



RESEARCH REPORT | Center for American Security

DEFINING NATIONAL SECURITY: A COMPARISON OF THE TRUMP AND BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGIES

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TOP LINE POINTS

- The Biden Administration's 2022 National Security Strategy (NSS) puts America last as it prioritizes investing American resources in multilateral accords that undermine American interests and promote globalist aims and falsely designates climate change as the top existential threat rather than China.
- In stark contrast, the 2017 NSS produced under the Trump Administration offered an approach towards national security in which American interests and safety were prioritized, including countering China, restoring America's domestic prosperity, bolstering American military power, and keeping Americans and their communities safe.
- The release of the Biden Administration's NSS and the current state of the world details why the renewal of an America First approach to national security is needed and, ultimately, demonstrates the need for strong American leadership that preserves peace through strength, both domestically and abroad.

Introduction

The 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act requires that “the President shall transmit to Congress each year a comprehensive report on the national security strategy of the United States.” It has become standard practice for every presidential administration to produce its National Security Strategy (NSS) within the first year of the administration.

On October 12, 2022, the Biden Administration published its first National Security Strategy (NSS). Biden Administration officials claim that it was supposed to be issued last December, but



its release was delayed due to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. What follows is a comparison of the Biden Administration’s National Security Strategy with the Trump Administration’s National Security Strategy that was published in 2017.

Focus

The Biden and Trump Administrations’ NSS documents offer contrasting perspectives on the leading threats to the American people, America’s role in the world, and what is in America’s national interests.

For the Biden Administration, “climate change” was mentioned more than any other phrase or topic in its NSS. “Of all the shared problems we face, climate change is the greatest and potentially existential for all nations” (EOP, 2022, p. 9). Furthermore, for the Biden Administration, “transnational challenges” like climate change and food security are framed as being equal or greater threats than China and Russia. When leading threats such as China are addressed, they are discussed in their relation to climate change efforts, thereby undercutting a legitimate policy position towards America’s adversaries (EOP, 2022, p. 24-25).

In contrast, the Trump Administration’s 2017 NSS focused on addressing the leading threats to the American people, namely China as a global challenge and transnational terrorist and organized crime threats to the homeland. This different focus on the leading threats to the American people is evident as the 2017 NSS uses “adversary” 33 times in comparison to the 2022 NSS, which uses the word “adversary” a total of five times. Furthermore, the theme of advancing American interests by promoting policies that protect American sovereignty, prosperity, national power, and interests was the driving theme of the 2017 NSS.

Topic	Number of Mentions	
	Trump Administration’s NSS	Biden Administration’s NSS
China	33 (“China”)	7 “China;” 46 (“People’s Republic of China”)
Russia	25	71
Iran	17	7
North Korea	18	4
Climate Change	1 (in the context of climate change policies harming American enterprises, interests, and security).	63 (includes “climate change” and the “climate crisis,” etc.).
Islamism	37 (includes both “Islamist” and “jihadi”)	0
Terrorism (both domestic and foreign)	82	37 (0 mentions of Islamist and jihadi terrorism serving as a threat to the U.S. homeland)



Constitution of the United States	2 “Constitution”; 2 “Constitutional government” or “Constitutional framework”	0
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Key Principles of the National Security Strategies

Trump Administration	Biden Administration
<p>Principled Realism. The Trump Administration defined its strategic approach to national security as “principled realism that is guided by outcomes, not ideology. It is based upon the view that peace, security, and prosperity depend on strong, sovereign nations that respect their citizens at home and cooperate to advance peace abroad. And it is grounded in the realization that American principles are a lasting force for good in the world” (EOP, 2017, p.1). It frames the relations between nations as one of independent, sovereign nation-states working together toward common interests. It also acknowledges the role of power among nations and clearly defines American national interests and the pathways needed to secure them.</p>	<p>Idealist approach to achieving globalist aims. The Biden Administration’s NSS does not describe the guiding philosophy by which their strategy is informed. It is, however, evident that their strategy represents an idealist vision of international affairs as they describe “an inclusive world” in which the U.S. prioritizes cooperation with China on climate change and global health efforts over holding China accountable for its trade violations and human rights abuses. (EOP, 2022, p. 18, 24). Moreover, it takes a globalist perspective towards the relations between nations as it emphasizes vague notions of the competition between “autocracies and democracies” and emphasizes collective efforts within multilateral forums (EOP, 2022, p. 8).</p>
<p>Upholds an America First doctrine and makes a clear distinction between American interests and globalist-oriented objectives. The Trump Administration’s NSS is grounded in the America First doctrine in which America’s domestic prosperity, security, and national interests are given priority- before external engagements. “We are prioritizing the interests of our citizens and protecting our sovereign rights as a nation” (EOP, 2017, p. I). It affirms that when the United States does engage outwardly and within multilateral accords, it does so in such a way that American interests are considered first. This approach makes a clear distinction between American interests and globalist interests in which nation-states view collective interests as taking precedence over the interests of their own nation. Above all, the America First position described in the Trump</p>	<p>Rejects the America First doctrine and conflates American interests with globalist pursuits. The Biden Administration’s NSS fundamentally rejects the notion that the United States should prioritize its own interests before engaging externally. The NSS delineates an approach in which domestic and foreign policies are given the same prioritization stating, “we have broken down the dividing line between foreign policy and domestic policy” and “in an interconnected world, there is no bright line between foreign and domestic policy” (EOP, 2022, p. 11, 14). While it is the case that a strong and secure America bolsters our standing overseas and that there is a connection between a nation’s foreign and domestic policies, the Biden Administration’s framing uses this line to argue for embracing its domestic climate</p>



<p>Administration’s NSS ensures that domestic conditions are prioritized before international affairs, with the highest priorities given to securing a prosperous homeland. This ensures that America is effectively positioned to lead in the world when it has first secured its own citizens and their interests. Stated more simply, “this National Security Strategy puts America First” (EOP, 2017, p. II).</p>	<p>policies and other initiatives. (EOP, 2022, p. 11).</p>
<p>Focuses on the United States preserving equal opportunities for all Americans. The 2017 NSS reiterates an important truth that the United States was founded on the principle that all people are equal under the law and that it is the duty of the government to protect unalienable rights. “The extraordinary trajectory of the United States from a group of colonies to a thriving, industrialized, sovereign republic—the world’s lone superpower—is a testimony to the strength of the idea on which our Nation is founded, namely that each of our citizens is born free and equal under the law. America’s core principles, enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, are secured by the Bill of Rights, which proclaims our respect for fundamental individual liberties beginning with the freedoms of religion, speech, the press, and assembly. Liberty, free enterprise, equal justice under the law, and the dignity of every human life are central to who we are as a people” (EOP, 2017, p. 41).</p>	<p>Focuses on equity and rooting out systematic racism. While the 2022 NSS acknowledges that the United States’ founding guaranteed equality under the law and that America provides a unique leadership role in the world to defend liberty, the Biden Administration diverts from a core principle of the United States Constitution through its advocacy of equal outcomes rather than equal opportunities. The Biden Administration NSS explicitly calls to “advance equity and root out systemic disparities in our laws, policies, and institutions. Indeed, pluralism, inclusion, and diversity are a source of national strength in a rapidly changing world” (EOP, 2022, p. 16). This promotion of equity and embrace of unequal treatment to achieve it is antithetical to the United States’ constitutional framework of government and our founding’s prioritization of equality of opportunity.</p>

China

Trump Administration	Biden Administration
<p>Frames China as the preminent national security challenge for American security, economic prosperity, and interests. The 2017 NSS’ defining characteristic is that it directly addresses the various ways China threatens America’s political, economic, and security interests. For example, it explains that “although the United States seeks to continue to cooperate</p>	<p>Acknowledges that China is the leading geopolitical challenge for America and its allies yet focuses on collaborating and competing with China. The Biden Administration’s 2022 NSS acknowledges that China is an unparalleled geopolitical challenge, yet it simultaneously frames China as a competitor with which the U.S. is able to</p>



<p>with China, China is using economic inducements and penalties, influence operations, and implied military threats to persuade other states to heed its political and security agenda” (EOP, 2017, p. 46). The NSS goes on to offer direct and pragmatic measures to protect American interests from China’s malign actions, specifically by leveraging American statecraft to counter China’s rise.</p>	<p>“coexist peacefully” and collaborate on shared challenges such as climate change (EOP, 2022, p. 24, 25). Furthermore, it designates climate change as the preeminent threat to the United States and our allies today, stating, “of all the shared problems we face, climate change is the greatest and potentially existential for all nations” (EOP, 2022, p. 9).</p>
<p>Hold China accountable for unfair trade practices and end America’s tolerance of China’s malign economic practices (EOP, 2017, p. 25, 47, 48). “We will work with our partners to contest China’s unfair trade and economic practices and restrict its acquisition of sensitive technologies” (EOP, 2017, p. 48).</p>	<p>Do not allow China’s violations of free trade agreements to undermine collaboration with China on climate change (EOP, 2022, p. 24, 25). While the Biden Administration acknowledges the unfair trade practices of China—including violations of free and open markets—as well as their predatory economic practices, the 2022 NSS posits that U.S. efforts to address China’s violations of free trade agreements do not undermine potential collaboration with China on global health and climate change efforts. “At the same time, the PRC is also central to the global economy and has a significant impact on shared challenges, particularly climate change and global public health. It is possible for the United States and the PRC to coexist peacefully, and share in and contribute to human progress together” (EOP, 2022, p. 24). “We will always be willing to work with the PRC where our interests align. We can’t let the disagreements that divide us stop us from moving forward on the priorities that demand that we work together for the good of our people and for the good of the world. That includes climate, pandemic threats, nonproliferation, countering illicit and illegal narcotics, the global food crisis, and macroeconomic issues. In short, we’ll engage constructively with the PRC wherever we can, not as a favor to us or anyone else, and never in exchange for walking away from our principles, but because working together to solve great challenges is what the world expects from great powers, and because it’s directly in our interest. No country should withhold progress on existential transnational issues like the climate crisis because of bilateral</p>



	<p>differences” (EOP, 2022, p. 25). This communicates a vague vision of how the U.S. will achieve stable relations with China yet does not consider how American interests will be secured in the process.</p>
<p>Directly addresses China’s intellectual property theft of U.S. research and development. China’s malign interference in American ingenuity through its rampant theft of U.S. intellectual property, research, and development has cost the American people hundreds of billions of dollars every year. Recognizing this, the 2017 NSS directly implicates China for their theft of America’s most critical assets and ends U.S. complacency and tolerance of this practice. (EOP, 2017, p. 21).</p>	<p>Does not directly implicate China for their intellectual property theft of U.S. research and development. The 2022 NSS recognizes that intellectual property theft of American ingenuity from both state and non-state actors has a detrimental impact on America’s economy, security, and enterprises (EOP, 2022, p. 15, 35). However, a crucial point is that the Biden Administration does not designate China as the leading state responsible for this practice. This is a reiteration of their approach toward China’s unfair trade practices in which the administration refuses to directly challenge China for fear that it will undermine collaborative efforts on climate change and global health.</p>
<p>Challenges conventional Washington policy towards China that facilitated China’s ascension to power (EOP, 2017, p. 25). “For decades, U.S. policy was rooted in the belief that support for China’s rise and for its integration into the post-war international order would liberalize China. Contrary to our hopes, China expanded its power at the expense of the sovereignty of others. China gathers and exploits data on an unrivaled scale and spreads features of its authoritarian system, including corruption and the use of surveillance. It is building the most capable and well-funded military in the world after our own. Its nuclear arsenal is growing and diversifying. Part of China’s military modernization and economic expansion is due to its access to the U.S. innovation economy, including America’s world-class universities” (EOP, 2017, p. 25).</p>	<p>Returns to the conventional Washington approach of competing with China and not holding them accountable for their trade violations and security threats. While the 2017 NSS explicitly broke away from the Washington establishment’s posture towards China, the Biden Administration’s NSS reiterates sentiments of the United States’ traditional strategies towards China. Including toleration of China’s unfair trade practices for fear that it will upset the status quo, particularly within multilateral institutions, as it asserts “though allies and partners may have distinct perspectives on the PRC, our diplomatic approach, and the PRC’s own behavior, has produced significant and growing opportunities to align approaches and deliver results” (EOP, 2022, p. 25).</p>
<p>Directly implicates China in the production and distribution of lethal fentanyl (EOP, 2017, p. 12).</p>	<p>Fails to designate China as the producer and distributor of lethal fentanyl.</p>



One sentence in the Biden Administration’s National Security Strategy captures the core reality of the strategic situation between the United States and China: “The PRC...is the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to advance that objective” (EOP, 2022, p. 8). From there, the NSS stumbles through skewed perceptions, warped priorities, and a vague affirmation of a decades-old Taiwan policy that has been contradicted by the president’s own rhetoric on multiple occasions.

The 2022 NSS commits the United States to “managing the competition between our two countries responsibly,” which shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the disposition of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime. A Marxist-Leninist police state at home and an aggressive, expansionist belligerent with an ultra-nationalist orientation abroad. This same style of “management” of the CCP is the exact approach that has enabled China’s economic and military expansion, which threatens our dominant position in East Asia.

The Biden Administration’s NSS calls on the United States to move forward on priorities that require that we work together with the CCP, including “climate, pandemic threats, nonproliferation, countering illicit and illegal narcotics...” (EOP, 2022, p. 25). This posture that “it is possible for the United States and the PRC to coexist peacefully, and share in and contribute to human progress together” is one not only of naivete, but it is more severely a stance of appeasement (EOP, 2022, p. 24). By pushing forward a policy that the United States should merely acknowledge—without actually challenging—China’s violations of free trade practices, so that collaboration with the CCP on climate change is not swayed, the Biden Administration acquiesces to China at the cost of the American people. This approach further neglects to consider that the CCP’s energy policies are designed to maximize their geopolitical strength and have no relation to the Western progressive climate change agenda. China enabled COVID-19 to escape from its borders to infect the world while using the World Health Organization as a shield and preventing meaningful inspections of the Wuhan Institute of Virology. China is rapidly building nuclear warheads to fill hundreds of new missile silos in its western deserts, altering and destabilizing the global nuclear balance. China is the primary source of fentanyl, which kills thousands of Americans annually after it is shipped overseas and smuggled over the U.S.-Mexico border.

The document claims that “We remain committed to our one China policy, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act” (EOP, 2022, p. 24). Yet, the one China policy states that the only legitimate diplomatic address for the Chinese nation is Beijing, while the Taiwan Relations Act is purposely vague, calling for America to maintain Taiwan’s ability to defend itself. President Biden has said openly on four occasions that the United States would respond militarily in defense of Taiwan in the event that China invades the island, but White House aides have subsequently walked back these statements. The overt statements shatter the strategic ambiguity that has served us well for decades, but the White House staff contradicting the president on this issue undermines our credibility.

Russia



Trump Administration	Biden Administration
Counter Russia’s aggression and malign actions by working directly with America’s European allies and renewing America’s competitive advantages to compete with Russia (EOP, 2017, p. 28, 48).	Constrain Russia by investing in NATO, upholding the UN, and investing in multilateral accords (EOP, 2022, p. 23, 26).
Utilize American energy dominance to deter adversaries such as Russia from commencing offensive actions (EOP, 2017, p. 4, 22).	Russia’s energy dominance in its offensive military campaign against Ukraine provides a justification for a complete transition to green energy alternatives (EOP, 2022, p. 28).

Given Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, a reader would expect the Biden Administration to present a new approach to Russia and to present a plan for ending the invasion. The Biden Administration’s NSS introduces a new term—the word “constraining” (EOP, 2022, p. 26). Although undefined, the term appears to refer to stretching Russia’s resources, for example, in this sentence: “[w]e are constraining Russia’s strategic economic sectors, including defense and aerospace, and we will continue to counter Russia’s attempts to weaken and destabilize sovereign nations and undermine multilateral institutions.” (Ibid.) This new strategy of containment, as opposed to deterrence denotes that Russia will continue to exert its aggressive behavior and posture throughout Europe without a clear strategy from the United States to end it.

The Biden Administration’s NSS also describes Russia as an immediate and “acute threat,” stating, “over the past decade, the Russian government has chosen to pursue an imperialist foreign policy with the goal of overturning key elements of the international order,” which resulted in the invasion of Ukraine (EOP, 2022, p. 25). What is meant by “acute” is similarly not clearly defined and is notably distinct from the “pacing threat” posed by Communist China. The Biden Administration tries to take credit for its leadership in standing up to Russia on this invasion and supporting Ukraine. Its NSS states that the United States will not allow Russia to achieve its objectives by threatening or using nuclear weapons but does not explain what the United States would do to stop this (EOP, 2022, p. 26). Notably, the NSS claims that the Biden Administration’s Russia policy has been effective and does not mention how the Biden Administration’s weakness and foreign policy failures, especially the Afghanistan withdrawal, emboldened Putin to invade Ukraine (EOP, 2022, p. 26). The Biden Administration does not discuss its end state for the Ukraine war—as readers might expect, given the reason given for its delay being the invasion of Ukraine—or use the word “negotiations” even once.

Iran

Trump	Biden
Rejects a diplomatic solution with Iran via the JPCOA nuclear deal and works with partners in the Middle East to deny Iran a nuclear weapon. “We are...confronting the danger posed by the dictatorship in Iran,	Uses a diplomatic approach to ensure Iran does not acquire nuclear weapons. “We will pursue diplomacy to ensure that Iran can never acquire a nuclear weapon while remaining postured and prepared to use other



which those determined to pursue a flawed nuclear deal had neglected” (EOP, 2017, pg. I).	means should diplomacy fail” (EOP, 2022, p. 42).
Directly addresses and challenges Iran’s state sponsorship of terrorist activity and threats against Israel (EOP, 2017, p. 49).	Fails to mention Iran’s state sponsorship of terrorist organizations and threats against Israel.

The Trump Administration delivered a clear and pragmatic approach towards Iran in its “maximum pressure” campaign. That policy rejected the notion that a diplomatic deal with Iran—a regime that has historically violated and dismissed America’s diplomatic efforts toward arms control—would curtail their nuclear proliferation efforts and instead imposed the strictest sanctions on the Iranian regime in response to its malign activities, ranging from its nuclear ambitions to its human rights approach. This approach was centered on working with America’s partners in the region (EOP, 2017, p. I, 49). The Trump Administration’s 2017 NSS took an equally direct approach toward Iran’s state sponsorship of terrorism and threats against Israel by explicitly condemning these actions and committing to working with partners in the region to counter Iran’s malign actions (EOP, 2017, p. 49).

In direct contrast, the Biden Administration believes direct negotiations with Iran can curtail Iran’s nuclear weapons program and provides only a brief reference to the threat from that program, stating, “We will pursue diplomacy to ensure that Iran can never acquire a nuclear weapon, while remaining postured and prepared to use other means should diplomacy fail.” (EOP, 2022, p. 42). There is no reference to the Vienna talks to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, known commonly as the Iran Nuclear Deal, or references to Iran’s refusal to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors on several sites where evidence of covert nuclear weapons work was discovered. Furthermore, their strategy neglects to mention Iran’s state sponsorship of terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and their threats against Israel, which include explicit calls for the annihilation of the Israeli state. Moreover, amid the anti-government protests occurring in Iran following the killing of Mahsa Amini, the Biden Administration’s NSS does not devote any meaningful discussion to the brave protesters currently taking to Iran’s streets. The only reference to these developments is a single sentence, “We will always stand with the Iranian people striving for the basic rights and dignity long denied them by the regime in Tehran” (EOP, 2022, p. 42).

Homeland Security

Trump Administration	Biden Administration
Emphasizes the need to secure the southern border, enforce strong immigration laws, reform the immigration system, and target cartels to eliminate drug and human trafficking at the border (EOP, 2017, p. 7-12).	Prioritizes modernizing border infrastructure and supporting law enforcement’s efforts against transnational criminal organizations but focuses more on humanitarian migration movements and processing migrants apprehended at the southern border quickly (EOP, 2022, p. 40). No mention of the ongoing



	border crisis ignoring record border crossings actors (America First Policy Institute, Center for Homeland Security, 2022; U.S. CBP, 2022).
Focuses on radical Islamist and Jihadi terrorism as a threat, both domestically and abroad, and increasing America’s resources to defeat the ISIS caliphate, al Qaeda, and the Taliban at their source (EOP, 2017, p. 10, 25, 26, 42, 47, 49).	Focuses on a politicized understanding of extremism and classifies domestic violent terrorism as a leading threat to American democracy and security. The 2022 NSS reaffirms its commitment to focus on domestic extremism over transnational terrorism threats by establishing the first-ever Domestic Terrorism strategy for the United States (EOP, 2022, p. 7, 16, 30, 31). Islamist terrorism is mentioned only in the context of an international threat.

A border that is not secure is a national security threat. So far, during the Biden Administration, a record 4 million illegal aliens have been apprehended at the southern border, with at least 1.5 million illegal aliens being allowed into the country. An additional 1 million illegal alien “gotaways” unlawfully entered the country undetected—a population that includes many bad actors (America First Policy Institute, Center for Homeland Security, 2022; U.S. CBP, 2022). For example, the Biden Administration’s public advocacy of open border policies has resulted in a surge of terrorist-related activity at the border, with more than 90 known-or-suspected terrorists (KST) being apprehended at the border in the past two years, compared to just 14 KST apprehensions during the entire Trump Administration (U.S. CBP, 2022). This increase shows that KSTs likely believe the southern border is the path of least resistance to entering the U.S.

The failed border policies have also created an opioid epidemic. Fentanyl is now the leading cause of death for young Americans. The Biden Administration’s NSS, however, reflects their refusal to secure the border. Amid the unprecedented wave of illegal immigration into America’s borders, including the record-breaking number of illegal immigrants pouring into America’s borders, the Biden Administration’s NSS details an approach of processing migrants quickly without addressing the ongoing crisis at America’s southern border or long-term border security measures. Additionally, rather than addressing America’s ongoing border crisis, the administration has instead weaponized the Department of Homeland Security against the American people who challenge these failed policies, particularly through its Disinformation Governance Board. The irresponsible decision to unlawfully allow more than 80,000 unvetted Afghans into the country after the botched withdrawal from Kabul has introduced new security threats to the homeland (America First Policy Institute, Center for Homeland Security, 2022). The 2022 NSS also passes a reference to fentanyl without linking it to distribution from the cartels, China’s production of the lethal opioid, or measures to stop its flow into the country.

Diplomacy

Trump Administration	Biden Administration
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<p>America’s participation and investments in multilateral institutions should result in “better outcomes” for the American people and advance their interests (EOP, 2017, p. 40).</p>	<p>America’s participation and investments in multilateral institutions should work towards globalist pursuits and collectivist aims, such as climate change, gender equity, and global health (EOP, 2022. p. 18-20, 27, 28, 46).</p>
<p>America’s diplomatic efforts should advance common interests with our allies and deter our adversaries.</p>	<p>Pursue a “dual-track” diplomatic approach of cooperating with America’s adversaries—including China—to engage on shared challenges, such as climate change, while continuing efforts with America’s allies (EOP, 2022, p. 12).</p>
<p>Does not “cede sovereignty to those that claim authority over American citizens and are in conflict with our constitutional framework” (EOP, 2017, p. 40).</p>	<p>Cedes American sovereignty to multilateral institutions. The 2022 NSS rescinds American sovereignty and jeopardizes the United States’ constitutional framework by offering multilateral institutions greater levels of control over the United States, particularly by prioritizing America’s involvement in the United Nations’ 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and World Health Organization’s global health and pandemic preparedness efforts (EOP, 2022, p. 10, 19, 28).</p>
<p>Protects American interests in multilateral institutions by refusing to cede leadership to adversaries (EOP, 2017, p. 40).</p>	<p>Cedes American leadership to adversaries in multilateral institutions by reengaging the United States in the World Health Organization (EOP, 2022, p. 28).</p>

The Trump Administration’s NSS ensured that American investments into multilateral institutions and arrangements must achieve “better outcomes” for the American people. This was based on the foundational belief that it is the duty of a nation’s leader to represent the interests of their people on the world stage rather than serve as a representative of a global community.

Moreover, a guiding principle of the 2017 NSS is that America must not rescind its leadership on the world stage by making the U.S. subordinate to multilateral institutions, particularly those that tolerate America’s adversaries. This principle was cemented in the Trump Administration’s decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Climate Accords as the U.S. committed more money than any other participant, and the Accords tolerated China’s environmental abuses. Additionally, this principle was evidenced by the United States’ withdrawal from the World Health Organization for its role in setting back the United States’ response to COVID-19 by covering for Communist China, the withdrawal from the United Nations Human Rights Council, and efforts to distance the United States from the United Nations intrusive Sustainable Development Goals.

The Biden Administration has delineated an opposite approach to these principles in its diplomatic framework. First, the Biden Administration commits to America’s engagement in the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, which introduces a comprehensive system



of centralized power where decisions over a nation’s energy and environmental sector are decided by an unaccountable multilateral body rather than individual nation-states. This challenges the Trump Administration’s NSS approach, which ensures that “the United States will not cede sovereignty to those that claim authority over American citizens and are in conflict with our constitutional framework” (EOP, 2017, p. 40). The Biden Administration further rejects the premise of America First as they challenge the notion that the United States should first secure and advance its own interests in international arrangements as they commit to globalist initiatives, such as developing global climate infrastructure, where the American interest is not clearly defined.

Economics & Trade Policy

Trump Administration	Biden Administration
Promotes free and fair trade agreements, addresses unfair trade imbalances between nations, and achieves reciprocal economic agreements.	Neglects efforts to achieve free trade agreements in favor of pursuing global trade arrangements. “Move beyond traditional Free Trade Agreements” and embraces new economic frameworks such as global investment plans, global income taxes, and digital currency (EOP, 2022, p. 12, 18, 33-35, 44).
Directly challenges nations that violate free trade and wage predatory economic practices, particularly China. Calls to enforce free trade and open markets.	Acknowledges but does not challenge China’s unfair trade practices. Asserts that the U.S. should not allow trade policy towards China to undermine U.S. shared efforts with China on climate change (EOP, 2022, p. 23-24).
Moves to achieve domestic prosperity by bringing jobs back from overseas, incentivizing work, promoting tax reform, and reducing workforce regulations.	Uses the Inflation Reduction Act to facilitate the job sector; no mention of bringing jobs back to the U.S. from overseas.
Promotes fiscal responsibility and eliminates reckless government spending.	Increases government spending programs, such as the Inflation Reduction Act.

The Trump Administration’s 2017 NSS delineates an approach toward U.S. trade policy that mirrored its approach towards multilateralism, calling for every multilateral arrangement to achieve “better outcomes” for the American people. In trade policy, the 2017 NSS prioritized efforts to balance trade agreements between nations to ensure the U.S. was engaging in “reciprocal economic relationships” (EOP, 2017, p. 19). This approach ensured that America’s trade policy would begin working for the American people, effectively restoring “reciprocal” economic arrangements that did not place burdens on the American people. Furthermore, the American-led trade efforts established in the 2017 NSS confronted the decades-long abuse by China over the free market, effectively eliminating America’s tolerance of unfair trade and predatory economic practices by adversaries.



Rather than addressing the current trade imbalances between the United States and other nations, means of addressing China’s trade violations, and encouraging a free and open international trade market, the Biden Administration calls to “move beyond traditional Free Trade Agreements” in favor of global trade arrangements (EOP, 2022, p. 12). This initiative is a directed effort to transform the international trade environment away from bilateral agreements and shift it toward multilateral arrangements where trade imbalances will become harder to address. The new trade policy and international monetary system the Biden Administration establishes will give more power to multinational bank corporations tied to globalist interests, eliminate the United States’ ability to hold trade violators such as China accountable and threaten America’s standing as the preeminent economic superpower.

Energy

Trump Administration	Biden Administration
Counters the “anti-growth energy agenda” of climate change policies and secures American energy independence by stewarding our resources and aiding the U.S. energy sector. (EOP, 2017, p. 22).	Embraces the green energy and climate change agenda and develops global climate infrastructure.
Unleashes America’s energy dominance to deter adversaries, shift allies’ energy sources away from adversarial nations, and strengthen the American economy.	Prioritizes collective green energy initiatives with the EU, UN, and among allies.
Removes burdensome government regulations on America’s energy sector so that American enterprises can thrive.	Restructures America’s energy sector by fully transitioning away from fossil fuels and adopting green energy alternatives. Adds regulatory burdens to develop energy infrastructure (America First Policy Institute, Center for Energy Independence, 2021).
Protects American authority and leadership over multilateral institutions.	Gives unaccountable multilateral bodies more control over U.S. energy policies by prioritizing U.S. engagement in the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
Empowers market-based competition and success to realize economic benefits for the American people, drives trade parity, and strengthens international relations with allies and trading partners.	Reorients domestic and international finance to restrict new fossil fuel projects, including the provision of \$11 billion annually in climate assistance to foreign nations.
Looks to assist allies in their efforts to delink from the Russian energy supply by securing American energy independence and pushing allies to find alternative energy sources. “As a growing supplier of energy resources, technologies, and services around the world, the United States will help our allies and partners become more resilient against those	Looks to reduce Europe’s dependence on Russian fossil fuels by prioritizing green energy alternatives in Europe and climate infrastructure. “The necessity to protect forests globally, electrify the transportation sector, redirect financial flows, and create an energy revolution to head off the climate crisis is reinforced by the geopolitical



<p>that use energy to coerce. America’s role as an energy exporter will also require an assessment of our vulnerabilities and a resilient American infrastructure” (EOP, 2017, p. 23).</p>	<p>imperative to reduce our collective dependence on states like Russia that seek to weaponize energy for coercion” (EOP, 2022, p. 9).</p>
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The Biden Administration’s NSS takes a bold by designating climate change as a national security issue that it presents as “the existential challenge of our time” (EOP, 2022, p. 27). Lauding their record-breaking spending on green energy and related technology, such as their \$11 billion annual investment in global climate change initiatives, the Biden Administration falls short of outlining with confidence how such investments will prove sustainable as to “accelerate” the speed of an energy transition. The 2022 NSS offers further funding for foreign nations and federal intervention into domestic and international financial institutions as a means of forcing a vision of a “better, safer, and fairer” America or one that “lifts up” foreign nations. The logical leap is notably absent in clarifying how the world’s first wholesale energy transition of a greater than \$90 trillion global economy will manifest to the satisfaction of the NSS’s own success metric. The Biden Administration’s NSS also does not define the parameters of what it means to obtain “energy security” in the near-to-medium-term. While it claims that long-term energy security will depend on clean energy, it does not present solutions to the severe challenges projected to impact the world through 2024. It instead uses international crises, most notably Russia’s ongoing invasion of Ukraine, as a justification for the United States’ complete transition toward green energy, arguing that this event fortified the need for America and allies to move away from fossil fuels.

Finally, not only does the Biden Administration’s commitments to global climate change funding fail to delineate how such efforts will advance America’s domestic prosperity, it overlooks the fact that this same spending is responsible for America’s domestic inflationary spikes (Faulkender, 2022). It is also notable that the NSS does not mention the free or fair market-based competition in any shape or form when they discuss energy policy with allies.

Military

Trump	Biden
<p>Improves military readiness by renewing the focus of the military’s training.</p>	<p>Strengthens America’s military force by prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion; and ensures all U.S. national security institutions promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies.</p>

The military sections of the Biden and Trump Administration’s National Security Strategies share many similarities. Both the Trump and Biden Administration’s strategies acknowledge the need for the United States to strengthen its nuclear defense posture and missile defense systems amid the rising nuclear threats from North Korea, Iran, Russia, and China. Additionally, both the Trump and Biden Administration’s National Security Strategies call to modernize the U.S. force



structure across all warfare domains, prioritize U.S. cyber and space capabilities, and ensure the United States is using military engagement as the last resort when American interests have been clearly identified.

However, a noticeable divergence in the National Security Strategies occurs as the Biden Administration inputs Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies as a strategic priority for the U.S. military. Two years into the Biden Administration, these same DEI policies have had devastating consequences for the U.S. military, including the current recruiting and retention crisis of armed forces members and the influx of harmful ideologies, such as critical race theory, introduced in U.S. military academies (DeVore, 2022; Lindquist, 2022). Despite the consequences of DEI policies, the Biden Administration's NSS reaffirms DEI policies as a priority for the U.S. military as well as in all U.S. national security institutions (EOP, 2022, p. 26). This prioritization of DEI policies demonstrates the U.S. military losing focus on its core purpose: warfighting and deterrence.

Omissions and Cursory Attention

The timing of the Biden Administration's NSS is particularly noteworthy, as it follows crises that directly stemmed from the administration's policies and actions, including the catastrophic withdrawal from Afghanistan, Putin's invasion of Ukraine, historic inflation, Communist China's escalatory rhetoric and actions regarding Taiwan, and today's food and energy crises.

Noteworthy as well is the NSS's omissions regarding these and other topics. Its two mentions of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan fail to mention the resurgence of the Taliban because of the botched withdrawal and the U.S. servicemembers killed during the withdrawal. It also neglects to mention the direct impact of the manner of the withdrawal on American deterrence and its demonstration effect towards other adversaries.

On North Korea, the NSS states, "We will seek sustained diplomacy with North Korea to make tangible progress toward the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, while strengthening extended deterrence in the face of North Korean missile threats." There are no references to the surge in North Korean missile tests or recent reports that North Korea could conduct a seventh nuclear test by mid-November.

On Middle East peace, the NSS describes a vague new framework to promote stability, freedom of navigation, and human rights. It endorses the Abraham Accords and states that the United States maintains an ironclad commitment to Israel's security, but also quotes President Biden's remarks from his joint press conference with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Bethlehem in July 2022, where he calls a two-state solution along the 1967 lines "the best way to achieve equal measure of security, prosperity, freedom, and democracy for the Palestinians as well as Israelis," effectively reverting to the pre-Trump Administration era approach to Middle East peace.



Moving Forward

Given that the Biden Administration's NSS has been released two years into their administration, the American people have a track record of observing the result of the current administration's approach towards national security. The fatal events unfolding in Europe and the Middle East, escalating hostilities in Asia, and domestic turmoil demonstrate the need to bring back an America First approach to national security.

The America First doctrine is one that protects American interests, security, prosperity, and sovereignty above all else. This approach views America's economic conditions, energy independence, and military readiness as items that not only benefit the lives of the American people but also serve as invaluable tools of statecraft. The domestic conditions achieved under the 2017 NSS, such as America's energy independence, brought immense benefits to the American people and, as a byproduct, deterred adversarial nations like Russia, who weaponize energy (Buchan, 2022). An America First approach was bred in the 2017 NSS, carried throughout the Trump Administration, placed Americans first, and ensured meaningful engagement from the United States in the world.

These are the policies that will restore America's domestic prosperity and a Nation that upholds the rule of law, ensure safe communities, maintain a strong national defense, and strengthen America's standing in the world. The policies needed to secure a prosperous and secure America are America First.



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