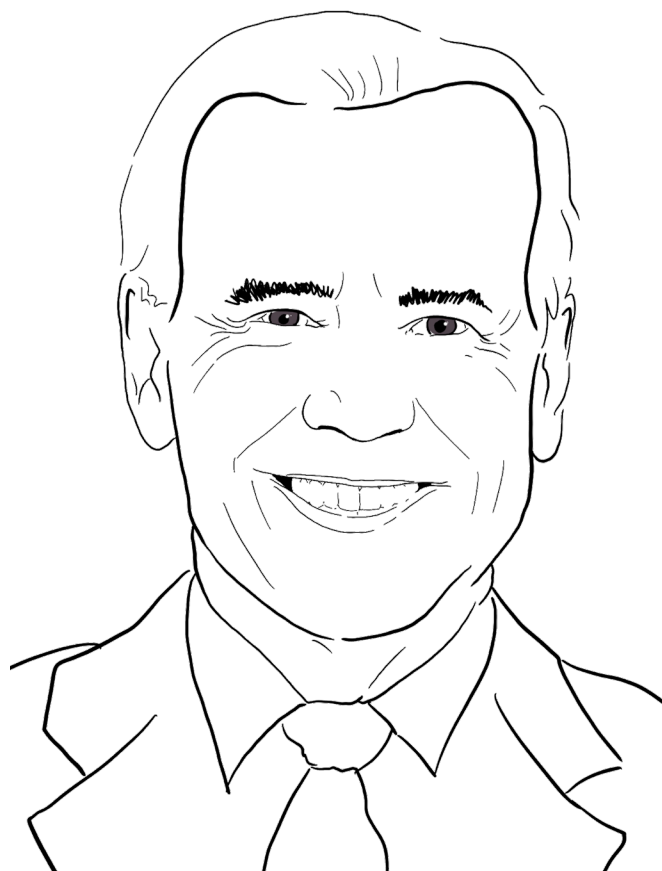


JOE BIDEN



OVERVIEW

Former Vice President Joe Biden touts his foreign policy experience as a highlight of his candidacy, but his record includes many disastrous missteps for which he hasn't held himself accountable. His plans largely focus on rolling back the clock to the broken status quo that led to Donald Trump's victory, rather than charting a progressive path forward on foreign policy.

While he appears to have moved in an incrementally more progressive direction on some issues, Biden's foreign policy remains more hawkish and elite-oriented than the mainstream views of everyday Americans.

The United States's Role in the World

What we're looking for: A progressive foreign policy rejects Trump-esque “America First” posturing in which alliances are annoyances, international institutions are burdens, and foreign policy is inherently zero-sum, oppositional, and transactional. A progressive foreign policy also avoids “American exceptionalism” framing, which fails to recognize the harm that some of the United States's policies have done in the world (including policies instituted before Trump), and it does not view either the US's permanent, global military hegemony as a prerequisite for a peaceful world, or the rise of other countries as an inherent threat.

Where Biden stands: Biden has spoken sharply and clearly against the “America First” approach and in support of more international cooperation.¹ He has also put forward plans for reengaging the US in various international agreements, convening democracies to work in collaboration, and the need for the US to lead by example in putting our stated values into action.²

But Biden fails to grapple directly with the harm that US policies—including many that Biden himself championed in the past—have caused in the world before Trump. Biden has used phrases like “leading again” and has suggested that, after Trump, other countries will simply “once again” respect the leadership of the United States.³ He has not taken responsibility for his support for disastrous policies, such as the Iraq war. At times, he has also actively distorted facts about his record.⁴

Biden views Trump as an anomaly, embraces a worldview of “American exceptionalism” disconnected from the perception of voters (let alone the rest of the world), and continues to aspire to a permanent US role as a hegemonic global ruling power regardless

of the cost.⁵ Because of this, he is unable to advance a platform that seriously engages with the reasons for the resurgence of authoritarianism and the other challenges that he himself identifies as the top threats globally. His campaign website states: “[T]he world does not organize itself. American leadership... is necessary to effectively address the defining global challenges of our time.”

Bottom line: There's no question that Biden embraces the process of international diplomatic engagement (though the outcomes are what matter, not merely the process), and that he would turn away from the toxic, coercive nationalism of the Trump administration, but he is overly focused on putting things back in place as they were—a broken, destructive, and exploitative status quo that is increasingly unsustainable—rather than acknowledging and repairing the damage that the US did long before Trump, which is essential for a successful and moral US foreign policy moving forward.

Threat Assessments

What we're looking for: We want to see candidates take stock of and prioritize the security challenges facing the United States through a realistic lens that avoids fearmongering and/or inflating the level of actual threat. Candidates should prioritize by looking at physical, social, and economic threats holistically, and put people over power and profits. We want to see a recognition that many security challenges lack military solutions, and an acknowledgement that there are limits to US power.

Where Biden stands: Biden correctly identifies the top foreign policy challenges facing the US as economic, political, and environmental in nature, rather than as military threats. He calls the climate crisis our greatest geopolitical threat⁶ and an “existential threat.”⁷ He also identifies the challenges

posed by global corruption, authoritarianism, and erosion of democracy and human rights as priorities, but he lacks a clear diagnosis for how these problems arose. Therefore, he inspires little confidence that he can address them.⁸

Biden largely proposes nonmilitary solutions to what he sees as our top challenges,⁹ and seems to acknowledge at least certain limits to US power.¹⁰ He frequently emphasizes the need for the US to earn the cooperation of other countries, arguing that his experience makes him the best candidate to engage in diplomacy and build these coalitions.

Bottom line: Overall, Biden's current campaign rhetoric on the level of threat posed by our national security challenges is fairly realistic and nonhawkish compared to the kind of campaign he plausibly could have run—a testament to the shift achieved by organizers in the progressive movement. However, Biden's credibility in foreign policy must be assessed against his concrete record and proposals.

Investing in Military Dominance versus Other Tools

What we're looking for: The challenges facing the United States often lack military solutions, and prioritizing global military dominance at any cost is both harmful and unsustainable. A progressive budget would instead prioritize increasing the number of expert diplomats, expanding development programs that prevent conflict and reduce poverty, and fortifying peacebuilding institutions, rather than further inflating the already bloated Pentagon budget.

Where Biden stands: Biden talks generally about the need to rebuild the State Department and to elevate

diplomacy as our primary tool of foreign policy.¹¹ He has not specifically committed to expanding the size, budget, or role of the State Department beyond the pre-Trump status quo, despite the years of brain drain, hiring freezes, and budget cuts during the Obama administration.

Biden also acknowledges that endless wars prevent the United States from leading on and investing in other goals.¹² He declares a goal of maintaining the world's strongest military,¹³ and while the US military could sustain massive cuts and still remain the "world's strongest," Biden avoids committing to cut Pentagon spending.¹⁴ Instead, he suggests that Pentagon spending should simply be shifted to invest in newer technologies—an indication of his friendliness to the defense corporations that profit from this massive spending.¹⁵ Although Biden says he would end the wars, he does not discuss shifting current high levels of war spending back into other national priorities.

Bottom line: Biden's budget priorities are out of step with his own threat assessments. He proposes deepened diplomatic engagements and a focus on challenges like climate change and protecting democracies. Despite that, he has refused to recalibrate foreign policy spending to effectively accomplish those goals, and he appears committed to maintaining sky-high, permanent war-levels of military spending.

The Crisis in Yemen, and US Military Support to the Gulf States

What we're looking for: A progressive consensus has emerged in favor of ending US military support for a bombing campaign as part of Yemen's civil war. During the Obama administration, the US began to actively assist a coalition led by Saudi Arabia and

the United Arab Emirates, supplying them with intelligence, targeting assistance, refueling aircraft, and weapons sales.

All parties to this conflict, including the Saudi-led coalition as well as their enemies the Houthis, have committed war crimes against the civilian population. But US military support for the Saudis makes the United States directly complicit in their actions targeting civilians and blockading key ports, resulting in a mass famine, a spiraling civilian body count, a cholera outbreak, and currently the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Congress has voted on a bipartisan basis to end US participation in Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen, and to halt arms sales to the Gulf states carrying out the atrocities. President Trump, however, has vetoed these efforts. At minimum, a progressive candidate would commit to end US complicity in this tragedy and similar atrocities in the future.

Where Biden stands: Although Biden was vice president when the United States first began participating in the Yemen conflict, he has since committed to ending the US support to the Saudi-led coalition.¹⁶ He has also called for a “reassessment” of the US relationship with Saudi Arabia.¹⁷

However, Biden has stopped short of calling for an end of arms sales to the Saudis and Emiratis as a result of their apparent war crimes in Yemen.¹⁸

Bottom line: Biden's recent commitment to ending US complicity in Yemen's suffering is welcome, but if as the next president he would continue to prioritize the profits of defense corporations over human rights, US-made weapons will continue to be used to massacre civilians and oppress dissent in authoritarian countries like Saudi Arabia.

Ending Endless Wars

What we're looking for: The post-9/11 wars and global military operations have proven ineffective at reducing terrorism. They also seem to be endless, consuming trillions of dollars and tens of thousands of lives. A progressive candidate should explicitly recognize that there is no military solution to transnational groups that perpetuate terrorism, and should reflect the overwhelming consensus among the US public that these wars were a mistake.

Candidates should articulate clear, thoughtful plans for bringing the “Forever War” to an end. These plans should encompass not only ending US military interventions in places like Afghanistan and Syria but also halting the routine use of targeted strikes through drones and raids, and arming and training of proxy forces. Their plans should drastically limit the widespread covert operations of US special forces, and not simply replace active military operations with less-transparent covert operations or with private-sector mercenaries.

Their plans should invest heavily in ensuring a stable and peaceful transition as those operations wind down, placing impacted civilian populations as a top priority through inclusive diplomatic negotiations and aid programs.

Candidates should also focus on fortifying the constitutionally mandated separation of war powers between the Executive Branch and Congress. Candidates should also work to increase transparency and democratic accountability over the future use of the US military.

Where Biden stands: Unlike several of his opponents, Biden has not signed progressive veterans group Common Defense's pledge to End the Forever War.¹⁹ In the Senate, he voted in favor of both the 2001 and 2002 Authorizations for the Use of Military Force, authorizing the so-called “Global War on Terror” paradigm and the Iraq war, respectively.²⁰ These

authorizations remain in force today. Biden continues to obfuscate and tell contradictory stories regarding why he originally supported the war and when he turned against it, though both developments are well documented.²¹

Biden hasn't explicitly stated support for repeal of either authorization—a necessary step to ending the endless wars and to restoring the constitutional power that Congress has unwisely surrendered to multiple presidential administrations.

So, when does Biden think the use of force is justified, and when does he think the president must seek congressional authorization? He says he will “never hesitate” to protect the American people—including by force, if necessary—though believes it should be a “last resort.”²² He has not clearly elaborated what he means by “protecting the American people,” which leaves significant room for interpretation. He also says that force should be limited to “defending our vital interests”²³—a standard that is highly broad, ill-defined, and ripe for exploitation—though he does say the objective should be “clear and achievable.”²⁴

When it comes to limiting presidential war powers, he says the use of force should occur with the “informed consent of the American people,” though he does not expressly commit to seeking congressional authorization before taking the country to war.²⁵ He continues to defend the Obama administration's reliance on Article II of the Constitution and its “commander-in-chief” powers to launch “limited” military operations in service of “important U.S. interests” without congressional authorization, a standard used to justify interventions like the bombing of Libya.²⁶ This is an expansive reading of presidential war powers, one well beyond the traditional understanding that it allows unauthorized force only in limited instances of self-defense. Beyond the legal implications, this reading means that Biden believes the president has the right to send US troops to die, and order military combat operations against people in other countries—all without the permission of Congress—as long as these operations are relatively small in scale.

Biden speaks the language of ending endless war, explicitly committing to “ending the forever wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East.”²⁷ He even says he will bring home “combat troops” from Afghanistan by the end of his first term,²⁸ and he calls for diplomatic engagement to find an end to the war in Syria.²⁹ But digging further into his plans, it's clear that Biden intends to continue “War on Terror” practices. He talks about leaving residual forces in Afghanistan and the Middle East, to conduct counterterrorism operations³⁰—a mission that is inherently endless and which Democratic primary voters overwhelmingly reject. His tenure in the Obama administration saw an expansion of targeted strikes across the globe,³¹ and this appears to be an approach to which he wants to return.

On that note, Biden also proposes returning to Obama-era disclosure standards regarding the use of force and civilian casualties.³² While more transparency is welcome, especially given the current practice under Trump, the Obama administration's disclosures were insufficient in scope. Additionally, President Obama moved the control of drone strikes from the CIA to the military, but Biden has not yet indicated publicly whether he would do the same.

Bottom line: Though Biden has embraced the rhetoric of “ending endless war,” he has failed to acknowledge the inability of military power to deal with terrorism, grapple fully with the harm caused by policies he has supported, and/or propose a real plan for ending forever wars.

Russia and China

What we're looking for: Progressive candidates should reject the framing that the rise of Russia and China requires a response akin to a new Cold War, a ramped-up “great-power competition” for unquestioned global military dominance at any cost, or a zero-sum diplomatic approach hostile to targeted cooperation with either state. Human rights abuses and other violations of international norms should not be ignored, but we'd like to see candidates

recognize that there is no military solution to these challenges.

Instead, progressive candidates should offer solutions such as diplomatic cooperation to create pressure and incentives through multilateral mechanisms. Candidates' proposed solutions should primarily focus on domestic investments and on opportunities for transnational partnership in order to jointly address existential, shared global challenges (climate change, nuclear weapons).

Progressive candidates should also recognize that the challenges that Russia and China pose are unique and context specific. In the case of Russia, the primary security challenge to the US consists of disinformation and election interference, like what took place in 2016, as well as the country's willingness to wage asymmetric warfare, such as in Crimea. In the case of China, the primary security challenge is the increasingly totalitarian nature of the regime and its willingness to weaponize technology and economic resources to the detriment of human rights and human dignity, both inside and beyond its borders.

Where Biden stands: Biden continues to repeat the rhetoric of "American exceptionalism," which calls for maintaining US global hegemony. When it comes to China, Biden has previously avoided explicitly calling for a military ramp-up, and has downplayed the idea that China poses an existential threat to the US.³³ His recommendations focus on working with democratic allies (through diplomacy and development) to invest in economic competition with China, working multilaterally to address human rights concerns, and improving the US's own human rights record to lead by example—although he focuses entirely on abuses in the Trump era.³⁴ He also asserts that the US can and must engage China to confront shared challenges, such as climate change or North Korea's nuclear program.³⁵ All of this is positive and gives reason for optimism. However, Biden has since flipped his position on China, saying that the threat is "real" and a "serious challenge."³⁶

On Russia, Biden co-authored an op-ed where he advocated an aggressive campaign against growing Russian influence.³⁷ While he does make nonmilitary recommendations involving multilateral diplomacy and financial investments at home and abroad, he also talks about the need for NATO to militarily deter and, if necessary, defeat Russian threats,³⁸ ignoring how US military build-up in Russia's vicinity escalates tensions. He's also proposed increasing arms sales and lethal aid to Ukraine.³⁹ Such an approach risks playing into the Russian government's efforts to capitalize on what they portray as aggressive actions and rhetoric from the US, allowing Putin to shore up his regime, suppress domestic pro-democracy protests, and justify destabilizing actions abroad.

Bottom line: While Biden appears to reject calling for an all-out new Cold War, and while he seems to understand the importance of diplomacy and investing domestically in order to compete in an increasingly globalized economy, he does lean into hawkish rhetoric and proposals that both leave military confrontation on the table and feed into a Cold War-like, zero-sum policy framework. Such a "great-power competition" narrative risks a new Cold War military and diplomatic posture, and a truly progressive foreign policy would avoid it.

Venezuela

What we're looking for: Mindful both of the crisis unfolding in Venezuela as well as the ugly history of US interventions in Latin America, progressives are looking to presidential candidates to first do no harm. This means recognizing that US options in Venezuela are not "war or nothing," that a US military intervention will only make things worse, that broad-based sanctions harm the most vulnerable while empowering the Maduro regime, and that there are numerous steps that the US can and should take to help Venezuelans. Most importantly, it means recognizing that the only viable path out of the current crisis is a negotiated process that leads to free

and fair elections, allowing Venezuelans themselves to choose their own leaders.

Where Biden stands: Biden was one of the first to join Trump in backing National Assembly President Juan Guaidó as the interim head of state in Venezuela.⁴⁰ He has also expressed support for stronger multilateral sanctions against individuals associated with the Maduro regime. However, his stance on sectoral sanctions,⁴¹ which affect the Venezuelan population more broadly and have already exacerbated the suffering of Venezuelans, is unclear. He has said that the US government “should maintain sanctions pressure until negotiations produce results,” suggesting he would lift sanctions in exchange for a negotiated solution leading to elections. Also, he hasn’t explicitly rejected the use of force in Venezuela, though he has called for a “peaceful and negotiated outcome.”

Biden has also outlined a number of humanitarian steps he supports, including giving Venezuelans temporary protected status in the United States, and supplying financial support to the region to help care for Venezuelans fleeing the crisis.⁴²

Bottom line: Though Biden calls for a peaceful and negotiated settlement to Venezuela’s conflict, his failure to explicitly take a military option off the table and his support for maintaining financial and oil sanctions with no clear path to a solution could make the situation worse for everyday Venezuelans.

North Korea

What we’re looking for: Democrats often fail to express a principled, progressive plan for diplomacy with North Korea. Candidates should reject framing that diplomacy is a gift or a concession to North Korea, should recognize how dangerous a military clash would be, and should commit not to strike North Korea first but instead to embrace a sustained, long-term path of diplomacy and peace, including by formally ending the Korean War.

Where Biden stands: Biden says that he understands a president cannot strike North Korea without congressional authorization, and that a potential military clash could be “catastrophic.”⁴³ He also speaks in favor of empowering our diplomats and working multilaterally toward the goal of denuclearization.⁴⁴

However, Biden trafficks heavily in language that suggests meeting with Kim Jong-un is a major concession or gift to North Korea, rather than an essential tool to success that benefits everyone. He has suggested that Trump’s summits with Kim Jong-un have worked to “legitimize” him,⁴⁵ and that Kim Jong-un is “no longer an isolated pariah on the world stage”⁴⁶ as a result of the talks. Similarly, Biden appears to reject the idea of meeting with Kim Jong-un without preconditions, if elected.⁴⁷ Biden dismisses or misunderstands the South Korean government’s pro-engagement policy toward North Korea, which includes promoting inter-Korean reconciliation and direct U.S.–North Korea dialogue.⁴⁸ Biden also seems to have an unrealistic view of the time required for denuclearization, expressing outrage that weapons have not yet been destroyed and that inspectors are not yet on the ground.⁴⁹ Finally, Biden has failed to acknowledge the unresolved status of the Korean War and what role that plays in the continued military standoff and tensions.

Bottom line: Despite lip service for diplomacy, Biden seems poised to continue the failed hawkishness toward North Korea that has driven US policy for decades, maintaining the risk of nuclear war.

Iran

What we’re looking for: At minimum, we want to see candidates commit both to reentering the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) negotiated by President Obama, which Donald Trump violated, and to declare that they will not start a war with Iran. Furthermore, candidates should not repeat

right-wing talking points that criticize the JCPOA deal as “flawed,” or inaccurately assert that Iran “has” or is “actively developing” nuclear weapons. Progressive candidates will realistically assess the challenges posed by Iran, and recognize that only diplomacy can succeed in addressing those challenges, with the JCPOA representing a successful model of international cooperation.

Where Biden stands: Biden was vice president during the negotiation of the JCPOA and has pledged to reenter it.⁵⁰ He also acknowledges that a first strike against Iran would require congressional authorization and could be disastrous.⁵¹

However, Biden also said that he would organize the international community to address Iran’s destabilizing behaviors “through military means if necessary.”⁵² And even when talking about diplomacy with Iran, he does so in the context of maintaining a rigid posture that isolates them.⁵³

This rhetoric buys into framing that Iran is the most (or only) destabilizing actor in the region, ignoring actions by the US’s own partners in the region, such as Saudi Arabia. The rhetoric also leaves a new war as an option. He has also been imprecise in commenting on Iran’s nuclear activities, which could be interpreted as suggesting that Iran has restarted a nuclear weapons program.⁵⁴ While aspects of Iran’s civilian nuclear energy program have been restarted now that the US broke their side of the deal, candidates shouldn’t overinflate these developments in a way that could justify escalation.

Bottom line: Successful diplomacy with Iran starts with immediately reentering the JCPOA and with refraining from military action. It’s not clear that Biden is fully committed to a diplomatic approach when it comes to building on the nuclear deal and resolving regional conflicts, and he has signalled a continued hawkishness and confrontational posture toward Iran.

Corruption and the Military-Industrial Complex

What we’re looking for: Progressives recognize that the military-industrial complex, like any other sector of entrenched corporate power, has an undue influence in our politics, our foreign policy, and our framework of national security decision-making. Candidates should recognize this as well, and articulate specific reforms to combat corruption, revolving doors, lobbying influence, corporate welfare, and be willing to take on the power of the defense industry in the same way they’d take on sectors like Wall Street.

Where Biden stands: Biden never talks about fighting corruption stemming from the defense industry.

Bottom line: This is a huge gap in Biden’s foreign policy posture. In order to invest in diplomacy, combat the climate crisis, or end endless wars, the powerful financial interests of the military-industrial complex must be defeated.

Nuclear Weapons

What we’re looking for: Progressive candidates should enthusiastically support US participation in key arms-control agreements, including extending the New START treaty and reentering the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. They should also embrace a “No First Use” policy, meaning they’ll commit to use nuclear weapons only to deter nuclear attacks on the US or its allies. They should also support reducing the role of nuclear weapons in US foreign policy, and reject the development of new nuclear weapons.

Where Biden stands: Biden has called for a new arms-control era,⁵⁵ starting with extension of the New START Treaty and using it as a foundation for further agreements.⁵⁶ He played an active role in ratification of the INF Treaty.⁵⁷ He hasn't explicitly invoked No First Use, but he says that nuclear weapons should be used only to deter or retaliate against a nuclear attack.⁵⁸ He has directly opposed the Trump administration's proposal for the development of a new nuclear weapon.⁵⁹

Bottom line: Biden's stance on reducing the threat of nuclear weapons is consistent and fairly strong.

The Muslim Ban, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers

What we're looking for: It should be a top priority for a progressive president to repeal Trump's Muslim, asylum, and refugee bans—but that's not enough. A progressive president should live up to America's aspirational values and undo nearly a century of xenophobic policies by moving to increase refugee resettlements (particularly among refugee populations directly created by US policy), support reforms that significantly streamline the asylum process, ensure there are no such similar bans in the future, and make direct connections to the US policy decisions framed around "national security" that have systematically demonized Muslims and people of color as inherently suspect and threatening.

Progressive candidates should call out Trump and the Republican Party's racist "divide-and-conquer" tactics that falsely paint immigrants and refugees as the reason for voters' problems, in order to distract from the real causes. The candidate should recognize that US foreign policy is deeply intertwined with US immigration policy, and work to make the US a more welcoming nation while also working to create a more peaceful, stable world where fewer people are forced to flee their homes.

Where Biden stands: Biden clearly states he will terminate the Muslim ban,⁶⁰ though he disappointingly refers to it by Trump's sanitized term—"travel ban"—on his campaign website.⁶¹ Biden says he supports accepting at least 110,000 refugees per year,⁶² and he says he wants to address what causes people to flee in the first place, urging a return to and expansion of an Obama-era initiative to address corruption and poverty in Latin America.⁶³ However, many of those initiatives, led by Biden, exacerbated suffering and contributed to the current crisis.⁶⁴

Indeed, Biden doesn't appear to address the active harm that US foreign policy has done in Latin America or the role that the US has had in fueling the refugee crisis throughout the world. Neither does he appear to grapple with the demonization of Muslims through the "War on Terror" paradigm that continued through the the policies of the Obama administration, laying the foundation for Trump's Muslim ban.

Bottom line: There's a recurring theme with Biden on these issues: His sharpest criticisms are reserved for Trump-era policies, and his solution is primarily to return to Obama-era approaches without confronting harms that existed prior to Trump.

Civil Liberties and Human Rights in National Security Policy

What we're looking for: The US's approach to national security following 9/11 has produced numerous human rights and civil liberties abuses, from torture and surveillance to racial profiling and indefinite detention. Progressive candidates should propose specific reforms to end these abuses, and roll back infringements on rights in the name of security, particularly those disproportionately impacting marginalized communities.

Where Biden stands: Biden hasn't said much about this on the campaign trail. Despite serving in an administration that attempted to close the detention camp at Guantanamo Bay, and despite him speaking about it often during that time, Biden hasn't advanced a plan in this campaign to accomplish closure, if elected. He also hasn't mentioned concerns about mass surveillance, although he has stated he believes the Bush administration's use of warrantless wiretapping was unlawful.⁶⁵ He also hasn't spoken out against the privacy concerns resulting from the Obama administration's own use of surveillance, nor has he called for reform to or sunset of current authorities like the Patriot Act or Executive Order 12333. In fact, he voted for the Patriot Act in 2001⁶⁶ and supported its renewal during the Obama administration.⁶⁷

Additionally, during the Obama administration, Biden took a leading role in the launching of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs,⁶⁸ which have been used almost exclusively to target Muslim communities, and which have the potential to recreate the same harms as government monitoring and surveillance.

And while Biden has explicitly reaffirmed the ban on torture,⁶⁹ the administration he served in declined to pursue accountability for the perpetrators of torture during the George W. Bush administration, helping to sow a lack of accountability.

Bottom line: It is unacceptable to merely return to Obama-era practices. The expansive national-security state threatens the rights and liberties of Americans, and further endangers marginalized communities. Biden falls short of advancing a progressive path of reform.

Climate Security

What we're looking for: Progressives recognize climate change as an existential national security threat, and want candidates to articulate a plan to confront this threat with the scope and urgency that

it requires. This is particularly important because the US, and in particular the US military, makes a disproportionately large contribution to carbon emissions.

There is a direct line from the effects of climate change—droughts, crop failures, land loss, desertification, animal extinctions, and increasingly frequent severe weather and natural disasters—to a growing amount of unrest and instability around the world. These disruptions have already led to violent conflict, and unrest will continue to get worse. Climate refugees will be forced to seek new homes, resulting in unprecedented levels of migration. Melting arctic ice has exposed previously buried natural resources, setting off competition among different nations to secure them—a competition that could easily escalate into war. Up to this point, the US has responded to the spiraling level of conflict and instability by fortifying and militarizing its borders, growing its armed forces, and intervening in fragile countries around the world while investing trillions of taxpayer dollars into the increasingly difficult task of maintaining global military dominance.

A progressive candidate should recognize that climate change is both the greatest threat to the safety and prosperity of the US, and the global issue that the US has the greatest power to mitigate. A progressive candidate should recognize that the growing militarization of our society has things exactly backward: It's a fruitless effort to adapt to the symptoms, instead of treating the rapidly worsening disease.

A progressive candidate should have a serious and detailed plan to prevent further climate change. This should include not only a domestic plan but also a framework for a global Green New Deal, reentering and significantly building upon the Paris Agreement, supporting the UN Green Climate Fund, and recognizing the crucial impact that the current size, structure, and role of the US military has in fueling the climate crisis.⁷⁰

Where Biden stands: When asked what the US's

worst foreign policy blunder has been since World War II, Biden named Trump pulling out of the Paris Agreement.⁷¹ This is a historically dubious assertion, but it demonstrates Biden’s seriousness about reengaging in collaborative diplomacy with the international community around climate change. He has called for the US to reenter the Paris Agreement, and to work diplomatically to push for more-ambitious targets.⁷² He’s also called for increased funding to the UN Green Climate Fund,⁷³ and he’s spoken about the need for the US to “lead the clean economy revolution,” embracing the language and many of the proposals of the Green New Deal.⁷⁴

Unfortunately, Biden hasn’t incorporated proposals reducing the military’s bloated size and negative impact into his climate-security plans—a crucial step in remaking the US economy and addressing the US contribution to the climate crisis.

Bottom line: Biden appears to understand the urgency and scope of the climate crisis, but his policies are less serious than those of many of his rivals, and Biden fails to address the militarization of our foreign policy and the contribution that has made to the worsening climate crisis.

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