



Foreign Policy for the People

American foreign policy should serve the safety, prosperity, and everyday needs of the American people. But right now, we're trying to do too much with our military and we're allowing special interests too much influence. The result is a set of priorities that are out of balance, where we spend billions on unnecessary military programs and invest too little in American communities.

A more responsible and balanced foreign policy would focus on what actually keeps Americans safe. It would keep us out of unnecessary wars, prioritize diplomacy, and invest in strength at home. And all of these decisions would be made with the best interests of the American people in mind, rather than corporate profits or foreign interests.

What keeps Americans safe?

Security isn't just about military power. It's also about a strong economy, reliable infrastructure, public health, and staying out of unnecessary wars. When our priorities are out of balance, it can actually make us less safe. Spending too much on military programs, especially ones we don't need, means less investment in the things that Americans rely on every day. Over time, that weakens our economic strength, strains public services, and leaves us less prepared for vital threats like pandemics, natural disasters, and financial crises. This is what happens when we try to do too much abroad, and let spending decisions be shaped by politics and special interests instead of real priorities.



"Given today's threats, we need a larger defense budget."



"When defense spending grows without limits, we underinvest in other forms of safety."

Don't we need to increase Pentagon spending given today's threats?

One result of trying to do too much globally and letting special interests shape decisions is constantly rising Pentagon budgets. The US already spends more on its military than any other country by a wide margin. We shouldn't cut corners on defense. But we also shouldn't assume that more spending automatically means more security, especially when that spending is driven by politics or outdated strategies rather than real threats. Efforts to push defense spending even higher than they are now risk worsening our budget deficit, crowding out investments in infrastructure, health care, and education. A more restrained strategy could maintain US security while saving significant resources for national renewal at home.



"Given all the threats we face, we can't afford to cut defense spending."



"More Pentagon spending does not mean more security. It makes us more vulnerable to waste, fraud, and abuse."



"If we don't keep increasing the Pentagon budget, we'll fall behind."




"The US isn't at risk of falling behind in military spending. It is at risk of wasting resources on programs that don't actually make us safer."

Doesn't defense spending create good jobs?

Defense spending creates fewer jobs per dollar than investing in infrastructure, clean energy, health care, or education. So when we rely on Pentagon spending as a jobs program, we're overspending and also missing better opportunities to grow the economy. This is another example of how misaligned priorities weaken our economic strength.

 "We need to support this weapons program because it creates jobs in our district."

 "Defense spending and foreign policy decisions should be based on strategy, not whether a program benefits a particular district."

 "Cutting Pentagon spending would hurt American workers."

 "We can create more good jobs by investing in industries that directly benefit our communities."

What influence do corporations have on foreign policy?

The defense industry and related interests play a major role in shaping US foreign policy. Contractors deploy extensive lobbying networks, campaign contributions, and local economic pressure to sustain high levels of military spending. These dynamics can distort policy decisions, prioritizing weapons programs and military commitments that benefit contractors rather than serving the national interest. The arms industry spends tens of millions on campaign contributions and employs hundreds of lobbyists to influence defense policy and budgets. This reinforces high levels of military spending and encourages a foreign policy that tries to do too much.

 "Defense companies are just responding to national security needs."

 "Major contractors actively shape foreign policy through lobbying and political spending, distorting our national priorities."


What should we do about foreign influence?

Foreign governments and their agents actively lobby US officials to shape policy outcomes in their favor. In some cases, this can drag the US into unnecessary wars or towards commitments that don't serve the American public. Even our strongest allies have interests that diverge from ours, and it is essential that policymakers recognize this. To mitigate the negative impacts of foreign influence, it's important to prioritize transparency, to apply the rules consistently, and to ensure policymakers prioritize real US interests.

 "Our allies' priorities naturally align with ours."

 "Even close partners pursue their own interests. US policy should be guided by what benefits Americans."

 "Adversary countries should be subjected to more stringent transparency rules."

 "All foreign influence should be transparent, so that we have a clear view of the interests at play."

Ending the War in Ukraine

A responsible approach to ending the Russia–Ukraine war should defend Ukraine’s sovereignty, reduce the risk of a wider NATO–Russia war, and bring this devastating conflict to a close through realistic diplomacy. The United States should support Ukraine and deter further Russian aggression, but avoid open-ended escalation or a permanent proxy war with a nuclear power. Responsible policy requires balancing support for Ukraine with the need to reduce the risk of escalation and bring the conflict to an end.

 “Negotiations equal appeasement.”

 “Diplomacy backed by leverage is how wars end, and how lives are saved.”

What interests are at stake in this war?

There is no clear American interest in an indefinite proxy war. There is a clear American interest in a stable Europe, a secure Ukraine, and avoiding escalation with a nuclear power. The most important US interest is preventing a wider NATO–Russia war, because a direct clash between two nuclear-armed powers could escalate rapidly and unpredictably.

 “If Ukraine doesn’t defeat Russia outright, America loses.”

 “America’s core interest is preventing a wider war and securing long-term stability, not chasing maximalist outcomes.”


Is a negotiated settlement possible — and is Russia really ready to compromise?

Yes, but only if the United States leads a serious diplomatic effort. After years of attrition, neither Ukraine or Russia is positioned to achieve a decisive victory at an acceptable cost. However, many of the issues behind the war cannot be resolved on the battlefield alone. Russia has tied the conflict to broader European security concerns. Ukraine cannot negotiate over NATO policy or US military deployments in Europe, but Washington can. That is why US diplomacy is essential to reaching a durable settlement. There are political settlements available that would preserve Ukraine as a sovereign, independent state and provide it with the means to defend itself, while also reducing the risk of direct NATO–Russia war.

 “Ukraine must keep fighting for as long as it takes.”

 “The alternative to negotiations isn’t guaranteed victory. It is more war and destruction.”


 “Addressing NATO expansion means accepting Russia’s narrative.”

 “Acknowledging security concerns is not endorsing aggression — it’s recognizing that durable peace requires addressing root causes.”

What leverage does the United States have?

The United States has real leverage to help shape how this war ends, through military, economic and diplomatic tools. The United States and its NATO allies remain far stronger militarily than Russia. Decisions about US troop levels, missile deployments, and future arms control agreements matter greatly to Moscow. Sanctions, along with hundreds of billions of dollars in frozen Russian assets, are powerful tools that can be used to achieve a framework deal. Any sanctions relief should be gradual, conditional, and reversible if Russia violates an agreement. Russia also wants relief from international isolation and recognition as a major power. The United States can use that interest as leverage, offering limited diplomatic and economic normalization only if Moscow follows through on a peace deal. US strength gives us tools beyond the battlefield, if we can use them strategically to help bring this war to a responsible end.

 "Give Ukraine the weapons it needs to win."

 "Support and diplomacy must go hand in hand. We need to strategically use all of our tools to help Ukraine reach a peace deal."


 "Negotiations mean giving up our leverage."

 "Negotiations are where we use our leverage to protect American interests and bring the war to an end."

Would a settlement reward Putin's aggression?

Russia launched this war hoping to bring Ukraine back under its control and stop it from moving closer to the West. That didn't happen. Ukraine is still an independent country, its government is intact, and its ties to Europe are stronger than before the invasion. At the same time, Russia has paid a high price — with heavy military losses and far fewer gains than it expected. A settlement along today's front lines wouldn't be a clear victory for either side, but it would confirm that Russia failed to take over Ukraine. A deal that protects Ukraine's independence, helps it defend itself, and secures its future in Europe would not reward aggression. It would lock in the reality that Ukraine survived, while stopping the fighting and saving lives. Any realistic settlement is likely to leave some Ukrainian territory under Russian control, which is a difficult thing to come to terms with. But the alternative is not guaranteed victory for Ukraine. It is likely years more war, more lives lost, higher costs for the United States, and a continued risk of escalation between nuclear powers.

 "Talking to Russia rewards aggression."

 "Putin's larger war objectives have already failed. Ukraine remains independent and aligned with Europe. Territorial concessions reflect battlefield realities, but they do not change the fact that Russia failed to conquer Ukraine."

How does the war in Iran impact the war in Ukraine?

The war in Iran is stretching US military resources and attention. The same air defense systems and precision missiles that Ukraine depends on are also being used at a rapid pace in the Middle East. When the United States is involved in multiple conflicts at once, it becomes harder to sustain support for any one of them. At the same time, conflict with Iran is pushing up global oil prices, which helps Russia finance its war in Ukraine. These factors make a prolonged war in Iran more dangerous and less likely to improve Ukraine's position, increasing the urgency of pursuing an end to these two conflicts.

 "Now that there's a war with Iran, Ukraine doesn't matter anymore."

 "The more global conflicts there are, the more important it is to end the ones we can responsibly resolve."




Responsible US–China Policy


A responsible approach to the US–China relationship strengthens America at home, protects critical industries, and deters aggression while preventing rivalry from spiraling into permanent confrontation. We should defend our interests firmly, but avoid repeating the mistakes that led to costly, open-ended wars.

Policymakers are often pushed towards emotionally charged language on China, even though the myth of popular hostility to China is not well-supported. The public is more concerned about conflict with China than about appearing weak. Yet certain rhetorical habits move policymakers away from a real and restraint-oriented approach, and increase the risk of escalation. Here are some common pitfalls, and how to avoid them:

 “China is an existential threat.”

 “China is a serious competitor, but America has much to gain from a healthy relationship and much to lose from permanent hostility.”

 “This is a choice between democracy and autocracy.”

 “We defend our values best by strengthening our own democratic institutions, competing in smart and constructive ways, and avoiding unnecessary wars.”

 “A deal with China sells out the American public.”

 “A smart, enforceable deal with China protects jobs, lowers risks of conflict, and keeps competition stable instead of spiraling toward crisis.”

Should the US decouple economically from China?

A full economic break with China would hurt American families and make conflict more likely. Severing most economic ties with the world’s second-largest economy would raise prices, damage American farmers and manufacturers, and trigger retaliation that hurts US businesses. Broad exclusion also pushes both countries toward deeper hostility and increases the risk of military confrontation. Rather than decoupling, the US should strategically reduce dependencies in key areas while deepening ties in others that serve to rebuild American strength at home.

 “We need to separate the US and Chinese economies.”


 “We need protections in some sectors, but a self-inflicted economic rupture would deprive America of great opportunities without strengthening our security.”

Should the US restrict Chinese access to technology and limit research collaboration?

Intellectual property theft and improper technology transfer are real problems, and they require enforcement. But broad suspicion and restrictions on even low-risk cooperation are overreach that weakens American science and damages American business. China has become a major power in many scientific and technical fields, and cutting off collaboration will not stop China’s progress. Instead, it risks harming US universities, companies, and researchers, while

reducing American visibility into Chinese capabilities. Overbroad restrictions can also damage America's talent pipeline and fuel prejudice against Chinese scholars. A responsible approach would involve controls on narrowly defined, high-risk technologies and research areas, while encouraging collaboration in medicine, climate science, public health, and other low-risk areas.


 "If China 'wins' in AI, chips, or biotech, America has lost."

 "America cannot lead in innovation if it cuts itself off from one of our most dynamic competitors and one of the most important sources of new technological breakthroughs."

Should the US defend Taiwan if China invades? How should the US deter Chinese aggression?

The US has a strong interest in preventing coercion and preserving peace in the Taiwan Strait, but the deteriorating US-China relationship in recent years has made that more difficult. A war would be devastating for Taiwan, the US, China, and the global economy. Deterrence should focus on convincing Beijing that it cannot achieve its aims in Taiwan quickly or cheaply, while also reducing the risk of escalation. That means strengthening Taiwan's self-defense, maintaining a credible U.S. military posture centered on denial rather than provocation, and preparing serious economic and diplomatic consequences for aggression. However, efforts to restrict China must be accompanied by robust reassurance, including reinvigorating a stable One China Policy, steady crisis communication, and initiatives that cultivate shared interests between the two powers.


 "The US needs to commit to defending Taiwan and prepare for war with China."

 "The best way to support Taiwan is to prevent war, and that requires not just a smarter approach to deterrence but also rebuilding the diplomatic relationship with China."

How should the US respond to China's human rights abuses?


The Chinese government's human rights abuses, including repression in Xinjiang and crackdowns on labor, feminist, and democracy activists, are real and wrong. The US should speak clearly about those abuses. But when human rights are instrumentalized as a tool to gain geopolitical advantage, they lose credibility. If Washington frames every dispute as part of an ideological crusade, it strengthens nationalist forces in China and makes it easier for Beijing to portray domestic reformers as agents of a foreign power. A new Cold War atmosphere empowers authoritarianism and militarism, which are the very forces most hostile to universal rights. A more strategic approach means speaking clearly and consistently about abuses, applying standards evenly to preserve credibility, and rebuilding diplomacy with China so Beijing has a stake in listening to US criticism.

 "The only way to stand up for human rights is to confront China everywhere."

 "We should speak clearly about human rights abuses, but we shouldn't use them as a reason to escalate towards conflict that could hurt millions and close space for real progress on human rights."

Can the US and China work together on global issues?

The US should compete with China, but refusing to cooperate on global threats is strategic irresponsibility. Some dangers, like pandemics, climate disruption, financial shocks, and nuclear escalation, cannot be managed without direct engagement between the world's two largest powers. We don't cooperate because China is altruistic — we cooperate because both Americans and Chinese pay the price when global crises spin out of control.

 "Cooperation with China sells out the American people."

 "Cooperation isn't appeasement. It's protecting Americans from global threats we can't manage alone."



Ending US Entanglements in the Middle East

As the US embarks on a war in Iran that lacks strategic sense and public support, the American public is questioning endless military commitments in the Middle East that cost lives, drain resources, and fail to make the country safer. The failed US approach to the Middle East has made it abundantly clear that it is time for a radically different approach. The US must right-size its role in the Middle East, protecting core interests while ending unnecessary entanglements and avoiding another generation of war. A smarter approach should put the responsibility for regional security on regional actors and bring open-ended US military involvement in the region to a close.

 "If the US pulls back, the Middle East will fall into chaos."

 "If the US pulls back, evidence shows that regional states will step forward and take greater responsibility for their own security."

What are US interests in the Middle East?

The United States has real but limited interests in the Middle East. These include protecting the US from attack, and facilitating the free flow of global commerce. What is not a core interest is trying to control political outcomes across the region, maintaining indefinite military deployments, or providing security guarantees that put US troops in harm's way for the interests of other countries. Over the past several decades, Americans have grown skeptical of these kinds of commitments. US interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and now Iran have cost trillions of dollars and stretched US forces thin while doing little to deliver lasting stability.


 "The US must stay deeply militarily involved in the Middle East to protect its interests."

 "The US can protect its core interests, including economic stability, without a military presence in the Middle East."

What about terrorism? Won't reducing our commitments in the region make us less safe?

Terrorism is a concern, but large-scale wars and military occupations have often made the problem worse. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan did not eliminate terrorism. In many cases, they created instability that extremist groups used to grow and recruit, the rise of ISIS being a case in point. Military interventions tend to fuel anti-American sentiment, weaken local governments, and create the conditions that terrorist groups rely on. A more effective approach focuses on targeted counterterrorism. This includes intelligence sharing, limited operations against specific threats, and cooperation with regional partners.

 "If the US reduces its military presence, terrorism will surge."

 "Large-scale wars have often fueled terrorism. More effective strategies for keeping Americans safe include removing the US from regional conflicts and focusing on targeted counterterrorism."

Now that we are at war with Iran, don't we need to focus on winning the war?

This is the same argument Americans have heard before in Iraq and Afghanistan. Once a war begins, the only option is escalation until we win. Experience shows that this logic leads to longer wars, higher costs, and no clear victory. There is no simple military win in a war with Iran. Even after major strikes, Iran retains the ability to escalate and prolong the conflict. Military pressure has historically strengthened hardline elements and increased instability rather than producing lasting, stable outcomes. The US needs to quickly find off-ramps and negotiate an end to this war.

 "Now that we've started a war with Iran, we need to finish the job."

 "Our problems with Iran need to be solved diplomatically, not through war. Pouring resources into a protracted war would be doubling down on our mistake."


Isn't Israel our greatest ally? Should we continue to sell weapons to Israel?

Israel has been a close partner of the United States, but this does not mean offering unconditional support, especially when Israeli interests run counter to US interests, as they do in Gaza, Lebanon, Iran, and elsewhere. In recent years, US security assistance has helped sustain devastating operations in Gaza, despite US laws that should have restricted assistance. It has also enabled Israel's escalation with Iran, drawing the US into direct conflict. Military aid is a key source of US leverage with Israel, and this leverage should be put to work now, by restricting arms transfers to limit further harm to civilians and regional escalation. The idea that the US can simply provide "defensive" weapons is misleading, as US military aid can shield Israel from the consequences of its actions and encourage further aggression.

 "Israel's interests are America's interests."

 "Allies have their own interests, and US policy should be guided by what serves the American people."


 "We should send Israel only defensive weapons."

 "Sending weapons to Israel has enabled genocide and has protected Israel from the consequences of their own military escalation. The US should not provide Israel with weapons until this behavior changes."

What would success look like in the Middle East?

Success means a more stable Middle East where security is upheld by regional states rather than by the United States. Stability cannot be imposed from the outside or through military force, and excluding key actors has often made conflicts worse. A better system would involve building a more inclusive regional security framework that includes all major actors, including rivals, because lasting stability requires everyone to have a stake in avoiding conflict.

 "Success means defeating adversaries and maintaining US dominance."

 "Success means building a system where countries in the region manage their own security without American involvement, and in which all people in the region live in safety and dignity."

What happens to US troops already in the region?

The United States should bring its troops home. The US has thousands of troops stationed across the Middle East, often in missions that no longer have clear objectives. The current posture creates risks. Military assets, rather than deterring attacks, have become targets. Attacks on these forces can quickly pull the US into wider conflicts, even when those conflicts are not in our interest. Reducing unnecessary bases and deployments lowers the risk of stumbling into another war. A responsible strategy would include a phased and deliberate reduction of the US military presence.

 "We need to keep troops in place indefinitely to maintain stability."

 "Endless deployments put US troops at risk and can drag the US into wars it does not need to fight."



The US Role in a Changing World Order

The global balance of power is changing. The era when the United States could dominate the world after the Cold War has ended. New economic powers have emerged, and influence is increasingly spread across multiple regions. This shift does not necessarily mean the United States is declining or that the world is becoming unmanageable. But it does mean that trying to dominate every region of the world through military power is not realistic or necessary, and often makes things worse for American security.

The path to long-term security and prosperity lies in focusing on core interests, avoiding unnecessary wars, and leading with diplomacy and restraint. In a more multipolar world, American strength will come from restraint abroad and investments at home, rather than trying to control every outcome around the world.

What are the United States' core interests?

The United States has several enduring interests, including defending the US homeland and its citizens; maintaining economic stability and access to global markets; and preventing the spread and use of nuclear weapons. Many global challenges are important, but not every conflict is a vital US interest. A more disciplined foreign policy means focusing American resources where they matter most.



"Most problems around the world can and should be solved by the US."



"The United States cannot and should not try to solve every problem in the world, especially through military force."

Does global stability require US dominance?

Efforts to preserve Washington's role as the only real rule-setter in every important region of the world have drawn the United States into costly wars and open-ended military commitments, with no benefit to American security. Recent decades have shown that rather than producing stability, US military involvement can make the world less stable, as we are now seeing in Iran. A refusal to acknowledge the core interests of other powers also makes conflict more likely. In a more multipolar world, stability is more likely to come from regional balances of power, active diplomacy, and cooperation among states rather than from a single dominant power laying down the law.



"If the United States isn't the dominant power everywhere, the world will fall into chaos."



"Trying to dominate every region tends to create new conflicts, weaken US security, and drain American resources."

Is the "rules-based international order" under threat?

The phrase "rules-based international order" is widely used in Washington, but many countries view it as unclear and applied unevenly. In practice, the system often appears to reflect the preferences of Western powers rather than universally accepted rules. For the United States to maintain legitimacy and leadership, it should emphasize consistent following of international law rather than relying on arbitrary rules that many countries see as politically motivated.

 "If the US doesn't enforce the rules-based order, the world will become lawless."

 "Global stability depends on good-faith efforts to resolve clashing interests peacefully and the consistent application of international law."

Is the world becoming "multipolar"?

Economic growth and technological development in countries like China, India, and others are shifting the global balance of power. This trend cannot be reversed through military confrontation or attempts at economic isolation. Periods of change and uncertainty can become dangerous when countries treat competition as a zero-sum struggle or divide the world into opposing groups. Forcing countries to choose sides risks deepening divisions and making cooperation harder. To avoid these risks, the United States should focus on managing competition responsibly while preventing escalation into conflict.

A more multipolar world is also an opportunity for the United States. Since America no longer has the resources to dominate every region, US allies will need to carry more of the burden of maintaining order in their regions, helping reduce the costs to American taxpayers.


 "Multipolarity means America is losing and our rivals are winning."

 "A more multipolar world is inevitable. The challenge is managing it peacefully and taking advantage of the opportunities it presents."

How should the United States manage rivals in the emerging global order?

Treating every global issue as part of a geopolitical contest increases the risk of arms races, proxy wars, and economic division. The United States should compete where necessary but prioritize compromise and cooperation wherever possible, particularly on global challenges like climate change, pandemics, financial stability, and reducing nuclear risks. This requires the United States not to exaggerate the threat that its adversaries pose to its way of life or to the international order, especially given Washington's own track record of inconsistent support for international law and norms. Even in rare situations where we must compete with a country almost as powerful as the US, the rivalry can be managed through careful balancing and economic competition. Diplomacy should be the first tool of American statecraft, not a last resort after military options are exhausted.


 "Great-power rivalry means the US must confront competitors everywhere."

 "While our interests may not always align, cooperation with rivals should be the baseline, inevitable competition with states that truly match US power should be diverted as much as possible to the commercial arena, and unavoidable conflicts compartmentalized."

How should the United States behave in a changing world order?

A changing world presents an opportunity for the US to thoughtfully adjust its role, prioritizing American wellbeing and stability. We should start by accepting the reality of a more multipolar world, rather than trying to achieve the unrealistic goal of permanent global dominance. We should work towards a more inclusive international system that takes the interests and perspectives of the Global South – rising powers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America – into account. This is key for solving global problems and maintaining US influence in an increasingly multipolar world. We should take the opportunity to solve most problems peacefully, using military force only as a tool of last resort when vital US interests are at stake.

 "The US must remain the world's dominant power and reclaim the leadership role of the past."

 "The world is changing, and US domination is no longer possible or desirable. While remaining engaged on the global stage, we must deal with the world as it is, prioritizing American interests and global stability."