

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Messaging Guidance: The Coronavirus Epidemic and U.S. Foreign Policy

### Topline Takeaways:

- The greatest human security challenges of the 21st century — climate crisis, global inequality, and yes, pandemics — don't have military solutions. The coronavirus outbreak reveals that the foreign policy status quo has left us unprepared to confront them.
- The U.S. has spent trillions of dollars fueling an overpowered Pentagon while underfunding public health measures and other human needs both at home and abroad.
- A “Great Power Competition” mindset has undermined our ability to cooperate with China, and other countries, to address global crises.
- Broad, sectoral U.S. sanctions were already inhumane and ineffective. Now, they're proving a global health liability.
- U.S. global economic policies have long prioritized corporate profits at the expense of public health, particularly for countries in the Global South.
- One of the most disturbing outcomes of the coronavirus outbreak has been the depth of xenophobia, particularly anti-Chinese hatred, that it has revealed.

### **The U.S. has spent trillions of dollars fueling an overpowered Pentagon while underfunding public health measures and other human needs both at home and abroad.**

- Centers for Disease Control funding has [dropped](#) by 10% since Trump took office.
- Earlier this month, Trump [proposed](#) a Fiscal Year 2021 budget that would *halve* U.S. funding for the World Health Organization, cutting a total of \$3 billion from global health programs. For comparison, last year's Pentagon budget was \$740 billion.
- So far, the Trump administration has requested a \$2.5 billion budget supplemental to combat the coronavirus — almost exactly as much as the Pentagon spent on the newest model of aircraft carrier... [in cost overages alone](#).
- Lack of [accessible, affordable healthcare](#), and the inability of many working people to take [sick leave](#) has left the United States vulnerable to the effects of pandemics.

### **A “Great Power Competition” mindset has undermined our ability to cooperate with China, and other countries, to address global crises.**

- In the decades of fearmongering that have accompanied China's growth in influence, our countries' ability to work together to confront shared challenges has been severely undermined. As two Carnegie Endowment China experts recently [wrote](#), the coronavirus outbreak “has demonstrated just how low bilateral ties have sunk.”
- Many have even seized on the outbreak itself as an opportunity to [push](#) their jingoistic anti-China agenda.

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- While the Chinese government has committed numerous human rights abuses that should be condemned, this critique is distinct from the military mindset that advocates power competition at all costs, and should not preclude cooperation on global challenges like the climate crisis and coronavirus.

## **Broad, sectoral U.S. sanctions were already inhumane and ineffective. Now, they're proving a global health liability.**

- The foreign policy status quo reflexively uses blanket sanctions to strong-arm foreign governments despite the mass [suffering](#) they unleash on civilian populations.
- U.S. sanctions on [Iran](#) and [North Korea](#) have exacerbated the threat posed by the coronavirus, constraining access to vital health care resources.
- Congresswoman Ilhan Omar's recent [Pathway to PEACE](#) legislative package includes a measure to rein in the overuse of sanctions as a punitive tool.

## **U.S. global economic policies have long prioritized corporate profits at the expense of public health, particularly for countries in the Global South.**

- Every year, the Global South [loses](#) hundreds of billions of dollars to illicit financial flows — many times what it receives in all foreign aid combined. These are funds that could otherwise be spent on vital human needs, like public health. The U.S. is one of the main [actors behind](#) the system of financial secrecy and tax havens that enables this.
- Decades of World Bank and International Monetary Fund loan conditions requiring privatization have [decimated](#) public health care systems across the Global South.
- From World Trade Organization rules on [intellectual property](#) to trade agreement dispute settlement systems that [undermine](#) domestic health regulations, the global rules of trade have consistently put profits before public health.

## **One of the most disturbing outcomes of the coronavirus outbreak has been the depth of xenophobia, particularly anti-Chinese [hatred](#), that it has revealed.**

- In some cases, this racism has been interpersonal and direct: the [bullying](#) or [assault](#) of Asian Americans.
- Others have been subtler, but no less insidious: a [drop](#) in visits to Chinese restaurants, [insinuations](#) that China, or Chinese people, are inherently less sanitary, or the dubbing of the disease as the “[Wuhan](#)” or even “[Chinese](#)” coronavirus.
- Decades of waging war against countries with predominately non-white populations, bipartisan [anti-China rhetoric](#), and dehumanizing treatment of migrants and refugees have fed this xenophobic response.