



Rebuilding and Rebalancing Our National Security Tools and Institutions

Today's U.S. foreign policy tools and institutions are in serious need of repair. At the same time, America's overreliance on the military to solve most problems is increasingly disconnected from the national security challenges we face. It is time to reexamine what it means to keep America safe and what we need from our national security institutions to do so. This chapter lays out recommendations to rebuild and restore trust in our national security institutions and rebalance our national security tools to end the cycle of overreliance on the armed forces to manage problems that should be handled by civilian agencies.



Over the past 20 years, U.S. national security and foreign policy tools and institutions have become increasingly ill-suited to advancing U.S. interests around the world. This problem has been exacerbated over the past four years. Not only has victory been elusive¹ in theaters of active conflict, but the deadliest² and costliest³ national emergencies of the past two decades—including hurricanes Katrina, Sandy, Irma, Maria, and Harvey, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic—have raised new questions about what it means to protect the homeland from its most common and foreseeable threats. Meanwhile, increasingly intense competition with China and a revanchist Russia are presenting new challenges with the potential to transform how we think about our security. At the same time, new national security challenges such as climate change, rapid technological change, migration, and rising authoritarianism are also stressing U.S. national security institutions' ability to respond.

The military is not equipped to solve all or even most of these problems. Yet it is the only national security institution that has come out of the past decade stronger than it was before. Since 9/11, the role of the military in national security policymaking has steadily increased⁴ and has led to military issues competing with and often dominating economic, political, and diplomatic priorities, with dismal consequences. By investing disproportionately in the military as the United States' primary foreign policy tool, we have chronically underinvested⁵ in other national security institutions, creating a cycle of overreliance on the armed forces to manage problems that should be handled by civilian agencies. Meanwhile, for these and other reasons, the United States now finds itself underinvested—or entirely unequipped—to address problems that the military alone cannot solve.

This cycle must not continue in the next administration. In a world with today's range of international problems, we must abandon an approach which defines American national interests primarily in terms of security from foreign threats and instead reexamine our understanding of U.S. national interests both domestically and abroad. Only then can we recalibrate our national security tools to better advance these interests. Doing so will require us to answer hard questions about how best to keep our nation secure. How do we assess and prioritize the threats facing the United States? And because the meaning of U.S. national security has evolved, what are the consequences for the tools we use to protect and defend the United States?

An honest answer to these questions will require a significant rebalancing of our national security tools. Most obviously, this will require enhancing the status and influence of diplomacy and development in Washington, restoring the U.S. Department of State's overall primacy in foreign policymaking, and reestablishing the State Department as the lead for U.S. engagement around the world. At the same time, merely shifting the balance

of power or the investment of resources to favor the State Department will be insufficient on its own to modernize America's foreign policy. A comprehensive approach will require a decisive pivot away from the military as the foreign policy tool of first resort and toward meaningful investments in economic, diplomatic, and multilateral tools. It will require the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to use the tools they have—and the new tools and funding they receive—more effectively. It will require the development of new tools to confront emerging threats that the military, however powerful, cannot address. It will also require the next administration to wrestle with difficult questions about how to bring our national security tools and institutions into better alignment with our national security needs.

The next administration will also need to rebuild—and remodel—our national security institutions. Attacked from the outside and hollowed out from within, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and the intelligence community, in addition to the State Department and U.S. foreign aid organizations, are also severely diminished after a decade of sequestration and austerity and, more recently, mismanagement during the Trump administration.⁶ As a consequence, the next administration will face the most severely weakened⁷ national security institutions in a generation. Rebuilding these institutions will require visionary leadership, skilled management, and thoughtful restoration to make them stronger and more effective institutions than they were before.

Merely returning to the pre-Trump status quo will not be enough. Instead, institutional investments and reforms must adapt and creatively reorient these institutions for a new world. The public health crisis caused by COVID-19 has exposed major deficiencies in the institutions meant to keep Americans safe; hampered by inept leadership at the top, these institutions have largely failed to protect Americans from the greatest and perhaps most foreseeable threat to our security in the past 20 years. The next administration will need to establish a wide-ranging and innovative agenda and mobilize skilled leaders to modernize how our national security institutions are staffed, how they operate, and the tools they use to implement the president's foreign policy.

The next administration will also need to reexamine core assumptions about what institutions and policies keep America safe and secure. This should include a wholesale reexamination of the mission, structure, and role of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with the goal of realigning the department's activities to today's threats. Finally, the next administration will need to consider whether, in today's world, continuing to increase the amount of resources America spends on its military is justified.

The next administration will need to drive significant reforms to refine and reimagine how our national security tools are used to protect the nation. This will take time, but a next administration can make important strides in its first 100 days in three key areas:

1. Restoring trust and recommitting to the rule of law.
2. Rebuilding and modernizing our national security institutions, workforce, and processes.
3. Signaling a meaningful shift toward a diplomacy-first foreign policy.

The recommendations that follow provide a range of options for advancing these goals.

Restoring trust and recommitting to the rule of law

American institutions—in particular, our law enforcement and national security institutions—are facing a crisis of trust. During the past four years, the Trump administration has consistently and methodically undermined the missions of our national security institutions and questioned the motivations of career public servants. The current administration has taken unprecedented actions to contort national security institutions into vehicles to serve personal rather than national interests, starting with the misplaced push to purge⁸ the so-called “deep state” from the government and continuing with the abuse of presidential authority to seek political favors⁹ from foreign governments. In recent months, the current administration has also inappropriately used the uniformed military and federal law enforcement agencies to suppress¹⁰ peaceful protests. In doing so, the Trump administration has violated long-standing norms against the use of national security institutions for political purposes and undermined the nonpartisan nature of the national security mission. Taken together, these actions have systematically undercut¹¹ the rule of law, rebuffed¹² congressional oversight, and upended¹³ decades of precedent that were the result of bipartisan reforms in the post-Watergate era.

During the past four years, the Trump administration has also hollowed out our national security workforce. Career officials and experts have been publicly attacked¹⁴, pushed out¹⁵ of their jobs, and cruelly undermined¹⁶ at the hands of political leaders. Many experienced career public servants have chosen to leave¹⁷ government service altogether rather than have their advice ignored, their work politicized, and their motives questioned. Some have been forced out. Those who remain have seen their institutions buckle under political pressure as they pursue their missions in the face of tremendous stress and uncertainty. The next administration must have a plan to reestablish norms, restore trust, and instill confidence with the experts that remain.

The Trump administration’s actions have also exposed dangerous weaknesses in our institutions, especially around civilian control of the military and the independence of our intelligence and law enforcement agencies, which serve as a necessary check on the power of the executive branch.¹⁸ These norms need to be reestablished and strengthened.

Overall, the next administration should publicly and persistently prioritize responding to the crisis of trust by restoring integrity—the commitment to the public good and freedom from undue political influence—and a commitment to the rule of law to our national security institutions. By doing so, the next administration can begin to reestablish the trust that Americans should have in their government and the confidence that the national security workforce should have in public service.



QUICK WIN: Issue a presidential directive on day one underscoring trust and commitment to rule of law in our national security institutions.

On the first day of the next administration, the president should address the crisis of trust by issuing an executive order on restoring integrity to our national security institutions. This executive order could address broader issues, but at a minimum it should:

- Reaffirm that our national security institutions will work to serve the interests of our country, not partisan political interests.
- Recommit to the rule of law and reinforce the administration's respect for the role of other branches of government in overseeing the conduct of national security and foreign policy activities.
- Direct national security leaders to normalize relations with Congress and respect its oversight function.
- Announce that the Office of Government Ethics' rules will be treated as binding on executive branch employees in national security and foreign policy roles.
- Announce a strict, zero-tolerance policy for executive branch employees in national security and foreign policy roles, including political appointees, who violate laws and policies that prohibit using their positions for political or financial gain for themselves or others.
- Direct the use of available hiring authorities to offer new opportunities to career civil servants who were pushed out or inappropriately reassigned during the prior administration.
- Reinforce the independence of inspectors general in national security departments and agencies by announcing that all nominees will be selected from individuals recommended by an independent committee. Consider supporting a for-cause removal limitation for new inspectors general.



QUICK WIN: Direct leaders of national security departments and agencies to issue messages on trust and commitment to rule of law upon assuming office.

Incoming department and agency leadership should use their first communications with their career workforces to reinforce trust and integrity and reaffirm a commitment to the rule of law and the national security mission. These messages should reiterate the president's commitment to governing for the benefit of national—rather than personal—interests,

express a clear commitment to transparency and independent oversight, and convey that the only loyalty required of civil servants is loyalty to the U.S. Constitution. These messages should also seek to reestablish key norms within each department and agency. For example, the secretary of defense should announce new initiatives to depoliticize the military, including restrictions on the use of military titles, uniforms, and other insignia for political and other nonmilitary purposes.



QUICK WIN: Swear in key intelligence and law enforcement appointees at their home agencies. The next administration should reaffirm the unique independence of intelligence and law enforcement missions by swearing in the attorney general and director of national intelligence at Main Justice and Liberty Crossing, respectively, rather than at the White House. The chair and ranking representatives from key oversight committees should be included in each swearing-in ceremony, reinforcing the president's commitment to respecting Congress' oversight function.



QUICK WIN: Resume regular press briefings at the White House, the State Department, and the DOD. Restoring trust in national security institutions will require more transparency and accountability to the public. The next administration should immediately resume regular press briefings at the White House and at the departments of State and Defense to ensure the public has access to a steady stream of reliable information about the conduct of U.S. foreign policy.



QUICK WIN: Replace politically appointed inspectors general at national security departments and agencies. Given efforts to exert undue influence over inspectors general over the past four years,¹⁹ the next administration should immediately replace politically appointed inspectors general with their career deputies and select permanent officials from among candidates recommended by an independent committee, once established.



QUICK WIN: Appoint a diverse slate of foreign service officers to key ambassadorships. Major campaign donors are often rewarded with coveted ambassadorships. While some of these high-level campaign donors may have experience that makes them well equipped to serve in these posts, many do not. The practice of awarding these positions to unqualified donors can often appear corrupt and undermines the professionalism of the foreign service. To restore trust and reinforce a commitment to installing qualified officials to key national security posts, the next administration should announce a diverse slate of foreign service officers to key ambassadorships before naming any other ambassadors.

Rebuilding and modernizing our national security institutions, workforce, and processes

The deadliest²⁰ and costliest²¹ national emergencies in the past two decades—including hurricanes, floods, fires, and the COVID-19 pandemic—have laid bare major flaws: The institutions charged with protecting Americans are not calibrated to protect us from our most common and foreseeable threats. Meanwhile, increasingly intense competition with China and a revanchist Russia as well as new national security challenges such as climate change, rapid technological change, migration, and rising authoritarianism are stressing our national security institutions’ ability to respond. Modernizing our national security institutions will require new national security tools for the future—as discussed in the “Tackling Global Challenges” section of this report—strategic investments in the national security workforce, and better coordination across the structures that are already in place.

The next administration will also need to innovate: reinventing structures and processes, modernizing legacy systems, establishing new policy and implementation mechanisms, and identifying and attracting a workforce with a diversity of skills and experiences to creatively respond to threats that legacy national security tools alone cannot address. It will need to improve the National Security Council (NSC) staff to transform the post-Cold War, post-terrorism national security apparatus of the past into the all-threats national security enterprise of the future. Doing so will require the next administration to confront—and overcome—bureaucratic hurdles to innovation.

The next administration will also inherit a national security workforce in serious need of modernization.²² A diverse workforce is a strategic asset, yet today’s national security workforce is not only unrepresentative of the United States’ diversity, but it is also less diverse²³ than the rest of the federal government. This must change. The next administration must improve talent pipelines and remove bureaucratic barriers to human-capital reforms—hurdles that have stymied past efforts to invest in talent programs. It will also need to invest in its most important asset—its people—by prioritizing management skills and experience in making national security appointments.

Modernizing our national security institutions will require dedicated focus over time, but important progress can be achieved within the first 100 days to set the next administration on a promising course for the future.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Direct a high-level review of the Department of Homeland Security's mission focused on reorienting the department to today's threats

Created after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, DHS is the result of the largest reorganization of government in more than half a century. Today, DHS has five main missions, but its overwhelming focus has been on two: preventing terrorism and immigration enforcement. The next administration should direct a high-level review of DHS's mission, focused on reorienting the department and reprioritizing its activities to better align with today's threats. This review should consider whether current circumstances warrant changing DHS's approach to homeland security, including how it is staffed and what it prioritizes in pursuit of its strategic goals and statutory responsibilities.



QUICK WIN: Issue an executive order on improving diversity in the national

security workforce. The diversity of the American people is one of our greatest assets as a nation, yet our national security agencies do not reflect this diversity and are even less diverse²⁴ than the rest of the federal government. The next administration should issue an executive order on improving diversity in the national security workforce. This executive order should:

- Direct national security agencies to recruit and support strong candidates that reflect the breadth of talent, skill, and experience found in the diversity of the American people.
- Commit to gender parity and racial equity in making national security appointments.
- Restore transgender individuals' eligibility for military service. Particularly in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark case²⁵ *Bostock v. Clayton County*, the next administration's DOD should restore Obama administration guidelines²⁶ on the ability of LGBTQ people to serve in the U.S. military and commit to defending these policies in court.
- Revoke executive order (EO) 13782,²⁷ which reversed the Obama administration's federal contracting regulations that prevented discrimination against LGBTQ employees. These protections should be restored.
- Revoke EO 13950,²⁸ which the Trump administration used to prohibit workplace diversity, racial justice, and bias training for federal employees and contractors.

- › Make the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce its own Executive Core Qualification (ECQ) required for promotion to the Senior Executive Service. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) should elevate the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce by making the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce a stand-alone ECQ rather than a subcomponent of the ECQ on leading people.
 - › Require annual reporting on diversity statistics by department and agency, accompanied by explanations of programs designed to close diversity gaps.
- **Address racism in military policy and in military and veterans communities.** These issues need to be addressed head-on in the early days of the next administration.
 - Direct the secretary of defense to rename military bases, revise military branch policies, and eliminate insignia and memorials that are white-nationalist symbols or vestiges of the Confederacy.
 - Revoke EO 13933,²⁹ which the Trump administration issued to prosecute the vandalism of Confederate monuments and memorials; and review EO 13934,³⁰ which the Trump administration sought to use to set new standards on monuments and statues.
 - Task the secretaries of defense and veterans affairs to conduct a review to identify actions that can be taken to respond to white supremacy in the military and in veteran communities.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Direct the OPM to launch a human capital initiative aligned to current or emerging threats

Since 9/11, the U.S. government has made major investments³¹ in counterterrorism and in Middle East and South Asia expertise to address the security challenges that have dominated U.S. national security policy. It is imperative that U.S. departments and agencies now make strategic investments in developing deep expertise in other areas to ensure agencies and their functions are appropriately resourced with the skill sets needed to confront current strategic challenges, especially with great power competitors such as China, Russia, and other key regional powers. The COVID-19 pandemic also highlights the need to invest in expertise in nontraditional security threats such as global pandemics, climate change, and corruption. The next administration should launch a major human capital initiative that is aligned to current and emerging threats. This initiative should include a review of skill and expertise deficits identified during recent climate and global health emergencies and recommendations for hiring incentives and expedited clearances to close identified gaps.

- **Establish a recurring, principals-level meeting focused solely on national security human capital and talent to provide a forcing mechanism for progress on the administration's goals.** This quarterly, principals-level meeting should track progress and milestones related to the administration's human capital initiatives, including achieving gender parity in national security appointments, improving diversity in the national security workforce, and expanding the pipeline of qualified, diverse professional talent in national security recruitment and hiring.



QUICK WIN: Prioritize management skill and commitment to the federal workforce in hiring for senior political appointments. In recent years, U.S. national security institutions have been severely mismanaged. The next administration should prioritize management skill over other qualifications in making senior political appointments by asking standard questions about leveraging diversity and commitment to the federal workforce of all candidates for senior appointments.

- **Appoint a chief technology officer in each national security department and agency.** As technology increasingly shapes our threats as well as our defenses, it is time to rethink the role technology plays in our national security institutions. What was once an enabling tool is now a central focus of national security policymaking. That shift should be reflected in our organizational structures. The next administration should install senior executive-level chief technology officers to serve as part of the executive management teams at each national security department and agency. These officers, whose responsibilities should be separated from general IT support functions, should focus on innovation, policy, and digital delivery, cybersecurity, and evaluating the strategic risks and opportunities for technology to advance department and agency missions.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Improve the function of the National Security Council staff

The Trump administration's haphazard attempts³² to reshape the NSC staff under four national security advisers in as many years have had dismal results. Almost from the start, experienced career officials serving in NSC staff posts were branded as holdovers and excluded³³ from critical decisions. Many found their tours of duty abruptly ended, and several were expelled in retaliation³⁴ for complying with valid congressional subpoenas. The Trump administration's structural changes proved to be strategic errors, most notably its decision to disband³⁵ the Global Health Security and Biodefense Directorate and fold what remained of it into the Counterproliferation and Biodefense Directorate, also known as the WMD Directorate, that oversees man-made disasters.

That decision left the current White House without an obvious coordinating body for managing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The next administration should prioritize targeted changes to the structure and organization of the NSC staff to resolve legacy issues, reorient its focus toward modern national security threats, and set the NSC as an institution on a sustainable course for the future. Further, any right-sizing of the NSC should flow from an actual prioritization of our national security objectives and be relevant to the new challenges we face.



QUICK WIN: Reestablish the Global Health Security and Biodefense Directorate in the NSC staff. This position was eliminated³⁶ early in the Trump administration but will be critical to coordinating the U.S. response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.



QUICK WIN: Disband the Border and Transportation Security Directorate in the NSC staff. The Trump administration has used the Border and Transportation Security Directorate—previously known as the Transborder Directorate—to advance his Muslim ban, asylum restrictions, and other harmful immigration policies. The office should be disbanded and its responsibilities assumed by other regional and functional directorates.



QUICK WIN: Designate an Office of Security and Technology Policy (OSTP) liaison or task force within the NSC staff. Almost every national security department and agency is investing in technology tools and grappling with the policy implications of matters that cut across technology, national security, and the economy. Today, those efforts are disconnected from each other and from broader national policy objectives. To unify those efforts, the next administration should designate an OSTP liaison to the NSC staff to coordinate national security efforts in this critical area. This liaison or task force should lead on cross-cutting issues such as 5G, quantum computing, and artificial intelligence (AI). The goal of these efforts should be to leverage the government's significant purchasing power, efficiencies associated with shared services, and interoperability benefits and best practices.

Signaling a meaningful shift toward diplomacy-first foreign policy

U.S. national security is no longer guaranteed simply because we have the world's most powerful³⁷ military. Faced with a crippling global pandemic and the rise of great-power competition, the next administration will begin during the first and only global crisis bereft of American leadership. Diplomacy and development tools—maligned and severely underutilized during the past four years—will be critical to restoring, to the extent possible, America's leadership role in the world. At the same time, the strategic focus of the U.S. military will need to be reexamined and better aligned with U.S. national interests. Any serious effort to put diplomacy at the center of our foreign policy must address the enormous disparity³⁸ between our investments in the military and our investments in diplomacy. In the first 100 days, the next administration should signal a meaningful shift toward a diplomacy-first foreign policy. But far from merely pouring more resources into the State Department, the next administration will need to strategically reexamine how to strengthen, modernize, and realign our other national security tools, including by shifting defense resources toward today's threats and carefully narrowing the use of hard-power tools.

The Center for American Progress has long recommended³⁹ the creation of a unified national security budget to drive integrated thinking about the best application of our resources to address the threats we face. We renew that recommendation here, noting that the arguments in favor are even more compelling today than they were more than a decade ago when the recommendation was first made. Though it will not be easy, the time is right for the White House and Congress to work together to drive integrated thinking about the security challenges we face and the best application of our resources to address them. With emerging climate, cyber, and global health threats on the rise, and national security institutions poorly aligned to respond to them, it is now more important than ever that the administration and Congress consider the national security budget holistically if they want to start doing the rebalancing that policymakers have long said they want to do.

The most urgent and obvious imbalance is the chronic underinvestment in the State Department. Today's State Department is outflanked by the DOD by nearly every measure. The DOD has more resources, more capacity, and more influence within the national security bureaucracy than its diplomatic counterpart. This imbalance, which has been a feature of national security policymaking since the Cold War, has been dramatically accelerated in the past four years. Today, the military commands more than 15 times⁴⁰ the resources that are invested in the State Department—a fact that is increasingly difficult to justify in a world in which threats such as COVID-19 or climate change cannot be addressed with military strength. The next administration should try to fix this imbalance.

But investing resources alone will not be enough. The State Department and U.S. foreign aid organizations will also need to become more efficient and effective. They will need to fix their organizational weaknesses so that their success is enabled by, rather than hindered by, their systems and processes. The State Department will need to finally adapt to changes in technology, which have negated the department's traditional source of power: its control over the flow of information between foreign capitals and Washington. It will also need to make—and win—the argument that America is strongest when it is working in partnership with other nations. This will require the State Department to make serious changes, rethink its value proposition, and bring its structure and processes into alignment with its unique advantages.

Finally, a next administration would be wise to reassess the use of American hard-power tools. For too long, the executive branch has overrelied on hard security as a first impulse rather than a last resort. This has led to the misuse⁴¹ of these tools and contributed to claims that America is failing⁴² to live by its values. The next administration should independently review the use—and abuse—of hard-power tools and establish modern guideposts around the use of military and intelligence activities to ensure their future use is narrowly tailored to clear national policy goals and better aligned to today's threats.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Task the secretary of state to develop a National Diplomacy Strategy

As an initial step toward rebalancing defense and diplomacy, the next administration should task the secretary of state with developing a National Diplomacy Strategy. This strategy would establish clear, new priorities for the State Department, articulate a new role for the department in implementing the president's National Security Strategy,

and provide a defensible rationale for investments. The development and release of a National Diplomacy Strategy would send a signal to our allies and partners—and to the State Department workforce itself—that the department is on a trajectory to play a larger and more consequential role in U.S. foreign policymaking in the years ahead.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Signal meaningful resource shifts in the president's FY 2022 budget

As one of the first critical tasks in the first 100 days, the president's FY 2022 budget will provide an important signaling opportunity. The next administration should take advantage of this to signal a strategic shift in national security resourcing, proposing meaningful reductions in the defense budget and meaningful increases in State Department funding.

- **Propose to fund 1,000 new State Department full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to rebuild U.S. diplomacy.** The State Department has been gutted⁴³ over the past decade, first due to austerity and budget sequestration and more recently as the Trump administration sought to cut the department's budget and push out public servants en masse. A next administration should request an increase of 1,000 FTEs to grow America's diplomatic presence overseas and begin rebuilding a more diverse State Department workforce, aligned to emerging or underresourced threats as defined in the OPM human capital initiative, discussed above. Half of these slots should be reserved for climate-related positions, as discussed in the "Tackling Global Challenges" section of this report.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Propose a consolidated national security budget

Today, decisions about resourcing America's national security institutions are siloed. America's offensive, defensive, and preventive tools are all funded through separate and distinct appropriations processes with no opportunity to consider trade-offs or propose realignments strategically. The next administration could drive integrated thinking about the security challenges we face and the best application of our resources to address them by proposing a consolidated national security budget that is transparent about the trade-offs embedded in our current resource allocations. An integrated national security budget should call for serious realignments between the DOD and America's civilian institutions of diplomacy and development.

- **Task the OMB director to propose a consolidated national security budget** and establish a working group with Congress to develop it for FY 2023.
- **Phase out the use of the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) account and propose targeted reductions to the Pentagon's budget.** The OCO account has been used to fund operations addressing new contingencies. Yet, over time, these new contingencies have become⁴⁴ regular operations. The Pentagon and Congress have used this account to avoid making hard choices about the budget. The defense budget should prioritize investments in capabilities that are most likely to deter provocative action from China and Russia and reexamine its other investments.
- **Reverse the militarization of foreign policy by transferring DOD security assistance programs back to the State Department.** After the Vietnam War, the State Department was put in charge of security assistance, as providing military equipment to a foreign country is fundamentally a foreign policy decision. Over the past two decades, the DOD has developed its own duplicative⁴⁵ security assistance budget and bureaucracy. This effort now mirrors the State Department's long-running \$6 billion security assistance system.⁴⁶ The dramatic growth and expansion of the DOD's aid programs has eroded the State Department's control and oversight of security assistance policy and therefore over U.S. foreign policy. A next administration should transfer the DOD's \$8 billion budget over to the State Department. The State Department's existing programs ensure hand-in-glove coordination with the DOD, as the DOD implements State Department's programs.
- **Seek an increase to USAID's budget, with a significant focus on global health and climate change.** The developing world has an urgent need for health care assistance, particularly related to the coronavirus response. China and Russia have used high-profile health assistance as a public diplomacy tool⁴⁷ to build better bilateral relations and to undermine the United States and Europe. There is both an urgent humanitarian and geopolitical need to provide greater assistance. Providing assistance to hard-hit countries and regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, Central America, Southeast Asia, and the Balkans, can help these regions respond to the crisis and can help the United States build and strengthen diplomatic ties.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Restore the status and influence of the State Department in national security policymaking

The budget imbalance in national security leaves the State Department under-resourced and badly positioned to lead an effective U.S. foreign policy. A next administration must seriously invest in rebuilding the State Department's resources, personnel, and status within U.S. national security and foreign policy.



QUICK WIN: Establish a presumption that the State Department chairs working group-level interagency meetings. Task the State Department to chair working group-level interagency meetings, with NSC staff as vice chairs, especially where meetings are focused on policy implementation. The State Department should also be tasked to lead the development of policy options papers and implementation plans.



QUICK WIN: Create a larger role for the State Department in setting national intelligence priorities. Prioritize setting new intelligence priorities within the first 100 days as an early signal of strategic realignment to elevate national security threats such as global health, migration, and climate change as tier-one presidential intelligence priorities. In doing so, create a larger role for the State Department in setting these priorities by requiring the concurrence of the secretary of state before revisions are presented to the president.

- **Launch a review of personnel to strengthen the State Department.** The Trump administration's efforts to gut the State Department have depleted its ranks. The next administration should launch a 100-day review to recommend immediate steps that the administration can take to strengthen the State Department. The review should be led by the undersecretary for management, who should be among the earliest appointees. The review should consider:
 - The department's structure and policymaking processes, including the undersecretary positions and which bureaus report to them.
 - Key talent acquisition priorities for the department, including how to improve the ability of mid-career professionals to enter the State Department at ranks commensurate with their abilities; how to give State Department officers the ability to take long leaves of absence to obtain an advanced degree, gain private sector experience, or work for nonprofit organizations; and how best to make the foreign and civil services complementary pillars to promote U.S. foreign policy.
 - How State Department and USAID leadership coordinate on foreign assistance as well as how to deliver such assistance most efficiently.
 - How to refine and strengthen the role of the Global Engagement Center.

- **Launch an effort to immediately recruit high-quality State Department employees.**

Concurrently with the review of personnel, the secretary of state can direct some immediate changes to ensure a high-quality pipeline of talent to meet the talent acquisition priorities identified by the 100-day review. These immediate steps could include:

- Leverage Section 308(a)⁴⁸ of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 or the OPM’s pending rule⁴⁹ on promotion and internal placement to recall retired diplomats at the same rank they left with who were forced out in the past four years.
- Fully utilize Schedule B⁵⁰ hiring authority to increase the number of technical and scientific specialists in the State Department. This will be essential to ensuring that the department has the expertise it needs in a variety of technical areas such as cyber, climate, tech, AI, health, biosecurity, and economics and finance.
- Task the Bureau of Global Talent Management to develop a proposal to establish a national diplomatic corps in high schools and colleges, modeled after the ROTC, to develop a reliable pipeline of skilled and diverse foreign service officers.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Restore civilian control of the military

The secretary of defense needs to establish greater civilian control of the military by prioritizing the Title 10 authority⁵¹ of the Office of the Secretary of Defense on war planning, budget, policy, and capabilities. The next administration should restore civilian control by clearly establishing the direction and limits under which the armed forces should operate.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Signal a realignment of defense resources toward emerging threats

The secretary of defense should signal early and often an intent to realign defense resources and focus to combat rising competitiveness threats, both traditional and nontraditional, from China and Russia.



OVERARCHING POLICY:

Narrow the use of hard-power tools

The Trump administration has taken advantage of a bloated DOD budget, often using military force to accomplish political aims such as in its use of the military at the U.S. southern border. A next administration must review U.S. hard-power tools and reassess where the military should be focused.



QUICK WIN: End military deployment to the southern U.S. border. President Trump's rare and controversial use of the military⁵² to support DHS missions was legally questionable, costly for taxpayers, and wholly unnecessary. The next administration should rescind EO 13919⁵³ ordering some reservists to active duty and immediately end military deployments to the southern U.S. border; it should also revoke EO 13767,⁵⁴ which the Trump administration used to strengthen enforcement at the border, increase deportations, and build the border wall.



QUICK WIN: End the 1033 program. The military surplus equipment transfer program, known as the 1033 program⁵⁵, established in 1997, has allowed the transfer of more than⁵⁶ \$7.4 billion in military equipment and goods, including armored vehicles, rifles, and aircraft, to state and local law enforcement agencies. This has led to no measurable reduction in crime or improvement in police safety. Weapons of war do not belong in American communities. A next administration should end the transfers of military equipment and vehicles under the 1033 program as a step toward reducing overly aggressive policing.

- **Support legislation limiting the use of the Insurrection Act.** The Insurrection Act⁵⁷ invests full authority in the president to determine that circumstances warrant its use, with no legislative, judicial, or executive branch checks on its use. As became clear during protests following the death of George Floyd, the lack of any limits on the use of the Insurrection Act allow it to be wielded for undemocratic and even unconstitutional purposes. The next administration should support legislative efforts⁵⁸ to put in place appropriate checks on abuse of this authority, including an explicit prohibition against invoking the act against peaceful assembly, and require congressional notification and authorization, court findings to invoke the act over the objection of governors, and certification by the attorney general and/or the secretary of defense that conditions necessitate its use.

- **Announce an independent review of covert action and set modern limits on intelligence collection activities.** Announce an independent review of covert action over the past three presidencies, exploring the policy goals, risks assumed, and policy gains achieved. The next administration should commit to reforms in the use of covert action and make some of the findings public. Relatedly, the next administration should set new boundaries around intelligence collection activities by adding a dimension to the National Intelligence Priorities Framework (NIPF) that indicates the level of invasiveness, or risk, that policymakers are willing to assume in the conduct of intelligence activity related to the priority.
- **Establish new parameters and strategic objectives for arms sales.** American weapons should not be used to commit human rights abuses at home or abroad. Today, U.S. arms sales support⁵⁹ illiberal and abusive regimes and flood⁶⁰ police departments in the United States with excess military-grade equipment. A next administration should conduct a review of U.S. arms sales policy and establish guidelines to halt and prevent further sales when a partner's behavior no longer serves U.S. national security interests. The new policy should embed higher human rights standards into sales decisions and significantly increase the training and doctrine development required in order to ensure that American equipment is used legally and effectively. Partners that violate American standards for use, including end-user license agreements, should be held accountable.

Conclusion

A next administration must begin its term prepared to rebuild—and improve—hollowed-out national security institutions. At the strategic level, doing so will require leaders to articulate a coherent rationale for U.S. engagement in the world—that America’s security and prosperity is inextricably linked with the rest of the world and that the leadership role we play in global affairs offers clear dividends to the American people. To enlist congressional and public support for these efforts, the president will need to better connect the conduct and goals of foreign policy to the lived experience and domestic needs of the American people. National security experts have often remarked that the barriers between domestic and foreign policy have fallen,⁶¹ but our public discourse has not kept pace. Most Americans have an incomplete understanding,⁶² at best, of what the United States is trying to achieve in the world and how it affects them. This deficiency has allowed overly simplistic but easily digestible populist strategies—such as an America-first strategy—to take hold. A shared understanding about the aims of foreign policy that directly ties America’s domestic strength to its strength abroad will be essential to making—and winning—the argument for meaningful institutional reform.

But restoring these institutions will not be enough; they must also adapt for the future. As the next administration rebuilds, it should prioritize efforts in the first 100 days that restore integrity to our national security institutions and workforce and modernize both for the future. It should also endeavor to signal a meaningful shift toward an economic and diplomacy-first foreign policy that is better aligned with today’s national security challenges. Significant reforms to refine and reimagine how our national security tools are used to protect the nation will take time, but a president can make important strides in the first 100 days to set our national security institutions on a sustainable course for the future.

Prerequisites for a functional national security enterprise

The actions below are critical prerequisites for modernizing how our national security institutions do their work. They should be considered together with the broader initiatives undertaken by the next administration in the first 100 days.

- **Prioritize the development of a unified system for security clearances.** Backlogs and waiting times for security clearance applications create barriers to recruiting the best officials to serve in U.S. national security. Resolving this backlog and facilitating a unified system will be critical to rebuilding a hollowed-out national security workforce and bringing in new talent.
- **Launch a unified national security directory for the executive branch.** One of the simplest and most impactful things the next administration could do to improve interagency coordination is to make it easier for national security employees to connect with each other via a contact directory. This basic business requirement enables employees to identify who does what across the community. Yet the national security infrastructure does not have one. A unified national security directory would facilitate greater cooperation, even if it needs to be classified to mitigate the security risk.
- **Simplify the White House visitor process for U.S. government employees attending NSC meetings.** The current system for processing visitors into the White House is understandably complex, but USG employees attending NSC staff meetings should be able to be cleared and screened more efficiently than non-U.S. government visitors. Reforms to the White House visitor process could achieve significant time savings if senior officials no longer had to arrive up to an hour before each meeting. The next administration should immediately seek to improve the function and efficiency of the official visitor process.
- **Announce an immediate initiative to modernize the USAJobs website.** The government's online recruiting portal, USAJobs, is outdated and ineffective in recruiting top talent to U.S. government employment. A next administration should prioritize overhauling the application portal, making it a priority project for the U.S. Digital Service.
- **Propose and support significant investments in State Department and USAID IT infrastructure.** Outdated technology hampers modern, effective diplomatic capabilities. Modernizing the State Department and USAID's infrastructure will be essential to elevating these agencies' stature within the U.S. foreign policy decision-making process.
- **Ensure Joint Worldwide Intelligence Communications System (JWICS) email access and Tandberg systems at every workstation for all cleared State Department personnel.** One of the most consequential impediments to State Department leadership is its inability to easily and effectively access the IT systems in wide use by their defense and intelligence counterparts. The next administration should resolve this disparity by installing JWICS email access and Tandberg secure videoconferencing systems at the workstations of every cleared State Department official.



New executive orders or policies recommended in the first 100 days:

- Issue a presidential policy directive underscoring trust and integrity in our national security institutions.
- Create an executive order on improving diversity in the national security workforce.
- Task the secretary of state to develop a National Diplomacy Strategy.
- Create an executive order to reinstate reporting requirements on counterterrorism activities, increasing the transparency of U.S. operations.
- Issue a presidential policy directive to tighten the policy and legal boundaries for direct lethal action in U.S. counterterrorism operations.



Executive orders or policies recommended for rescission or removal:

- **Executive Order 13767:** Used by the Trump administration to strengthen enforcement at the border, increase deportations, and build the border wall
- **Executive Order 13782:** Permits discrimination against LGBTQ employees by reversing the Obama administration's federal contracting regulations
- **Executive Order 13919:** Used by the Trump administration to send troops to the southern U.S. border
- **Executive Orders 13933 and 13934:** Deployed by the Trump administration to protect Confederate monuments and set new standards for monuments and statues

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