

10 Foreign Policy Priorities for the Biden Administration

Win Without War welcomes and looks forward to working with the new Congress and the Biden-Harris administration. But our fight doesn't end in January. In fact, President Biden will be the fourth president we have worked under. Whether supporting the new administration, or pushing it to do better, we will keep struggling to build a more peaceful, progressive U.S. foreign policy. Here are our top ten priorities, in no particular order, for the new administration to bring us closer to that goal.

1. Work *with* the rest of the world to end the pandemic and rebuild the global economy.
 2. Reverse Trump's Pentagon spending spree and reinvest in real, human needs.
 3. End endless war and invest in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
 4. Reset the U.S.-Gulf alliances and end U.S. complicity in the war in Yemen.
 5. Stop arming and abetting human rights abusers. Period.
 6. End hostile hybrid wars and reinvest in diplomacy.
 7. Reassert Congressional power over war and peace.
 8. Protect migrants and refugees, and confront displacement at its *roots*.
 9. Make the world safe from the threat of nuclear war.
 10. Confront the climate crisis — the greatest threat of our time.
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1. Work *with* the rest of the world to end the pandemic and rebuild the global economy.

We can't confront *global* threats like COVID-19 by going it alone. Tragically, that's exactly what Donald Trump has tried to do, withdrawing from the World Health Organization, refusing to participate in multilateral vaccine production and distribution plans, maintaining and expanding ruthless economic sanctions, and using racist tropes to scapegoat other countries, especially China, for the crisis. The Biden-Harris administration must take exactly the opposite approach, reversing Trump's unilateralism and addressing the shared threats to our security through [global cooperation](#). This multilateralism must also extend beyond the pandemic itself, to the economic devastation that it has produced. Prioritizing justice for the Global South, the Biden-Harris administration should support comprehensive debt cancellation, a major [allocation](#) of IMF Special Drawing Rights, equitable global vaccine [distribution](#), and [more](#).

2. Reverse Trump's Pentagon spending spree and reinvest in real, human needs.

If budgets are moral documents, then our country's morals are dangerously out of whack. For far too long, successive Congresses and administrations have funneled trillions of dollars into the overstuffed and [unaccountable](#) coffers of the Pentagon, putting the profits of the weapons industry ahead of the needs of people in the United States and around the world. The COVID-19 era has only made this misalignment more pronounced: the government failed to control the spread of the coronavirus, the economy is in recession, millions of people's unemployment benefits are running out, and nearly 250,000 people have died of the virus — and yet the Pentagon is not only receiving its annual appropriations amounting to *more than half* of the federal budget, but is getting billions [more](#) in COVID bailout money for arms makers. The Trump era has seen a [\\$100 billion](#), or 15 percent, increase in the Pentagon budget. Now, fearmongering about China threatens to [fuel](#) ever more spending for decades to come. The next Congress, with the backing of the president, must reject the new Cold War mentality and finally [fix](#) this dangerous state of affairs. We must reverse this out-of-control spending and reinvest those funds in meeting real human needs, from providing relief during a pandemic to supporting over-policed and under-resourced communities of color to confronting the climate crisis

3. End endless war and invest in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

The status quo, war-first approach to U.S. foreign policy has failed in every way, taking the lives of countless soldiers and civilians, leaving behind untold destruction and displacement, wasting trillions of dollars and, at this dire cost, failing to even accomplish its nominal goals. The next administration inherits a military that is mired in wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen, and countless other covert special operations across Africa, southeast Asia, and the world. The Biden-Harris administration must [end](#) the United States' endless wars, rapidly but responsibly halt the U.S. role in [existing conflicts](#), stop secretive CIA shadow wars, seek the repeal of the 2001 and 2002 [Authorizations for Use of Military Force](#) that have acted as blank checks for this reckless militarism, and dramatically scale back the global network of over 800 U.S. military bases. In place of the status quo approach, we must invest in the peaceful, less costly, and *more effective* alternatives to war: diplomacy, peacebuilding, and development. Only by reorienting the U.S. government's approach to conflict writ large – to root it in peacebuilding and conflict prevention – can the United States play a credible role for peace in these countries, improving the security of regular people in both other countries and our own.

4. Reset the U.S.-Gulf alliances and end U.S. complicity in the war in Yemen.

Though it reached new heights under the Trump administration, it has long been common wisdom among the U.S. foreign policy establishment that the Gulf monarchies – particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – are *allies*, and, as allies, the United States should offer them unconditional support with no regard for their authoritarian regimes, corrupting influence, or human rights abuses at home and abroad. Driven by corporate and fossil fuel interests, as well as a vast Washington lobbying and [influence machine](#), the United States has consistently ignored such abuses while shaping its Middle East policy to their desires. One particularly heinous product of this poisonous relationship has been U.S. military support of, and arms sales for use in, the catastrophic Saudi and Emirati-led war in Yemen. It's time for this to finally end. Beyond cutting off arms sales and [ending](#) all support for the war, the next administration must entirely [rethink](#) its relationship with the Gulf: taking on [corruption](#) in Washington, refusing to define U.S. foreign policy in the interests of abusive, authoritarian regimes, and instead aligning U.S. interests with the wellbeing and dignity of everyday people in these countries.

5. Stop arming and abetting human rights abusers. Period.

The Gulf alliances are not the only relationships that need rethinking. Across the world – from Israel to the Philippines, Brazil to Egypt – the United States defines its alliances with little consideration for questions of democracy, human rights, or justice. These allies are then offered billions of dollars in arms sales or, in some cases, guaranteed military grants straight from the U.S. budget. The next administration must reject this status quo. The United States should not be in the business of arming, or otherwise aiding and abetting, some of the world's most heinous, anti-democratic, rights-abusing regimes. But stopping the supply of weapons to human rights abusers isn't just a question of foreign policy – it *also* means ending the deadly transfer of surplus weapons and mass surveillance capabilities from the Pentagon to police departments across the United States.

6. End hostile hybrid wars and reinvest in diplomacy.

The flip side of these ill-considered alliances are those countries deemed by the establishment to be unequivocal *enemies of the United States™*. Once labeled, they are subjected to extensive campaigns of hostility with little regard to efficacy or the resultant human suffering. Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Venezuela, and more – to varying extents, the victims of catastrophic, deadly campaigns of broad-based sanctions, provoked instability, assassination attempts, and threats of all-out war, all of which fuel and exacerbate any harms caused by the governments themselves. The Biden-Harris administration must reject the doctrines of “maximum pressure” and “great power competition,” begin the process of repairing long-damaged relations, and meet international challenges with diplomacy *first*. That means recommitting to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), ending sanctions, and otherwise healing relations with Iran; engaging in good-faith denuclearization [negotiations](#) with North Korea premised on normalization and peace; ending the hostile, competitive posture that risks a new Cold War with China; rebuilding the hollowed-out infrastructure of the State Department; and holding ourselves accountable to international law, treaties, conventions, and norms.

7. Reassert Congressional power over war and peace.

For too long, national security powers, vested in Congress by Article I of the Constitution, have been overridden by an increasingly powerful presidency, under both Democrats and Republicans. Congress, meanwhile, has typically found it easier to roll over and allow their power to be eroded than to fight back. We've seen these powers abused to continue U.S. support for the war in Yemen despite bipartisan opposition expressed in multiple War Powers Resolutions; expand our endless wars without Congress's approval; and declare 33 “national emergencies,” providing extraordinary powers to the president with no Congressional action to remove them from the books. It's past time for Congress, with the new administration's support, to [reassert](#) itself – to rein in the executive and bring the power over matters of war and peace back to the body most accountable to the people.

8. Protect migrants and refugees, and confront displacement at its roots.

Donald Trump made the suffering of migrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees the centerpiece of his administration. But the United States began mistreating those who came to its borders well before 2016. It's time for a new chapter. The Biden-Harris administration should make the United States a place of humanity and refuge: reversing Trump's racist [Muslim and African bans](#); reconnecting and providing reparations for all families separated under the Trump administration; [demilitarizing the border](#); abolishing [ICE and DHS](#); protecting Dreamers; providing permanent [residency](#) for at-risk communities with Temporary Protected Status; dramatically raising refugee resettlement limits; providing a path to immigration and legal citizenship; and more. But a Biden-Harris administration should also go further — treating not just the symptoms of displacement, but its [causes](#). That means rethinking the destabilizing effects of U.S. militarism, particularly in [Latin America](#), rewriting trade agreements that have [forced](#) countless from their homes for lack of economic opportunity, and confronting the [climate crisis](#) with a focus on justice for the hardest-hit communities of the Global South.

9. Make the world safe from the threat of nuclear war.

Trump's disdain for multilateralism has brought the world closer to nuclear catastrophe. In four years in office, he unilaterally [withdrew](#) from the JCPOA; [shredded](#) the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the nonproliferation agreement best known for its role in ending the Cold War; [abandoned](#) the Open Skies agreement; took an [inconsistent](#), self-serving, and often antagonistic approach to negotiations with North Korea; and has so far [allowed](#) the New START agreement to lapse... *and* he wanted to [nuke hurricanes](#). At the same time, the Congress-approved Pentagon and nuclear weapons budget has funneled billions into expanding and renewing these deadly capabilities, [billions](#) that *could* be spent meeting human needs instead of on the ability to end humankind as we know it. The Biden-Harris administration must reverse the damage done and then some, recommitting to multilateral, good-faith negotiations to reduce the global stockpile of nuclear weapons and ending the United States' role in driving the global arms race — including by stopping development of a new [intercontinental ballistic missile](#), extending the NEW Start Treaty and advancing follow-on negotiations to further reduce global stockpiles, providing further [reparations](#) for the lives affected by the testing and use of nuclear bombs, and [more](#).

10. Confront the climate crisis — the greatest threat of our time.

The climate crisis is an all-encompassing, existential threat to the world as we know it, with impacts borne disproportionately by oppressed and frontline communities — confronting it must be a [top priority](#) for the Biden-Harris administration. To start, we must [lead](#) by example from home. But confronting the *global* challenge that is the climate crisis also requires *foreign policy* change: dramatically scaling back the entire U.S. military, which is one of the [largest](#) polluters in world history; [cooperating with](#), rather than stoking hostility against, foreign powers like China; recommitting to and building on multilateral institutions and agreements like the Paris Agreement; and legally recognizing and welcoming climate refugees. It also means comprehensively rewriting the rules of the global economy under the banner of a [Global Green New Deal](#), including: ending tax havens, renegotiating trade agreements to put people and planet first, reforming the World Bank and IMF to promote rather than undermine goals of equity and sustainability, committing to North-South green technology transfers, contributing massive, anti-austerity public investment toward a just transition for the Global South, and more.