

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

*Intel for Advocacy*

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SL: What's next for progressive foreign policy?

### **The Takeaway:**

- For four long years, the progressive foreign policy movement has fought tooth and nail to prevent disaster. As we look forward to what we hope will be a brighter future, we celebrate all those who contributed to this struggle.
- From its words in this week's confirmation hearings, to its deeds in the first few days of executive action, the Biden administration appears ready to reverse the worst of Trump's disastrous foreign policies. But a return to the status quo ante is not enough.
- We can transform U.S. foreign policy, but not by sitting back and hoping the new leadership will get us there on its own. Now is the time to mobilize.

## **Now Is Our Chance To Build The World That We Want**

### **Goodbye to the Trump Era**

The Trump era of foreign policy was defined by hostility, recklessness, and war. As we detailed thoroughly [last week](#), while Donald Trump is often labeled “anti-war,” the reality of his and Mike Pompeo's foreign policy was the exact [opposite](#). Trump attacked vital multilateral institutions, escalated our endless wars, undermined diplomatic relationships, violently attacked civilians, dragged the world closer to nuclear war, and stoked a new Cold War. The suffering caused by the Trumpian approach to foreign policy was immense. Some may celebrate that “we survived” the Trump era, but let's be clear: many did not. We mourn those who bore the brunt of his violence. At the same time, we celebrate all who — like you — fought to ensure that it wasn't even worse. For the last four years, our movement has put our all into obstructing Trump's path of destruction. We were on the defensive. But thanks to the mobilization of a movement, we often prevented the worst. Now, we can begin to turn the page.

### **Hello to the Biden Era**

For many around the world, this Wednesday's inauguration was a moment of hope. No longer will the nuclear codes be in the hands of an aspiring dictator. No longer will the likes of [Elliot Abrams](#) be in charge of U.S. relations with Iran and Venezuela. No longer will we have to spend every moment worried that a fresh disaster is around the corner. But our battle is nowhere near

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over. So far, Biden's foreign policy pledges have largely promised a return to the pre-Trump era. That means the welcome reversal of many disastrous policies. But what it *does not* mean is a wholesale transformative rethinking of the U.S. approach to the world — not, that is, unless we fight for it. Here's a quick look at what we've seen from the Biden administration so far.

## The Biden Admin in Words

This week saw a slew of hearings for important Biden nominees, from potential Secretary of State Tony Blinken to now-confirmed Secretary of Defense General Lloyd Austin. From these, we were able to glean a bit more about how the Biden administration plans to approach U.S. foreign policy — both the good and the bad. On the hopeful side, we saw: from nominee Blinken, signs of [rethinking](#) the overstretched blank check for war that is the 2001 AUMF, a [restatement](#) of Biden's candidate commitment to end U.S. support for the Saudi/Emirati-led war in Yemen, and [recognition](#) of the existential threat of the climate crisis; a [pledge](#) from Gen. Austin to recuse himself from decisions involving Raytheon — on whose board he sits until confirmation — for four years (thanks to the outstanding questioning from Sen. Warren); plans by now-confirmed Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines to [declassify](#) intelligence on the murder of Jamal Khashoggi; and more. Outside of these hearings, Biden further [pledged](#) to seek a five-year extension on the critical New START nuclear treaty with Russia. Worryingly, we also saw: a [lack](#) of clear support for the U.S. *immediately* rejoining the Iran deal; a dangerous [hawkishness](#) on China; and plans to [recognize](#) Juan Guaido as the leader of Venezuela. At this point, though, these are all just words. What remains, both good or ill, is for them to be turned into action.

## The Biden Admin in Deeds

We *have*, however, already seen the start of action from the new administration. Since Wednesday's inauguration, Biden [has](#):

- [Repealed](#) the racist Muslim and African Bans;
- [Rejoined](#) the Paris Agreement;
- [Rejoined](#) the World Health Organization;
- [Halted](#) construction of Trump's border wall;
- [Begun](#) a process of reviewing the impact of U.S. sanctions on COVID-19 response;
- [Joined](#) the multilateral vaccine production and distribution coordination efforts that Trump eschewed; and more.

These decisive actions to right some of the Trump era's most egregious wrongs are major victories for our movement. After enduring a long period with little good news, they're very much worth celebrating.

## The Fight Ahead

At the same time, they must only be the beginning. Our movement has spent four years struggling to prevent the worst. Reversing Trump's mistakes is a welcome step forward. But we have a unique opportunity to go even further. This is our chance to move from the defensive to

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the offensive — not just to prevent disaster, but to begin the task of building [the world that we want to see](#). As a movement, our task is to ensure that the Biden administration's good plans are translated into action, that its harmful plans are not, and that it does not stop at a return to the status quo ante. We must transform U.S. foreign policy from top to bottom. Sometimes this will mean working with the administration. Sometimes it will mean pushing from the outside. But always, it will mean moving forward toward a new vision of U.S. foreign policy, one [rooted](#) in justice, equity, and liberation for all.

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## **BURIED LEDES**

**One of the most dangerous foreign policy trends of today is the growing bipartisan instigation of a new Cold War with China.** [Here's](#) some guidance on how to talk about (and stop) this new Cold War approach.

In a HUGE victory — the result of years of dedicated organizing and activism — **the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons [entered](#) into force today, making nuclear weapons illegal under international law.** Now, it's time to push for worldwide ratification.

**For the second time in four years, Congress voted to waive a prohibition on recent military officials running the DoD.** Regardless of the merits of Gen. Austin's record itself, civilian control of the military is a *critical* principle. The waiver should be abolished, or [restricted](#).

**U.S. military bases in Hawaii [dumped](#) more than half a million pounds of toxic nitrate into the ocean.** Your reminder that unfettered militarism is an environmental issue too.

**The [insurrection](#) at the Capitol may have its roots in a militarism-first approach to U.S. foreign policy.** Violence abroad begets violence at home.

If confirmed, Treasury Secretary nominee Janet Yellen will hold many lives in her hands. **By supporting IMF Special Drawing Rights and opposing suffocating broad-based sanctions, Yellen could [help end](#) the suffering of millions.**

In case you missed it: **the claim that Donald Trump was ever “anti-war” was always [a lie](#).**

Rejoining the Paris Agreement was a good first stat on climate. **But to truly confront the crisis, Biden has to go [far beyond](#) business as usual.** An existential threat demands radical action.

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**Iranian President Hassan Rouhani is [right](#): the ball is in Biden's court to rejoin the critical Iran deal.** And he must act swiftly. With Iranian elections around the corner, the window for action may soon be closed.

One of the Trump era's most eye roll-inducing policies was the creation of the "Space Force." **How should Biden [treat](#) the final frontier? Treat is as a commons.**

And finally, sometimes work brings unexpected moments. **If you're a wildlife photographer, those moments can look like [this](#).**