



CENTER FOR AMERICAN SECURITY

Placing Americans First in America's Foreign Affairs

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“What truly matters is not which party controls our government, but whether our government is controlled by the people. January 20th, 2017 will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again... a new vision will govern our land, from this day forward, it's going to be only America first. America first.”
– President Donald Trump, Inauguration Speech, January 20, 2017 ([Trump, 2017a](#)).

An America First approach places the welfare of the American people at the forefront. This includes the American principle of respecting our neighbors, while advancing the stability gained through upholding the rule of law. There are circumstances where it is necessary to impose consequences. But in each case, policymakers should choose to impose the consequence that honors the greatest stewardship of American resources. Thus, each engagement should gain a better deal for America, and a better deal for the world.

Accordingly, the America First approach to national security prioritizes the use of diplomacy, intelligence, economic and trade policy, as well as law, financial aid, and infrastructure. America First means that our military should be used sparingly, for specific and well-articulated aims. In each case where our military is deployed, however, the result should be definitive, and in favor of clearly articulated American interests.

Given the nature of bureaucracies, it is essential that America's national security have an outstanding civilian leadership that is focused on the welfare of all Americans rather than the parochial territorial benefits of a particular agency. It is also essential that there be sufficient transparency such that our constitutional commitment to the consent of the governed can be respected.



WHAT IS AMERICA FIRST

An America First foreign policy works and delivers for Americans.

The phrase “America First” refers to an approach rooted in an awareness of America’s unique role in the world and its unmatched ability to do best for others when its people are strong, safe, and prosperous. The America First approach means that any commitments of American lives or dollars must come with concrete benefits to the American people. Every investment of American resources needs to reap a substantial security benefit.

There is no more powerful example of this principle than the Marshall Plan, a foreign assistance program launched in 1948 that sent billions of American dollars (nearly \$150 billion in today’s dollars) to Europe to help restore its economy following World War II. The program remains arguably one of the most successful moments of U.S. diplomacy. President George W. Bush cited it in building a case for the U.S. presence in Afghanistan ([Bush, 2002](#)), just as then-Senator Obama invoked it on the campaign trail in describing his plans for the Middle East ([Obama, 2008](#)). This plan, so often referred to, has two specific attributes that have been too frequently absent from subsequent imitations.

First, the Marshall Plan had a clear and definitive objective. Rebuilding Europe to a point of self-sufficiency was a tangible goal with a definitive endpoint. Second, the Marshall Plan was transparent and was made subject to the consent of the governed. Its inventors did not rely solely upon its brilliant design. Rather, the plan’s architect, Secretary of State George Marshall, made the case for it directly with the American people. This could be seen as an America First approach. It had a clear objective, a clear benefit to America was consistent with the American value of serving our neighbors, and it was transparent and accountable. Americans understood the cost would come out of their paychecks. But they approved of the investment.

Secretary Marshall stated the America First principle quite succinctly in the closing of his commencement address at Harvard University in 1947, when he spoke the following words: “An essential part of any successful action on the part of the United States is an understanding on the part of the people of America of the character of the problem and the remedies to be applied” ([Marshall, 1947](#)).

Burden sharing among allies was intimately tied to America’s altruism from the start. Secretary Marshall asked his Director of Policy Planning, George Kennan, to prepare a memo about the “world situation,” which was presented several months later. That memo argued that “our policy must be directed toward restoring a balance of power in Europe and Asia” and that the United States should “persuade others to bear a greater part of the burden of opposing communism” since only having the United States do so “will, in the long run, be beyond our resources” ([Kennan, 1947](#)).



The decades since that memo saw vast global transformation, just as they saw vast American transformation. This included America's new and leading role in world affairs, even changing the course of world history. This transformation was accompanied by the emergence of a new national security apparatus and theoretical and operational support system—a national security establishment—a substantial bureaucracy increasingly unaccountable to and disconnected from the Americans they are supposed to serve. This has, predictably, led to endless wars where it is unclear how the American people can come out ahead, among other unsustainable and undesirable outcomes.

The policies and structures governing America's relations with the world drifted and expanded due to inertia into amorphous nation-building projects overseas (Mandelbaum, 2016, p. 2). Successive generations of Washington policymakers perpetuated old foreign policy paradigms without any serious reassessment by their implementers or accountability to the American people, who paid for them with their lives and tax dollars. The political scientist Michael Mandelbaum writes that “[t]he American public as a whole had no particular desire to use American power to transform other countries but the foreign policy establishment, whose views counted most, was, if anything, enthusiastic about the project” (Mandelbaum, 2016, p. 369). To those in Washington who designed and implemented these policies, Mandelbaum explains, “the recent historical experiences of the United States, America's own political culture, and the circumstances of the post-Cold War world combined to make the missions the country undertook seem initially plausible...” (Mandelbaum, 2016, p. 369).

An America First perspective demands that those designing and implementing policies on behalf of the American people ask and answer the following question: “How does this policy help or harm the American citizen?” With a return to the America First principles inherent in the approach of the Marshall Plan, policies will be directed and bound by clear and transparent objectives and accountability to the American people, through their role of providing consent to those who govern.

America First means placing Americans first in policymaking, just as it means America leading on the world stage. America First is both a guiding principle and a vision of American strength. America can do limitless good only when it is at its greatest.

President Trump's words in his first address before the United Nations in September 2017 captured that America First reflects a more natural and effective way for countries to work together on behalf of their citizens:

In foreign affairs, we are renewing this founding principle of sovereignty. Our government's first duty is to its people, to our citizens—to serve their needs, to ensure their safety, to preserve their rights, and to defend their values.



As President of the United States, I will always put America first, just like you, as the leaders of your countries will always, and should always, put your countries first.

All responsible leaders have an obligation to serve their own citizens, and the nation-state remains the best vehicle for elevating the human condition.

But making a better life for our people also requires us to work together in close harmony and unity to create a more safe and peaceful future for all people.

The United States will forever be a great friend to the world, and especially to its allies. But we can no longer be taken advantage of, or enter into a one-sided deal where the United States gets nothing in return. As long as I hold this office, I will defend America's interests above all else ([Trump, 2017b](#)).

President Trump's words signaled a return to the era of transparency and accountability. The exercise of American power requires clear justification, and America First ensures that American power is used in the interests of Americans. While presidents of both parties, such as Woodrow Wilson and Warren G. Harding, invoked the phrase America First as a campaign slogan, President Trump was the first to develop the phrase into an entire foreign policy framework over the last 4 years.

The Trump Administration's stewardship of an America First foreign policy not only disrupted the national security establishment's complacency, but also charted a new path for the American people that brought them real benefits. These included renegotiating trade deals to protect American workers and families, marshaling a strong and holistic approach to protecting Americans from the threat of an economically rising and militarily aggressive China, and securing the Nation's southern border. Indeed, it has even become the foundation of a new direction in foreign policy. For example, the Biden Administration has praised and adopted parts of the Trump Administration's approach to China ([Nelson, 2021](#)) and also seeks to withdraw troops from Afghanistan (albeit in a manner that, in departing from the Trump Administration's approach, could yield problematic consequences).

The following are the key characteristics of America First foreign policy:

- Setting objectives based on a clear articulation of American interests.
- Determining strategies by evaluating what works and treating each engagement or transaction with an investment mindset as well as seeking the best return for the smallest expenditure of American resources.
- Avoiding vague, grandiose, and ideological paradigms.

- Maintaining a lethal and focused military that is used sparingly but effectively, for specific and transparent purposes.
- Requiring that military engagements meet a strict standard for furthering American objectives with a well-conceived path to success.
- Avoiding engagement in endless interventions without clear objectives or benefits.
- When possible, prioritize engagement at the nation-state level instead of through undemocratic multilateral institutions.
- Making alliances work for the American people by insisting on a model of mutual benefit whereby all partners adhere to commitments and contribute to carrying the load; this is America teaching other nations to “fish” rather than creating an unsustainable dependence.

From 2017 to 2020, the United States engaged with the world in a manner that protected the Nation’s men and women in uniform, reinvigorated America’s military, and abandoned the practice by recent administrations of entering new, and often costly, conflicts overseas. Indeed, over the first year of his presidency, President Trump took a series of strategic and bold actions, marking a sharp departure from the inaction, or unhelpful actions of his predecessors ([Pressman, 2009](#) and [Boyer, 2017](#)).

While many characterize different visions of foreign policy as existing on a continuum from isolationism to full-scale globalism, the America First approach creates an alternative paradigm. In some cases, it calls for deeper international leadership and engagement by the United States, while in other cases it calls for not interfering in the affairs of other nations or else unwinding an ongoing international engagement. Each situation and circumstance calls for a unique investment. America has a vast array of resources, spanning economics, trade, financing, diplomacy, intelligence, and law. The determining factor in each case is not the abstract dictate of a grand ideological vision but a pragmatic assessment of what is achievable. In each instance, the appropriate resource should be applied to gain the desired result. In each instance, that result should be in the bona fide interests of the American people and ask of the American people the lowest level of resources to gain the greatest benefit.

When military action is required, the action taken should be decisive and the results clear. As an example of such bold affirmative action on the world stage, President Trump, in early April 2017, ordered the launch of 59 missiles into Syria in response to reports of Assad’s use of sarin nerve gas—an event that Trump described as an “affront to humanity” and which he explained, referencing Obama’s inaction on his threat of a “red line,” that “[w]hen you kill innocent children, innocent babies...that crosses many, many lines—beyond a red line” ([Kirby, 2017](#)). He also accelerated support to U.S. partners and allies in the campaign to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which he declared defeated on February 28, 2019



([Faulders, 2019](#)). This is an excellent example of creating consequences with the American military that lays a groundwork that will often lead to the constructive use of other, non-lethal approaches. When America makes such “red lines” clear, and enforces them consistently, it can often create a sustainable order.

When other approaches fail, and military intervention is necessary, the America First vision means bringing U.S. troops home when the fight is completed and the clearly articulated objectives are gained. In December 2018, just as the mission to defeat ISIS neared completion, President Trump ordered the return home of U.S. troops from Syria. In a similar vein, over the course of his administration, he consistently pushed to bring U.S. troops home from Afghanistan, where mission adjustments had previously expanded the U.S. presence there. By January 2021, he brought the troop levels in Afghanistan down to 2,500—the lowest it had been since 2001, and down from a height of 98,000 in 2011 ([Garamone, 2021](#)). Subsequently, the Biden Administration has announced an intent to complete the withdrawal, even though it arbitrarily set its own deadlines. Sadly, after decades of presence in Afghanistan, it is difficult to articulate what objective was sought or gained for the American people, or the American lives expended. With an America First approach, this kind of tragic result will be avoided.

The Trump Administration recognized the opportunity to make high return investments in national defense through the creation of the United States Space Force. This was the first new branch of the U.S. Armed Forces since 1947, and it propels both commercial innovation and strategic deterrence against adversaries in space. By accelerating an early investment, this creates a substantial deterrence to other nations to attempt to use space to create threats to American security. These investments also enabled the modernization of America’s nuclear forces and missile defenses, upgraded the Nation’s cyber capabilities amid increasing asymmetric and hybrid threats from adversaries, and facilitated the first government-wide review of manufacturing and defense supply chains in nearly 7 decades ([The White House, 2021](#)). In each instance, the focus was on maximizing the application of American resources to the specific application of national security investments.

Within the national security profession, this approach is referred to as being “transactional.” In the case of America First policies, each engagement or transaction focuses on getting a better deal for the American people—a deal that advances sustainable security, avoids overreach, and advances American prosperity.

In dealing with allied nations, President Trump exercised an America First approach by pushing to get the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies to meet their 2 percent Gross Domestic Product commitments so that the American taxpayer would no longer need to foot the bill. This was good for America, and it prompted our allies to make changes. Recently, NATO allies pledged to raise their defense spending to \$400 billion by 2024 ([NATO, 2019](#)). Further east, the United States secured commitments from Japan and the Republic of Korea to increase the burden shared of stationing American troops in their respective countries while expanding America’s partnership through increased cooperation and



promotion of new investments with India ([Dhume, 2021](#)). In each case, this created more engagement, and a stronger alliance, with less reliance upon the pocketbooks of the American people.

The America First approach avoided further entanglements in endless wars. President Trump was the first president in 4 decades to avoid engaging Americans in an overseas conflict. His administration maintained a maximum pressure campaign on rogue states like Iran and Venezuela using non-military options. The Trump Administration employed its economic tools through crippling economic sanctions. At the same time, it employed its diplomatic capabilities by reopening talks between the United States and North Korea (which included President Trump becoming the first U.S. president to step foot inside the country) and facilitating the return of the remains of American heroes.

America First policies led to a new era in U.S. relations with China that prioritized the safety and prosperity of Americans. Again, the Trump Administration utilized appropriate tools in its toolbox. For China, the most effective tool was trade policy. This led to a U.S.-China trade deal, curbing the efforts of the Chinese Communist Party to control the international telecommunications system and even securing an international consensus around reforming the Universal Postal Union standards, which China had historically exploited ([Schaefer, 2019](#)).

Along the way, the Trump Administration secured the release of over 20 American hostages in 4 years ([McKay, 2019](#)). Not only did President Trump, through his personal intervention, bring Americans home from hostile areas, but he did so in a manner that improved other families' efforts with foreign governments to release their loved ones ([Musto, 2019](#)). A survey of two dozen hostages and families noted they felt "better understood and supported and believed that they were being treated with empathy and compassion," and that their cases were prioritized by the State Department under the Trump Administration ([Musto, 2019](#)). By contrast, President Obama himself admitted in 2015 upon the release of a report that detailed the Obama-Biden Administration's failures to prioritize American hostages overseas, "our government, regardless of good intentions, has let them down" ([Pace, 2015](#)).

WHERE AMERICA IS NOW

The Trump Administration's foreign and defense policies marked a departure from the prevailing Washington orthodoxy, which was often vague about how its stances toward national security and international engagement directly furthered American objectives. By 2017, significant portions of U.S. foreign policy did not appear to serve the core interests of the American people. As the public debate revealed, Washington's national security establishment discourse had hardened into orthodoxy, and its policies and paradigms became canonical, despite their mounting failures made apparent overseas and felt deeply at home. When Donald Trump took the oath of office, the Nation entered its 16th year militarily engaged in Afghanistan, where American taxpayers had spent over \$100 billion in



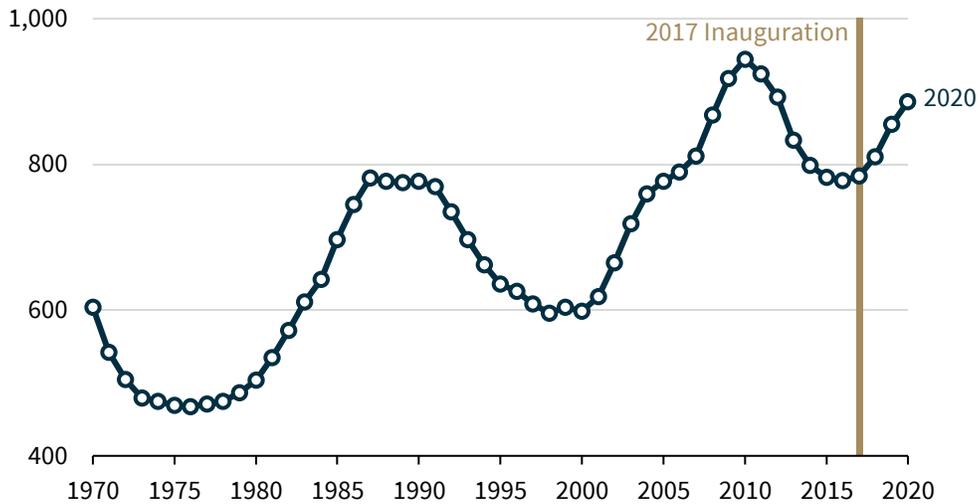
direct assistance to Afghanistan (not including the billions of dollars spent sustaining the U.S. military presence there), even as the Taliban continued to control large swaths of the country ([Katzman, Thomas 2017](#)). By January 2017, ISIS—a new and more brutal terrorist group controlling territory across Syria and Iraq, the size of Pennsylvania—eclipsed al-Qaeda, the terrorist group whose attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, prompted the initial entry of the United States into Afghanistan ([G. Wood, 2015](#)). ISIS was able to consolidate territory because of decisions made by the Obama White House about the Middle East—a selective “lead from behind” approach to popular uprisings across the region, inaction in Syria after issuing a threat of a “red line,” and a deal with Iran that unfroze over \$100 billion in assets that the regime invested into its proxy network (including Hezbollah, Shiite militias across the region, and Syria’s Bashar al-Assad) ([Diehl, 2015](#)).

As U.S. policy in the Middle East deteriorated, the Obama Administration—just as its predecessors had done—ignored the growing and complex challenge to Americans posed by a rising China. Over the last decade, China managed to expand its global reach through both its Belt and Road Initiative—an infrastructure project across 70 countries that experts estimate will exceed \$1 trillion in Chinese investments by the end of this decade ([as cited in Chatzky and McBride, 2020](#) and [in Dossani 2020](#))—and through its co-optation of multilateral institutions, just as it worked to exploit U.S. research to enhance its military capabilities. As China grew and advanced, the Obama Administration’s budget cuts to the Department of Defense resulted in smaller force size, equipment obsolescence, and inadequate training (as cited in [Moyar, 2015](#) and in [D. Wood, 2015, p. 239](#)).¹ On the southern border of the United States, meanwhile, years of neglect resulted in the unchecked expansion of drug cartels and human traffickers, alongside the exacerbation of the opioid crisis taking place within America’s neighborhoods. A Senate report found that in 2016 the United States was “losing the war on drugs,” and that the border was “unsecure,” with interdiction rates “as low as 30 to 40 percent in some areas” even as it was spending “roughly \$31 billion per year” ([Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2017, p. 3](#)).

¹ The Heritage Foundation’s annual *Index of U.S. Military Strength* for 2015 rated the U.S. military as “marginal” and explained it being a result of both “[d]ecades of underinvestment in modernization” and “the current budget cuts.” The report adds that “[u]nsurprisingly, funding is the single most important factor in fielding a military force that is modern, of sufficient size, and ready to be employed.” See Wood, ed. (2015), p. 239.

Inflation-Adjusted Federal National Defense Expenditures

Dollars (billions, chained \$2020)



Sources: Bureau of Economic Analysis; AFPI calculations.

The defense budget under the Trump Administration reflected the priorities of maintaining military readiness and pursuing strategic investments in the Nation's defense. Between 2016 and 2020, real (inflation-adjusted) federal government expenditures on national defense increased by over \$100 billion, or roughly 14 percent. This increase in defense spending followed a precipitous decline in the previous 8 years where federal national defense expenditures fell by roughly \$80 billion (-10 percent) between 2008 and 2016. This government spending—as measured by the Bureau of Economic Analysis' National Income and Product Accounts—includes both national defense consumption expenditures (i.e. spending on current obligations) and national defense gross investment (i.e. investment in fixed assets). Importantly, after decreasing 23.4 percent (-\$45 billion) between 2008 and 2016, the investment portion of federal national defense expenditures increased 26.7 percent (+\$40 billion) between 2016 and 2020.

In addition to these achievements, the Trump Administration took care of American veterans, as it transformed the Department of Veterans Affairs—to ensure those who served receive the best quality healthcare, particularly through signing the VA MISSION Act to expand choices—and formed the PREVENTS Task Force to help fight the tragedy of veteran suicide (with nearly two dozen veteran suicides each day) by taking a more holistic and preventative approach to veterans' health and working across government and with non-governmental partners ([E.O. 13861, 2019](#)). This was no small achievement, given the soaring costs of wars initiated by previous administrations. The U.S. military engagements in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria have resulted in the deaths of over 800,000 people, including approximately 8,000 Americans ([Crawford, Daulatzai, Lutz, MacLeish, 2020](#)). In addition to the thousands of Americans who have made the ultimate sacrifice abroad, vastly more veterans were wounded than killed in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan ([Crawford, Daulatzai, Lutz, MacLeish, 2020](#)). These patriots continue to suffer through both physical and mental injuries that will affect them and their loved ones. In addition to the sobering human costs

these conflicts have incurred upon the American people, there have also been significant economic consequences from unending American interventions. In total, the United States has spent almost \$5 trillion on the post-9/11 conflicts and sustained between \$600 billion and \$1 trillion in future medical and disability costs for veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq ([Bilmes, Crawford, Smith, 2015](#)). Realizing these costs to both American lives and economic prosperity, the America First foreign policy approach refused to bog down the United States in endless and costly foreign interventions and pivoted to a policy that emphasized peace through a robust and reinvigorated military that prioritizes the lives of American servicemen and women, their families, and the American taxpayer over the foreign policy establishment.

WHY THE AMERICA FIRST POLICY INSTITUTE IS ESSENTIAL

It is the America First Policy Institute's (AFPI) belief that some of the national security policies of the post-Cold War era were so deeply flawed, they had become dangerous. This makes logical sense, too, as the paradigms and assumptions that informed them were developed during the Cold War amid different national security threats in a world that looked very different. The former administration questioned Washington's paradigms and focused on achieving results—an approach that was as urgent as it was unprecedented.

The irony of the national security establishment's criticism is that the entire legitimacy of the national security profession is predicated on its ability to advance the interests and safety of the American people. As the strategist Colin Gray wrote: “[a]ny and all discussion of a sustainable U.S. national security strategy must be at least as attentive to the persisting realities of American culture as it is to the constraints and opportunities of the outside world” ([Gray, 2009, p. 10](#)). Unfortunately, too many in the national security establishment became better at protecting their flawed orthodoxy than the clear interests of the American people. AFPI's Center for American Security ensures there will be rigorous research and development of policies that will serve as an authentically American alternative to the Washington foreign and defense policy orthodoxy. The Center will research and develop policies which keep America First in the following ways:

- Question Existing Paradigms; Support Alternative Analytical Approaches: Many of the successes of the policies of the last 4 years reflect a reframing of national security challenges, whether regarding peace in the Middle East, deterring Iran, or making NATO more effective. Building on this interrogation of policy paradigms, the Center will foster and support evidence-based research that offers new analytical lenses to understand national security challenges.
- Policy Analysis that Directly Prioritizes Americans' Interests: With Washington's foreign policy conversation often lacking an explicit connection to the immediate needs and security of the American people, the Center will explore ways of grounding analysis in an understanding of the expressed interests of Americans, and it will



approach analysis of pressing national security issues—from China, to trade, to securing the U.S. southern border—with reference to how a policy advances the prosperity and security of the American people.

- Nurtures the Next Generation: AFPI will also play a vital mentorship role for the next generation of national security leaders. The continued Washington opposition to an America First agenda highlights the need to deepen the national security bench.

POLICY REVIEW

As 2017 to 2020 showed—whether in the form of the Abraham Accords, the new approach on China, the withdrawal from the United Nations Human Rights Council, the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, or the killing of terrorist masterminds Qasem Soleimani and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, among other examples—the assumptions and paradigms that have long limited Washington’s national security policymaking and policy thinking did not need to be the only ones. Indeed, rejecting them was necessary if the United States were to conduct its national security and foreign policy in a manner that achieved the most for the American people at least cost and hardship.

AFPI’s Center for American Security researches policies that keep America first in foreign affairs and national security. The following are the key policy areas the Center’s research will focus on, reflecting the needs and security of the American people:

1. **Maintain the America First Tradition in the National Security Profession**
The Center will examine avenues for developing and sustaining the intellectual space for America First and deepening the national security talent bench.
2. **Bolster America’s Economic Might**
Research and develop foreign policies that advance America’s economic superiority. This includes examining various administrations’ approaches to protecting Americans from China’s threats in the realms of big tech, higher education, and corporations.
3. **Expand America’s Unrivaled Military Strength**
Conduct research regarding a strong defense budget and investment in the latest cutting-edge military technology to address the threats of adversaries on land, sea, air, and space. This includes research into building effective cybersecurity and missile defense systems, as well as robust biodefense planning. A key national security priority, and central to America’s military strength, is ensuring that America’s service members are taken care of—both during and after their service—and that their government’s engagements overseas improve their future and that of their families and neighbors. The greatest strength of America’s military might remains the men and women who proudly wear the uniform. Ensuring we take care of these brave men and women after their service builds morale and attracts future talent.



4. **End Endless Wars and Make Foreign Commitments Strategic**

Educate about both troop drawdown in Afghanistan and a broader push for accountability in the country's military engagements overseas. Additionally, focus on U.S. foreign assistance and U.S. commitments to multinational alliances and institutions to ensure these advance the needs and interests of Americans and that the burden is fairly shared between the U.S. and partner nations.

5. **Secure the Southern Border**

Research approaches for stronger security on the U.S. southern border, including measures to curb illegal migration, counter drug and human trafficking, and addressing the root causes of the crisis in the weak governance of Latin American countries.

6. **Eliminate Global Terrorists Who Threaten to Harm Americans**

Research and develop policies to educate the public regarding strategies against global terrorist organizations and state sponsors of terror. Such research will focus on effective and sustainable approaches to dismantle terrorist organizations and eliminate their territorial footholds.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

The Center's research and analysis will be guided by the following four pillars, or four "S's," each reflecting a different dimension of an America First perspective on foreign and defense policy:

- **SECURITY:** The first goal of any policy on how the U.S. engages militarily or diplomatically is ensuring that it protects the safety of Americans and advances their prosperity and well-being. While military engagements may not always be avoided, care should be taken that all such engagements must be clearly tied to concrete objectives that advance the overall security and prosperity of Americans.
- **STRENGTH/AMERICA FIRST DEFENSE:** Alongside (and as part of) prioritizing the security of Americans, foreign and defense policy should emphasize the unmatched strength of the U.S. military. This means committing to strong defense budgets that help advance national security objectives, with an eye toward defense acquisition reform, cutting of cost overruns, acquisition of the latest and best American-made technology, and—through a solid foreign military sales program—the encouragement of allies and partners to buy American, while blocking China's economic and technological imperialism.
- **STRATEGY:** Policy analysis and recommendations regarding committing U.S. military engagement and taxpayer dollars overseas must be tied to clear objectives. This is particularly the case when designing options that impose significant human and



financial costs on Americans. Where the federal government may be ill-equipped or the least-efficient partner to carry out a policy, analysis should consider partnerships with the private sector and non-governmental organizations that can most effectively and efficiently help attain the policy objectives.

- **SUSTAINABILITY:** Considering the soaring price tag of the War on Terror, research into U.S. foreign and defense policy could consider fiscal responsibility and avoiding wasteful spending. By extension too, research on alliances and multilateral institutions could consider fiscal and results-based calculations, e.g.: “Is the U.S. paying too much relative to others and relative to the objective?” and “Is the U.S. investing in causes and programs that advance Americans’ safety and prosperity?”

AFPI’s Center for American Security will educate the American public on policies that champion Americans rather than a theoretical “America” imagined by the Washington national security profession in the development of policies relating to the country’s engagements overseas. It means researching and educating about policies that place the security and prosperity of the American people before everything else, without pretext or apology, and understanding the importance of being clear-eyed about the world, seeing it for how it actually is rather than how it ought to be. We will continue to align our objectives with our capabilities, matching our goals with what is truly attainable in the world in which we live. It is through identifying and openly pursuing the overall well-being of the American people that we can best build consensus among other countries, both those who share our ideals and objectives and even bringing around others who may not.



AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

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