

Reimagining the Path to Peace: Priorities for the New Presidential Agenda

Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Recommendations

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*AfP thanks all of its members
for their contributions.*



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Introduction

In the last year, the number of [highly violent conflicts](#) increased for the first time in four years. In the beginning of 2019, there were 41 active highly violent conflicts, an increase from 36 in 2018. These conflicts are taking a heavy toll on civilians, dramatically spiking instances of sexual violence, injury, death, damage to property, and loss of livelihoods. The onset of COVID has increased the likelihood of conflict in an additional [13 countries](#) through the end of 2022, further complicating fragile contexts. The COVID-19 global pandemic is, effectively, [stabilization in reverse](#) – a serious disruption of health systems, as well as an exacerbation of the drivers of violent conflict. Compounding matters, climate change has emerged as a threat multiplier for violent conflict. In 2020, nearly 168 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection – about 1-in-45 people in the world, the highest figure in decades.

To address the increasing global challenges to better engage with global partners and reprioritize development, democracy and governance, peacebuilding, and humanitarian assistance—particularly in service of the prevention of violent conflict—the Alliance for Peacebuilding recommends the Biden-Harris Administration address the following priorities:

1. Restore American leadership and robustly resource a U.S. global, multi-sectoral integrated COVID strategy;
2. Fully implement U.S. laws and support new Youth, Peace, and Security legislation;
3. Urgently implement a new climate change/crisis foreign assistance strategy;
4. Promote democracy and good governance in fragile states and backsliding democracies;
5. Strengthen and empower local civil society-led ownership;
6. Rightsize the military defense budget to ensure critical funding for diplomacy and foreign assistance, including democracy, governance, and peacebuilding programs, and responsibly end and prevent wars;
7. Rebalance and rightsize counterterrorism and preventing/countering violent extremism laws, policies, and programs;
8. Enhance USAID and State Department structures;
9. Restore support to the United Nations and other multilateral institutions to promote international cooperation and partnership on peace and security;
10. Partner with the American private sector for peace and prosperity;
11. End arms sales to countries violating Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law; and
12. Address priority country and regional contexts.

The following 12 recommendations address the ways in which U.S. foreign assistance and diplomacy must adapt and innovate to keep pace with recent upticks in violence and protracted conflict, as well as to create the conditions for the effective prevention, building, and sustainment of peace.



1. Restore American Leadership and Robustly Resource a U.S. Global Multi-Sectoral Integrated COVID Strategy

The COVID-19 pandemic is more than just a health crisis—it is increasing instability and exacerbating conflict dynamics and gender-based violence in conflict-affected and fragile states. The [Infectious Disease Vulnerability Index](#) shows conflict is present in the 25 countries most vulnerable to infectious diseases; 22 are in Africa, and the other three are Afghanistan, Yemen, and Haiti. Since the onset of COVID-19, an estimated [additional 13 countries are likely to see new conflicts through 2022](#)—a 56% increase from pre-COVID forecasts. Additionally, it takes only [36 hours for a pathogen such as COVID-19 to spread around the world](#), illuminating the interconnected need for global cooperation to combat illness and its multiplier effects. Beyond its health implications, the COVID-19 pandemic poses far-reaching and long-term dangers through the disruption of effective governance, collapse of economies, significant threats to human and food security, and undermining of informal and formal peace processes. Violent extremist groups, including the [Islamic State](#), are also leveraging the pandemic to their advantage by legitimizing their ability to provide services to communities facing [economic and food insecurity](#).

The U.S. failed to lead a global response to contain the pandemic and prevent and mitigate the humanitarian and economic shocks, increased violence, and “[shadow pandemic](#)” of gender-based violence emerged. The current joint State Department-USAID strategy is inadequate to address the crisis. It prioritizes three of four pillars: protecting American interests, bolstering health systems, and addressing complex humanitarian crises. The catch-all fourth pillar focuses on mitigating and addressing second-order impacts including economic instability and conflict drivers. This linear and siloed strategy treats the fourth pillar as a lesser priority that will be addressed after the immediate health and humanitarian emergency has abated. Additionally, despite the surge of COVID-19 cases in developing countries, in September, the Trump Administration disbanded the USAID Coronavirus Task Force. To be truly effective, the COVID strategy must be an integrated multi-sectoral approach with a coordinating mechanism amongst U.S. foreign policy agencies.

AfP applauds the Biden-Harris transition team for standing up its COVID-19 task force with a team dedicated to national security and foreign and domestic policy. However, the Trump Administration and Congress have failed to agree and advance an additional supplemental funding bill to address foreign and security priorities. The House put forward a [new package with \\$250 million in foreign assistance](#), but the House, Senate, and [Administration have not agreed](#) on a way forward. The House FY21 budget included [\\$10 billion in emergency funding for global COVID response](#), whereas the [Senate includes \\$0 for this issue](#). Less than 1% of all the funding made available in COVID-19 supplementals has gone to support the global response and the ancillary issues created by the pandemic.



The Biden-Harris Administration should reinvigorate U.S. leadership in response to the global pandemic by:

- Reinstating the USAID Coronavirus Task Force disbanded by the Trump Administration with an empowered Associate Administrator for Relief, Response, and Resilience and Bureau of Global Health to lead a revised multisectoral, coordinated, field-facing, and conflict-sensitive response. The revised USAID and State Department COVID-19 strategy must ensure [peacebuilding and conflict prevention](#) are integrated into a strategy that contains and prevents the pandemic and mitigates accelerating destabilization, conflict, and violence;
- Reinstating the National Security Council's [pandemic preparedness and global health security team](#) disbanded under the Trump Administration. These issues require a government-wide response and leadership of a high-ranking official within the White House who is solely assigned to this response. Global and domestic health security is very fragmented, with many different agencies involved, and senior-level coordination is critical to the success of containing and responding to a global pandemic;
- Providing at least \$20 billion in emergency supplemental funding to contain and prevent the spread of the virus and address the conflict dynamics and socio-economic grievances that threaten to accelerate violent conflict in conflict affected and fragile states;
- Recognizing the role that charitable giving to nonprofits and civil society organizations plays in reflecting American values abroad, and working with Congress to ensure additional Coronavirus stimulus measures, such as incentivizing charitable giving by raising the above-the-line deductions; increasing non-profit access to credit, including for midsize organizations, and including relief for payroll and other kinds of taxes to which nonprofits are subject; and
- Providing specific funding streams to support the design, implementation, and monitoring of gender-sensitive COVID-19 responses across sectors, as well as instituting monitoring, prevention, and response services for domestic and intimate partner gender-based violence, particularly in conflict-affected and fragile states, including for women refugees and internally-displaced persons, to best address the spiking rates and risks associated with reduced access during social separation.

2. Fully Implement U.S. Laws and Support New Youth, Peace, and Security Legislation

Global Fragility Act

The bipartisan Global Fragility Act (GFA), adopted in December 2019, signals an important new willingness in Congress to provide the State Department and USAID with the funding flexibility and a multi-year mandate to reduce risks of conflict, starting in selected pilot countries. Building on bipartisan Congressional support, the GFA offers the Biden-Harris Administration an unprecedented opportunity to test and learn from new approaches to deter conflict, cement Congressional support

for strategies to reduce violence, build stability in conflict-affected countries/regions, and prevent conflict in fragile states where the U.S already invests heavily in development and humanitarian aid.

The GFA is critical to advance President-elect Biden's democracy, rights, and governance agenda in conflict-vulnerable countries, targeting conflict drivers and authoritarian backsliding through fit-for-purpose democracy, rights, and governance programs. The GFA builds on hard-earned lessons regarding what works in conflict settings and Obama-Biden Administration prevention initiatives (e.g., the Atrocities Prevention Board; the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda; the Countering Violent Extremism Summits; and coordinated programs in the Northern Triangle).

The Trump Administration failed to seize this opportunity. In addition to pushing for irresponsible cuts to international assistance, it thwarted career professionals' efforts to substantively develop and implement the [U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability \(the Global Fragility strategy\)](#), which was finally released on December 18th after significant delays. Unfortunately, the selection of a minimum of five countries or regions to pilot GFA implementation was not released along with a report that details authorities, staffing, and resources that would enable the U.S. government to successfully implement the GFA.

The Biden-Harris Administration should fully implement the GFA by:

- Committing to a new timeline with clear deadlines for reviewing and revising the Global Fragility strategy, identifying or revising selected priority countries/regions (if they are released before January 19th), and submitting country year plans to Congress. Ideally, this new deadline should be no later than May 1st to allow the agencies to use FY20 GFA resources and to demonstrate progress before the FY22 appropriations process ends;
- Ensuring effective coordination, through designating the Deputy Secretary or Under Secretary-level authorities at State, USAID, and the Department of Defense (DoD) to effectively lead GFA strategy development. The senior-level designation will signal the Administration's serious commitment to Congress and ensure the strategy and implementation of the country plans is not situated in one office—i.e., the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations at the State Department, as is currently the case;
- Rescinding the White House delegation of GFA authority to the Secretary of State and establishing a White House Coordinator to ensure effective coordination with all agencies, including USAID, Department of State, and DoD, amongst others;
- Establishing a coordinating mechanism with civil society, particularly the peacebuilding and WPS communities, to ensure the GFA's requirements for consultation and engagement with local and marginalized constituencies is fully implemented;
- Prioritizing locally-led peacebuilding approaches within all country strategies developed under the GFA; and
- Engaging Congress early to:
 - Request the full \$200 million per year for the Prevention and Stabilization Fund and at least \$30 million in the Complex Crises Fund (already authorized in the GFA through FY25) to implement the initiative, which is a needed increase from the



likely \$100 million in the FY21 Senate and House State and Foreign Operations appropriations measures;

- Signal a commitment to Congress to include, if needed, the full funding for the GFA in a COVID supplemental. Reducing the level of funding for this nascent initiative threatens to stall its development and undermine the bipartisan Congressional intent behind the law for a new approach to global violence and conflict; and
- Support the FY21 Senate appropriation measure for \$25 million to the Multi-Donor Global Fragility Fund, but do not fund it out of the Prevention and Stabilization Fund. Launch the Fund at a multilateral gathering, possibly the global summit of democracies, as already committed to by President-elect Biden, and ask other countries to make public contributions during the event.

Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act

Atrocities [destabilize countries](#), trigger mass displacement and humanitarian crises, and create grievances and chaos that violent extremists exploit for their own ends. In 2012, the Obama-Biden Administration established the [Atrocities Prevention Board](#) (APB), an interagency coordination body that met monthly to develop and implement an atrocity prevention and response policy. The APB rightly elevated atrocity prevention as a key focus of U.S. foreign policy. The Trump Administration's efforts to support the atrocities prevention agenda, however, have been decidedly mixed. The Trump Administration did sign the [Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act](#) (EWGAPA), which requires a U.S. government atrocity prevention strategy and mandates atrocity and conflict prevention training for U.S. foreign service officers in at-risk contexts, into law. The Trump Administration also met its annual Congressional reporting requirements concerning interagency coordination and State Department atrocities prevention training in [2019](#) and [2020](#). Yet, it downgraded the APB to the "Atrocity Early Warning Task Force," which now meets five times per year instead of monthly. Moreover, the Trump Administration's withdrawal from the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council and its issuance of sanctions on the International Criminal Court signaled hostility toward working multilaterally to prevent mass atrocities and hold perpetrators of atrocity crimes accountable.

The Biden-Harris Administration should uphold both the spirit and the letter of the EWGAPA by:

- Restoring the Task Force to stress its role in preventing, and not just responding to, mass atrocities, and reinstating its monthly meetings;
- Identifying countries and regions at-risk of atrocities. As identified in subsections 5(a)(1)(D) and (E) of the Act, Congress required the Administration to provide a "global assessment of ongoing atrocities, including the findings of such assessment and, where relevant, the efficacy of any steps taken by the Board or relevant Federal agency to respond to such atrocities" and to report on "countries and regions at-risk of atrocities, including a description of specific risk factors, at-risk groups, and likely scenarios in which atrocities would occur." The 2020 Report, like the 2019 Report, still does not include this assessment of ongoing atrocities or list of at-risk countries or regions;
- Organizing regular briefings with Congress to discuss atrocity situations and detail the Administration's ongoing response to them;

- Coordinating EWGAPA implementation with the GFA, the WPS Act, and other complementary violence reduction efforts to reduce bureaucratic silos and ensure codified tools that support inclusive foreign assistance programs are available for use;
- Recommitting to the global Arms Trade Treaty as an essential atrocity prevention mechanism; and
- Rejoining the UN Human Rights Council and ending sanctions on the International Criminal Court, in addition to strengthening other multilateral mechanisms and cooperation for tracking and deterring mass atrocities.

Recommendations for the Biden-Harris Administration for full implementation of the Elie Wiesel Act:

- Public Release of Designated Countries List Recommendation: the Task Force should publicly release, either in whole or in part, the list of countries and regions designated as at-risk. This list should be regularly updated and additions or subtractions from it should be announced publicly, subject to intelligence and classification limitations. Each annual report should include the most current list at the time of filing;
- Global Assessment of Atrocities and Reporting of U.S. Government Responses: the Task Force should create a formal process to monitor the risk or presence of a mass atrocity event, as defined by the Act. When a determination has been made that a situation of increased risk or actual atrocity event is present, the Task Force should notify the appropriate departments, agencies, and offices of the U.S. government and should serve as the coordinating body for the U.S. government response. To the extent possible, such determinations and the steps being taken to address the situation should be announced publicly by the appropriate department, agency, or office;
- Multilateral Engagement: the U.S. government, through the Task Force, should increase its engagement with international organizations and international financial institutions on atrocity prevention efforts. Such engagement should be detailed in specific language included in the public section in future reports;
- Transitional Justice and Accountability: the Task Force should examine ways that it or U.S. agencies and departments can support transitional justice measures and mechanisms as an important aspect of atrocity prevention, including supporting individual criminal accountability for atrocities. The Task Force should proactively engage with local, regional, and international organizations to support transitional justice and accountability. These efforts should be detailed in future reports;
- Task Force Staff: the Task Force should be composed of individuals at the Assistant Secretary-level or higher (as designated by the leadership of the respective departments or agencies), should have a clearly identified organizational structure including support staff, and participating departments, agencies, and offices should provide individuals to fill those support roles;
- Whole-of-Government Training: the Task Force should affirmatively undertake an effort to coordinate a government-wide training regime, available to all departments, agencies, and offices engaged in atrocity prevention efforts or deployed in settings where warning signs or indicators of ongoing atrocity events may be present;

- **Curricula Release and Design:** the training courses and documentation designed for U.S. government employee training should be released publicly, to the fullest extent possible. Training courses should be updated regularly (at least every other year) and the curricula design process should include input from local communities, women and other marginalized communities, civil society and non-governmental experts, and academic specialists;
- **Report Barriers to Performance:** the Task Force should record and evaluate the legal, procedural, and resource constraints faced when engaging in atrocity prevention activities and should include that analysis in each annual report, along with recommendations for overcoming those constraints; and
- **Consultation with Local Actors:** the Task Force should engage directly with local actors from civil society and non-governmental organizations in countries and regions identified as experiencing or being at-risk for an atrocity event, particularly women and other marginalized communities, prior to making decisions on which actions to pursue to mitigate or prevent atrocities in that community.

Women, Peace and Security Act

The Obama-Biden Administration [elevated gender equality issues](#) in U.S.' foreign policy based on the belief that ensuring and expanding women's rights is consistent with American values and critical to national and international security. In 2011, in an effort to further the aims articulated in the landmark [UN Security Resolution 1325](#), President Obama issued an [Executive Order](#) creating a National Action (NAP) to advance the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, which was later [updated in 2016](#). In 2017, President Trump signed the bipartisan [Women, Peace, and Security Act](#) (WPS Act) into law, which sought to ensure women's meaningful leadership in peace and security processes, facilitate their active participation in efforts to prevent, mitigate, and resolve conflict and to establish and maintain peace, and elevate their contributions to post-conflict and disaster reconstruction in the U.S. and around the world. The WPS Act required the deployment of a WPS strategy within one year of enactment and the creation of implementation plans for the State Department, DoD, USAID, and Department of Homeland Security, as well as Congressional oversight of a cross-government effort to integrate gender perspectives across diplomatic, development, and security-related efforts in conflict-affected contexts.

The Trump Administration [took more than two-and-a-half-years to complete this process](#), releasing a [bare-bones White House strategy in June 2019](#) that jettisoned the lessons of past administrations, explicitly stating that its strategy "supersedes" rather than builds on the NAP adopted in 2011 and 2016. In June 2020, the Trump Administration released the four agencies' [implementation plans](#), which omitted references, previously included in the NAP, to sexual and reproductive healthcare, harmful gender norms and power structures, commitments to expend resources in support of women's rights, and positive allusions to the UN and multilateral engagement, amongst other key issues germane to a comprehensive and holistic approach to WPS advancement and government integration.

The Biden-Harris Administration should ensure successful implementation of the WPS Act by:

- Establishing a new timeline, in consultation with Congress, for revisions to and implementation of the June 2019 WPS strategy and the four agencies' implementation plans released in June 2020;
- Revising the implementation plans, including by reinserting references to sexual and reproductive healthcare, commitments to expend resources in support of women's rights, and other critical aspects that were removed by the Trump Administration;
- Ensuring a cross-government approach by linking the revised WPS strategy to and integrating WPS principles in the National Security Strategy; the [Global Fragility](#) strategy and its country-led plans; the Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally; the Strategy on the Trafficking of Persons; the Strategy to Support Women and Girls At-Risk from Violent Extremism and Conflict; and other relevant strategies, policies, and programs in order to eliminate wasteful, duplicative efforts, save resources, centralize expertise, eliminate gaps in the currently siloed system, and create a holistic effort to empower women and girls, promote peace and stability, and ensure U.S. national security;
- Implementing plans and programming that support the participation of women-led and women-focused civil society organizations and independent women peacebuilder delegations in peace processes, as well as foster inclusive processes that facilitate the robust participation of women and other marginalized groups;
- Prioritizing the attainment of gender parity in leadership throughout the U.S. government, particularly within the implementing agencies of the WPS Act, and ensuring that the nominee for Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues has substantial experience, as endorsed by the [global gender equality community](#), advancing the WPS agenda and championing the equality, rights, and empowerment of women and girls;
- Providing robust financial and human resources for the advancement of the WPS agenda and instituting timely and transparent public reporting procedures. In particular, support full and robust resourcing of WPS, with no less than \$130 million included in the Presidential Budget Request annually;
- Ensuring budgetary requests include funding for programs, supplies, resources, training, and other measures, materials, and initiatives that encourage women's participation in governance, peacebuilding, transition, relief, and recovery processes within partner governments and their civil society sector, as well as multilateral institutions and security cooperatives;
- Expanding oversight mechanisms of U.S. government assistance to complement existing metrics to ensure that funds are utilized for their intended purposes to advance women's participation and protection;
- Ensuring the strategy, plans, and programming include quantitative and qualitative indicators and outcomes, require gender analyses, and mandate the collection of sex- and diverse identity-disaggregated data that ensures a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to address national and international security, improve existing and future programming, and account for the differences men and women experience in conflict, violent, and fragile states; and



- Committing to regular consultations on the implementation of the WPS agenda with civil society, particularly the U.S. Civil Society Working Group on WPS.

Youth, Peace, and Security Act

With a world population of 1.85 billion youth, it is estimated that [one-in-four young people](#) are living in or otherwise affected by armed conflicts and violence, which is driving momentum for the burgeoning Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda. Youth populations are often at the forefront of grassroots efforts for peace and justice through the creation of youth-led movements, organizations, and networks that seek to mitigate the negative effects of conflict and strengthen community social cohesion and resilience. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many youth-led organizations have [led efforts to assist their communities](#), such as by distributing sanitation supplies and food to vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations and providing the public with critical health information about the virus.

In March 2020, the bipartisan [Youth, Peace, and Security Act](#) (YPS Act) was introduced in the House with bipartisan support from Representatives Meng (D-NY), Brooks (R-IN), Phillips (D-MN), and Curtis (R-UT). The Senate is expected to introduce bipartisan companion legislation in early 2021. The YPS Act is critical to catalyzing the global YPS agenda and creating an unprecedented global investment stream in support of youth leadership, in addition to giving young people the political platform and support they need to advance peace in their communities.

The Biden-Harris Administration should advance the YPS agenda by:

- Working with Congress to ensure passage of the YPS Act, making the U.S. the first country to adopt a policy on YPS and integrating it into a broader U.S. national security agenda;
- Implementing key components of the YPS Act prior to the Act's passage by:
 - [Strengthening the role of the current USAID Agency Senior Advisor on Youth](#) (referred to as Youth Coordinator in H.R. 6174) to enhance the U.S.' role in overseas conflict prevention, management, and resolution programming and post-conflict relief and recovery efforts related to youth; lead strategy implementation; and better coordinate all U.S. government resources and activities related to youth; and
 - Building on existing Obama-Biden era [USAID](#) and [State Department](#) youth policies to develop an interagency YPS strategy, ensuring more meaningful and inclusive participation of youth in decision-making, including age- and gender-responsive policies and programming in design, implementation, and evaluation. This strategy must overcome current siloes through a whole-of-government approach that interacts with current directives such as the forthcoming GFA strategy and the existing WPS strategy, and includes specific implementation plans for U.S. government agencies and countries/regions; and
- Committing to increased prioritization and funding to accounts that support youth programming, youth-led organizations, and the protection of youth peacebuilders.

3. Urgently Implement a New Climate Change/Crisis Foreign Assistance Strategy

The climate crisis is a threat multiplier and is impacting global economic growth, health, food security, mass migration, and violent conflict. The World Bank estimates the effects of climate change could push an additional [100 million people](#) below the poverty line by 2030.

While President-elect Biden has already committed to [fully integrate climate change into U.S. foreign policy and national security strategies](#), as well as to rejoining the Paris Agreement on day one, the climate plan does not address serious climate threats to foreign policy, and especially with respect to fragile states. President Obama's [Global Climate Action Plan](#), first adopted in 2013, proposed a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, preserving forests, encouraging the use of alternate fuels, and increased study of climate change. However, the Trump Administration canceled the Climate Action Plan quickly upon ascension to power.

The U.S. must reestablish its role as a global leader to mitigate and prevent the worst impacts of the global climate crisis. The U.S. government must develop a foreign assistance initiative and strategy that is measurable, includes cross-cutting programs that reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and protects and restores ecosystems needed to offset GHG emissions. The strategy must also address the risk of climate-related disasters to fragile and conflict affected states. We applaud that former Secretary of State John Kerry will serve as a special Presidential Envoy on Climate, which is the highest-ranking position that has been devoted to the issue. His appointment affirms Biden's commitment to climate change as a foreign policy issue and will ensure a high-level climate change strategy/agenda and effective coordination amongst the Department of State, USAID, National Security Council, Department of Defense, the Securities and Exchange Commission, International Trade Commission, Federal Reserve Bank, and other pertinent agencies and offices.

The Biden-Harris Administration should urgently address the global climate crisis by:

- Issuing a series of new [executive orders on climate change](#) on day one that will, with unprecedented reach, fully integrate climate change into foreign policy, international development assistance, and the National Security Strategy;
- [Rebuilding the U.S.' credibility and return to multilateral diplomacy](#) by recommitting to the Paris Agreement and reestablishing a leadership role in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Arctic Council, the Major Economies Forum, the G-7 and G-20, including high-level diplomatic engagement and mediation of regional infrastructure disputes impacted by climate change and a call for action for a more humane response for climate induced migration;
- Elevating the climate offices at both USAID and the State Department and appointing senior level officials with authority to develop a new transformational climate change strategy for foreign assistance and diplomacy. Provide significant new resources and



- immediate hiring authority to rebuild significant lost technical expertise; and
- Integrating climate change into all foreign assistance programming through policy guidance and implementation plans that require cross-cutting programs and reporting requirements, particularly in conflict affected and fragile states by:
 - Requiring increased focus on climate mitigation and adaptation to address climate change's threat multiplier effect on fragile states, including targeting strategies in food security that are critical to building the resilience of communities threatened by severe droughts, floods, and waterborne diseases, strengthening water infrastructure and drought-tolerant agriculture, and monitoring and assessing agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and mitigation;
 - Incorporating risk-reducing conflict prevention programs into the global transformation strategy to ensure climatic hazards do not exacerbate violent conflict;
 - Requiring conflict, governance, and humanitarian assessments to integrate climate change risk and adaptation where relevant; and
 - Consulting with local communities, particularly women and other marginalized groups, most at-risk for displacement, lost economic opportunity, violence, and other deleterious effects of climate change, in developing and implementing programs.

4. Promote Democracy and Good Governance in Fragile States and Backsliding Democracies

The last decade of the 20th century was defined by the fall of the Soviet Union and the Iron Curtain and an expanding number of democracies worldwide. In contrast, the [second decade of the 21st century was marked by concerns about backsliding in new and established democracies](#) alike, as well as a [14-year decline](#) in global freedom. Under the Trump Administration, U.S. support for democracy and good governance withered globally as the U.S. embraced authoritarian governments and rhetoric and focused on countering the influence of geostrategic competitors. During this period, wherein a global pandemic ravaged the country, protests over racial injustice raged, and polarization and allegations of government corruption spiked, Americans realized their own democratic governance institutions were vulnerable.

[Good governance increases public trust in institutions](#), which contributes significantly to the reduction of armed conflict. Weak governance and political institutions are not only significantly related to repeated civil war, but are the [primary determinants of whether countries get caught in the conflict trap](#). President elect-Biden recognizes [a democracy promotion agenda abroad must be matched by one at home, as the two are deeply connected](#). The President-elect already committed to holding a global summit of democracies to address issues including climate change, the global pandemic, economic aftershocks, corruption, human rights, China's rise of power, and democracy backsliding. The Summit of Democracies offers an opportunity to articulate—and align diplomacy and

development assistance—behind a positive vision of healthy, inclusive, just, and safe societies around the world and in the U.S.

The Biden-Harris should work to promote democracy and good governance in fragile states and backsliding democracies by:

- Developing a strategy that integrates conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and the WPS agenda with the democracy, rights, and governance sector in fragile states and backsliding democracies. It is critical to ensure coordination between the newly created Conflict Prevention and Stabilization Bureau and the Democracy, Rights, and Governance Center. These sectors were separated in different Bureaus under the recent reorganization, and integration is critical to the success of a new strategy;
- Leveraging diplomacy to [protect civil society space](#) so that local stakeholders, particularly women and other marginalized communities, can provide locally-driven solutions and programs without fear of reprisal;
- Executing the GFA's intent of developing a Global Fragility Strategy that ensures a coordinated approach to diplomatic, funding, and security work in fragile states and promotes healthy and transparent national and local democratic governance, as well as a robust civil society;
- Ensuring careful engagement of local civil society, particularly women-led and focused organizations, and partnership with legitimate local authorities in the development of strategies for supporting democratic governance overseas;
- Reaffirming the U.S.' public diplomacy in both multilateral and bilateral institutions and meetings to a strategy built on genuine commitment to the protection of human rights and democratic values;
- Recognizing that state fragility is, at heart, a political power problem that requires governance reform and democratic political process strengthening to restore the social contract between the state and its citizens. Prioritize six governance reforms to bolster the supply (government institutions and representation) and demand (civil society) sides of governance, including: (1) strengthening the core institutions of governance; (2) implement policies and programs that fundamentally shift power from exclusionary, predatory political actors; (3) support legitimate traditional structures that manage conflict while working to make them more inclusive and representative; (4) prioritize gender equality; and (5) improve the legitimacy and functioning of political parties as mediators between citizens and the state;
- Making governance reform a key component of U.S. P/CVE strategies, recognizing the role of heavy-handed state interventions, corruption, and human rights abuses as drivers of the local grievances that violent extremist groups exploit, and that increase the risk of violent extremist operations and recruitment in affected communities; and
- Recommitting the U.S. government to championing the protection of civil society organizations and activists, especially human rights defenders and women peacebuilders, in societies where civic space is closed or becoming more restrictive.

5. Strengthen and Empower Local Civil Society-Led Ownership

Strengthening local ownership is critical to sustainably preventing, managing, and resolving conflict and violence in fragile states. Strengthening and empowering local civil society, particularly women and other marginalized groups, is a key requirement of the GFA, the [UN Sustaining Peace Agenda](#), the WPS strategy and agenda, and the [World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence](#). However, there are significant challenges to ensuring local ownership and locally-led peacebuilding can thrive, including the current donor funding approaches. During the Obama Administration, the USAID Forward initiative was established to lead the Agency's work in locally-led development by requiring 30 percent of program funds to be obligated to local organizations. However, this target was never achieved and was replaced by the [Capacity Building for Local Development](#), or CBLD-9, which creates a common standard for all missions to use in measuring local partners' organizational performance. USAID is now measuring strengthened local capacity instead of the percentage of funds received. However, barriers and challenges remain.

The Biden-Harris Administration should address identified barriers to, as well provide direct support for, locally-led peacebuilding by:

- [Reforming the procurement process](#) to provide local organizations with more flexible and [equitable](#) financial opportunities that enable them to better design, implement, and scale local solutions including rapid emergency response funding, seed funding for community based-groups, and small grant programs administered by local civil society organizations in regional hubs;
- Ensuring diplomacy and development are working closely to address restricted and closing civil society space, often deemed [an early warning sign for fragility, conflict, and violence](#), to ensure local organizations, women, and marginalized groups are able to operate safely;
- Demonstrating commitment to provide support for nonviolent, locally-led means of civilian protection and empowerment, especially in contexts of closing civic space, to operationally [protect peacebuilders](#) and civilians that are facing increasing levels of risk; and
- Actively engaging with local civil society peacebuilding actors (not just international non-governmental organizations), particularly women and individuals and organizations from marginalized communities, to build trust and strengthen relationships and establish a stronger culture of listening and respect within countries where the U.S. operates. It is vital to encourage and support networking among local civil society and create opportunities for direct communication with local, national, and international stakeholders.



6. Rightsize the Military Defense Budget to Ensure Critical Funding for Diplomacy and Foreign Assistance, Including Democracy, Governance, and Peacebuilding Programs, and Responsibly End and Prevent Wars

The budget line items of a country reveal its values—and funding for U.S. diplomacy and development [pales in comparison](#) to the military defense budget. Annual military and security-related spending for the current fiscal year [will reach an estimated \\$934 billion](#), almost 20 percent of the overall U.S. budget. Foreign assistance, on the other hand, constitutes less than [one percent](#) of the federal budget, of which only [11 percent](#) (roughly one-tenth of one percent) is spent supporting governance, democratic institutions, justice, and peacebuilding.

This disparity pushes the U.S. to adopt military responses to challenges best resolved through multilateral diplomacy, development, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. Research strongly suggests diplomatic and development tools are more cost effective at preventing the outbreak or recurrence of conflict than military approaches. Every dollar invested in prevention saves an [estimated](#) \$16, meaning that for every additional dollar spent on peacebuilding, the future cost of conflict would be reduced by \$16.

Additionally, [strong evidence suggests](#) that civilian-led conflict prevention, civilian protection, and peacebuilding are significantly cheaper than military security-focused responses. Currently, all donor states are struggling due to the economic impact of the global pandemic, and a military-centric foreign policy and ever-escalating military defense budget all but guarantee that it will be used unnecessarily, whereas cost-effective development investments will not be adequately funded. Additionally, the prioritization of military objectives has served to damage our standing in the world, as foreign policy values, such as supporting democracy and promoting human rights, have often been subverted in service of a security-centric approach.

The Biden-Harris Administration, in its first budget request, should rebalance funding for U.S. foreign policy and assistance by:

- Rightsizing funding for DoD, in line with the recommendations from the Defense Spending Reduction Caucus, by [reducing its budget by 10%, or \\$74 billion](#). A sizable budget cut would require DoD to better prioritize missions, reduce its overreliance on contractors, eliminate waste, and cancel redundant and out-of-date weapons systems while leaving military readiness intact;
- Doubling the State Department and USAID budgets. In addition to [revitalizing the State Department to meet 21st century challenges](#), this increase should include a major new investment in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, including priority accounts such as the Complex Crises Fund (no less than \$50 million); Reconciliation Programs (CMM) (no less than \$45 million and \$50 million for, if enacted, the Middle East Partnership for Peace Fund); U.S. Institute of Peace (no less than \$50 million); the Atrocities Prevention Fund (no less than \$25 million); the Democracy Fund at USAID (no less than \$160 million);

Human Rights and Democracy Fund at State (no less than \$360 million), Transition Initiatives (\$112 million); the Prevention and Stabilization Fund (\$200 million); and the multi-donor Global Fragility Fund (\$25 million);

- Restoring U.S. contributions for international peacekeeping activities and support lifting the arbitrary statutory 25% cap on U.S. contributions (\$2.6 billion to payoff arrears and fully cover current dues) and to international organizations (\$1.5 billion);
- Allocating no less than \$130 million to fully implement the WPS Act of 2017 and provide the implementing agencies (DoD, Department of State, USAID, and the Department of Homeland Security) with ample resources to integrate the principles of the WPS agenda across government; and
- Directing the Secretary of State, in consultation with the USAID Administrator, to provide funds for use of unarmed civilian protection organizations (\$25 million).

7. Rebalance and Rightsize Counterterrorism and Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism Laws, Policies, and Programs

After two decades the status quo is not working, U.S. counterterrorism (CT) laws and policies, as well as those on preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE), have failed to effectively reduce radicalization and extremist violence and remain unable to adequately address evolving threats or incorporate programmatic approaches to ending conflict, reducing violence, and building sustainable peace. As the 20th anniversary of 9/11 draws near, the “War on Terrorism” has cost over [801,000](#) lives and [\\$6.4 trillion](#) to-date, even as deaths from terrorist attacks globally are almost [three times](#) as high now as in 2001. Additionally, violent extremists are exploiting COVID-19 by [integrating](#) the pandemic’s effects into their propaganda narratives, taking advantage of political instability, and, in some cases, [stepping up attacks](#) in conflict zones.

Despite an increased prioritization of countering violent extremism (CVE) policies and programs under the Obama-Biden Administration, an over-militarized approach persists, which fails to address the root causes that give rise to violent extremism in the first place. Further exacerbating the problem, the “[material support ban](#)” hinders peacebuilding and humanitarian organizations from providing critical assistance in conflict-affected and fragile states, wherein the conditions for radicalization and terrorism are ripest. The Biden-Harris Administration has the opportunity, despite diminished resources due to competing international challenges and the global pandemic, to rebalance and rightsize its approach to CT and CVE—globally and in the U.S.—through an increased and evidence-based focus on prevention, peacebuilding, development, democracy and governance, and humanitarian initiatives to adequately address the threats that are qualitatively different than they were 20 years ago.

The Biden-Harris Administration should rightsize and rebalance the U.S. CT and CVE approach by:

- Undertaking an extensive review and evaluation of previous and existing CVE laws, policies, and programming to glean lessons learned and best practices in light of evolving threats, in the U.S. and abroad, in service of creating a revamped approach to CT and CVE. This approach should deprioritize security interventions in favor of a multisectoral framework that focuses on evidence-based policy and programming and undertakes prevention, intervention, disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration, as well as the root causes and drivers of violent extremism and conflict;
- Recognizing the diversity of existing and emerging threats whereby extremists and violent extremists comprise a multitude of religions, nationalities, races, ethnicities, and other identity groups and beliefs. Ensure that all legislation, executive orders, regulations, policies, strategies, and other governmental directives use language to recognize such diversity;
- Requesting any foreign assistance funding, policy, and programming for CT and CVE has an increased focus on addressing the drivers of violent extremism, including, but not limited to, political marginalization, ineffective governance, instability, weak rule of law, and social exclusion;
- Reinvigorating the U.S.' global leadership role in multilateral efforts on P/CVE; coordinating closely with allies, partners, and international institutions; and leveraging assistance through Multi-Donor Global Fragility Fund established by the GFA;
- Incorporating public, mental, and behavioral health, trauma-informed, and resiliency assistance into CT and CVE efforts to effectively engage violence-affected communities and undertake disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration programming for extremists;
- Tailoring CVE programming and initiatives to the local context with local stakeholder buy-in, particularly by integrating civil society, women, youth, and other marginalized communities in program design and implementation;
- Reinforcing and complementing efforts related to CT and CVE, such as those implementing the GFA and WPS strategy, in order to promote inclusivity and standardization across government;
- Ensuring the draft USAID CVE Policy, which included significant consultations with civil society, is finally released and fully resourced. The policy strengthens the evidence base for P/CVE efforts by increasing the monitoring and evaluation of P/CVE programs to assess their effectiveness. The policy further invests in research on the drivers of violent extremism, and empowers international civil society to comment on U.S. assessments and socialize best practices;
- Establishing a coordinator at the National Security Council or at a senior level of the State Department to ensure oversight and coordination amongst bureaus and missions implementing the rebalanced and rightsized approach to P/CVE; and
- [Fixing the material support problem](#) limiting the ability of peacebuilding and humanitarian organizations from operating in certain conflict-affected areas and engaging with



individuals and entities classified as terrorists and undermining the effectiveness of programs to prevent and address violent extremism. Revise [Executive Order 13224](#) and urge Congress to amend the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty and the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to create legislative exceptions for peacebuilding and humanitarian organizations to provide the critical assistance necessary to mitigate, resolve, and prevent conflict and address the conditions that fuel violent extremist recruitment and activity. Provide peacebuilding and humanitarian exemptions to future executive orders issuing sanctions to avoid restrictions on the delivery of vital aid.

8. Enhance USAID and State Department Structures

AfP applauds USAID for its reorganization that elevated the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS). The CPS Bureau is now able to [rapidly adapt and respond to evolving contexts](#) in conflict-affected countries due to its separation from humanitarian assistance initiatives and work to eliminate bureaucratic burdens. However, for this Bureau to be successful, it will need resources and funding to address global conflicts.

Unfortunately, the State Department requires [significant reform in several key areas](#), including improved expertise in 21st century issues, progress in institutional reform, workforce expansion and career-building, and longer-term thinking and planning. Addressing these deficiencies in the State Department will improve America's standing and influence in the world and allow for stronger diplomacy efforts, which are vital to successful development, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding programming.

The Biden-Harris Administration should take steps to [revitalize the State Department and American diplomacy](#) by:

- [Depoliticizing American diplomacy](#);
- Reducing the number of undersecretaries and delegating the authority to empowered assistant secretaries and equivalents would ensure significant laws and policies, including the GFA and WPS Act/strategy, are elevated and not buried in offices lacking the authority to ensure successful implementation;
- Elevating diplomacy as the tool of first resort through support for inclusive peace processes, with participation and representation of women, youth, other marginalized groups, and other identified actors and peacebuilders critical to conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution, and through the funding of conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution programs that address the drivers of global displacement and armed conflict;
- Training career expertise on conflict and atrocity prevention and inclusive peacebuilding through strategies and lenses such as the GFA, WPS, and YPS;
- Supporting stronger partnerships and collaboration platforms with civil society, especially local actors, women, youth, and other marginalized groups, to support more resilient,



rights-respecting societies and improve the ability of the U.S. government to do work in difficult contexts;

- Linking diplomatic and programmatic efforts, through mechanisms such as the GFA, [to develop an integrated approach](#) that combines resolute and agile diplomacy with sustained and flexible assistance that is rooted in evidence and local leadership. This U.S.-led diplomatic engagement is also critical to galvanize support from regional actors, other donor governments, and multilateral organizations that can help share the burden of costs associated with addressing the causes of fragility and violent conflict;
- Developing appropriate tools and support to allow for increasing risk tolerance and reducing the “bunker mentality” of U.S. embassies and missions to allow for greater direct engagement with local communities; and
- Ensuring gender parity and greater diversity in senior appointments at State and USAID and a diplomatic and development corps that fully represents America in all its diversity.

9. Restore Support to the United Nations and Other Multilateral Institutions to Promote International Cooperation and Partnership on Peace and Security

Over the last four years, the Trump Administration has undermined American leadership at the UN and the work of the UN on a global scale. The Trump Administration annually proposed withdrawal or [crippling funding cuts to the UN](#) and its agencies and endangered international peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts. The Administration also tried to undermine landmark diplomatic agreements that aimed to reduce the threat of conflict, such as the [Iran nuclear deal](#) and the [Open Skies Treaty](#). The U.S. was the first country to pull out of the [Paris Climate Agreement](#), a global effort to mitigate the common threat of climate change. When the world was experiencing mass displacement, the U.S. quit participation in the [Global Compact on Migration](#), and later [drastically reduced the U.S.’ refugee allowance](#).

Multilateralism has been a pillar of U.S. foreign policy, and [the U.S. consistently operated in coordination](#) with its allies and the international community. The U.S. cannot tackle the world’s most pressing problems—climate change, the pandemic, and increasing violent conflict—alone. It is vital that the Biden-Harris Administration immediately reset America’s relationship with the UN—through a series of executive actions on day one that restore our credibility and advance American interests by strengthening the UN’s ability to take on global challenges in support of American foreign policy goals and interests.

In November 2020, the UN Secretary-General informed that little progress has been made on increasing, restructuring, and better prioritizing funding for peacebuilding so that these resources are adequate, predictable, and sustained. The UN responds to and prevents violent conflict by supporting governments and societies in at-risk countries through the Peacebuilding Fund, which is drastically underfunded. [The Secretary-General called on every Member State to make a voluntary contribution to the Peacebuilding Fund](#) that reflects the mutual recognition that

peacebuilding and sustaining peace are core mandates of the UN and are inseparable from sustainable development and recovery, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Biden-Harris Administration should restore U.S. engagement in multilateral institutions and global cooperative efforts by:

- Making a significant voluntary contribution to the Peacebuilding Fund to properly resource critical peacebuilding programs and set an example for other Member States (from 2016 to 2020 the U.S. only contributed \$300,000 compared to Germany, which contributed more than 17 million dollars);
- Paying America's arrears to UN Peacekeeping while working to end the need for foreign military-led peacekeeping interventions. There are some 95,000 UN Peacekeepers deployed to 13 missions around the world. These missions are paid through assessed contributions from UN Member States who do not contribute troops. During the Trump Administration, however, the U.S. did not pay its share of the UN peacekeeping budget on time or in full. Today, the U.S. is about [\\$900 million in arrears to UN Peacekeeping](#)—a significant amount that is contributing to an ongoing liquidity crisis at the UN. Much of these arrears are due to Congress refusing to appropriate an amount equal to the U.S. obligation through an arbitrary 25% cap, but some of this shortfall can be covered through executive action;
- Supporting unarmed approaches to civilian protection, as recommended in the [UN Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people](#);
- Restoring funding for the UN Refugee and Works Agency (UNRWA). This agency supports the health and welfare of Palestinian refugees, but the Trump Administration froze funding to it in 2018. The agency provides vital aid for Palestinian refugees in what is formally known as the Occupied Territories and in neighboring countries, including Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. It is in America's national interests to prevent a humanitarian crisis in this region;
- Re-joining the UN Human Rights Council. The Trump Administration vacated America's seat on the Council in June 2018, before the U.S. term ended. Expressing an intent to join the Human Rights Council would be an important signal to the world that the U.S. respects and seeks to uphold international human rights standards and laws; and
- Working with democratic allies to counter the rise of authoritarianism. The U.S. must avoid legitimizing and empowering illiberal governments in multilateral fora and bilateral engagement. Governments such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar exploit U.S. support for their counterterrorism practices, which undermines the UN's ability to stand up for peace and human rights.

10. Partner with the American Private Sector for Peace and Prosperity

The innovation, entrepreneurship, and responsible business practices of America's private sector lay the groundwork for prosperity and jobs at home, and American leadership and inspiration abroad. Yet, in the fragile and conflict-affected societies where many of the world's poorest live, U.S. companies face competition from opaque or irresponsible competitors who often have shaky commitments to transparency, little or no Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) oversight, and work in close cooperation with authoritarian regimes.

American foreign policy engagement to harness international development potential with the private sector has historically been scattershot with equities spread across different State Department bureaus, USAID, specialized agencies like USDA and Department of Commerce, and the new Development Finance Corporation (DFC), and focused on the needs and opportunities of middle-income countries. The Biden-Harris Administration should bring these equities together to make it easier for companies committed to high business standards to invest in frontier markets and in-line with America's peace and security goals.

The Biden-Harris Administration should promote global prosperity through private sector partnership by:

- Reinforcing the U.S. DFC's Political Risk Insurance commitments to de-risking priority countries at-risk of political violence and working in close collaboration with USAID's CPS Bureau to establish public-private partnerships for peacebuilding akin to the USAID-Chevron partnerships in Angola and Nigeria. Set and report targets for the amount of investment dollars catalyzed for investment in fragile and conflict-affected states;
- Mandating a team within USAID's CPS Bureau responsible for developing an impact bond market and other innovative funding models for conflict intervention programs, and coordinate across the Global Development Lab, USAID Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning, and DFC and with like-minded governments, private sector, philanthropy, academia and civil society; and
- Appointing a Senior Envoy for Business and Human Rights supported by the State Department's Bureau of Human Rights and Labor with adequate staff mandated to *internally* coordinate a coherent responsible business agenda across State, USAID, Commerce, and DFC, and with the UN and the international financial institutions, as well as and to *externally* ensure robust American leadership in the multi-stakeholder initiatives that oversee critical high-risk industries including the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (extractives industry), the International Code of Conduct Association (private security industry), and in key fora for technology and human rights, such as RightsCon.



11. End Arms Sales to Countries Violating Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law

[Gaps](#) in U.S. arms control policy allow militaries and security forces across the world to purchase lethal weaponry that they then use on civilian populations, violating international humanitarian law and contributing to the spread of violent extremism.

The Biden-Harris Administration should fill these gaps in U.S. arms control policy by:

- [Ending](#) transfers and sales of arms and defense services to any country if the Secretary of State has credible information that its government has committed or is committing violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Transfers and sales may resume when accountability for these violations has been attained and when the U.S. government has implemented appropriate safeguards to prevent the use of U.S. weaponry in future violations;
- Applying the [Leahy Laws](#) blocking assistance to human rights violators to both Foreign Military Sales and Direct Commercial Sales;
- Returning [oversight](#) of firearms sales to the State Department, and seeking Congressional notifications on [firearms deals](#) of \$1 million or more; and
- Pursuing alternative approaches to U.S.- and UN-supported security sector reform initiatives aimed at reducing human rights violations, [such as social and behavioral change interventions](#), community policing, social accountability interventions, and civilian oversight measures.

12. Address Priority Country and Regional Contexts

Proposed Countries/Regions for Implementing the Global Fragility Act

Ethiopia

The last few years in Ethiopia have seen extraordinary political transformation. However, increasing and existing conflict dynamics threaten not only reforms, but also Ethiopia's tenuous stability. There are systemic and long-standing socioeconomic development challenges that have kept Ethiopia classified high on fragile state and conflict watchlists for decades. Today, the country is experiencing a major drought, ongoing ethnic violence, the reversal of new political reforms, the pandemic, indefinitely postponed elections, and violent demonstrations. In addition, the U.S. government announced a halt to essential foreign assistance to Ethiopia due to its [Renaissance Dam](#) dispute with Egypt, and the prime minister recently initiated a military campaign against the Tigray region and removed Ethiopian troops from Somalia to redeploy against the well-armed Tigray forces. Instead, the people most impacted once again will be civilians, including women and [children](#).



While this conflict will be increasingly destabilizing to Ethiopia, it will also have ramifications for the entire region. Ethiopia, a country of over 100 million people, is pivotal to the stability of the Horn of Africa. Since December 6th, the UN refugee agency has registered 50,000 Ethiopian refugees crossing into Sudan.

The Biden-Harris Administration should select the Northern Triangle region as part of the implementation of the Global Fragility Act and should quickly act to stabilize Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa through diplomatic and robust assistance by:

- Reversing the Trump Administration's halt to foreign assistance and providing significant aid, including investment targeted toward addressing the causes of conflict in Ethiopia, governance, climate resilience, poverty alleviation, and reconciliation;
- Using existing leverage to urge the African Union and the European Union to drive the message that Ethiopia should agree to talks with both Tigray and Egypt to settle these disputes diplomatically;
- Calling on all parties to comply with their international obligations to protect civilians; and
- Supporting Ethiopia's electoral system for a timely, fair, and inclusive election with technology and training to establish trust in the process and reduce the risk of electoral violence in an increasingly polarized context.

Northern Triangle

The Northern Triangle is in crisis, as El Salvador continues to have the world's highest homicide rate and Guatemala and Honduras remain among the top 10 deadliest countries in the world. In 2014, as record numbers of unaccompanied children were arriving on the southern U.S. border and U.S. immigration services became overwhelmed, the Obama-Biden Administration established the [U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America](#) aimed at addressing the "underlying conditions driving irregular migration from the Central America" region through programs targeting the drivers of violent conflict, including governance, security, and rule of law. This strategy was a whole-of-government effort that provided an overarching framework for all U.S. government interactions in Central America. The strategy ensured programs were not siloed, did not conflict with other U.S. agencies, international donors, or regional partners, and coordinated messages. The U.S. developed the [Alliance for Prosperity](#) in conjunction with the [Inter-American Development Bank](#) and Northern Triangle governments, which ensured governments in the region had a stake in the success by requiring their own monetary contributions aimed at four main areas: strengthening state institutions, increasing citizen security, investing in human capital, and energizing the private sector.

The Trump Administration announced the revocation of aid to the governments of the Northern Triangle in March 2019, for their purported failure to stem migration. Some of that aid has been reinstated, but the punitive measure stunted initial progress on preventing crime and violence. President-elect Biden pledged to renew a robust commitment to U.S. leadership in the region and pursue a comprehensive strategy for Central America.



The Biden-Harris Administration should select the Northern Triangle region as part of the implementation of the Global Fragility Act, and robustly and quickly implement President-elect Biden's proposed plan of a regional comprehensive strategy that includes:

- Developing a comprehensive four-year, \$4 billion regional strategy to address factors driving migration from Central America, including rule of law, corruption, governance, security, and economic development, and ensure an evidence-based monitoring and evaluation plan and flexible and adaptive procurement system;
- Mobilizing private sector investment, including through public-private partnerships, to invest in civil society organizations, particularly those led and assisting women, youth, and other marginalized groups, that are on the frontlines of addressing root causes of conflict; and
- Renewing partnerships with multilateral and regional partners and securing commitments of investments from the Northern Triangle countries.

Somalia

Somalia remains one of the most under-developed countries in the world, and is facing challenges of drought and COVID-19 impact, [in addition](#) to a pre-existing slowdown in economic growth, tensions between the federal government and local entities, and ongoing insurgent violence. However, positive developments include an increasingly established federal government, debt relief from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and a growing private sector. Somalia could easily tip into worse conflict over the next few years, extending to Kenya and increasing instability in the region, or could alternately develop a more stable path forward.

The Trump Administration emphasized a military-led engagement in Somalia. As a result, [NGO investigations](#) have demonstrated that U.S. airstrikes have killed civilians, undermining the U.S. government's goals in the region and potentially leading to increased radicalization, as well as causing unnecessary deaths.

The Biden-Harris Administration should select Somalia as part of the implementation of the Global Fragility Act and develop a coordinated diplomatic, security, and development approach that includes:

- Ensuring the U.S. appointed ambassador is seen as a legitimate broker across the Somali federal government and the Somali member states, and developing a diplomatic strategy to resolve ongoing issues around the federal structure of Somalia and insecurity;
- Working with the Somali federal government to build capacity to implement the one-person-one-vote electoral process it has committed to;
- Increasing oversight of military force used in Somalia and ensuring alignment of military or security activities with a coordinated diplomatic and development strategy that emphasizes negotiation with militant groups and the provision of development and humanitarian assistance.



- Developing a peace plan for a negotiated end to the crisis in Somalia, including reducing military footprint and committing to sustained development and humanitarian assistance;
- Promoting multilateral and bilateral diplomacy among the many states funding or supporting various political actors in Somalia to reduce proxy conflict and internal political and economic fractures; and
- Establishing a strategic priority of the U.S. government on providing technical capacity and financial incentives to develop a transparent and well-functioning private sector, including in high-value resources such as fisheries and livestock, and support the development of Somali-led financial markets that meet international standards.

Additional Priority Countries/Regions

Afghanistan

After four decades of conflict and nearly 20 years of direct U.S.-military engagement in Afghanistan, [hundreds of thousands of deaths](#), and the distinction of being the [world's bloodiest conflict](#), the current peace process offers a potential resolution, but requires robust U.S. support, technical assistance, and diplomatic maneuvering to actualize sustainable peace. The U.S. must utilize all available leverage to move the intra-Afghan talks forward and ensure its inclusivity—wherein women, youth, and other marginalized groups are provided the opportunity for meaningful participation and consultation.

Previous attempts at peace have fallen short due to the parties excluding key stakeholders, ignoring drivers of violent conflict, and failing to undertake confidence-building measures and create monitoring mechanisms. Despite the problematic nature of the U.S.-Taliban talks that marginalized the Afghan government, civil society, and women, and the significant politicking amongst the Afghan parties, the formal intra-Afghan dialogue commenced in [September](#). However, the continued uptick in Taliban and Islamic State attacks, in tandem with the recently announced [pause](#) in the intra-Afghan dialogue, threatens to upend the already fragile process. All interested parties, including the U.S., must continue their efforts to ensure an immediate ceasefire, a comprehensive peace process with the meaningful inclusion of women, and sustained development assistance in order to create and sustain peace.

The Biden-Harris Administration should devise a holistic, locally-focused approach to responsibly end the conflict in Afghanistan by:

- Pressing for an immediate, comprehensive, and permanent ceasefire to create the conditions for an inclusive and viable peace process;
- Providing resources to civil society, particularly women, youth, and other marginalized groups, to enhance their technical capacity to contribute meaningfully to the building, oversight, and sustainment of peace in Afghanistan;



- Supporting broad public awareness campaigns and formal and informal opportunities for public debate and consultation on their perspectives on the intra-Afghan dialogue and peace, including but not limited to through the Afghanistan Mechanism for Inclusive Peace, as well as related to the creation of truth, justice, and reconciliation mechanisms;
- Ensuring a peace agreement that integrates fundamental democratic principles (i.e., including human rights, gender equity, and inclusion), addresses the drivers of violent conflict, incorporates a third-party monitoring and enforcement mechanism, and paves the way for regional cooperation;
- Promoting burden-sharing and multilateralism by working closely with the UN, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, foreign governments, philanthropic foundations, and other partners to create a multi-year [peace dividend package](#) to stimulate Afghanistan's economy, reduce poverty and unemployment, and create disincentives towards violence and radicalization;
- Committing long-term investment and Afghan-led development at [current](#) or enhanced levels to build upon the progress Afghanistan has made across all sectors since 2001, to ensure and sustain peace, and to support country-wide and local, formal and informal, transitional justice and reconciliation initiatives. As the U.S. military presence and funding decrease, a corollary increase in civilian-side expenditures and development are vital to create the conditions to support an enduring peace;
- Investing in development, governance, infrastructure, and economic assistance of at least [\\$1 billion](#) and [\\$5 billion](#) for security assistance to enable a successful transition that allows U.S. troops to come home. This assistance, in particular, should support democratic governance, the rule of law, a free press, and the promotion of fundamental human rights. Provide unconditioned assistance to non-governmental organizations and civil society actors, particularly women-led and focused, that deliver humanitarian assistance, promote human rights, and build and sustain peace; and
- Providing technical assistance to the Afghan defense and security sectors, particularly to enhance their ability to tackle law enforcement and counterterrorism challenges, and towards security sector reform. Incentivize the provision of additional security assistance based on progress toward outcomes, such as protections for women and girls, security sector reform, and disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DDRR) for former combatants.

Central Africa

For the past 30 years, the Central African region, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Burundi, and Rwanda, has experienced genocide, ethnic cleansing, destructive conflict, and acute human suffering. Fragility in the region is driven by decades of misrule and corruption stemming from colonial exploitation, intense competition over land, water, and mineral wealth, and cycles of violence. Conflict in the region has become a generational crisis, consistently serving as one of the world's worst humanitarian crises for decades. American aid, diplomacy, and influence in the multilateral system has the opportunity to break this cycle by investing in the next generation and future of the region.

The Biden-Harris Administration should act to break cycles of violence and humanitarian need in Central Africa and seek an enduring end to the chronic crises that have plagued the region, by:

- Scaling up local, effective models of security sector reform and DDRR programs to reduce human rights abuses and improve civilian protection. This should include innovative approaches including behavioral change approaches, civil oversight, and social accountability measures. Where appropriate, supply-side DDRR programs should be accompanied by community violence reduction programming, local conflict resolution, and other demand-side interventions to reduce the number of non-state armed actors;
- Investing in truth, justice, accountability and reconciliation processes in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo and facilitating the sustained return of displaced people. Integrate peace education and other approaches to address intergenerational trauma within education assistance in the region;
- Developing a regional climate change mitigation and adaptation strategy, including existing and new programs aimed at protecting forest resources, mitigating competition for scarce land and water resources, and improving governance and community benefits from minerals, such as cobalt and nickel, central to the global green revolution; and
- Supporting economic integration within the region and linkages between the region and neighboring African countries, including prioritizing the region's economies under the U.S. DFC, and increasing U.S. participation in and expansion of Trademark East Africa.

China

Since 2017, [the Chinese government has imposed](#) surveillance, religious restrictions, and forced sterilizations on the minority Uyghur population. Additionally, over one million Uyghurs are in detention—or “reeducation”—centers. Many officials, including [President-elect Biden](#), and human rights organizations have condemned these camps and called for an end to these human rights violations, characterizing them and the campaign against the Uyghurs and other Turkic-speaking Muslims as genocide. President-elect Biden has indicated he will seek to create an alliance to put pressure on China.

The Biden-Harris Administration should leverage action taken by the Trump Administration to address these human rights abuses by:

- Ensuring robust implementation of the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020 and [increasing sanctions](#) against Chinese officials responsible for the detention and persecution of Uyghurs;
- Working with Congress to urgently adopt the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (H.R.6210 and S.3471). This bill imposes various restrictions related to China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous region, including by prohibiting certain imports from Xinjiang and imposing sanctions on those responsible for human rights violations there; and



- Building a broad alliance to bring attention to this issue and put pressure on China to end the genocide.

Israel-Palestine

Since 2016, [U.S. policy towards Israel and Palestine](#) has dramatically changed, harming chances for a just and peaceful resolution to the conflict. The Trump Administration exerted a maximum pressure campaign on not only the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian Liberation Organization, but also the Palestinian people by instituting draconian measures as a means to pressure them to stop demanding statehood. The radical departure from accepted territorial norms around the conflict is exacerbated by a prolonged attack on civil society. These efforts go beyond enacting the Taylor Force Act and the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act to include cutting critical development and humanitarian aid to the West Bank and Gaza, including aid to UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Furthermore, human rights organizations report there are major violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law in the occupied territories, including unlawful killings; forced displacement; the closure of the Gaza Strip and other unjustified restrictions on movement; and the development of settlements, along with the accompanying discriminatory policies that disadvantage Palestinians. These acts have devastated the relationship between the U.S. and the Palestinian people and also weakened relations between Palestinians and Israelis, rendering future peace negotiations extremely difficult.

Instead of restoring the status quo of 2015/2016, the incoming Administration has a unique opportunity to innovate. Any re-imagined U.S. strategy should be predicated on reengaging both Palestinians and Israelis at a societal level and grounding all efforts in international and humanitarian law. To address this conflict effectively and pragmatically, the Biden-Harris Administration should center its strategy around evidence-based conflict resolution tools, such as [people-to-people programming and economic development](#).

The political and diplomatic crisis is not primarily an elite-level problem. Support for a negotiated two-state solution has dropped below 50% in both societies, a trend particularly prevalent among youth, whose support for violence is on the rise. Scaled investment in programs and strategies that can halt and reverse these trends will strengthen the chances of any diplomatic process' success, creating civic momentum that has been missing since well before the Trump Administration. Additionally, the Trump Administration's actions have made a stronger case for the critical need for a multilateral approach because the U.S. is no longer seen as an honest broker by the Palestinians. Civic, economic, and confidence-building measures in advance of an inclusive and multilateral process, potentially led by partners from Europe or the Middle East, must be a priority.

The Biden-Harris Administration should fully embrace the bipartisan [Middle East Partnership for Peace Act \(MEPPA\)](#), which lays the cornerstone for a global effort to engage civil society in Palestine and Israel. The bill delivers [unprecedented funding to Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding](#)

and strengthening the Palestinian economy, building its private sector, and tackling escalating tensions and violence.

The Biden-Harris Administration should work towards a solution to protracted conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians by:

- Utilizing key provisions in MEPPA designed for U.S. leadership in creating a new International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace and convening a summit of multilateral actors to scale up this effort quickly, utilizing Congress's \$50 million annual appropriation as the seed investment that U.S. allies will match, radically increasing the project's scale, reach, and legitimacy. If not enacted prior to 2021, work with Congressional leaders in both parties to fully support re-introduction and ensure MEPPA's passage;
- Creating an interagency strategy, led by the National Security Council, for reengaging Israeli and Palestinian society. Engage the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace and leverage the projects and momentum it generates as part of public diplomacy campaigns on both sides of the Green Line;
- Utilizing conflict resolution tools gleaned from past U.S. government efforts and through other legislation, such as the GFA;
- Restoring critical funding to development and humanitarian programming, including funding for UNRWA, to the extent allowed by current U.S. law;
- Announcing plans to reopen the U.S. diplomatic mission in East Jerusalem and appointing a senior Administration official to liaise with the Palestinians;
- Rejecting the Trump Administration's peace plan, including actions regarding annexation, and publicly announcing that it is no longer standing U.S. policy;
- Reversing the current U.S. policy regarding settlement enterprises, bringing the U.S. in line with prior administrations and international consensus;
- Calling on the Palestinian government to replace its prisoner payment program with a responsible welfare program to address concerns of incentivizing violence; and
- Addressing the critical humanitarian, health, and economic crisis in the Gaza Strip.

Nigeria

As the largest country in Africa—both by economic and population metrics—Nigeria is an important partner to the U.S. A destabilized and crisis-ridden Nigeria has negative impacts for American businesses, international security, and the stability of the entire region. The current #EndSARS movement reveals that the military/police-first status quo of public security in Nigeria is untenable. There are too many abuses on one hand; yet too many failings to deliver security on the other hand. Alongside low oil prices and budget deficits, the military is deployed in 30 out of Nigeria's 36 states. In addition, the core drivers of conflict in Nigeria, including corruption and a lack of governance, access to livelihoods, and justice remain.



The Biden-Harris Administration should develop a Nigerian-led, U.S.-supported approach to violence and fragility that addresses the structural causes, conflict drivers, and consequences of instability by:

- Ensuring that peace and security issues are a diplomatic priority in Nigeria and align development dollars to reduce violent conflict and achieve development outcomes. The Biden-Harris Administration can encourage conflict-sensitive public and private sector investments in agricultural and cattle value-chain development that improve food security, create jobs, and lessen resource pressures; and
- Enhancing security cooperation between our two states that focuses on preventing violence at all levels, including through a “peace architecture” approach to security assistance in Nigeria, which could bring government, security, and civilians together to identify warning signs and produce non-violent solutions.

The Sahel

The central countries of the Sahel—Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger—are experiencing an alarming humanitarian conflict [exacerbated](#) by [climate change](#) and insecurity from proliferating violent extremist groups. In this region, [13 million](#) people desperately need humanitarian assistance, and [1.6 million](#) are displaced. France is [leading](#) an international response to the conflict that includes the leadership of West African states, but is [bogged down](#) in a military intervention that echoes U.S. experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. To date, the U.S. has offered some support to this international response—extending humanitarian [assistance](#) and appointing a State Department [Special Envoy for the Sahel Region](#) focusing on violent extremism—while the Trump Administration has simultaneously [considered](#) drawing down the U.S. military presence in West Africa.

The Biden-Harris Administration should take diplomatic action to address the challenges facing the Sahel and help ensure regional and global security by:

- Maintaining the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sahel Region at the State Department, and ensuring it has the necessary funding and staff to carry out its mission through multilateral diplomatic engagement;
- Ensuring that the [\\$274 million](#) U.S. pledge at an October 2020 high-level humanitarian conference is fully delivered, and preparing future funding to bolster civil society support in the Sahel region, with a focus on programs that include traditional dispute resolutions, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), conflict prevention, community resilience, as well as WPS, YPS, and other peacebuilding principles and methods;
- Investing in integrated peacebuilding and governance programs as outlined in the GFA with the “[Four People’s Pillars](#)” put forward by the People’s Coalition for the Sahel, including placing civilian protection and human security at the heart of the international community response and creating a comprehensive political strategy to address the root



causes of insecurity, and stressing these pillars in bilateral discussions with the French government and West African partners; and

- Addressing the [worsening desertification and other effects of climate change](#), a key driver of conflict, through [agriculture programs](#) that improve local capacity, ensure local ownership, and work towards sustainable and scalable solutions.

Sudan

As Sudan heads towards an end to its transition process with elections scheduled in 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration will have an 18-month window to direct American diplomacy and assistance to support the consolidation of peace and democracy in the country, building on the success and sacrifices of the Sudanese people—women and young people, in particular—in seeking a brighter future. This window offers an opportunity to secure a legal peace and normalized relations between the U.S. and Sudan and begin to craft a “democracy and peace” dividend to help the Sudanese people sustain progress towards an open, peaceful, and prosperous society.

The Biden-Harris Administration should provide diplomatic and development assistance to support a democratic transition and resolve long-stemming conflict in Sudan, including by:

- Providing full diplomatic and financial support to civilian-led peacebuilding and local formal and informal peace processes in the Kordofans, Blue Nile, Darfur, and the contested Abyei region;
- Investing in the institutions that have driven Sudan’s transformation and which will be essential to sustaining a pluralistic society, including women-led civil society organizations, the university system, media, and the creative arts;
- Completing the process, initiated by the Obama-Biden Administration, of restoring Sudan as a full partner to the U.S., including by working with Congress to secure “legal peace” between the U.S. and Sudan and approving debt relief from international financial institutions, and in leveraging the Department of Commerce, U.S. Trade Development Agency, and the U.S. DFC to facilitate American investment; and
- Strengthening people-to-people ties between the Sudanese and American people, including by expanding the Stevens Initiative and other virtual exchange curricula to include Sudanese educational institutions.

Syria

The Syrian conflict continues to drive an unimaginable displacement and humanitarian [crisis](#), even as a path to its resolution remains unclear. In the nearly 10 years since violence broke out, over half of Syria’s population has been displaced--nearly [13 million](#) people--and over 500,000 have been killed. The disparate actors and interests at play have ensured prolonged suffering and destruction in the wake of the Syrian regime’s initial crackdown of peaceful civilian protesters in March 2011.

The emergence of COVID-19 has posed increasing risk to Syrian civilians, both in terms of the stressed health, food, economic, political, and security systems, but also in terms of the potential for an Islamic State resurgence and increased displacement. After years of insufficient U.S. diplomatic and military engagement in Syria, the Biden-Harris Administration has the opportunity to take a holistic approach to the situation, glean lessons learned under the Obama and Trump Administrations, as well as other international and multilateral interventions there and in the region.

The Biden-Harris Administration should provide real support to Syrian civilians and help pave the way for negotiations to peacefully end the protracted conflict by:

- Redoubling support for a UN-mediated political settlement to Syria's conflict that will open the way for democratic elections and the resettlement of displaced Syrians;
- Requesting bilateral, non-lethal stabilization assistance to support local governance in areas not controlled by the Assad government;
- Lifting legal obstacles to and investing in programs designed to [rehabilitate and reintegrate](#) former Islamic State fighters and the [women and children](#) who lived with them, with a view towards repatriating those living as refugees in Syria; and
- Assessing the [impact](#) of U.S. sanctions on local actors' ability to deliver basic services and identify necessary exemptions, so that U.S. economic pressure does not impede humanitarian operations or efforts at de-escalation and peacebuilding.

Yemen

Under [both](#) the Obama and Trump Administrations, the U.S., with little moderation, supported the Saudi- and United Arab Emirate (UAE)-led coalition's intervention against the Houthi rebels in Yemen's conflict. This support enabled severe international humanitarian and human rights law [violations](#) by the coalition, while undermining the U.S.'s ability to possibly mediate the conflict.

The Biden-Harris Administration should re-establish the U.S. as an impartial broker and help push the warring parties towards a political settlement by:

- Ending U.S. military support for the Saudi- and UAE-led intervention in Yemen, including halting current arms transfers and prohibiting future arms sales as long as the conflict continues;
- Enhancing diplomatic efforts to mediate a settlement, including the drafting of a new UN Security Council resolution to update the outdated negotiating framework imposed by Resolution [2216](#) and increase support to inclusive local and national peacebuilding and mediation efforts, wherein women, youth, and other marginalized groups play a meaningful role;



- Fully supporting the international humanitarian response in Yemen, including ending [U.S. aid cuts](#) in northern Yemen and working multilaterally with the UN and international partners to push back against aid interference without punishing civilians in need;
- Working with Yemeni civil society—particularly women- and youth-led organizations, and ensuring peacebuilders and other stakeholders in especially conservative and rural regions are included—on local peacebuilding initiatives that will foster dialogue and contribute to state-wide stabilization as an UN-mediated process unfolds; and
- Ensuring U.S. policy allows peacebuilding and humanitarian organizations to deliver critical support in places of Houthi control.