

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: Dems at a Crossroads

The Takeaway:

- Representative Engel's apparent defeat by progressive challenger Jamaal Bowman is one sign of a larger trend: the people are rejecting the failed foreign policy status quo.
- The Democratic Party must adapt to the changing times. To start, Dem leadership should ensure that the next HFAC Chair is committed to advancing a progressive foreign policy. Presumptive nominee Joe Biden should ensure the same for his transition team.
- In the meantime, Dems can prove their credentials by supporting cuts to the Pentagon budget and repealing the 2001 AUMF in this year's NDAA and appropriations process.

The Foreign Policy Tides Are Turning: Will Dems Follow Suit?

Maybe it's the global pandemic that has proven unequivocally that we can't bomb our way to peace and security. Maybe it's the nationwide uprisings against violence-first institutions. Or maybe it's simply that we're tired of decades of endless war. Whatever brought us to this turning point, one thing is clear: across the country, people are waking up to the disastrous failures of the foreign policy status quo and demanding a new, progressive alternative.

But as the changing times become increasingly undeniable, the question remains: are the Democrats willing to change with them?

A Sign of Things To Come in New York

Representative Eliot Engel's probable defeat at the hands of progressive challenger Jamaal Bowman had many causes. But chief among them was Engel's [long record](#) of kowtowing to war hawks and the weapons industry: Engel supported the 2003 Iraq War, he was one of the few Democrats to oppose the Iran nuclear deal, he is a vocal ally of human rights abusers abroad, from Saudi Arabia to Egypt to Israel — he even opposed a measure that would have banned selling indiscriminately-deadly cluster munitions to Saudi Arabia for use in Yemen back in 2016.

Distinguishing himself from this ghastly record was a deliberate [piece](#) of Bowman's successful campaign: "My opponent accepts donations from corporations and arms manufacturers like

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Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon,” Bowman said. “He supports a hawkish and costly foreign policy agenda instead of focusing on the communities in our district that have been neglected for far too long.” As our Executive Director Stephen Miles [writes](#): Bowman realized what Engel didn’t: “It’s bad politics for Democrats to be hawkish on foreign policy.”

Who Will Head HFAC?

With the likely defeat of Engels, who served as the Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC), Democrats now have a chance to prove that they’re not stuck in the past. With the Chair spot open, Democratic leadership [must prove](#) that they’re willing to break from the status quo by selecting a replacement who opposes knee-jerk militarism, prioritizes cooperation over competition, and is willing to fight for justice for people around the world.

New Administration, Same Old Blob?

But Congressional Dems are not the only ones at the crossroads. With the nomination all but wrapped up, the Joe Biden campaign is left with the task of selecting a foreign policy team to determine the course of his potential presidency. This selection process is already shaping up to be a battle between the old guard and the new. Recent reporting shows that many top advisors come straight from — and have grown wealthy off of — the corrosive, for-profit influence-peddling world of [“strategic consulting.”](#) Others are already drawing heat for their roles in targeted killing programs and obstructing accountability for torturers during the Obama administration. In other words, ensuring that Biden’s foreign policy team isn’t just a retread of a deeply-flawed Obama administration is going to take pressure.

Personnel is Policy

That’s why, this week, Win Without War and thirty other progressive organizations signed [a joint letter](#), calling on the Vice President to ensure that the personnel of his transition team, and a potential future administration, meet a number of progressive principles. These include recognizing the climate crisis as a critical national security threat, committing to cutting the Pentagon budget, and more. The letter also calls to disqualify anyone who opposed the Iran nuclear deal, deny the right of U.S. citizens to boycott in protest of foreign government actions, or have worked for an organization that receives funds from authoritarian regimes.

Dismantle Systems of Oppression

For far too long, foreign policymaking has been dominated by a small cabal of white cis men. One critical step toward bringing foreign policymaking into line with the times is ensuring that it is determined by those who have traditionally been excluded: Black and Indigenous people, other people of color, Muslims, cis women, trans and gender non-conforming people. But it’s not enough to [check the diversity box](#) and continue along the same old path. Dems must also ensure that their foreign policy [actively dismantles](#) systems of oppression – including the ways in which these systems fuel the ideas that are considered in policymaking.

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A Chance to Get With The Times

But bringing the Democratic Party's foreign policy into the twenty-first century is not just about finding fresh blood — those who are willing to recognize the turning tides and prove their progressive credentials have a chance to do so *right now*. With the defense authorization and appropriation processes in full swing, Dems in Congress will soon face a number of key questions: will they support Rep. Barbara Lee's [proposal](#) to repeal the long-abused 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF)? Will they join the growing movement behind Sens. Sanders, Markey, and Warren's and Reps. Pocan, Lee, and Jayapal's [amendments](#) to redirect 10% from the Pentagon budget to programs that fight poverty, create jobs, and invest in education and health care? Will they sign on to Rep. Lee's resolution calling to [slash](#) the Pentagon budget by \$350 billion? Each of these votes offers Dems a clear choice: double down on the failed, unpopular status quo, or chart a new path forward?

People Power for a Progressive Foreign Policy

As the likely defeat of Eliot Engel has [made clear](#), "the old Washington mantra that 'voters don't care about foreign policy' fundamentally misunderstands the intelligence and wisdom of the American public." At a world historic moment, people across the country, fueled by the long struggle of the anti-war movement, are demanding a break from the disastrous establishment dogma. The tides are turning toward [a new, progressive vision](#) for U.S. foreign policy. Democrats must ask themselves: will they get on board before it's too late?

BURIED LEDES

As the U.S. grapples with its ongoing racist violence, **maybe it's time to apply peacebuilding techniques at home**. Maher Akremi and WWW's Caroline Smith [contend](#) that techniques learned in West Africa and the Congo should be used to build trust and save lives at home.

Joe Cirincione and WWW's Erica Fein [argue](#) that this election season, **Democrats must reevaluate the costs and priorities of national security**. COVID-19 and the BLM movement have proven that more money will not translate to more security.

Is Trump trying to [spark](#) a confrontation in the South China Sea? Before he gets his chance, we must unequivocally condemn his anti-China fearmongering and reject the logic of the new Cold War.

The United States needs to do more than [acknowledge](#) its dark history if it wants to ensure national security. If policymakers don't understand their fellow citizens and constituents, they can't be trusted to understand our allies and enemies abroad.

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After the Trump administration introduced a cruel new directive that would strip international students of their visas if courses were taught online, **Harvard, MIT, and the Association of American Universities** [sued](#) to block the policy.

Though the EU continues to work towards a new partnership agreement with the United Kingdom, Chancellor Angela Merkel [said](#) that **they should also prepare for an abrupt, “no-deal” Brexit by the end of the year.**

After weeks of downplaying the scale of the COVID-19 outbreak in Brazil, **President Jair Bolsonaro** has [tested positive](#) for the virus.

Russia and China [vetoed](#) a cross-border aid extension to Syria in the UN Security Council. The operation would have allowed supplies to enter Syria without interference from the Syrian government.

And finally, thanks to a Japanese theme park’s COVID-19 regulations, **we now have an** [official slogan](#) for the year 2020.