

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

*Intel for Advocacy*

DATE: 12/11/2020

SL: A full week for foreign policy news!

### **The Takeaway:**

- From the corporate capture of U.S. foreign policy to the undermining of civilian control of the military, there is reason to be seriously concerned about Biden's pick for Secretary of Defense. We hope that the Senate will do its due diligence and address these questions.
- The Senate voted this week to allow Trump's last-ditch arms sale to the UAE to go through unimpeded — a shameful dereliction of human rights and basic decency.
- After a bitter battle, Congress is on the brink of passing the FY21 NDAA. While we're glad they didn't cave to Trump's intransigence, let's not forget: the NDAA is nothing to celebrate.

## **Three Stories That Are Shaping the Future of U.S. Foreign Policy**

We wish we could say that, with the election behind us and inauguration over a month away, right now is a time to kick back and relax. But the reality is quite the opposite. This period is absolutely critical to defining the landscape of the foreign policy fight for the coming four years and beyond. And this past week was a case in point: in a jam-packed few days, we saw not one, not two, but three major moves in the foreign policy sphere, the impacts of each of which may be felt for years to come. Let's break them down:

### **A Concerning SecDef Pick**

This Monday, President-elect Joe Biden tapped General Lloyd James Austin III for the position of Secretary of Defense, and there are a [number of reasons](#) to be concerned. First and foremost, General Austin is a board member of Raytheon — yes, that [Raytheon](#), one of the most powerful arms manufacturers in the world, emblematic of all that is wrong with the corporate capture of U.S. foreign policymaking. Second, the National Security Act of 1947 prohibits the nomination of recent military officials to head the Defense Department to ensure that the U.S. military is controlled by U.S. civilians. As a recent retiree, Austin's nomination requires a waiver — an act that we opposed when Trump's nominee sought one. Finally, Gen. Austin was the leader of CENTCOM at the time of the decision to support the Saudi- and UAE-led intervention in Yemen. As a military leader, we do not fully know Gen. Austin's policy

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positions on this and other missions he oversaw, but this is all the more reason to get to the bottom of them.

However, beyond our particular concerns above, the historic nature of the nomination of the would-be first African American Secretary of State is indeed laudable. We share the President-elect's commitment to an administration that looks like the country it serves, including the highest levels of our military leadership which has long failed to reflect the diversity of either our country or those wearing its military uniform.

Ultimately, as with any nomination, we hope for the careful consideration of the record of the nominee at hand. As the Senate prepares to exercise its constitutional role to advise and consent, we hope that they will dig into these questions, address the concerns raised by his ties to Raytheon, scrutinize whether he should be granted a waiver for only the third time ever and the second time in four years, and assess not only how Gen. Austin would further President-elect Biden's vision, but what his *own* views are on the many policy choices he will be confronted with should he be confirmed.

## **The Senate Rolls Over on Arms Sales**

Late Wednesday evening, the Senate was presented with a [choice](#): defend human rights and prevent atrocities against civilians, or roll over to Trump and his corporate cronies as they attempt to ram through a last-minute \$23 billion arms sale. Shamefully, every Republican (except Rand Paul), and [a pair of Democrats](#), chose the latter. Despite the fact that weapons sold to the UAE by the United States have regularly been used to [massacre](#) civilians in Yemen and Libya, have repeatedly [fallen](#) into the hands of violent non-state actors, and have only served to fuel, rather than mitigate, violent conflict, the Trump administration — acting at the behest of weapons manufacturers and the powerful UAE lobby — is trying to sell them more fighter jets, more bombs, and more armed drones. Senators Menendez (D-NJ), Murphy (D-CT), and Paul (R-KY) introduced legislation to block the sale, but hopes that the rest of the Senate would join them and choose humanity over weapons manufacturer profits were dashed with Wednesday's vote.

## **The NDAA Is Not Much to Celebrate**

In the past few weeks, Donald Trump has managed, through his own intransigence, to turn the debate about the Fiscal Year (FY) 21 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) into a story about himself — first in support of [white supremacy](#), and later his own [pet issues](#). While we commend Congress for not ceding to Trump's demands, particularly on the question of Confederate base names, we must not lose sight of the basic fact that the FY21 NDAA is about much more than that.

First and foremost, the FY21 NDAA authorizes nearly three-quarters of a trillion dollars in Pentagon spending. As people across the world reel from a devastating pandemic, as families

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struggle to pay their bills, as communities of color go starved for resources, funneling billions more into an overpowered war machine is an act of utter inhumanity. The FY21 NDAA also extends the influence of the Pentagon in determining the Energy Department's nuclear budget, provides one of the largest historical provisions of no-strings-attached military aid to Israel, heightens the United States' aggressive posture toward China, and places obstacles in the way of the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan (an absurdity that Senator Paul [highlighted](#) in his filibuster of the bill).

Let's be clear: the FY21 NDAA does include a number of hard-fought and commendable policies, from requiring the renaming of military bases honoring the Confederacy, to cracking down on the use of shell corporations, to tightening restrictions on the provision of military equipment to domestic law enforcement. But we must not allow the goalposts to be defined by the low bar of the status quo or Trump's personal obstinance.

## Reasons for Hope

On the surface, this may seem like a lot of bad news. But there's a silver lining. On each of these issues, we've come further than we've been in decades — and momentum is on our side.

The last four years have highlighted the issue of corporate capture of the government, and the Pentagon in particular, like never before. Biden's Secretary of Defense announcement was met with widespread [skepticism](#), and there remains plenty of opportunity for the Senate to examine, and for Gen. Austin to address, these concerns. On the question of arms sales, the Senate has [already voted three times](#) during Trump's term to block similar sales to the UAE and Saudi Arabia, and Joe Biden has [promised](#) to end U.S. complicity in their intervention in Yemen. Under a Biden administration, we have a chance to block the completion of this sale, prevent future ones, and reset U.S. relations with the Gulf for good. And on the NDAA, though Congress failed to cut the Pentagon budget this year, an amendment to do so received levels of support that would have been [unthinkable](#) years ago. This coming year, we have a chance to finally right-size Pentagon spending and rein in the out-of-control NDAA.

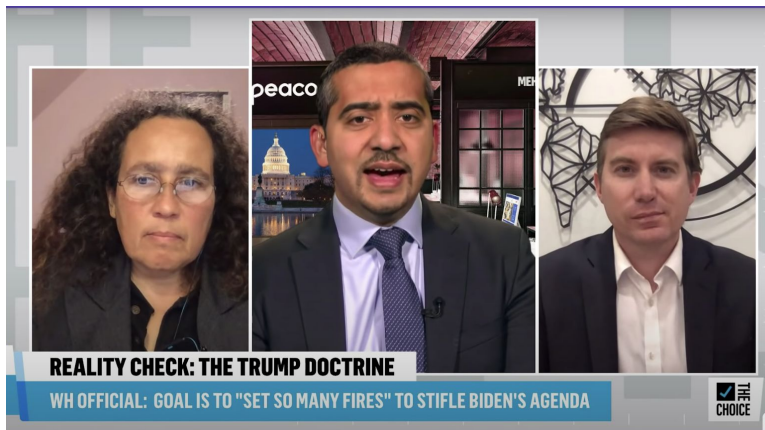
This fight is nowhere near over. And while there may be periodic setbacks, the wind is at our backs. Over the course of these critical next few weeks and beyond, we will continue to push to ensure that the future of U.S. foreign policy is one rooted in justice, equity, and peace.

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## Win Without War on the Mehdi Hasan Show!

This week, our executive director Stephen Miles had the chance to join journalist Mehdi Hasan's talk show, along with co-director of the Costs of War project at Brown University Neta Crawford, to discuss all things foreign policy: from how people in the United States have become inured to the violence our government commits abroad to the laughable claim that Trump has been an "anti-war president." Check out the full segment [here](#).

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## **BURIED LEDES**

Want some drones? Want the U.S. to weigh in on a decades-long dispute? Just recognize Israel and ask Trump! Trump's diplomatic firesale continued this week as **Morocco received U.S. support on the issue of the Western Sahara [in exchange](#) for recognition of Israel.**

The foreign policy establishment loves talking about U.S. "leadership." But **there's no moral or practical reason why the United States [should](#) be *first* in the world.** What we need instead is partnership... and solidarity.

The country is waking up to the fact that **domestic poverty and inequality are not inevitabilities, but products of class and power.** It's time we [recognize](#) the same is true globally.

Just in time for International Human Rights Day, **Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) and dozens of colleagues have [called on](#) Gulf states to abolish the exploitative "kafala" system of migrant worker control.**

The COVID-19 crisis has underscored many of the existing fault lines in society. Now, it's exposing the ongoing oppression of Native Americans. **Data from 14 states shows that Indigenous Americans have a COVID-19 death rate [twice](#) the national average.**

**A devastating fire [destroyed](#) a new LA apartment complex that would have provided low-income housing for Veterans** — a tragic reminder of the crisis of veteran homelessness.

Trump's campaign to sabotage Biden's relationship with Iran before he takes office continues with **B-52 bombers [dispatched](#) to the region to ramp up tensions.**

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In a long-awaited step toward accountability, **the U.S. Army has [disciplined](#) 14 officials for their role in creating a culture of sexual harassment, assault, and, ultimately, murder at Fort Hood.** Here's [a thread](#) with some context from activists close to the issue.

This year, the movement to defund oppressive systems of policing and incarceration and replace them with just alternatives has gained monumental ground. [Here's a look at what those alternatives might look like.](#)

Following a series of massive mobilizations by women's movements, **Argentina's lower house [has voted](#) to legalize abortion.** If the bill makes it through the Senate, Argentina will be only the third country in Latin America, after Cuba and Uruguay, to do so.

And finally, Cookie Monster, Soviet art, and angry landlords — **the [story](#) behind a mysterious new mural in Peoria, IL.**