

## **Win Without War's Questions for House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Candidates**

### **Responses from Rep. Joaquin Castro, Vice Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee**

**If you were to be selected for the HFAC Chair position:**

#### **1. What concrete steps would you take toward putting an end to, and preventing more, endless wars?**

- As Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, I will reassert Congress' sole constitutional authority to declare war and authorize the use of force. I support repealing the Authorizations for the Use of Military Force passed in 2001 and 2002. I have voted to repeal both of these in the past, which have been used by consecutive administrations to justify military action far beyond their original intent.
- More generally, Congress must reassert the responsibility the constitution entrusted in us in deciding matters of war and peace. The truth is that the executive branch's accumulation of the war powers in recent decades is not only a story of power-hungry Presidents seizing more authority—Congress has at least been complacent. I believe it is time to re-balance that relationship between the executive and legislative branch. The War Powers Act and other similar laws were passed in response to the corruption and overreach of the Nixon era. We need a similar effort today to pass laws that strengthen congressional power, including updating or replacing laws like the War Powers resolution.
- We also need to rebuild our infrastructure of diplomacy so we can pursue a diplomacy-first foreign policy, rather than turning to military force as the first option in many crises. That is why I have called for passing a new Foreign Service Act and building a 21<sup>st</sup> century State Department.

#### **2. Would you use the committee process to seek a repeal of the 2001 and 2002 Authorizations for Use of Military Force? If so, would you seek a replacement AUMF?**

- I have repeatedly called for the repeal of the 2001 and 2002 Authorizations for the Use of Military Force and voted on numerous occasions to repeal them. More specifically, I have voted to end the War in Afghanistan, our assistance to Saudi Arabia in Yemen, and on bills requiring President Trump to seek Congressional approval for the use of force against Iran. As Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, we'd absolutely take up those efforts as a top priority.
- I believe the Congress must take a closer look at the impact of the 2001 and 2002 AUMFs and use the committee process to build support for a repeal of those AUMFs. If there is a need for further military action, the Congress must assert itself in debating and considering new AUMFs that are narrow in scope.

#### **3. How would you reclaim Congress's Article I authority under the Constitution to decide when and where the U.S. goes to war?**

- As I explained in announcing my candidacy, one of the reasons I am inspired to run for chair is to assert "Congress must reassert its role under Article I of the U.S. Constitution to restrain executive power," with a particular focus on the war powers. As I've shown previously with both words and action, that begins with repealing the 2001 and 2002 AUMFs and not shirking from the hard choices

of war and peace as Congress has done too often in the past. I would also be open to updating or passing a new Wars Power Resolution since that legislation clearly failed to have the impact that Congress intended.

- The Committee can have an important role to play in scrutinizing an administration's plans to use military force, including through hearings and oversight. I believe that we should only authorize military action when in direct defense of American lives and our treaty allies, and that it must be done in accordance with our values. I would also look for how we would work with our allies to act multilaterally, the implications for any military action on U.S. and international law, and whether the plan of action has clear, achievable, objectives and a plan for what comes next.

**4. What steps would you take to end the use of surveillance and other civil rights-violating tools of the post-9/11 police state against people in the United States, particular people of color?**

- Just as we need to repeal the post 9/11 AUMFs, we also need to re-examine the surveillance and other powers given to law enforcement and police in this country in the name of fighting terrorism. Not only as a Member of Congress but also as an American citizen, I object to the militarization of our police forces, who are supposed to protect citizens. They don't need weapons of war to accomplish that task.
- I think in the immediate aftermath and shock of 9/11, Congress gave law enforcement far too much power. We've long since realized this was a mistake, and people of color are too often the victims. Congress needs to scale back those powers, and I fully support doing so. What we saw this year, with the death of George Floyd only raises the urgency of this task.
- I'm also alarmed by the growing surveillance powers of authoritarian regimes around the world and how tech companies, including those in the United States, can enable those powers. Many countries, especially China, are using new and emerging technologies to erect what can only be described as Orwellian surveillance states. What we see today in Xinjiang in terms of surveillance and tracking could spread across China and is already being exported abroad. These authoritarians also rely on a lot of Western technology. This technology-enabled authoritarianism presents an existential threat to democracy, freedom, and liberty everywhere. The United States needs to take this threat more seriously than we currently are. As chair of HFAC, I would absolutely be focused on working with my colleagues to highlight these issues in the Committee and taking corrective actions such as on export controls for surveillance technology.

**5. 21st century challenges require robust diplomatic solutions. What would you do to prioritize non-violent forms of engagement to international challenges?**

- We need a new generation of foreign policy leadership with a new vision that promotes inclusive prosperity and democracy at home and a more holistic view of security abroad. I believe we must put diplomacy at the center of our strategy and rebuild America's infrastructure of diplomacy to achieve a more open, peaceful and just world. That's why I'm running for Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.
- I'm the only member of the House of Representatives that has served on the Foreign Affairs, Armed Services, and Intelligence committees — the nexus of American national security and U.S. foreign policy. Working at the intersection of diplomacy, defense and intelligence, I've come to fully appreciate the power of diplomacy to shape the world as it ought to be. Unfortunately, our foreign

policy has been dominated by military and other coercive tools like sanctions. The costs to us have been high and the benefits few. Additionally, civilians abroad have too often suffered as a result.

- Reversing this requires a rebuilding of America's infrastructure of diplomacy. The U.S. State Department needs to attract the best and the brightest and our diplomats should reflect the diversity of America. As Chair of HFAC, I will spearhead a new Foreign Service Act, which hasn't been updated in forty years. This would help us field a Foreign Service and State Department that reflects America's diversity and attracts the different skills needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, from climate and computer scientists to medical doctors and health experts.
- A new Foreign Service Act would also ensure our diplomats and civil servants receive the training and education they need to do their job. It would also assure that our trained diplomats are empowered to do their jobs and not undercut by unqualified political appointees or other agencies.

**6. Would you oppose U.S. attempts at foreign regime change, whether outright military force, covert operations or other harmful coercive tactics, such as blanket economic sanctions?**

- Our country has too often relied on the use of military force or coercion to change governments we disagree with, resulting in tragedy. The consequences of these policies, whether in Iraq or in Latin America are clear and continuing.
- I have been clear on the futility of military action, co-sponsoring or supporting bills that oppose the use of military force in Venezuela, Iran, and Yemen.
- The Trump administration's 'maximum pressure' campaign on Iran to bring down the Iranian government through sanctions has failed, and I have consistently opposed this policy in favor of a return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action that would reduce sanctions on Iran and place real limits on its nuclear program.

**7. Would you take immediate steps to end the inhumane and counterproductive use of blanket sanctions, such as those on Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, and North Korea? Would you support requiring congressional approval of executive branch sanctions under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA)?**

- For too long, our foreign policy has been dominated by military and other coercive tools like sanctions. The costs to us have been high and the benefits few. Far too often, the primary victims abroad are civilians whom we should be seeking to empower, not impoverish. We need to move beyond blunt punitive measure and reactive crisis management and recommit to proactive diplomacy to shape a better tomorrow.
- I believe Congress, when considering any sanctions, should prioritize targeted sanctions that are part of a diplomatic strategy. I also believe that they should not hurt innocent civilians while entrenching authoritarians and fraying our alliances, as the Trump administration's approach towards Iran has done. Put differently, our sanctions must be paired with a broader strategy to achieve specific objectives—not simply to inflict pain on countries because we don't like their governments.
- As someone who believes very strongly that Congress must retake its Article 1 powers, I also think we must assert ourselves into the sanctions process more forcefully. President Trump has abused emergency powers available to him, ranging from the use of Department of Defense funding to build

his border wall to expanding sanctions without strategy or concern for those affected. I believe we must reappraise these authorities to ensure no President can abuse them and that Congress has a direct say in their use.

**8. How would you use your position to pressure the Israeli government to end the occupation of the West Bank and blockade of Gaza, disband illegal settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and respect Palestinian human rights?**

- I have been clear that the United States should work to achieve a two-state solution that ensures security, freedom, prosperity, and dignity for all Israelis and Palestinians. The United States should not be complicit in any efforts by the Israeli government to unilaterally annex any part of the West Bank, including by prohibiting the use of U.S. security assistance for annexation.
- If the United States is to have a leading role in facilitating a resolution to this conflict, we need credibility with both sides and to hear from those who too often have not had the opportunity to make their case. For that reason, I believe it is critical to rebuild the U.S.-Palestinian relationship and restart assistance to the Palestinians, re-open the consulate to the Palestinians in Jerusalem, and the Palestinian mission in Washington, D.C.
- If elected chair, I would oppose Israeli actions such as the continued expansion of settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem that entrench the occupation and make peace a more distant reality, including by highlighting the personal experiences of Israelis and Palestinians affected by these policies and the consequence of a stalled peace process.

**9. What steps would you take to ensure that the rules of trade and the global economy prioritize people and the planet over corporate profit?**

- I believe that foreign policy starts at home. Our ability to promote peace and human rights on the world stage is directly connected to our capacity to advance equality and justice in the United States. Increasingly, we see the corrupting influence of money in politics undermining our society as well as foreign nations.
- While it's true our power internationally depends on our strength domestically, we can never lose sight that U.S. foreign policy is not an end in itself. Rather, it's a tool for protecting the United States and improving the lives of the American people.
- Our trade policy must advance the rights of workers and protect the environment. We must rethink trade to benefit workers and the planet, not just corporations and their shareholders. The U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) shows that when progressives push back, we can secure better agreements. The agreement isn't perfect, but it's a good start that we can build upon.
- The Foreign Affairs Committee can play an important role in advancing a progressive vision on trade, speaking to the consequences of badly negotiated agreements and the importance of progressive priorities in trade policy, including by hearing from those affected by the agreements and putting pressure on trade partners to live up to their commitments under agreements like the USMCA.
- This is something that I have already, including in pushing the administration to coordinate our reopening with Mexico to ensure the safety of both Mexican and American workers.

**10. Will you commit to using the committee's power to seek a ban on weapons sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE for a period of at least 3 years for their abuses in Yemen? If not, please explain. What steps would you take to end the rubber stamp of arms exports more generally?**

While Saudi Arabia was never leading Freedom House's rankings for freedom and democracy, the Kingdom has fundamentally changed under Mohammed bin Salman's leadership, and our relationship with Saudi Arabia must change accordingly. The United States cannot be complicit in MBS' aggression, from his brutal war in Yemen to his brazen murders of dissidents, rivals, and journalists such as Jamal Khashoggi.

- Arm sales are important part of this. I agree with at least temporarily suspending arm sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE so we can investigate what role U.S. assistance to these countries has played in contributing to the suffering in Yemen.
- These arms sales are a key part of how our country has contributed to the tragedy in Yemen, a consequence of the Saudi-led war in that country. The same extends to our relationship with the UAE, where I oppose the sale of F-35 fighters and armed drones to a country that has played a key part in the war in Yemen. I oppose such arms sales.
- As I've said here and elsewhere, Congress needs a bigger role in approving arms sales. The Trump administration has abused the current laws that provide far too much flexibility for a President to abuse. We need to urgently fix those.

**11. The world is currently experiencing the greatest forced displacement crisis in history. What steps would you take to protect displaced peoples, asylum-seekers, and refugees, and to end the United States' role in the root causes of forced migration?**

- I believe America must be a beacon of hope for the oppressed and a place of refuge for the vulnerable. Today, almost 80 million people are displaced — the highest number since the Second World War.
- As Chair, I will put our country's identity as a nation of immigrants at the forefront of our foreign policy. We must also address the fact that too often our foreign policy has been a driver of displacement from Central America to the Middle East, while rising sea levels and extreme weather are creating climate refugees. We need to address the root causes of migration while also doing our part to welcome new Americans. Although immigration mostly falls under the purview of separate committees, under my leadership HFAC would play a much larger role in addressing the root causes and making global displacement a top priority of U.S. foreign policy.

**12. How would you address the role of U.S. militarism in driving the climate crisis?**

- Climate change presents an existential threat to not only the United States but the world. We are already seeing its tragic impact more and more, most recently with the massive fires throughout the western states. Addressing climate change needs to be our top priority, and we need to explore every avenue in doing so.
- I am an original co-sponsor of the Green New Deal resolution introduced this Congress, which has specific language on the need for an international approach to combat climate change. I look for the

committee to play a role in any climate legislation the next Congress will consider to address U.S. international leadership in confronting climate change.

- The effects of climate change are and will be felt the hardest in countries that already suffer from deep inequality, public corruption, unaccountable governments, and fragile economies. Along with re-joining the Paris Climate Accords and building on it, the United States needs to double-down on development assistance to strengthen societies around the world to build resilience against the effects of a changing climate.
- Similarly, U.S. development assistance should also be a key part of how we can work with partner countries to decarbonize our economies and reach global net-zero emissions as fast as possible.

**13. All too often the impacts of foreign policy decisions are lost on the people of the United States. What would you do to better inform the public about and involve the public in the foreign policy issues under the committee's jurisdiction?**

- One of the reasons I decided to run for HFAC chair is because it is usually a closed process that takes place in back rooms in Congress. I believe we should have a national conversation about the role of the United States in the world, democracy and human rights, war and peace, and the future of our planet. Let's have a real debate and participate in forums so people know where candidates stand on the issues.
- The HFAC chair race is a microcosm of the issue of foreign policy more generally. As HFAC Chair, I would welcome more voices — women, African Americans, Latinos, the LGBTQ community, immigrants and indigenous peoples — at the witness table, as I have done through the CHC-led Tri-Caucus Diversity Initiative. And I've called for a far more diverse State Department that reflects the diversity of Americans. Most people who don't go to Ivy Leagues don't know our diplomats the way they might soldiers or veterans. Consequently, many don't have a strong grasp on how diplomats help improve the American people's livelihoods. Having a more diverse Foreign Service could help close the civilian-diplomat gap.
- All this is for not if we don't have a foreign policy that actually benefits all Americans, including the middle class and people of color. We need to make sure trade deals don't just benefit the bottom lines or corporations and their shareholders. They must improve the lives of workers and the middle class. Our diplomats need to be empowered to reduce climate change so massive fires and tropical storms aren't wiping out the livelihoods of people across the country. And we need diplomacy that protects Americans and advances their interests without war.