another 6 million internally displaced.³ This displacement has caused untold human suffering, placed severe strain on neighboring countries, and fed xenophobic right-wing populism across Europe. In South Asia, 900,000 Rohingya remain stateless and stranded in camps in southern Bangladesh.⁴ The United States has not mobilized sufficient resources to address these problems; it can and should do much more. Refugees comprise just one-tenth of 1 percent of the U.S. population; Germany, meanwhile, comfortably accommodates a refugee population more than 10 times greater as a share of population. As it addresses potential acute migration in the Americas, the next administration should also take early steps to begin rebuilding the international system in a way that protects the rights of the forcibly displaced.

Meanwhile, the United States has abandoned other long-term, bipartisan priorities such as arms control and nonproliferation. Under the Trump administration, the United States has plunged headlong into a new arms race with both Russia and China, directing billions to new strategic weapons, ending several arms control agreements, refusing to negotiate new controls, and contemplating resuming nuclear weapons testing. The Trump administration abandoned the Iran nuclear agreement with no plan for what followed. As a result, at the start of the next presidential term, Iran will be closer to a nuclear weapon than it was four years ago. In North Korea, too, the Trump administration has provided repeated propaganda victories to Kim Jong Un but has done nothing to slow or stop the North Korean nuclear and missile programs. The next administration—whether under former Vice President Joe Biden or a second-term Donald Trump—should cancel the most inflammatory of these new weapons programs and return to the path of negotiation to reduce the nuclear threat.

At a time when technological advances are outpacing legal regulation and social adaptation, the Trump administration has given up any pretense of coordinating international standards for emerging lethal and disruptive technologies. The proliferation of unmanned aerial vehicle technology in the past 20 years and the rapid spread of cyberwarfare offer two cautionary examples of what can happen when governments ignore

these emerging technological disruptors. Today, rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning offer authoritarian regimes the ability to synthesize massive stores of data to manipulate the truth and monitor dissent. These governments are aggressively pushing these tools of control to other would-be autocrats, while the United States has largely left the European Union alone in its effort to stand up for democratic regulation of these tools. The use of robotics and autonomous weapons will transform warfare, which could dramatically increase risks to civilian populations and fundamentally change the U.S. force structure. The militarization of space continues, threatening critical systems on which the entire world relies and, if left unchecked, threatening our very ability to explore the cosmos. The United States is doing too little to both secure its own technological security and establish humane, multilateral norms around the use of emerging technologies.

Far from taking up the mantle of American leadership to marshal international responses to these challenges—much less reform the international institutions designed to tackle them—the current administration has worked to undermine international institutions, reject multilateralism, and repeatedly attack long-standing norms of international behavior. The next administration must seek to outline collective responses, strengthen and renew international institutions, and reverse the retreat to nationalism that has characterized the Trump administration to date. At the heart of this rebirth must be an effort to define a new multilateralism, one that fulfills its obligations to established institutions but works with ad hoc groups of willing countries when older structures remain gridlocked. This effort will take time and require a difficult balance; U.S. officials will need to display humility to a world that has grown used to lies and bombast from the highest levels of the U.S. government while using power to advance collective solutions to the urgent problems confronting the country and the world. This return to multilateralism will require patience, accommodation, and cooperation to begin to earn back the trust of some of America's closest partners.

This new, collaborative U.S. approach to addressing global challenges should be built around five broad efforts to begin in the first 100 days of the next administration:

1. Put climate change at the center of U.S. foreign policy.
2. Implement a fair, humane, and workable approach to migration.
3. Make a new generational push on arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament.
4. Protect our values on technology.
5. Reinvigorate multilateralism.

The recommendations that follow provide a range of options for advancing these efforts.

Put climate change at the center of U.S. foreign policy

Accelerating climate change has the potential to catalyze a wide range of national security threats to the United States in the coming decades: plummeting U.S. and global prosperity; countries weakened by shortages of food and water; overturned livelihoods and accompanying displacement; increasing vulnerability to pandemic health risks; and governments destabilized by such crises. Immediate, aggressive global action will be needed to hold the global temperature increase to the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). CAP has outlined a strategy to limit U.S. CO₂ emissions to net zero by 2050 and return to international leadership on combating climate change.⁵ It is vital to the U.S. national interest that the next administration help coordinate global action to achieve urgently needed economic and social transformations at a massive scale in order not to surpass the IPCC's 1.5 C limit.

To do this, the next administration needs to put climate change and the effort to decarbonize the world by 2050 at the center of U.S. foreign policy.⁶ This reorientation will require a transformation in strategy, culture, and the budgets of the foreign policy and national security apparatus. Only the president can drive this transformation, and it will take years. As part of an initial push, in the first 100 days, the next administration should take the following steps.

- **Rejoin the Paris Agreement.** At the top of the list, of course, is the urgent need to rejoin the Paris Agreement. The Trump administration has promised to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement on November 4—the day after the 2020 election.⁷ While rejoining the agreement is not a panacea, it is an essential first step and an important signaling opportunity. The president should immediately declare his intent for the United States to rejoin. The formal return to the agreement could be achieved as soon as 30 days after inauguration but will require an updated climate commitment, or nationally determined contribution (NDC). Setting an appropriate NDC will require a complex policy, political, and technical process, but the president could commit to a science-based process to determine an NDC and promise its delivery by a date certain in 2021 such as Earth Day in April.



QUICK WIN: Issue a presidential policy directive declaring climate change a U.S. national security priority. This policy directive would outline a sweeping new U.S. diplomatic approach on climate change that treats it as a national security priority with the associated diplomatic focus and resourcing. This policy directive should include an explicit articulation of climate change as a leaders-level issue in all U.S. bilateral relationships and at all multilateral forums, including the UN, Group of Seven, Group of 20, NATO, East Asia Summit, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings.

- **Create a leaders-level climate forum, with a pledge to convene the first meeting at the U.N. General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2021.** The United States should propose that the existing Major Economies Forum (MEF) process—encompassing ministers from countries responsible for 75 percent of global emissions—be elevated to the leader level and commit to chair the first meeting during UNGA. At that meeting, the president should declare a U.S. commitment to the goal of global net-zero emissions by 2050 and seek each MEF leader’s commitment to the target. The meeting should also set a concrete action agenda for the MEF to include a strategy to promote the development and dissemination of sustainable technology, setting the MEF out as a venue to share policy ideas and best practices on decarbonization and a partner to support the clean energy efforts of multinational businesses.
- **Use trade and finance policy tools to drive climate action.** This could include implementing border adjustment mechanisms for imports from countries with inadequate climate policy as well as enforcement to advance global climate action and protect U.S. economic competitiveness.



QUICK WIN: Declare that the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and Export-Import Bank will immediately end U.S. financing for overseas fossil fuel projects and redirect their energy financing to fully clean energy-focused projects. The administration should then press other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development governments and other donors such as China to do the same.

- **Stand up a new review process to prohibit foreign investment in climate-damaging projects or acquisitions in the United States, using a mechanism similar to the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.** The next administration should work with Congress to provide new authorities to condition U.S. approval of potential foreign direct investment transactions into a given country against the investing party’s climate performance in its broader business activities. In addition, these authorities should allow the United States to prohibit foreign investments in climate-damaging projects in the country. These limitations would be controversial but would send a powerful signal of the need for immediate emission reductions and likely prompt changes in investor behavior.⁸

- **Push for regional transparency platforms.** The State Department should work with international groups and institutions such as the ASEAN, the European Commission, the Inter-American Development Bank, the African Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank to set up regional infrastructure investment transparency platforms to gather and publicize information on projects with major climate and environmental impacts such as investments made under the Belt and Road Initiative.⁹
- **Task all foreign affairs departments and agencies with generating new domestic and overseas positions dedicated to tackling climate change and declare the intent to seek necessary appropriations to fulfill the objective.** As a first step, the president should call for the creation of 500 new full-time employee slots at the U.S. Agency for International Development and the departments of State, Commerce, and Agriculture to build a cadre of officials engaged on international climate both overseas and in Washington.
- **Create a National Climate Council in the White House to spearhead executive action and champion legislation.** Overseen by an assistant to the president, the climate council should have a specialized support staff capable of directing action across the federal government and coordinating between state and local actors. The council should be comprised of Cabinet-level leadership and should work in conjunction with the National Security Council (NSC), the Defense Pricing and Contracting organization, and the Council on Environmental Quality to develop a strategy to propel rapid clean energy deployment, build resilience against climate change-induced disasters, and pressure reluctant actors to achieve the net-zero goal. The climate council should work to ensure there are strong links between domestic and foreign policy on climate change and aim to coordinate and guide the work of the executive agencies, not supplant them. More information on the need for a National Climate Council can be found in CAP’s report, “A 100 Percent Clean Future.”¹⁰
- **Seek funding from Congress to honor the \$2 billion U.S. pledge to the Green Climate Fund.** President Trump reneged on this pledge. As CAP has written previously, a \$6 billion pledge over three years would fund 100 new projects and catalyze nearly \$15 billion in co-financing.¹¹ This step should be framed as a minimum first step and paired with a declaration of the United States’ intent to dramatically increase climate-related bilateral foreign assistance programs on both the mitigation and adaptation fronts.

Implement a fair, humane, and workable approach to migration

The international system meant to deal with migration and forced displacement has been completely overwhelmed. Refugees and asylum-seekers face increasing state-sponsored refoulement, long-term detention and abuse, and xenophobic attacks. Extreme poverty and environmental degradation has sharply increased migration in the Americas and Africa, and the international community has done little to mitigate the root causes of these migration flows or adapt to their reality. Finally, the ongoing effects of COVID-19 bring significant new challenges, with intermittent border closures and other restrictions likely to persist well into the next presidential term.

As armed conflict, violent crime, and human rights abuses fuel forced displacement around the globe, intolerable economic conditions force people to flee their homes in search of better livelihoods and opportunities. Climate change is compounding these migratory pressures, contributing to more extreme and less predictable environmental conditions such as rainfall patterns and temperatures, more frequent natural disasters, and the wider spread of infectious diseases. These challenges will only get worse without serious global cooperation; some predict that as many as 320 million people could be forcibly displaced by 2030 without concerted global efforts.¹²

Meanwhile, the Trump administration has undertaken the worst possible response. It has adopted a punitive and counterproductive approach to deterring asylum-seekers and other vulnerable populations from seeking entry at the U.S. southern border and has sought to use coercion, rather than cooperation, to persuade regional partners to curb out-migration from their territories. Most recently, the Trump administration has used the coronavirus emergency as an opportunity to fully implement the kind of restrictive border policies it pursued long before the pandemic such as turning away all asylum-seekers and closing the southern border to nonessential travel.

Addressing the worst refugee crisis since World War II will require a comprehensive response that rethinks global protection for the forcibly displaced and combines traditional foreign policy tools such as humanitarian assistance, development aid, investment support, diplomacy, and climate change adaptation. While the United States is still the largest contributor to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR),

its contribution remains less than \$2 billion, a paltry sum in view of the scope of the crisis and the agency's requirements.¹³ To have credibility and any hope of mobilizing collective action, these efforts will need to be matched with domestic policy changes such as ending the de facto asylum ban and reforming asylum and refugee policy. And, given the scope of the challenge, the next administration must also dedicate serious efforts to rally partners in the international community to increase their own financial support and commitments to support the forcibly displaced. This effort will, of course, extend beyond the first 100 days, but the next administration could immediately set into motion a new U.S. approach by taking the following steps.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Take immediate action to bring U.S. immigration policy in line with international law and human rights.

Specifically, the next administration should:

- **Resume the processing of asylum claims with proper testing and precautions and rescind the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) coronavirus order at the U.S. northern and southern borders.** The CDC's COVID-19 order should be replaced with measures narrowly tailored to promote public health and preserve the legal right to fair and humane processing of requests for asylum.
- **Unwind the Migrant Protection Protocols with Mexico**, which has left some 50,000 asylum-seekers in often desperate circumstances on the Mexican side of the border, and begin transferring these cases to the United States for proper adjudication.
- **End the Humanitarian Asylum Review Process for Mexican nationals and the use of the Prompt Asylum Claim Review for non-Mexican nationals.** These programs deny asylum-seekers due process and restrict their ability to obtain necessary legal assistance before they undergo initial credible-fear screenings, resulting in faster deportation to potentially dangerous circumstances, in violation of U.S. and international law.
- **Tear up the asylum cooperative agreements with Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras—and perhaps others in the Americas as the Trump administration continues to pursue such agreements.** These agreements violate international law and have allowed the U.S. authorities under the Trump administration to deport asylum-seekers to third countries regardless of ties to that country and absent any thorough assessment of the safety of the person upon arrival.

- **Work to reestablish U.S. moral leadership on refugees and asylum-seekers.** The next administration should take concrete steps in the first 100 days to demonstrate a renewed commitment to protecting the rights of the forcibly displaced. The next administration should expand the processing of asylum and refugee claims, double the annual U.S. contribution to the UNHCR, and coordinate internationally to drive increased global refugee resettlement and assistance. The next administration should also review and consider revoking Executive Order 13888, which devolved significant power to state and local authorities over refugee resettlement decisions.¹⁴



QUICK WIN: Immediately raise the annual U.S. refugee admission cap to 125,000.

The next administration should immediately raise the annual admission cap to the level it was in 1990—and ask Congress to mandate a minimum requirement to be phased in over the following four years as the pipeline for resettlement is replenished with fully vetted candidates.



QUICK WIN: Protect longtime U.S. residents from deportation. The Trump administration announced the termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 7 of the 10 designated countries; those terminations are on hold due to court orders pending legal challenges. The hundreds of thousands of longtime residents protected by the TPS designations should be granted permission to remain in the country, either through the extension of their countries' TPS designations or through the president's authority to grant Deferred Enforced Departure.

- **Generate an action plan on the Northern Triangle in the first 100 days and work toward a leaders-level summit in Mexico in the first year.** The action plan should be built on the principle of addressing the root causes of out-migration and forced displacement from the Northern Triangle rather than further securitizing the border. It should combine humanitarian assistance, development aid, investment support, diplomacy, and climate change adaptation with traditional national security tools, while prioritizing executive action that can be taken immediately. In addition, the next administration should build toward co-convening a summit with the president of Mexico and the presidents of the Northern Triangle of Central America—El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—as part of a Mexico visit to launch a robust, joint strategy to manage and protect the rights of the forcibly displaced and those who seek better economic opportunities. The strategy should include programs that have been proven effective toward increasing government accountability, reducing violence and corruption, decreasing femicide and other gender-based harms, protecting vulnerable populations, and promoting sustainable economic development and climate change adaptation throughout Mexico and Central America.

- **Build toward a high-level global migration meeting on the margins of UNGA in September 2021.** Given the scale and impact of the global migration crisis, the next administration should work to galvanize multilateral action and rally partners in the international community to increase their own financial support and commitments to resettle and host refugees and to support the forcibly displaced.
- **Lead on Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian assistance.** The president should press Congress to allow Syrians who assisted U.S. forces to apply for special immigrant visas (SIVs) and expedite the processing of Iraqi SIV applicants. The next administration should redouble humanitarian efforts in Syria and neighboring countries, particularly Iraq, by asking Congress for special supplemental funding to provide additional humanitarian assistance to those fleeing Syria, more funds for refugee resettlement agencies and officers, and more funds for U.N. agencies and nongovernmental organizations working on the issue.
- **Announce a new U.S. policy on Venezuela that prioritizes the welfare of the Venezuelan people and supports regional efforts.** The next administration should focus U.S. policy toward Venezuela on coming to the aid of the Venezuelan people by:
 - Immediately granting TPS to Venezuelans living in the United States.
 - Ramping up humanitarian assistance for Venezuela’s neighbors laboring to care for the nearly 5 million Venezuelan refugees who have fled since 2015.
 - Depoliticizing humanitarian assistance provided to the Venezuelan people in Venezuela through nongovernmental and multilateral actors.
 - Ensuring U.S. sanctions do not block humanitarian aid flows to the Venezuelan people.
 - Investing in regional and global diplomacy to support a restoration of democratic order in Venezuela and return sovereignty to the Venezuelan people.

Make a new generational push on arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament

The next administration must recommit to efforts to reduce the proliferation of nuclear and conventional arms, constrain the spread of other emerging lethal technologies, and reduce the militarization of space. The Trump administration has undercut an arms control regime built up over decades that helped reduce tensions and the risks of nuclear accidents while plowing billions of dollars into new weapons with questionable strategic or military value. While some nuclear modernization is necessary, the size and form of these programs are increasingly destabilizing and costly, funneling money away from other priorities that do more to keep the country safe. Finally, the Trump administration has also done nothing to slow the adoption of new lethal technologies or to work with allies to establish international norms around their use, from those that allow for autonomous weapons to those that could render space a battlefield. The next administration must meet this increasingly dangerous moment with a new generational push in its first 100 days on all fronts to make the world a safer place while still defending U.S. security interests.

- **Stop the U.S. nuclear spiral.** The Trump administration accelerated a nuclear arms race by unilaterally withdrawing from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and beginning the development of new weapons prohibited by the treaty.¹⁵ Russia had cheated on the treaty, and China was not party to it, but the United States' withdrawal was clumsily managed, ceding the moral high ground and weakening the potential for a broader strategy to manage intermediate-range nuclear missiles. The Trump administration has also failed to negotiate a five-year extension to New START, which expires in February 2021, despite Russia's apparent willingness to do so, putting at risk the critical inspections and verification opportunities the treaty provides.¹⁶ The management of nuclear-armed intermediate-range missiles in the wake of the INF's demise is a more difficult problem that will not be resolved in the first 100 days of a next administration. The spread of these systems is now far advanced, and the U.S., Russian, and Chinese militaries have each built conventional variants of these missiles into core warfighting plans. But an attempt to manage this proliferation should be made; the risks of nuclear misunderstanding is too high given how quickly the missiles can reach their targets.



QUICK WIN: Appoint a U.S. special representative tasked with negotiating an extension of New START and engaging in consultations with allies on the future of the INF.

The representative should immediately begin efforts to restore international agreements and cooperation on these issues.



QUICK WIN: Announce a sustained U.S. ban on nuclear testing in the first 100 days and consider pushing for ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in the first term.

Doing so would demonstrate serious U.S. commitment to reducing nuclear tensions around the world.

- **Launch a new, comprehensive deterrence review.** To rationalize U.S. nuclear weapons plans, test Russian intentions, and lay the groundwork for a broad range of potential talks around arms control and nonproliferation, the administration should consider a range of steps that will cost little in strategic terms. First, the nuclear and strategic policy decisions taken under the current administration should be revisited in a new, comprehensive deterrence review. The deterrence review should replace the narrow Nuclear Posture Review and should involve the NSC and departments of State, Energy, and Defense, thereby examining the full range of concerns related to deterrence in their wider geopolitical context. The deterrence review should be presented to the president for final decisions. Pending the outcome of this review, the administration should take a series of steps to pause decisions that contribute to a spiraling arms race:
 - **Delay awarding the contract for the new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) (Ground Based Strategic Deterrent).** While the aging out of the current Minutemen III ICBMs requires attention, the contract should be paused pending the outcome of the deterrence review.
 - **Pause the contracts for the Long-Range Stand Off Weapon nuclear-armed cruise missile and the TLAM-N sea-launched version.** These new weapons add capabilities to the U.S. arsenal but are potentially destabilizing to global proliferation and could ultimately increase the risks of a nuclear exchange. Their contracts should be paused until the deterrence review is completed.
 - **Stop the deployment of the new low-yield tactical variant of the W-76 nuclear weapon.** This new weapon presents an extreme and unnecessary escalation risk because of the way it is deployed. The deployment of this system should be publicly paused pending the outcome of the deterrence review.

- **Resuscitate the Open Skies and Arms Trade treaties.** President Trump has likewise announced his intention to withdraw from the Open Skies Treaty, which was designed to reassure countries across Europe and the Atlantic about secret deployments through regular, approved surveillance flights.¹⁷ The next administration should recommit to the Open Skies Treaty because it is in U.S. interests. On conventional weapons policy, the next administration should also consider rejoining the Arms Trade Treaty and ask the Senate to give its advice and consent for the ratification of the agreement. The United States should support the regulation of the international conventional arms trade, particularly light weapons, which cause the overwhelming preponderance of combat and civilian deaths in the world's persistent conflicts. There is no competitive advantage placed at risk by taking this commonsense step.
- **Lead on demilitarizing space.** In a newer domain, the United States has also done little to stop the development of a space arms race or to protect the safety of critical systems in Earth's orbit. Along with GPS, communications and weather satellites play a crucial role in the global economy and contribute hundreds of billions of dollars to the U.S. economy. The U.S. military relies heavily on satellites for its communications, reconnaissance, and early-warning capabilities. The Pentagon's dependence on space-based capabilities creates real vulnerabilities. Without Defense Support Program satellites, for example, the United States would find itself blind against ballistic missile launches around the world. But peaceful access to space is also at risk. Chinese and Indian anti-satellite weapon tests have created orbital debris that will take decades to dissipate.¹⁸
 - **Launch a policy review of space-based capabilities and vulnerabilities.** This policy review should assess U.S. gains and setbacks in the space domain and consider policy options for offering constructive proposals to limit military competition in space, including an international arms control agreement to ban the testing of ground-, sea-, and air-launched anti-satellite weapons.
- **Lead international efforts to prevent the adoption of indiscriminate automated lethal weapons.** The next administration should conduct a policy review to develop options to limit the use of AI, particularly for lethal autonomy. The policy review should consider how best to engage with international bodies seeking effective ways to prevent indiscriminate automated weapons, including to clarify how the existing laws of war would apply to lethal autonomous weapons. The next administration should seek the international acceptance of theories of strict liability, command responsibility, and obligations to anyone fielding or employing autonomous lethal mechanisms.

Protect our values on technology

The United States also depends on a secure and open global network that extends beyond our shores and allows for fair and transparent e-commerce; supports freedom of expression and global information exchange; and protects users from cyber-threats abroad. The United States cannot simply pull up a drawbridge; we cannot defend ourselves without engaging with the world and building international norms. Coordinated international action is needed to keep the global internet open and secure as it migrates toward next-generation technology and to control the proliferation of dangerous or disruptive technologies.

The world's digital backbone is also its broadcast network. China's Huawei Technologies Co. reportedly has more than 50 commercial contracts to supply 5G equipment to other nations and a record of exercising control over network operations, including broadcast operations.¹⁹ Already, in Africa and Europe, fears are rising that China will use Huawei's influence on digital infrastructure to limit access to information or stifle dissent. The United States must therefore seek to compete for market share and assist other countries trying to ensure that rapid digitalization does not erode freedom of expression or access to reliable information. Digital-infrastructure financing should be made a priority focus for overseas aid to alleviate developing nations' dependence on China for affordable digital infrastructure. The United States provides more than one-third of global development aid and should seek to provide a digital alternative for developing nations, giving them access to secure technologies and advancing governance principles for a free and open internet.

Meanwhile, emerging technologies can allow totalitarian governments to control their populations. Several current, lightly regulated technologies already provide the tools to effectively control and manipulate people. Emerging technologies will increase the risks. The proliferation of smartphones, digital cameras, and other sensors tied to centralized cloud-based data centers provides the infrastructure for ubiquitous, near-constant surveillance. These sensor networks combined with massive advances in processing power and data analytics, facial recognition, and newer tools such as the automated determination of mood and emotion threaten the very concept of privacy. These capabilities can help deter and respond to nefarious activity but also provide

another way to control a population and suppress dissent. How these tools are used, including by law enforcement, and who has access to the data and under what circumstances, are all pressing questions. The next administration should follow the EU's lead and work to place citizens' privacy at the center of its norm-building at home and abroad and work to advance international standards to protect data privacy.

Likewise, authoritarian governments also now have potent new tools to influence the populations of other countries. Technologies for creating and disseminating false information, including fake full-motion video and audio that are effectively indistinguishable from genuine content are now widely available and rapidly improving. Social media provide a massive distribution system for fake information and allow for microtargeting of specific audiences. Massive bot networks can shape and control public debate with high degrees of deniability, while AI can allow for automatic adjustments to increase effectiveness at scale. The massive information attacks that characterized the 2016 election were crude compared with the threats the United States and its allies face as the relevant technologies mature.²⁰

The United States can no longer assume that values such as human dignity, universal rights, the rule of law, and democratic institutions will inevitably win out; the next administration must act to protect these values in the face of technological threats to their acceptance. But the United States should not act alone. Rather, the next administration should lead a global effort among democratic nations to adopt common governance principles for broadcast traffic in the digital era. Working with international partners who share our values, the democratic world should invest in capabilities to identify and respond to these threats and take strong action to deter and punish those who interfere in our democracies. That effort should also develop best practices for providing interoperability between free and open internet systems and those that utilize Chinese technology and governance principles. To help address concerns about American motives, the United States should enlist credible independent actors to pressure the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), and the International Telecommunication Union and 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) to challenge authoritarian efforts to erode the free and open global internet. Countering authoritarian influence at these standard-setting bodies will require the U.S. government to prioritize engagement in terms of staffing and resources, as the Chinese have already done.

- **Develop a U.S. strategy on digital technology.** In the first six months of the next administration, the White House should develop a new international strategy highlighting U.S. global objectives, values, and principles in digital technologies. This global strategy should be developed in conjunction with an expedited domestic strategy for digital technology. Priority should be given to coordinating with allies to promote democratic values in technology, pushing back against increasing disinformation and digital authoritarianism, and integrating with the next administration's cyberstrategy. This strategy should also prioritize digital-infrastructure financing in overseas aid to allow developing nations to develop affordable digital infrastructure free of authoritarian controls. The strategy should enlist credible independent actors such as the ICANN and IETF to challenge authoritarian efforts to erode the free and open global internet. This new approach could also provide research grants to encourage U.S. firms to participate in standard-setting meetings at bodies such as the 3GPP.
- **Task a national intelligence assessment on critical technology.** The director of national intelligence, in coordination with the secretaries of state, treasury, defense, and commerce, should produce a national intelligence assessment of which international technology standards are critical to national security—including 5G and hardware standards related to AI—and coordinate with democratic allies to ensure standards are protected at relevant international standards-setting meetings.
- **Stand up an international technology forum for like-minded democracies to develop common approaches and strategies.** This forum would provide allies who share concerns about emerging technology and its implications for free and open societies with a way to coordinate national strategies and develop multilateral approaches. This group could mobilize to counter abuse by authoritarian and nonstate actors and, eventually, become a vehicle to counter disinformation and develop shared principles governing the use of emerging technologies such as AI or microelectronics. This forum should complement existing international efforts such as the International Grand Committee on Disinformation.

Reinvigorate multilateralism

The next administration must embrace multilateralism, pursue collective responses to problems that transcend national borders, and strengthen and renew international institutions. Working with international partners is critical to addressing the most urgent challenges the United States will face, but the next administration must approach alienated partners with humility and with pledges to commit to transparent, honest, and cooperative relationships. This is fundamental to advancing U.S. interests, which rely on an open, democratic, and stable international system. Cooperative multilateralism also plays to the United States' strengths—primarily its robust alliance structures—and is the best way to reduce the demand on American resources for conflict resolution, disaster response, and economic rescue packages.

Currently, multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and its many component bodies as well as the World Trade Organization are under great pressure and are subject to persistent populist attacks. Yet the response to the 2008 economic crisis, the management of the eurozone debt crisis, the Paris Agreement, and the collaborative international response to the 2014 Ebola pandemic demonstrate how indispensable and effective these organizations and networks can be. The fractured, halting response to the COVID-19 pandemic—crippled by national rivalries, willfully ignorant populist leaders, and President Trump's attacks on the World Health Organization—only underlines the importance of good-faith multilateral cooperation. Indeed, the international success stories of the post-2008 period have often been the product of a new form of pragmatic multilateralism, one in which sometimes ad hoc groups of countries cooperated on issues of agreement when international bodies remained deadlocked and in which national governments worked more closely with nongovernmental actors to address pressing problems.

This new, pragmatic multilateralism devised flexible approaches to crafting a new set of sustainable development goals and helped conclude the Iran nuclear agreement and the Paris climate accord. This multilateralism—based on a diverse set of actors and coalitions of the willing—will need to be deepened and broadened by the next U.S. administration. Above all, the United States will have to show tangible commitment—

in money, material, and political concessions—to rejuvenate these efforts after years of attacks by the current administration. To begin this process, the next administration should engage in the areas outlined below—taken collectively, these steps will begin to restore trust in the United States as a good-faith actor interested in cooperative approaches. Presidential time in the first 100 days will be extremely limited, meaning the next administration has a short window to frame and affirm U.S. commitment to this new, pragmatic multilateralism.

- **Roll out a new multilateralism in a presidential speech at the Organization of American States (OAS).** The headquarters of the world’s oldest regional multilateral institution is less than a mile from the White House. In the first 100 days, the president should visit the OAS to deliver a speech outlining a new multilateralism focused on the following core principles:
 - That the most pressing challenges facing the United States and the world require cooperative, multilateral responses.
 - That the United States will recommit to these cooperative efforts, leading where possible and supporting when needed.
 - That the United States believes in the value of the U.N. system and existing multilateral institutions and will engage fully with those systems, but that the urgency of today’s global challenges sometimes requires pragmatic, ad hoc coalitions.
 - That cooperation will at times require either U.S. restraint or be marked by competitive multilateralism, but that a stable, peaceful international system is good for the United States and good for the world.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Make an early global anti-corruption push

Rampant corruption is undermining international systems and good government around the world, hollowing out the social compact that is the foundation of democratic governance. The next administration should make rooting out corruption and strengthening the rule of law a top priority, conceiving of it as a threat to international peace and security alongside climate change or terrorism. A major domestic and multilateral push on anti-corruption would also send a strong signal to competitors such as Russia and China that the United States views the rule of law as a comparative advantage to our system. This will require early steps at home and abroad, including:

- **Press Congress to pass legislation such as the ILLICIT CASH Act.** This will close loopholes in U.S. anti-money laundering regulations, levy meaningful fines on financial institutions which enable large-scale financial crimes, and require the collection of identifying information on the beneficial ownership of all financial entities created in the United States and all foreign entities involved in large transactions in the United States or with U.S. entities.²¹
- **Adopt the wide-scale use of geographic targeting orders.** These orders offer a powerful tool to crack down on high-risk locales—particularly in real estate transactions, one of the main ways in which oligarchs, warlords, and criminals launder their ill-gotten gains.
- **Propose a global corruption initiative.** This would harmonize standards, close regulatory and legal gaps, limit opportunities for arbitrage, and facilitate information exchange among the United States, United Kingdom, and EU—three entities that control the majority of cross-border financial transactions.
- **Reinvigorate U.S. participation in the Open Government Partnership.** In addition, the next administration should arrange a global anti-corruption conference modeled on a 2015 summit organized in the U.K.
- **Bolster multilateral judicial support missions in El Salvador and reestablish the missions in Guatemala and Honduras.** These efforts to support prosecutors and judges pursuing large-scale anti-corruption cases in Central America have led to hundreds of corruption convictions, helping boost transparent governance and faith in the rule of law.
- **Promote the establishment of an independent Inter-American Anti-Corruption Commission (IAACC) akin to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.** As a vehicle for this effort, the administration should push to add a protocol to the IAACC, the first anti-corruption convention of its kind.²² The starting blocks for the infrastructure of a new IAACC would be the Mechanism for the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption housed at the OAS. Work toward such a protocol could begin in the lead-up to the 2021 Summit of the Americas, which the United States is slated to host.
- **Increase funding for the Office of Foreign Assets Control and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor at the State Department.** Additional funding would allow these offices to vet and bring more cases under the Global Magnitsky Act, which provides for visa bans and sanctions on officials responsible for gross corruption or flagrant human rights abuses.

- **Instruct the interagency to formulate a plan to respond to the strategic use of corruption by authoritarian regimes.** The president should instruct the NSC to formulate a plan to respond to authoritarian efforts to use bribes, rigged contracts, and other illicit inducements to secure political influence, access to resources, or other advantages. The president should also instruct the departments of State and Defense to mainstream anti-corruption into their regional strategies.
- **Urge Congress to reinstate the Cardin-Lugar rule requiring Securities and Exchange Commission disclosure of payments for natural resources.** The president should push Congress to require the disclosure of payments to national governments. Disclosure provides transparency and discourages U.S. companies from making illicit payments for access to foreign natural resources, a significant portion of which often flow to corrupt or illegal parties.

Conclusion

The idea that the United States can protect itself and advance its interests by going it alone is deeply flawed. American success over the past century has been built upon alliances, prudent diplomacy, and cooperative approaches to shared problems. The country's greatest failures abroad have come when these principles—and our allies—have been ignored. As the coronavirus pandemic has starkly underlined, the profound challenges of climate change, migration, nuclear proliferation, and the abuse of emerging technologies can only be tackled with cooperative, multilateral approaches. By adopting the policies outlined above and pursuing a new spirit of cooperation, the next administration can begin to rebuild American influence and reconstitute a more effective and humane international system.



New executive orders or policies recommended in the first 100 days:

- Rejoin the Paris Agreement with an updated nationally determined contribution.
- Issue a presidential policy directive declaring climate change a U.S. national security priority.
- Make an early global anti-corruption push with new legislation and new tools.
- Announce a sustained U.S. ban on nuclear testing and launch a new, comprehensive Deterrence Review.
- Launch a policy review of space-based capabilities and vulnerabilities.
- Develop a U.S. strategy on digital technology.
- Extend TPS designations for the seven countries the Trump administration revoked, or grant Deferred Enforced Departure to affected individuals, in order to protect hundreds of thousands of longtime U.S. residents.



Executive orders or policies recommended for rescission or removal:

- **Migrant Protection Protocols with Mexico:** Violates the rights of asylum-seekers and expels them to possibly dangerous conditions in Mexico
- **Humanitarian Asylum Review Process for Mexican nationals and the Prompt Asylum Claim Review for non-Mexican nationals:** Programs that deny asylum-seekers due process
- **Asylum Cooperative Agreements with Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras:** Violates the rights of asylum-seekers and effectively forces them to abandon their claims
- **Executive Order 13888:** Devolves power on refugee resettlement decisions to state and local authorities

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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.

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Appendix

Important National Security Dates: 2020–2021

2020	November	3	Election Day
	December	10	Human Rights Day
2021	January	1	Council of the European Union presidency change to Portugal
		3	117th Congress begins
		20	U.S. presidential inauguration
	February	1	President's FY 2022 budget request due
		5	New START expires
		22	Start of 46th regular session of the U.N. Human Rights Council
	February–March		Munich Security Conference (date not yet confirmed)
	March	1	United States assumes presidency of the U.N. Security Council
		8	International Women's Day
		15	15th anniversary of the establishment of the U.N. Human Rights Council
		19	18th Anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq
	April	22	Fifth anniversary of the Paris Agreement
	May	2	Tenth anniversary of Osama bin Laden's death
		16	U.S. Armed Forces Day
		25	Memorial Day
	May–June	-	Iranian presidential election (date not yet confirmed)
	May–August	-	G-7 summit will be hosted by the United Kingdom (date not yet confirmed)
Late May	-	Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore (date not yet confirmed)	
June	20	World Refugee Day	

July	1	Council of the European Union presidency change to Slovenia
	4	Independence Day
August	19	U.N. World Humanitarian Day
August–September		German federal election (date not yet confirmed)
September	6	Labor Day
	11	20th anniversary of 9/11
	14	U.N. General Assembly opening date
	21	U.N. General Assembly opening of the general debate
September–November	-	G-20 summit will be hosted by Italy (date not yet confirmed)
October	7	20th anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan
November	-	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit and East Asia Summit (dates not yet confirmed)
	11	Veterans Day
December	7	80th anniversary of Pearl Harbor
	10	Human Rights Day
	26	30th anniversary of the collapse of the Soviet Union
	-	Manama Dialogue in Bahrain (date not yet confirmed)
Late 2021	-	United States hosts Summit of the Americas (date not yet confirmed)
	-	NATO summit meeting in the United Kingdom (date not yet confirmed)

Appendix

Partnering with Congress

The following collection of recommendations from this report—arranged by committee—involve legislative initiatives that the next administration, in partnership with Congress, should begin within its first 100 days:

Appropriations:

Signal a meaningful shift in national security resourcing by increasing State Department funding. Specifically, the next administration should fund 1,000 new State Department full-time equivalent positions to grow the U.S. diplomatic presence overseas and begin rebuilding a more diverse workforce aligned to emerging threats. Five-hundred of these slots should be reserved to build a cadre of officials engaged on international climate issues. (see pages 5–30)

Generate a new workforce to tackle climate change by creating 500 new full-time employee slots at the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of Commerce, and the Department of Agriculture to work on international climate. (see pages 96–119)

Increase USAID’s budget, with a significant focus on global health and climate change. Regional funding should be directed to hard-hit countries and regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, Central America, Southeast Asia, and the Balkans. (see pages 5–30)

Phase out the use of the Overseas Contingency Operations account and propose targeted reductions to the Pentagon’s budget. The defense budget should prioritize investments in capabilities most likely to deter provocative action from China and Russia. (see pages 5–30)

Increase global health funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by supporting an additional \$250 million in emergency funding for the global health program to aid the COVID-19 response. (see pages 120–132)

Reestablish USAID’s PREDICT program, which helps to identify and combat viruses that can generate global pandemics. (see pages 120–132)

Commit to a multiyear U.S. foreign and security assistance package for Afghanistan to demonstrate a clear U.S. commitment to the Afghan people. (see pages 54–77)

Restore U.S. assistance to the Palestinian Authority by reversing the previous administration’s hold and ease or lift existing legislative restrictions on this assistance to create positive incentives for diplomatic progress. (see pages 54–77)

Fully resource the Global Fragility Act by supporting it with adequate appropriations. (see pages 54–77)

Fully fund the U.S. pledge to the Green Climate Fund at \$2 billion. (see pages 96–119)

Lead on Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian assistance, including through supplemental financial assistance for those fleeing conflict in the region. (see pages 96–119)

Transfer the Defense Department’s security assistance accounts, which mirror the State Department’s security assistance programs to ensure that security assistance policy aligns with the overall U.S. diplomatic strategy. (see pages 5–30)

Armed services:

Ensure that the administration implements National Defense Authorization Act provisions on election interference, including by creating a counter-malign influence center at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and a social media data center as well as by appointing a counter-foreign influence coordinator. (see pages 31–53)

Limit the use of the Insurrection Act by putting in place appropriate checks on presidential use of the military—including against peaceful protests—and by closing loopholes that allow its inappropriate invocation. (see pages 5–30)

Pass and fully fund the Pacific Deterrence Initiative to improve U.S. deterrence against China. (see pages 78–95)

Foreign relations and affairs:

Repeal and replace the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force to more tightly bind the use of force to regular affirmations of public consensus via congressional debate and votes. (see pages 54–77)

Pass a State Department authorization bill that reexamines and prioritizes the role of diplomacy in U.S. foreign policy. (see pages 54–77)

Establish new parameters and strategic objectives for arms sales that embed human rights in U.S. policy and prevent partners from using American weapons for purposes that violate our standards. (see pages 5–30)

Establish an annual floor for refugee resettlement in line with global need in order to prevent future administrations from gutting U.S. refugee admissions, as proposed in the Refugee Protection Act of 2019. (see pages 31–53)

Pass new anti-corruption legislation, such as the ILLICIT CASH Act, to close loopholes in existing U.S. laws and improve transparency on foreign financial influence, including through a ban on political spending by U.S. corporations with an appreciable amount of foreign ownership and/or control. (see pages 31–53 and 96–119)

Create a program that provides special immigrant visas (SIVs) for Syrians who assisted U.S. forces and expedite the processing of Iraqi SIV applicants. (see pages 96–119)

Rules and administration:

Pass legislation on election interference that strengthens deterrence mechanisms and provides funds to prevent future cases of interference. (see pages 31–53)

Appendix

Travel and Foreign Engagement

Official travel provides an important opportunity for an administration to reward allies, solidify partnerships, and signal strategic shifts. While travel may be limited due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the next administration should prioritize the following international engagements, recommended in this report:

The president:

Canada: The president-elect should prioritize his first international engagement with Canada by traveling to the country prior to inauguration if possible—and if not, by participating in a public virtual event with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. After inauguration, the president should invite the Canadian prime minister to an early meeting at the White House. (see page 47)

The European Union (EU) and NATO: The president’s first international trip—as soon as such travel is possible—should be to Europe, with a first stop in Brussels to visit the EU and NATO headquarters. (see page 81)

Mexico: Before inauguration but after engagement with Canada, the president should extend an invitation to the Mexican president for either a virtual meeting or, if safe, one in the United States. After inauguration and following his first trip to Europe to visit the EU and NATO, the president should travel to Mexico to signal the importance of the U.S.-Mexico relationship. (see page 47)

The vice president:

Germany: In February 2021, the vice president should invest in mending the rift between the United States and its allies by leading a high-profile delegation to the Munich Security Conference, either virtually or in person. (see page 82)

African democracies: Once travel is permitted, the vice president should lead a high-level U.S. delegation to visit key democratic African countries, signaling a new era in productive relations. (see page 85)

The Cabinet:

Mexico: The secretaries of state, homeland security, energy, and commerce should each prioritize engagement with Mexico, either virtually or in person, to pursue a coordinated, forward-looking agenda on bilateral issues such as trade, energy, and migration. (see page 83)

Japan, South Korea, and Australia: In a show of support for America's democratic allies in the Asia-Pacific region, the secretaries of defense and state should prioritize a joint visit to Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand—ideally within the first 100 days or virtually, pending health restrictions. (see page 84)

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