Research Paper

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US foreign policy priorities

What difference can an election make?

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Foreword by Sir Peter Westmacott

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- The last four years have confirmed that the choices the US makes are highly consequential for international politics. Even as geopolitical competition and globalization limit the range of available foreign policy options, the next president will determine how America's diplomatic, economic and military resources are invested, and, especially, what value the US will attach to existing alliances and multilateral institutions. Whoever sits in the White House will shape the trajectory of the US–China relationship and the global economy, with significant implications for America's partners.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored, at often shocking scale, the urgent need for competent state interventions and capable leadership. The priority for the next president will be to lead the US out of a public health crisis that by mid-October had caused the deaths of more than 213,000 Americans, and to assure the economic recovery. Pressure to tackle the deep-rooted racial and economic inequalities that have been thrown into sharp relief over the past months will not dissipate.
- The choices made by the next US president will have a crucial impact on climate action, international trade and technology policy, and global cooperation on health. These global challenges raise fundamental questions about the balance between national sovereignty, liberal values and multilateralism.
- President Trump's disregard for the value of science and expertise has risked permanent damage to research and innovation in the US, and the effects of this will be felt globally. The willingness of the next US president to push the reset button and ensure that these elements are once again fostered and respected within decision-making processes will be essential in restoring America's global image and soft power.
- European leaders are waiting to see whether the US will renew its commitment to the transatlantic partnership, and to critical multilateral institutions like NATO. This is all the more important in light of Russian adventurism, and as tensions between the US and China accelerate.
- Values are gaining increased prominence in US foreign policy, driven not least by the China challenge. Ensuring consistency in the administration's approach to democracy and human rights will be essential. Success on this dimension will depend, vitally, on upholding democratic norms and addressing social fractures at home. The US will also need to work closely with its democratic partners to create and enable viable and sustainable policy innovations that help meet the economic and security needs of people and states across the Middle East, Latin America and Africa.

Foreword

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There probably hasn't been a US presidential election of such significance for the future of the country, its values and its alliances as this year's contest since, well, the last one.

The choices facing America's voters are stark. A president who accepts constitutional checks and balances, or one who seeks to bend everything to his will – police, judiciary, intelligence agencies, the media, even the US Postal Service? Working with allies, or going it alone? Supporting or undermining international institutions and arms control agreements? Acting on climate change, or doubling down on oil, gas and coal? Tax reform, or just more breaks for those least in need of them? Standing up for democracy, truth and basic freedoms, or undermining them at home while accommodating dictators and strongmen abroad?

The experience of the last four years, and Donald Trump's reluctance so far to provide a coherent explanation of why he wants to be re-elected, suggest that a second term for the incumbent would be much like the first, and just as subject to the president's mood swings, personal likes and dislikes – at home and abroad – and egregious Twitter style.

Of course, whoever wins on 3 November will find his freedom of manoeuvre severely constrained by how successful the US, and the world, is at countering COVID-19. A Biden administration would nevertheless be very different. He may not have won a single primary in two previous runs at the White House, but many of the policies we can expect Biden to follow, and the people he is likely to appoint, have been fully road-tested during the Clinton and Obama years. 'No need for training wheels', as veteran Democratic strategist John Podesta puts it.

An early priority is likely to be the formulation of a new national security strategy. How to show foes and friends alike that 'America is back'? What to do about China? How to manage Putin? Should the US re-engage in the Middle East and South Asia? If so, how?

There have been suggestions that, among other resets, a Biden presidency would be more inclined to look to Germany as its principal European ally than keep 'the special relationship' with the UK in pride of place.

Perhaps. Germany and France are undoubtedly the dominant players in the EU. But Merkel will be leaving the stage soon. As for the UK, the government's handling of Brexit and COVID-19 has done serious damage: politically, economically, socially, and to its international standing. Even so, it remains a – if not the – go-to partner for the US when it comes to intelligence, defence, cybersecurity, international development and counterterrorism; and it could even regain its position as foreign policy partner of choice if it can recover its flair for diplomacy.

But this will need work. It will not be lost on Biden that the last two British prime ministers have gone out of their way to humour Donald Trump, and he believes Brexit was an avoidable act of harm, pushed by political opportunists, to both the UK and its close allies. As a proud Irish-American, Biden has already warned that he will take a dim view of any UK moves around the completion of Brexit at the end of this year that risk undermining the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

Some things will not change, whoever wins. Donald Trump is as much symptom as cause of the different kind of America the world is now witnessing. The US will be robust towards China. There will be differing views on the value of tariff wars, but trade deals won't be any easier to conclude under Biden than under Trump. The fossil fuel industry will continue its well-funded lobbying. So long as Iran's Revolutionary Guard continues its destructive interference across the wider Middle East, and its government continues to disregard human rights, any fresh nuclear agreement with Tehran will be hard to achieve.

So big challenges and choices lie ahead. But first, the world needs to see that the leader of the free world is still capable of organizing free and fair elections, despite Trump's efforts to delegitimize his opponents and convince his supporters that the election will have been fraudulent if he loses.

01 Introduction: America constrained

For the next administration, leading America's recovery from COVID-19 and addressing social and economic inequities at home will be necessary first steps in building international support to address the most important global challenges.

Leslie Vinjamuri

America is at an inflection point. The outcome of the 2020 presidential election will determine whether the coming four years see a further withdrawal from international engagement, a deepening of domestic divisions, and an ongoing assault on democratic norms, or whether the tide may yet be turned.

Some things are already certain, and, for these, the election may matter less. The US's relationship with China will continue to dominate foreign policy, and there is broad agreement that the US should take a tougher line. Those who feel they have lost out as a result of globalization have been given a powerful voice in US domestic politics over the last four years. Therefore, the US is unlikely to push the reset button on China, on globalization, and especially on free trade, anytime soon.

But the last four years have confirmed that, even where geopolitical competition and globalization limit the range of available policy options, the choices that the US president makes are highly consequential for international affairs. These choices are increasingly unconstrained, as the power of the executive has continued to grow.[1] The next president will shape the trajectory of the US–China relationship and the global economy, and the implications will be especially significant for America's partners.

1 Binder, S., Goldgeier, J. and Saunders, E. (2020), 'The Imperial Presidency is Alive and Well', *Foreign Affairs*, 21 January 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2020-01-21/imperial-presidency-alive-and-well (accessed 6 Oct. 2020).

European policymakers are aware that the president has considerable influence over the US's commitment to its transatlantic partners. It is conceivable that, in a second term, Donald Trump might attempt to withdraw the US from NATO. A Trump or a Biden presidency will also make very different choices about the optimal path for securing regional stability in the Middle East and Eurasia. US policy on climate change, arms control, global health and technology will all be shaped by the outcome of November's election.

For the US, as for the rest of the world, dealing with the health, social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis means that the overwhelming immediate priority will be to ensure a domestic recovery. The next president will need to lead the US out of the worst public health crisis in a generation, which by mid-October had caused the deaths of more than 213,000 Americans, and to restore the health of the US economy. Pressures to tackle the deep-rooted racial and economic inequalities that have been thrown into sharp relief over the past months look set to continue.

In light of the Trump administration's catastrophic response to the pandemic, at home, but also internationally, it is hardly surprising that the US's global standing has been diminished. The assault on democratic norms over the last four years has also contributed to this. Whether the US can restore its global influence in the years ahead will depend crucially on the next president's ability to reverse these failings and address the deep economic and social fractures at home.

Respect for scientific rigour and expertise will be critical. What happens in the election will have a profound impact on the connection between science, expertise, public discourse and policy formation in the US. And the effects of this will reverberate globally. The US has cultivated an environment for world-leading innovation and research in the post-war era, and this has both contributed directly to policymaking and been a central aspect of America's soft power. The last four years, however, have seen a rejection of science even at the highest levels of US public authority, in favour of grandstanding and rhetorical attacks on experts and expertise.

President Trump's America

Campaigning for the presidency in 2016, on a wave of growing populism, Donald Trump undertook to renegotiate the US's international role. Americans, he told the electorate, had been taken for a ride, and it was time to reclaim the benefits of globalization for themselves. He promised to tear up multilateral commitments in favour of bilateral deals and tough bargaining that would deliver greater benefits to the nation at the expense of both rivals and long-term allies. Trump's pledge to bring manufacturing jobs back home resonated in particular with white non-college-educated men, whose belief in his message that he would redistribute wealth to their advantage helped to assure his victory.

Four years later, Trump has overseen the consolidation of a political consensus that trade deals should be fair more than free, and that China is at the root of many of the most critical global imbalances.[2] But his solutions have focused narrowly on tariff wars and failed to level the playing field with China or to identify a domestic strategy for inclusive growth that delivers tangible economic benefits, especially to working-class Americans. The Congressional Budget Office forecast in early 2020 that tariffs imposed by the Trump administration since 2018 would leave the average household almost $1,300 worse off over the year.[3] Inequality in the US has also continued to grow;[4] and Trump's promise to invest in domestic infrastructure has not yet translated into practice.[5]

Under Trump's presidency, the US has stepped away from its role as liberal leader. In doing so, the US has often antagonized its closest allies, especially in Europe, while giving strongmen in Russia, North Korea and the Philippines, among others, a free pass on human rights. The administration has delivered on Trump's pre-election promise to reduce the US's multilateral commitments, not least by withdrawing from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the UN Human Rights Council, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. It has given formal notice of withdrawal from the Paris Agreement (due to take effect the day after the 2020 election); and, most recently, has initiated America's withdrawal from the World Health Organization. Trump has also undercut the functioning of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) appellate body, and has at times wrecked efforts by the G7 to coordinate its members' positions on key issues. And his administration has spurred a surge of protectionism globally.[6]

But Trump has failed to deliver many of his key foreign policy promises. China has not made adjustments to its model of state capitalism that would deliver on the president's ambition to 'level the playing field'. Instead, the US–China relationship has deteriorated substantially. Trump's summit diplomacy with Kim Jong-un has failed to deliver substantial progress towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. And the strategy of 'maximum pressure' against Tehran that followed the US's withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 has failed to bring Iran back to the negotiating table.

Efforts in line with Trump's pledge to reduce US troop commitments in the Middle East have had mixed success, and have been met with the stubborn reality of facts on the ground. In the autumn of 2019, Trump announced that he would remove

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2 Ikenson, D. (2020), 'The Bipartisan Consensus to Destroy U.S. Trade Policy', CATO Institute, 1 July 2020, https://www.cato.org/blog/bipartisan-consensus-destroy-us-trade-policy; Shambaugh, D. (2018), 'The New American Bipartisan Consensus on China Policy', China US Focus, 21 September 2018, https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/the-new-american-bipartisan-consensus-on-china-policy (accessed 12 Oct. 2020).
3 Congressional Budget Office (2020), 'The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2020 to 2030', https://www.cbo.gov/publication/56073 (accessed 6 Oct. 2020).
4 Telford, T. (2019), 'Income inequality in America is the highest it's been since Census Bureau started tracking it, data shows', *Washington Post*, 26 September 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/09/26/income-inequality-america-highest-its-been-since-census-started-tracking-it-data-show (accessed 6 Oct. 2020).
5 In 2018, for example, a study undertaken by the University of Pennsylvania found that: 'On net, the budget appears to lead to little new federal spending on infrastructure, potentially even resulting in a reduction in public spending.' See University of Pennsylvania (2018), 'Changes to federal infrastructure spending in the White House FY 2018 Budget', https://budgetmodel.wharton.upenn.edu/issues/2018/2/9/changes-to-federal-infrastructure-spending-in-the-white-house-fy-2018-budget (accessed 6 Oct. 2020).
6 Bank of England (2019), 'In focus – Trade protectionism and the global outlook. Section 3 of the Monetary Policy Report', https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy-report/2019/november-2019/in-focus-trade-protectionism-and-the-global-outlook (accessed 6 Oct. 2020).

US troops from northeast Syria, in effect abandoning the US's Kurdish partners. This produced a backlash at home, even among some of his most loyal supporters, and also contributed to further instability in areas affected by the conflict. The US quickly reversed the decision, redeploying troops to guard oil facilities from ISIS. As the election approaches, the Trump administration has renewed its pledge to draw down troops from the region. It has brokered a normalization of relations between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain, culminating in Trump's hosting of the signing of the 'Abraham Accords' at the White House in September 2020. But the pursuit of the 'deal of the century' – in the form of the Middle East peace plan announced by Trump at the beginning of the year – has further sidelined the Palestinians, following the transfer of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in 2018, and done little to advance a two-state solution.

The collective impact of the Trump administration's foreign policy has been to undermine US influence globally. Moreover, the president's leadership style has compromised the administration's ability to build international support for realistic innovations that might help advance common policy objectives.

The US's response to the coronavirus pandemic has been catastrophic, and the prospects for suppressing the virus and securing a robust economic recovery remain uncertain.

For a period, all that was unsettling about Trump's assertion of presidential authority played out in a context of robust job creation, low unemployment and steady growth. This was built on the back of a strong economy inherited from the Obama administration, and by the president's own sweeping corporate and individual tax cuts. All of this served as a buffer against the effects of the president's erratic foreign policy and divisive politics, and deepening inequalities within the US.

This has now changed. The US's response to the coronavirus pandemic has been catastrophic, and the prospects for suppressing the virus and securing a robust economic recovery remain uncertain. The US is home to just 4 per cent of the world's population, but has suffered 22 per cent of all recorded COVID-19 fatalities.[7] Unemployment soared to a record high of 14.7 per cent in April, from 3.5 per cent just two months earlier; by September the jobless rate had dipped just below 8 per cent.[8] Despite a remarkable early success in agreeing a bipartisan fiscal stimulus, a return to partisan politics has continued to frustrate congressional efforts to agree further legislation to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic.[9]

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7 Hanage, W. P., Testa, C., Chen, J. T., Davis, L., Pechter, E., Santillana, M. and Krieger, N. (2020), 'COVID-19: US Federal accountability for entry, spread, and inequities', Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies Working Paper Volume 20, Number 2, 5 October 2020, https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/1266/2020/10/20_covid-19_federal-response_FINAL_for-HCPDS_1001_HCPDS-working-paper_volume-20_number-2_FINAL.pdf (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).
8 US Department of Labor (2020), *The Employment Situation – September 2020*, https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf (accessed 6 Oct. 2020).
9 Politi, J. (2020), 'Hopes fade for US stimulus with Washington in stalemate', *Financial Times*, 7 October 2020, https://www.ft.com/content/67d7abb8-3f67-49f5-a16d-f9ecf7e0a03c (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).

The clear failure of the Trump administration to contain the spread of the coronavirus matters far beyond America's borders, and has had a stark effect on the US's standing globally. Polling data released in September 2020 show that a median of just 15 per cent of respondents in the 13 countries polled believe the US has performed well in its response to the coronavirus.[10]

And in May, in the midst of the US outbreak, shocking footage of the police killing of an African American man, George Floyd, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, spread rapidly online and unleashed a wave of protests against racial injustice across the world. Protests continued in the US throughout the summer on a mass scale, with deep-seated anger at institutional racism further fuelled, on the eve of the Republican National Convention, after an unarmed black man, Jacob Blake, was shot seven times in the back by police in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

The November election

The 2020 US presidential campaign season has been one like no other, and fraught, not least as coronavirus infections took hold within the White House itself in the final weeks of the election.

It is hardly surprising that the election looks set to be a referendum on President Trump, especially his handling of the coronavirus crisis and the economic crisis it has driven. By mid-October 2020, Joe Biden was ahead in the polls by an average of around 10 percentage points,[11] although this did not mean that the outcome was certain. Polls are always subject to a margin of error, and, crucially, it cannot be known ahead of election day how many voters will turn out to vote. Likely turnout is even less predictable in 2020 because of COVID-19. And in the US, the weighting of electoral college votes means that, as happened in 2016, a candidate who loses the popular vote can still take the White House.

The focus in the run-up to the election has been on the swing states – especially Florida, which has 29 electoral college votes, and Pennsylvania, which shaped the outcome of the 2016 election and has this time around been the site of ongoing disputes over mail-in ballots.[12] An anticipated surge in mail-in ballots has led to battles in many states about the rules for recording and counting mail-in votes.[13] This matters in an election in which a far greater proportion of voters who identify as Democrats have planned to vote by mail, compared with their Republican

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10 Wike, R., Fetterolf, J. and Mordecai, M. (2020), 'U.S. Image Plummets Internationally as Most Say Country Has Handled Coronavirus Badly', Pew Research Center, 15 September 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/09/15/us-image-plummets-internationally-as-most-say-country-has-handled-coronavirus-badly (accessed 6 Oct. 2020).
11 Polling average taken from Real Clear Politics (2020), 'General Election: Trump vs Biden', https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2020/president/us/general_election_trump_vs_biden-6247.html (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).
12 Mejia, E. and Skelley, G. (2020), 'Is the Electoral Map Changing?', FiveThirtyEight, 26 August 2020, https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/swing-states-2020-election (accessed 14 Oct. 2020).
13 Corasaniti, N. and Vogel, K. (2020), 'Battles over Voting Rights Fuel Concern About Postelection Fights', *New York Times*, 24 September 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/24/us/politics/trump-election-voting-rights.html (accessed 6 Oct. 2020). Meyer, K. (2020), ''Naked Ballot' Rule Could Lead To Thousands Of Pa. Votes Getting Rejected', NPR, 1 October 2020, https://www.npr.org/2020/10/01/918368319/naked-ballot-rule-could-lead-to-thousands-of-pa-votes-getting-rejected?t=1602009327678 (accessed 6 Oct. 2020).

counterparts, especially in key swing states like Florida and Pennsylvania.[14] Despite Biden's clear lead in the polls, the uncertainty surrounding voter turnout, the battles over mail-in ballots and the realities of the electoral college mean that the final outcome of the election may not be known on the night, if the count is close, and a contested election is possible.[15] President Trump's ongoing allegations of fraud surrounding mail-in ballots have added to the febrile atmosphere of the pre-election period. When asked, in September, to confirm whether he would abide by the most fundamental democratic norm, assuring a peaceful transition of power, should he lose the election, the president refrained from doing so.[16]

What the 2020 election means for the rest of the world

For the world's leaders – and diplomats – who are currently watching the extraordinary progress of this US election campaign, there is a period of waiting to see whether America's role in the world has changed permanently, or whether the last four years will in time come to be seen by historians as a more transient disruption to the prevailing international order.

The contributors to this collection of essays agree that the challenge from China is pervasive, and that the effects of the US–China confrontation will reverberate across the globe.

What is clear is that the next president will determine the trajectory of the US's relationship with China. China now accounts for some 16 per cent of the world's GDP, has unparalleled influence on global consumption patterns, and is a major influence in leading multilateral institutions.

The contributors to this collection of essays agree that the challenge from China is pervasive, and that – for either a Republican or a Democratic administration in Washington – the effects of the US–China confrontation will reverberate across the globe. For this reason, it is considered across most chapters in this collection, rather than treated as a standalone.

But the next US president – be this Trump or Biden – can determine whether to reassert America's ambition to lead, and renew partnerships, in an increasingly multipolar world. The critical choice will be whether to reinvest in diplomacy, and to make liberal values central to US foreign policymaking.

14 Broadwater, L. (2020), 'Both Parties Fret as More Democrats Request Mail Ballots in Key States', *New York Times*, 30 September 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/30/us/mail-voting-democrats-republicans-turnout.html (accessed 6 Oct. 2020).
15 Gellman, B. (2020), 'The Election that Could Break America', *The Atlantic*, 23 September 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/11/what-if-trump-refuses-concede/616424 (accessed 6 Oct. 2020).
16 Itkowitz, C. (2020), 'Trump won't commit to a 'peaceful transfer of power' if he loses', *Washington Post*, 24 September 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-transfer-of-power/2020/09/23/be6954d0-fdf0-11ea-b555-4d71a9254f4b_story.html (accessed 6 Oct. 2020).

About this paper

The task of the authors of this collection of essays is to consider what is at stake for the some of the most pressing international and regional challenges, and how the outcome of the 2020 US presidential election will affect these. In some cases, the contributors discern a clear distinction between the likely policy trajectory under a second Trump term and what might be expected, or possible, under a Biden presidency. In other cases, the fundamental drivers suggest differences of style rather than radical differences of policy. The US's international engagement, and its standing in the world, was already changing before Trump entered the White House, but, in the view of most – if not all – the authors, the policy choices made by the next administration will continue to have critical impact globally.

In Chapter 2, Hans Kundnani argues that Europe will come under increasing pressure to align its policies towards China with the US, especially if Biden is elected in November. This will create difficult choices for Europe. The election may also shape who America's favoured European partners are. A Biden administration would be likely try to work more closely with Germany, but the author contends that the UK is the more natural partner for the US on China. If Trump remains in office over the next four years, the EU will push for greater sovereignty. This will be difficult to achieve, in part because Poland and the US are likely to further their efforts to deepen a bilateral relationship. France, on the other hand, would press the EU to adopt a more coherent set of independent policies. Regardless of who sits in the White House, Kundnani is sceptical that greater European sovereignty will follow.

In Chapter 3, Heather Williams examines the security challenge posed by Russian adventurism – which for the last four years has gone largely unchecked – for the next US administration. In her assessment, the US will need to adopt a finely balanced 'two-track' approach that assures NATO allies of its commitment to mutual security and signals to Russia its resolve to deter future aggression, while also pursuing arms control and other risk reduction opportunities that promote transparency and predictability. She argues that the US should look to rebuild trust among its allies as an essential part of its national security strategy, emphasizing that Russian military modernization, together with the demise of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, have once again made Europe a potential battleground. Williams sets out the priorities and likely policy choices of both a second Trump administration and an incoming administration under Biden. For either one, the most pressing task will be the extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which is set to expire in February 2021.

In Chapter 4, Sanam Vakil argues that transatlantic divisions and conflicting objectives in critical areas of Middle East policy have brought greater instability to the region over the last four years. Focusing on the Persian Gulf region, she makes the case that the next administration will need to view Iran and the Arab Gulf states not as discrete policy areas, but instead as part of a holistic, long-term strategy. The Iran nuclear deal, regional interference by Tehran, its ballistic missile programme, and US support for the Arab Gulf states in Yemen and Libya are all interlinked, and should be treated as such. Regardless of who occupies the White House from next year, the administration will need to draw on the lessons of successive policy failures in the region, and understand the importance of building a broad consensus – domestic, regional and international – on policy coordination. As part of this, in order to stabilize the JCPOA following the US formal withdrawal in 2018, the US will need to recognize that the E3 – France, Germany and the UK – are critical actors whose support and liaison with Iran will be essential to achieving a meaningful shift in the current balance of tensions. The author examines the prospects for progress under both a Trump and a Biden administration.

In Chapter 5, Marianne Schneider-Petsinger anticipates significant continuity in US trade policy, whether under a Trump or a Biden administration. Global trade will continue to dominate US foreign economic policy, and the drive to level the playing field with China will be maintained. While a Biden administration would be expected to work more closely with European partners to develop a joint response to China, policy divergence between the US and the EU will continue under either administration – for instance over digital services taxes. The challenges for WTO reform will remain. Re-entry into the now Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership would be complex, and efforts to strengthen supply-chain resilience will focus on domestic production. Trade policy will continue to face hurdles in Congress, too, since significant divisions persist within the Democratic Party as well as between Republicans and Democrats.

The next two chapters focus on climate change and global health. In both these critical areas, President Trump has reversed US engagement in the most important multilateral forums. In Chapter 6, Sam Geall and Tim G. Benton focus on the setback to efforts on climate change mitigation arising from the signalled US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, as well as the attacks on climate science that have gained a public platform under Trump. They nonetheless identify the opportunity that exists for the next US administration to lead global coordination on a 'cleaner' recovery from the pandemic – to 'build back better'. In the authors' assessment, the success of any future climate regime will be crucially dependent on there being a cooperative relationship between the US and China. Even in the context of the wider strategic competition between the two powers, their common interest in climate security demands continued engagement, through technical exchange, the building of trust, and coordinated efforts.

In Chapter 7, Amy Pope contrasts the current administration's response to the COVID-19 pandemic to the US's long bipartisan history of engagement in multilateral cooperation against infectious diseases. She identifies that 9/11, and the anthrax attacks that followed soon after in 2001, led to urgent scrutiny of the US's vulnerability to extreme shocks, including biological threats such as an infectious disease pandemic. Nonetheless, while investment in infectious disease response was accelerated under both the Bush and the Obama administrations, this cumulative effort was not yet sufficient to enable the US to manage an outbreak on the scale of the current pandemic. And now, the response of the Trump administration to COVID-19 is unprecedented in its politicization, in its marginalization of expertise, and in its antagonism towards China and WHO. Pope argues that it is vital for the next administration to significantly increase funding for, and political prioritization of, the US domestic and global health response to COVID-19. It should recommit, too, to investment in WHO and other key multilateral organizations, and help efforts at reform rather than, as Trump has tried to do, walk away. Within the US, there needs to be a rigorous investigation, as happened after 9/11, of the response to COVID-19, in an effort to ensure that lessons are learned and built on. It is through such a process that the US will better prepare for the next outbreak, and – critically – guard against future policy failure.

In Chapter 8, Christopher Sabatini takes as a starting point the devastation that COVID-19 has brought to the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and argues that the next US administration might have an essential role to play in helping the countries of the region rebuild their economies. A critical step would be for the US to lead an international response to the looming public debt crisis. He makes the case that the next administration should make efforts to recover the tools of US soft power in the region: part of this demands restoring the US's moral authority on matters of corruption, immigration, human rights and multilateral cooperation; and working on potential points of partnership such as security and climate change adaptation. China's growing investment and influence in Latin America and the Caribbean will continue to be a cause of concern for the next administration, but the author contends that this need not be a zero-sum threat. Instead, there is scope for the US and China to find areas of cooperation, such as investment in infrastructure, climate change and trade.

In the final chapter, Leslie Vinjamuri makes the case that democracy and human rights concerns have moved up the agenda in the US–China relationship, and that US policy has taken an ideological turn. Despite President Trump's aversion to leading with human rights, there has been growing pressure across his administration and in Congress to draw attention to, *inter alia*, China's surveillance tactics, its repression of the Uighurs in Xinjiang and its restrictions of democratic freedoms in Hong Kong. The focus on values is likely to be maintained, but the next administration should develop a clear strategy for influencing behaviour and avoid a focus on identity or ideology. Ensuring greater consistency on human rights in its foreign policymaking will be an important aspect of this. The challenge will be in managing important partnerships not only with China, but also with countries like Turkey, Saudi Arabia and India whose record on democracy and human rights in recent years has been poor or regressing. Essential, too, will be the clear commitment of the next administration to upholding democratic norms at home. Without this, US influence will be further diminished.

02 Transatlantic relations

A US foreign policy that is increasingly focused on strategic competition with China will – whoever is president – subordinate relationships with European allies to this overriding priority.

Hans Kundnani

Atlanticists tend to view the 2020 US presidential election as a make-or-break moment. They argue that the transatlantic relationship has already been damaged by the presidency of Donald Trump, and that a second term might deliver the fatal blow not just to the relationship, but to the liberal international order of which it is often seen to be a part. A Biden administration, in contrast, would recommit to the US's long-standing alliances and to multilateralism, and work with its allies on European security and developing a coordinated transatlantic approach to China – increasingly the focus in the relationship between Europe and the US.

This chapter argues that the implications of the 2020 election for the transatlantic relationship are not quite as clear-cut as this view suggests. Even before Trump was elected as president in 2016, the transatlantic relationship was already in a kind of structural crisis. The increasing focus of US foreign policy on China and the resultant pressure on resources has for some years intensified discussions about burden-sharing: as president, Barack Obama went so far as to describe European allies as 'free riders'.[17] As US foreign policy becomes increasingly focused on strategic competition with China and subordinates relationships with long-standing allies to that overriding priority, Europe will be faced with difficult choices – whoever is president.

17 See for example Goldberg, J. (2016), 'The Obama Doctrine', *The Atlantic*, April 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525 (accessed 25 Sept. 2020).

In Europe, meanwhile, Trump's presidency has put momentum behind the idea of 'European sovereignty', something that Atlanticists who believe that Europe and the US can cooperate on China tend to underestimate.[18] Even if Trump is re-elected in November, Europeans are unlikely to achieve 'strategic autonomy'. Rather, Europe is likely to be divided, as France and like-minded member states seek to develop defence initiatives within the EU, while others such as Poland look to further bilateralize their security relationship with the US. But – regardless of who is in the White House next year – the notion of 'European sovereignty' will limit Europe's willingness to defer to the US on China policy.

The structural crisis of the transatlantic relationship

While Trump clearly represents a break in US policy towards Europe, that break is not quite as dramatic as might first appear. Atlanticists seem to imagine that until Trump became president, the US had been consistently supportive of the European project. But while it is true that the impetus for the first steps towards European integration came from the US – in this sense it can even be seen as an American project – the US has gradually become less unequivocal in its support for what became the EU.[19] There have also been partisan differences: broadly, Democratic presidents have historically been more supportive of the EU than have Republicans.

The tendency among Atlanticists to idealize US policy towards Europe before Trump entered the White House obscures the pressures on the transatlantic relationship that were already evident prior to his run for the presidency in 2016. In recent decades, Europe has come under increasing pressure to take greater responsibility for its own security as the US has declined in relative terms and has become more and more focused – particularly in response to the rise of China – on what is now termed the Indo-Pacific. A consequence of this has been an effort to reduce US commitments in parts of the world, such as Europe, that are no longer seen as critical to the US, or that are able to maintain security without significant US help – what Dan Hamilton has called 'selective burden shedding'.[20]

The uncertainty about the US security guarantee towards Europe that followed Trump's election four years ago intensified the ongoing debate about the future of NATO, and in particular created momentum in Europe around the French concept of 'strategic autonomy'. In practice, however, collective security in Europe has become more bilateralized, as countries like Poland have sought to negotiate separately with the US in an effort to win greater commitments for themselves.[21] Debates about European security were already further complicated by the UK's decision to leave the EU: while the UK remained unconditionally committed to European security, it reduced the military resources available for defence integration within the EU.

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18 On the idea of 'European sovereignty', see Kundnani, H. (2020), 'Europe's sovereignty dilemma', *Berlin Policy Journal*, 13 May 2020, https://berlinpolicyjournal.com/europes-sovereignty-conundrum (accessed 4 Sept. 2020).
19 See Kundnani, H. (2018), 'Rethinking European integration', The American Interest, 9 July 2018, https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/07/09/rethinking-european-integration (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
20 Conversation with the author.
21 See Kundnani, H. (2017), 'Donald Trump's "East Asianisation" of Europe', Royal United Services Institute, 26 April 2017, https://rusi.org/commentary/donald-trumps-east-asianisation-europe (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).

The China challenge

These issues around burden-sharing will continue regardless of the outcome of the presidential election in November – and will be exacerbated by the pressure on US resources of dealing with the rise of China. US foreign policy has become even more focused on China under President Trump than it was with the Obama administration's 'pivot' to Asia. Trump has notably adopted a more confrontational stance on China than did his predecessor; and has also drawn a line under Obama's China strategy by following through on his 2016 election pledge to withdraw the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which was a central element of the 'pivot'. Instead, Trump has sought to radically alter the US–China economic relationship by taking a more protectionist approach to trade.

In doing so, Trump largely abandoned Washington's efforts, begun under the Obama administration, to work with European allies on Asia policy. Indeed, in 2018 the Trump administration went so far as to impose tariffs on imports of steel and aluminium from the EU as well as from China. After the EU failed to secure an exemption from the tariffs, it retaliated with counter-tariffs on US products. It was in the context of these escalating tensions over trade, and the imposition of new economic sanctions that would penalize European companies that continue to do business in Iran, that the concept of 'European sovereignty' took hold.

A consensus has now emerged in Washington around the idea of 'strategic competition' with China.

A consensus has now emerged in Washington around the idea of 'strategic competition' with China. But it is far from clear that there is a transatlantic consensus. There has been much discussion of the shift in thinking on China in Europe, particularly since the publication of a European Commission paper in March 2019 that described China as a 'systemic rival'[22] – leading some analysts to speculate that Europe and the US may be moving towards a joint approach. But although many Europeans want to pursue a tougher strategy in order to 'level the playing field' on economic issues, few want to see a more comprehensive 'decoupling' from the Chinese economy.[23] In fact, German companies like BASF and Volkswagen have doubled down on production in China in recent years by building new plants in China.

With the exception of France and the UK, which have carried out naval operations in the South China Sea, European states do not want to get involved in territorial issues in the Asia-Pacific region, which they tend to regard as a struggle for primacy between China and the US. Moreover, although Europeans often claim that human rights are a 'European value', they have also shown a reluctance to take a stand on issues such as China's treatment of Uighurs, on which the US has become increasingly vocal. (And at an institutional level, any member state can

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22 European Commission (2019), 'EU-China – A strategic outlook', 12 March 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
23 Small, A. (2019), 'Why Europe is getting tough on China', *Foreign Affairs*, 3 April 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-04-03/why-europe-getting-tough-china; Small, A. (2020), 'The Meaning of Strategic Rivalry', European Council on Foreign Relations, 13 May 2020, https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/the_meaning_of_systemic_rivalry_europe_and_china_beyond_the_pandemic (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).

block a statement or even a discussion on such matters by the EU.) In fact, many EU member states may see attempts to push them into alignment with US policy – for example through economic sanctions on Chinese companies that would have a secondary impact on European firms – as a violation of 'European sovereignty'.

A second Trump administration

It is almost as difficult to predict what a second Trump term might look like as it was to predict, four years ago, how his first term might unfold. Perhaps the biggest questions for Europe will be around the future of NATO, from which Trump has threatened to withdraw the US – though opposition in Congress will likely prevent him following through on this. If Trump is re-elected in November, a second term would certainly give further momentum to the proponents of 'European sovereignty'. It is also possible in this context that Europe – and in particular Germany – might increase defence spending to the extent that would be necessary for Europe to 'take its destiny into its own hands', as German Chancellor Angela Merkel (herself due to leave office next year) has previously said it should. If this were to happen, it might actually make the transatlantic relationship more sustainable in the medium term by finally rebalancing it.

However, it is unlikely that even a second term for Donald Trump would be enough to bring about such a dramatic shift in European security policy. Even if the logic for 'strategic autonomy' becomes more compelling, the huge difficulties in achieving it would remain.[24] What is more likely is that four more years of the Trump administration would result in further division in Europe between those EU member states like France that support 'strategic autonomy' and those like Poland that seek instead to deepen their bilateral security ties with the US (and perhaps other security providers like the UK). The withdrawal of US troops from Germany, recently announced by the Trump administration, would go ahead – and likely be followed by further steps along these lines.[25]

Beyond the question of European security, there could also be an intensification of the conflict between Europe and the US on economic issues. A second Trump administration might go further in imposing tariffs on European exports – in particular on automobiles, as the president has repeatedly threatened. It would also likely increase economic pressure on China, which would indirectly affect Europe. In particular, the US might be expected to go further in imposing sanctions on Chinese companies, with the potential for a secondary impact on European firms. This would cause notable friction with Germany, whose companies are resistant to the idea of 'decoupling' with China.[26]

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24 See Kundnani, H. (2018), 'The Necessity and Impossibility of Strategic Autonomy', German Marshall Fund, 10 January 2018, https://www.gmfus.org/blog/2018/01/10/necessity-and-impossibility-strategic-autonomy (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
25 Stewart, P. and Ali, I. (2020), 'U.S. to withdraw about 12,000 troops from Germany but nearly half to stay in Europe', Reuters, 29 July 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-germany-military/u-s-to-withdraw-about-12000-troops-from-germany-but-nearly-half-to-stay-in-europe-idUSKCN24U20L (accessed 4 Sept. 2020).
26 On the relationship between China and Germany, see Oertel, J. (2020), 'Redefining Germany's Relationship with China', Echo Wall, 12 May 2020, https://www.echo-wall.eu/knowledge-gaps/redefining-germanys-relationship-china (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).

A Biden presidency

From a European perspective, an administration led by Joe Biden would feel very different to a second Trump administration. A Biden administration can be expected to publicly embrace the transatlantic relationship, and this would be welcomed by many in Europe. It would align much more closely with Europeans on a range of issues such as climate change. It would also be much more supportive of the EU than Trump has been. Its instinct would be to work closely with Germany, which many of Biden's foreign policy team admire.[27] On the other hand, it is likely to want to downgrade the relationship with the UK – at least while Boris Johnson, who is widely seen by Democrats as a British version of Trump – remains prime minister.[28]

A Biden administration can be expected to publicly embrace the transatlantic relationship, and this would be welcomed by many in Europe.

A Biden administration can be expected to take a tough stance on Putin's Russia. In particular because of Russian interference in the last presidential election, many Democrats have become much more hawkish on Russia – a position previously associated more with Republicans like Senator John McCain – than they were prior to 2016. But while some in Europe, particularly in the Baltic states and Poland, would welcome such an approach, others, particularly in southern Europe, would be less enthusiastic. Although, as already noted, a Biden administration would likely seek closer cooperation with Germany, the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline could remain a source of tension between Germany and the US as Congress implements further sanctions against companies and perhaps even government officials involved in the project.[29]

Although a Biden administration would make a clear commitment to NATO, contention around burden-sharing between the US and its European allies would continue in a context in which US resources are increasingly focused on China. But a Biden administration would likely avoid publicly criticizing European NATO members, above all Germany, for their low level of defence spending, having seen Trump's antagonistic line on this to be unproductive. Instead, his administration will try to cooperate with Europe on issues such as reform of the World Trade Organization, stabilizing the Middle East as the US footprint there decreases, and – above all – responding effectively to the China challenge.[30]

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27 For example, Biden's foreign policy adviser Antony Blinken called Germany 'our most important ally in Europe'. See Amanpour, C. (@camanpour) (2020), tweet, 30 July 2020, https://twitter.com/camanpour/status/1288906306796032000?s=20 (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
28 For example, in 2019 Biden himself referred to Johnson as a 'physical and emotional clone' of President Trump. See Frazin, R. (2019), 'Biden calls Boris Johnson 'a physical and emotional clone' of Trump', The Hill, 13 December 2019, https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/474419-biden-calls-boris-johnson-a-physical-and-emotional-clone-of-trump (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
29 See Hackenbroich, J. (2020), 'How the US could ramp up its economic war with China', European Council on Foreign Relations, 8 July 2020, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_how_the_us_could_ramp_up_its_economic_war_on_china (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
30 See Wright, T. (2020), 'The quiet reformation of Biden's foreign policy', Brookings Institution, 20 March 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/03/20/the-quiet-reformation-of-bidens-foreign-policy; Carpenter, M. (2020), 'Five ways to fix America's broken ties with Europe', Politico, 4 August 2020, https://www.politico.eu/article/5-ways-to-fix-americas-broken-ties-with-europe (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).

However, efforts by the Biden administration to forge a transatlantic approach to China would take place in a different context than that seen under the Obama presidency. Democrats such as Kurt Campbell (who led attempts to develop a joint approach on China under the Obama administration) and Jake Sullivan have embraced the idea of 'strategic competition', but few Europeans will want to enter this competition on the US side.[31] There may be some scope for cooperation on issues like the screening of investments by Chinese companies and controls on the export of sensitive technologies to China. But unlike the US, which is increasingly subordinating economic policy questions to the logic of strategic competition, European states can be expected to continue to view their dealings with China more through an economic lens.

Like a second Trump administration, a Biden administration could also impose sanctions on China that would have a secondary impact on European companies. Sanctions in response to human rights violations, which a Biden administration is likely to emphasize even more than the Trump administration has thus far, may present particular difficulties for European countries because of the exposure of their companies to the Chinese market. This might lead to particular friction with Germany. Meanwhile the UK, which in recent months has adopted an increasingly hawkish stance on China, may turn out to be one of the few European countries that is substantially aligned with the US on China.[32] In other words, despite its instincts to work closely with Germany, a Biden administration might find that the UK is a more helpful partner in achieving its objectives with regard to China – and perhaps other areas too.

31 Campbell, K. and Sullivan, J. (2019), 'Competition Without Catastrophe', *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/competition-with-china-without-catastrophe (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
32 See Wright, T. (2020), 'What a Shift in the U.K.'s Foreign Policy Means for the U.S.', *The Atlantic*, 22 July 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/07/what-shift-uks-foreign-policy-means-us/614464 (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).

03 Responding to Russian adventurism

A 'two-track' approach is required to rein in Russia's adventurism and reassure allies in Europe, balancing a strong deterrent with arms control and other risk-reduction opportunities.

Heather Williams

In February 2020 the US intelligence community warned Congress that Russia appeared poised to interfere in the upcoming US presidential election, as it had done in 2016.[33] Election interference is just one of the significant national security challenges that Russia will pose to whoever is in the White House next year, along with adventurism in Europe and Moscow's efforts to drive a wedge between Washington and its allies.

Under the Trump administration, the US has been inconsistent in addressing these issues, oscillating between a strong deterrent in its defence postures and conciliatory messages from the White House. Balancing competition and cooperation with Russia is a perennial national security conundrum, but in recent months numerous foreign policy experts have called for just such an approach. For example, former Obama administration official Angela Stent has captured the challenge for the US in addressing Russian adventurism as being 'to find an acceptable balance between cooperation and competition and to compartmentalize the relationship in a more

33 Goldman, A., Barnes, J., Haberman, M. and Fandos, N. (2020), 'Lawmakers are Warned that Russia is Meddling to Re-elect Trump, *New York Times*, 20 February 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/20/us/politics/russian-interference-trump-democrats.html (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).

effective way than at present'.[34] And former NATO deputy secretary general Rose Gottemoeller has recalled the 1967 Harmel Report, which informed the Alliance's forging of a balance of deterrence and detente in subsequent decades.[35]

For the US today, and for its next president, what do these two tracks – cooperation and competition – look like in practice? This chapter makes three arguments with regard to Russia, national security, and the US's credibility with its allies:

- Russian adventurism has gone largely unchecked for the past four years, to include interference in the 2016 presidential election, support for the Assad regime in Syria, and bounties to the Taliban for killing US troops. Inconsistency in implementation of US policy has further emboldened Moscow.
- Reining in such adventurism will require a finely balanced 'two-track' approach. On the one hand, the US must maintain a strong deterrent and restore credibility with its allies. At the same time, it must pursue arms control and other risk reduction opportunities.
- European security and the US's role as a global leader hang in the balance. Russian military modernization and the demise of the INF Treaty literally make Europe a potential battleground. The US's assurances to its allies lie at the core of its global leadership, but have been waning in recent years. Trust in the US among other NATO members has plummeted: according to Gallup polling, European disapproval of US leadership reached a record high of 61 per cent in 2019.[36] From the outset, therefore, whichever administration is in the White House from 2021 should look to the rebuilding of trust among its allies as an essential part of its national security strategy.

US leadership on the line

America's national security and credibility are critically at stake, particularly in the eyes of its European allies. Among the defining features of the present administration have been its inconsistent policy towards Putin's Russia, and its often contradictory messages on the US's commitment to the NATO Alliance.

President Trump has been at odds with key parts of his administration from the outset, particularly the Department of Defense with regard to allies. The 2017 National Security Strategy, for example, states: 'Today, actors such as Russia are using information tools in an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of democracies.'[37] Similarly, in his preface to the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, the then Secretary

34 Stent, A. (2020), 'Why are US-Russia relations so challenging?', Brookings Institution, 27 April 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/votervital/why-are-us-russia-relations-so-challenging (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
35 Gottemoeller, R. (2019), 'NATO Is Not Brain Dead', *Foreign Affairs*, 19 December 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2019-12-19/nato-not-brain-dead (accessed 17 Aug. 2020). For background on the Harmel Report, see North Atlantic Treaty Organization (2017), 'Harmel Report', https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67927.htm (accessed 25 Sept. 2020).
36 Ray, J. (2020), 'U.S. Leadership Remains Unpopular Worldwide', Gallup, 27 July 2020, https://news.gallup.com/poll/316133/leadership-remains-unpopular-worldwide.aspx (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
37 White House (2019), 'National Security Strategy of the United States of America', December 2017, p. 14, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).

of Defense, James Mattis, highlighted: 'Russia is modernizing these [nuclear] weapons as well as its other strategic systems. Even more troubling has been Russia's adoption of military strategies and capabilities that rely on nuclear escalation for their success.'[38]

In contrast, Trump has typically sided with his Russian counterpart over the US intelligence community and America's European allies. He trusted Vladimir Putin's assurances that Russia did not interfere in the 2016 election, and the administration failed to respond to intelligence that Russia was offering bounties to the Taliban for killing US soldiers in Afghanistan.[39] Trump has consistently expressed scepticism about the value of NATO, and, as reported by the *New York Times* in 2019, allegedly contemplated US withdrawal from the alliance in private discussions the previous year.[40] For his part, in his January 2018 speech on national defence strategy, former Defense Secretary Mattis stated: 'History proves that nations with allies thrive, an approach to security and prosperity that has served the United States well in keeping peace and winning war.'[41] The problem, therefore, has not necessarily been US strategy towards Russia, but rather its implementation.

Trump has typically sided with his Russian counterpart over the US intelligence community and America's European allies.

One area where the administration has been consistent, however, is in its rejection of existing arms control agreements. In February 2019, announcing that the US would begin the process of withdrawal – effective six months later – from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, Trump pointed to years of alleged Russian violation that pose 'a direct threat to our allies and troops abroad'.[42] In 2018 Trump formally declared that the US would withdraw from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal – the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – which he had repudiated from the outset; and in June 2020 the administration gave notice of its intention to withdraw the US from the Open Skies Treaty, citing Russian non-compliance. The US's leadership both as a security guarantor and in arms control is imperilled by such actions.[43]

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38 US Department of Defense (2018), 'U.S. Nuclear Posture Review', February 2018, p. I, https://dod.defense.gov/News/SpecialReports/2018NuclearPostureReview.aspx (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
39 Savage, C., Schmitt, E., and Schwirtz, M. (2020), 'Russia Secretly Offered Afghan Militants Bounties to Kill U.S. Troops, Intelligence Says', *New York Times*, 26 June 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/26/us/politics/russia-afghanistan-bounties.html (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
40 Barnes, J. and Cooper, H. (2019), 'Trump Discussed Pulling U.S. From NATO, Aides Say Amid New Concerns Over Russia', *New York Times*, 14 January 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/14/us/politics/nato-president-trump.html (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
41 US Department of Defense (2018), 'Remarks by Secretary Mattis on the National Defense Strategy', 19 January 2018, https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/1420042/remarks-by-secretary-mattis-on-the-national-defense-strategy (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
42 White House (2019), 'Statement from the President Regarding the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty', 1 February 2019, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-regarding-intermediate-range-nuclear-forces-inf-treaty (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
43 Harvard Belfer Center (2018), 'Assessing the Iran deal pullout', Harvard Gazette, 8 May 2018, https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2018/05/harvard-analysts-assess-the-iran-deal-pullout (accessed 7 Sept. 2020).

How the next administration manages these challenges will have major implications for Europe. It may either strengthen the credibility of the US with its allies, and check Russian adventurism in the European theatre; or it may further damage the transatlantic relationship and sow greater instability in Europe, particularly for allies in the east such as Poland and the Baltic states. A particularly critical area of vulnerability is NATO (dis)unity. Part of Russia's strategy is to drive a wedge between the US and its European allies and within Europe itself. Whether or not the next administration reasserts US leadership and checks Russian ambitions could determine the future of the NATO Alliance and the collective security architecture that has defined Europe since the end of the Second World War.

Balancing deterrence and detente: challenges for the next administration

For the next administration, forging a bolder response *vis-à-vis* Russia and strengthening US credibility among its allies will require a balance of competition and cooperation, deterrence and detente. It requires partnership and trust, but within limits.[44] As recently recalled by Rose Gottemoeller, the 1967 Harmel Report captured this inter-relationship of deterrence and detente. The balance was later manifested in the 'dual track' approach of the 1980s. On the one hand, the US must do more to assure European allies of its commitment to mutual security, and signal to Russia its resolve to deter future aggression – be that in the form of 'grey zone' activities, information operations or new missile deployments in the European theatre. On the other hand, arms control and efforts at cooperation can also strengthen security by promoting transparency and predictability in US–Russia strategic relations, and reassure allies that Washington will not recklessly escalate into a conflict with Moscow.

Turning first to the challenges of competition and deterrence, the US is faced with an emboldened Russia. A consistent theme among many Russia scholars in the West is that Moscow has a weak hand, but has played it extremely well.[45] Russia's current strategy is one of opportunism: it is seeking to deepen and take advantage of fissures within Europe while also making use of the leadership vacuum left by the US. Meddling in elections is just one of many tactics available to Russia. Its new deterrence strategy, released in June 2020, suggests that it will continue on its current trajectory of military modernization, but also notes that 'compliance with international arms control obligations' is one of the principles of its approach to nuclear deterrence.[46]

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44 See for example Stent, A. (2015), *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
45 See for example Kofman, M. (2017), 'The Moscow School of Hard Knocks: Key Pillars of Russian Strategy', War on the Rocks, 21 November 2019, https://warontherocks.com/2017/01/the-moscow-school-of-hard-knocks-key-pillars-of-russian-strategy; and Nuland, V. (2020), 'Pinning down Putin: How a Confident America Should Deal with Russia, *Foreign Affairs*, 9 June 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2020-06-09/pinning-down-putin (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
46 Weitz, R. (2020), 'The Message in Russia's New Nuclear Weapons Strategy: Don't Mess With Us, But Let's Talk', Business Insider, 5 July 2020, https://www.hudson.org/research/16199-the-message-in-russia-s-new-nuclear-weapons-strategy-don-t-mess-with-us-but-let-s-talk (accessed 17 Aug. 2020). See also CNA Russian Studies Program (2020), 'Foundations of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Area of Nuclear Deterrence: Informal translation by the CNA Russia Studies Program'.

The most immediately pressing issue for the next administration will be the extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), which is set to expire on 5 February 2021, 10 years after its entry into effect. NATO allies overwhelmingly support its extension.[47] According to the treaty's chief negotiators, Anatoly Antonov and Rose Gottemoeller, failure to extend the agreement 'could bring a return to nuclear competition and spark mutual suspicion that would push the world to a level of nuclear risk unseen for decades'.[48] As of early October 2020, it remains unclear if New START will indeed be extended. The current US administration is engaging in talks with Russia to discuss extension, and while it initially set unlikely conditions, namely extending the terms of the treaty to include China,[49] Trump indicated in July that negotiations might now move ahead with Russia alone: 'We thought that we would do it [bilateral arms control with Russia] first.'[50] Otherwise, there is little 'vision or imagination' for further arms control agreements, according to Open Skies negotiator Bonnie Jenkins.[51] When it comes to arms control and the breakdown of the INF Treaty, Europe is literally caught in the middle. European governments overwhelmingly support continued US–Russia arms control, such as the extension of New START.

A second Trump term: end mixed messages

President Trump has given no indication that he would change policy towards Russia in a second term. We should not expect a staunch response should there be evidence of any Russian meddling in the 2020 election, or much reassurance of allies as to his commitment to mutual security. But Trump has indicated at least two possible policy shifts with regard to Russia under a second administration.

First, he could either increase or decrease pressure on NATO allies, potentially creating further opportunities for Russia. This might mean continued insistence that European allies spend more on defence, but this emphasis on burden-sharing has produced only limited results so far, and may not have the desired effect.[52] At its most extreme, Trump could attempt to withdraw the US from NATO. Given that Congress is overwhelmingly supportive of the Alliance,[53] such a move would

47 See for example Reif, K. and Bugos, S. (2019), 'Putin Puts Ball in Trump's Court on New START Extension', Arms Control Association, 20 December 2019, https://www.armscontrol.org/blog/2019-12-19/us-russian-nuclear-arms-control (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
48 Antonov, A. and Gottemoeller, R. (2020), 'Keeping Peace in the Nuclear Age: Why Washington and Moscow Must Extend the New START Treaty', *Foreign Affairs*, 29 April 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-04-29/keeping-peace-nuclear-age (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
49 Pifer, S. (2020), 'Unattainable conditions for New START extension?', Brookings Institution, 1 July 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/07/01/unattainable-conditions-for-new-start-extension (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
50 White House (2020), 'Remarks by President Trump Before Marine One Departure', 29 July 2020, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-marine-one-departure-072920 (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
51 Jenkins, B. (2020), 'A farewell to the Open Skies Treaty, and an era of imaginative thinking', Brookings Institution, 16 June 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/06/16/a-farewell-to-the-open-skies-treaty-and-an-era-of-imaginative-thinking (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
52 Rapp-Hooper, M. (2020), 'Saving America's Alliances', *Foreign Affairs*, 10 February 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-02-10/saving-americas-alliances (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
53 Saab, B. (2019), 'Broken Partnerships: Can Washington Get Security Cooperation Right', *Washington Quarterly*, 42(3), (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).

likely meet with significant domestic opposition and may well prove impossible to follow through on, as Congress is considering the bipartisan 'No NATO Withdrawal Act'.[54]

Second, the administration could take a new approach to arms control. Trump has long had the ambition to be an arms control negotiator,[55] as indicated by his now-stalled series of summits with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. To pursue trilateral arms control, his administration might involve China in informal nuclear dialogues or technical arms control verification activities, without the pressure of concluding an arms control treaty. If a second Trump administration takes the same position as the first, whereby it will only engage in arms control with Russia if the process also includes China, then the opportunities to move forward will be limited.

To strengthen US national security and develop a two-track approach to Russia, therefore, a second Trump administration could focus on consistency in messaging. As difficult as this may seem, given Trump's leadership style, a new national security strategy could emphasize a renewed commitment to the US's allies as an important deterrence signal to Russia, and also provide a vision for the future of arms control with personal involvement by the president. Above all, however, other political actors, notably Congress, would have to assume greater responsibility for investigating any evidence of Russian intervention in the 2020 election.

A new national security strategy could emphasize a renewed commitment to the US's allies as an important deterrence signal to Russia, and also provide a vision for the future of arms control with personal involvement by the president.

But for Europe, this approach would bring only partial reassurance. Trump has already proved to the US's allies that he does not necessarily follow his own administration's policies; so while new national security strategy documents might in theory improve credibility, in practice Trump has shown during his first term that adherence to strategy is not a given. NATO allies would understandably be deeply concerned about a US withdrawal from the Alliance, and failure to further address Russian adventurism would leave many members – particularly in Eastern Europe – deeply worried. Moreover, inability or unwillingness to demonstrate substantive progress in arms control would leave many countries and institutions troubled about rising nuclear risks and the collapse of the rules-based international order. In short, a second Trump term would potentially put European security and NATO unity at risk.

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54 See for example Borger, J. (2019), 'Senate committee passes bipartisan bill to stop Trump withdrawing from Nato', *Guardian*, 11 December 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/11/senate-committee-passes-bipartisan-bill-stop-trump-withdrawing-nato (accessed 7 Sept. 2020).
55 See for example Michaels, J. and Williams, H. (2017), 'The nuclear education of Donald J. Trump', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 38(1), https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2017.1291206 (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).

A Biden administration: go big to restore US leadership

A Biden administration would bring major shifts in the US's policy towards Russia, as part of what one journalist has summed up as an 'Erase Trump' doctrine.[56] Biden's national security strategy would be driven by a quest to restore US global leadership. As Colin Kahl, who served as Biden's national security adviser when he was vice-president, puts it: 'At the top of the agenda at the outset will be signaling to our closest democratic allies that we're back, that alliances and partnerships matter.'[57] A Biden administration might focus on two key areas: restoring arms control, and strengthening NATO.

Biden has already stated that he would pursue a New START extension and follow-on agreements.[58] The New START extension might entail an agreed single five-year extension, as permitted under the treaty, or a year-by-year extension to review the agreement's implementation. A Biden administration should also set out an ambitious vision for the future of arms control that includes short-term initiatives – such as agreements on Russia's non-strategic nuclear weapons – and longer-term endeavours – such as involving China and addressing threats from emerging technologies. This approach would likely be met with significant opposition on multiple fronts. Russia might be expected to exact a heavy price in exchange for agreeing to curbs on its short- and intermediate-range weapons, such as limits on US missile defence. And given Russia's poor compliance record, Congress might oppose any follow-on agreements.

A second initiative would be to strengthen NATO unity. Biden has referred to NATO as 'the single most consequential alliance in the history of the United States', and supports additional forward-deployed troops in Eastern Europe to deter Russia.[59] But the next administration will also have to make NATO more 'nimble', and prioritize responding to Russian adventurism.[60] This could be met with opposition by some NATO members who do not want to antagonize Moscow, but after years of mixed messages from Washington, it would likely be a welcome overture.

This vision for a Biden administration would strengthen European security and NATO unity. There would, however, potentially be residual distrust of the US, based on lessons learned from the Trump era – particularly that changes in administration can lead to major swings in policy and attitudes towards Europe, albeit this is not an entirely new phenomenon.

56 Nichols, H. (2020), 'Biden's doctrine: Erase Trump, re-embrace the world', Axios, 12 July 2020, https://www.axios.com/joe-biden-doctrine-allies-matter-foreign-policy-d0d37753-6701-415b-bb69-ab60d0354662.html (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
57 Ibid.
58 Biden, J. (2020), 'Why America Must Lead Again', *Foreign Affairs*, 23 January 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
59 See Friedman, U. and Giglio, M. (2019), 'Joe Biden Remembers When', *The Atlantic*, 11 July 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/07/biden-touts-foreign-policy-success-it-may-not-be-enough/593740 (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
60 Antonov and Gottemoeller (2020), 'Keeping Peace in the Nuclear Age'.

What to do on day one?

On the first day of Trump's second term or of a Biden presidency, the new administration should set about defining a new national security strategy. This strategy will need to balance a strong deterrent message with a willingness to engage in cooperative efforts such as arms control. Restoring credibility with allies should also be at the core of this strategy, and Biden's first foreign visit, if he were to win, should be to Brussels to underscore this message.

A longer-term vision for managing Russian adventurism and strengthening European security will require continuing to balance competition and cooperation. Russian adventurism may be impacted by internal issues, such as demographics or a stagnating economy, as much as (if not more so) by America's response. European ambitions are woven throughout Russia's history and its approach to national security: we should not expect that to suddenly change. Renewed US leadership and a stronger NATO could, however, change *how* Russia pursues these ambitions. Current strategies of election meddling and adventurism could be replaced by more productive means of engagement, such as economic cooperation, if the Alliance can strike the right balance. To be sure, however, they could also be replaced by more aggressive means of engagement. The stakes for Putin's Russia are also high.

European security has always had links to US politics, and that is particularly true in the upcoming election. A second Trump term could leave Europe even more vulnerable to Russian information operations and strategic threats, and deeply confused about the US's long-standing commitments to mutual security. A Biden administration would face the enormous task – indeed, the scale of this should not be underestimated – of restoring American credibility and leadership with frustrated allies. The solution lies neither in ruthless competition with Russia nor in conciliation, but rather in a finely calibrated and familiar two-track approach that improves not only the security of Europe, but also that of the US.

04
A regional security process for the Middle East

A viable long-term strategy for Iran and the Arab Gulf states is critically dependent on the US administration securing regional and international buy-in, and bipartisan support in Congress.

Sanam Vakil

The outcome of the 2020 US presidential election will have significant implications for the direction of US, UK and EU policy in the Middle East. Over the past four years, transatlantic divisions and conflicting objectives in critical Middle East policy areas have brought greater instability to the region. President Trump's formal announcement, in May 2018, that he would withdraw the US from the Iran nuclear agreement – the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), reached in 2015 under the Obama administration – and his administration's imposition of a sanctions-based campaign of 'maximum pressure' against Tehran, have exacerbated regional tensions and brought about the acceleration of Iran's nuclear programme. Through his calls for increased burden-sharing and the drawdown of US troops, grandstanding on a new Israel–Palestine peace deal, and inconsistent response to Iranian provocation in the Persian Gulf, Trump has stoked anxiety and confused the US's long-time partners in the region.

Without effective and collaborative US engagement on Middle East policy, relations with Europe have become strained, and this has limited both sides' effectiveness in promoting stability across the region. Wars in Syria, Yemen and Libya continue unabated. Tehran's support for non-state actors remains a destabilizing influence; and the rift in the GCC and now three-year blockade of Qatar by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt is unresolved. Russia, China and Turkey have taken stronger economic and security positions in the Middle East, complicating regional dynamics and adding a layer of geopolitical competition to the fragile interlay of regional and international challenges. Added to these factors, and playing out in advance of the US presidential election, are the impact of, and economic fallout from, the COVID-19 pandemic, and heightened US–China tensions, all of which are contributing to even greater regional insecurity.

US policy towards the Middle East under the Trump administration has, notwithstanding the rhetoric of the last four years, yet to bring Iran to the negotiating table. Nor has it delivered the Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA), or the promised 'deal of the century' between Israel and the Palestinians. The signing of US-brokered agreements to normalize relations between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain, in September 2020,[61] is a positive step forward, but any meaningful realignments will be contingent on mutual commitment to a longer-term process.

Managing relations with countries on both sides of the Persian Gulf will remain a principal foreign policy challenge for either a second Trump administration or a new administration under a Biden presidency. Rather than treating Iran and the Arab Gulf states as separate policy areas, the next administration would be better advised to regard the JCPOA, Tehran's regional interference, its ballistic missile programme, the lack of a regional security architecture, and US support for the Arab Gulf states in Yemen and Libya as all interlinked. Attempting to deal with all these aspects of a wide Middle East policy without a holistic, long-term strategy, involving multilateral collaboration, will see the further disintegration of the region. For such a strategy to take shape, a domestic consensus within the US political establishment is urgently needed. Working multilaterally with the EU and the UK would help to advance US objectives, and could simultaneously further progress on mutual security concerns in the region, including promoting peace and stability, nuclear non-proliferation, counterterrorism, energy and maritime security, and stemming refugee flows. An integrated approach would also contribute to managing the growth of Russian and Chinese influence in the region.

The US, Iran and the Arab Gulf: the Obama record

What President Trump has in common with his predecessor is that each has made efforts – as part of a larger US strategy focused on managing geopolitical competition – to resolve regional challenges and redress US security dynamics across the Middle East. Under the Obama administration, the calculation was that drawing down US resources in the Middle East would allow it to prioritize geopolitical challenges in Asia. As part of this strategy, the Obama administration devoted its attention to steering through multilateral negotiations to constrain Iran's nuclear programme. Linked to this was Obama's ambition to create a greater balance between Iran and the Arab Gulf. Interviewed for *The Atlantic* in 2016, he stated: 'The competition between the Saudis and the Iranians … requires us to say to our friends as well as to the Iranians that they need to find an effective way to share the neighborhood and institute some sort of cold peace.'[62]

61 U.S. Department of State (2020), 'The Abraham Accords', https://www.state.gov/the-abraham-accords (accessed 29 Sept. 2020).
62 Goldberg, J. (2016), 'The Obama Doctrine', *The Atlantic*, April 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525 (accessed 15 Sept. 2020).

The JCPOA, concluded in 2015 by Iran, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, the UK and the US), plus Germany and the EU, provided for restraints on Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief. The agreement, hailed by its proponents as a significant multilateral achievement, was strongly opposed by Republicans in the US Congress, by the Arab Gulf countries and by Israel. Opponents of the deal saw its specific focus on Iran's nuclear programme, and the concessions on sanctions, as an approach that would serve to encourage Iran's interference in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen, and allow the further development of its ballistic missile programme.

Arab states regarded the spread of Iran's external influence – which grew in Iraq following the US-led intervention against the regime of Saddam Hussein in 2003, and subsequently through its military intervention in the Syrian civil war and the fight against ISIS in Iraq in 2014 – as clear evidence of its role in driving sectarianization across the region. The course of the 2011 Arab uprisings had meanwhile also caused alarm among Arab Gulf leaders. When the Obama administration did not actively defend Egypt's Hosni Mubarak, a long-time US ally, the Gulf monarchies concluded, with great concern, that they could no longer rely on Washington as a consistent partner.[63] This perception was reinforced with the outbreak of the civil conflict in Syria in 2011, and particularly when President Obama did not act on his stated commitment to enforce his 'red line' on the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons against civilians.[64] Russia's entry into the Syrian civil war in 2015, unchecked by the US, was regarded among the GCC states as further evidence that the US was no longer willing to protect Arab Gulf security interests. One outcome of this assessment was a growing trend of regional adventurism on the part of Arab Gulf states, as seen in the 2011 intervention in defence of the Bahraini monarchy, in the Yemen war from 2015, in the 2017 Qatar blockade, and in the civil war in Libya. (It is important to note, however, that such interventions have not been collectively supported by the GCC, but led more proactively by the UAE and Saudi Arabia.)

Despite the Obama administration's commitment to the multilateral effort that achieved the Iran nuclear deal, it ultimately failed to assemble a coalition of supporters of the deal both across the Middle East and at home. Congressional backing for the JCPOA was clearly impacted by the strong opposition to the deal of key US allies in the region, including Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Although the agreement was eventually approved through a compromise arrangement, Republican hostility to the deal was a central theme in US election campaigning in 2016, including as part of Donald Trump's presidential bid.[65] Those Arab states that had opposed Obama's Iran strategy now embraced the Trump campaign, and the eventual policy of maximum pressure adopted by his administration against Tehran.

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63 Gerges, F. (2013), 'The Obama Approach to the Middle East: The End of America's Moment?', *International Affairs*, 89(2): pp. 299–323 (accessed 17 Aug. 2020).
64 Rhodes, B. (2018), 'Inside the White House During the Syrian 'Red Line' Crisis', *The Atlantic*, 3 June 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/06/inside-the-white-house-during-the-syrian-red-line-crisis/561887 (accessed 19 Sept. 2020).
65 Singh, M. (2020), 'Iran and America: The Impasse Continues', The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Spring 2020, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iran-and-americathe-impasse-continues (accessed 1 Aug. 2020).

The US, Iran and the Arab Gulf: the Trump approach

Trump's campaign threat to withdraw the US from the JCPOA took formal shape in May 2018. The stated aim of his administration's Iran policy was to roll back Tehran's regional influence. It also sought to compel Iran, through maximum economic pressure, to return to negotiate a new, comprehensive deal. Such a deal would not only increase the scope and scale of restrictions on Iran's nuclear programme; it would also require concessions and impose export controls on its ballistic missile programme, and stem its support across the region for Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Assad regime in Syria, Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) militia groups in Iraq, and the Houthis in Yemen.

The US's unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA and reversion to a sanctions-based strategy was unanimously rejected by the other parties to the agreement.

The US's unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA and reversion to a sanctions-based strategy was unanimously rejected by the other parties to the agreement. In the US, too, the Democrats – who regarded the deal as a significant nuclear non-proliferation achievement – denounced the Trump administration's actions. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Israel, along with many congressional Republicans, supported Trump's action.[66] France, Germany and the UK (collectively termed the E3), having failed to dissuade Trump from going ahead with the withdrawal, now consistently warned of the risks of instability while promising to shepherd new negotiations with Tehran.[67] The ramping up of US sanctions forced the withdrawal of most international business from the Iranian economy, and effectively blocked Tehran's access to the international banking system. The Trump administration, surprised by the level of international compliance with the sanctions, viewed maximum pressure via punitive economic constraints as effective in promoting US foreign policy objectives.[68]

From May 2019, having extracted no concessions from Tehran, Washington imposed additional penalties against Iran. These aimed first at cutting off oil exports; and, subsequently, sanctioned almost all Iranian trade and industry; designated the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) a foreign terrorist organization; and also directly targeted Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, and foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif (who had been instrumental in negotiating the JCPOA), among other senior figures. In retaliation, Iran shifted away from JCPOA compliance

66 Kalin, S. and Dadouch, S. (2018), 'Gulf Arab allies hail triumph after U.S. quits Iran deal', Reuters, 8 May 2018, https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-gulf-reaction/gulf-arab-allies-hail-triumph-after-u-s-quits-iran-deal-idUSKBN1I93CU (accessed 19 Sept. 2020).
67 Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2019), 'Press release: E3 Statement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action', 14 July 2019, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/e3-statement-on-the-joint-comprehensive-plan-of-action-14-july (accessed 19 Sept. 2020).
68 Author's confidential interviews with US policymakers, Washington DC, January 2020. Politi, J. (2020), 'Trump leans on sanctions to shape foreign policy', *Financial Times*, 3 January 2020, https://www.ft.com/content/a85a4246-169a-11ea-b869-0971bffac109 (accessed 14 Aug. 2020).

towards its own 'maximum resistance' strategy, designed to increase leverage and force a policy shift in Washington. Notably, Tehran made efforts to transfer the costs of the Trump administration's maximum pressure to the wider region, as seen in an increase in missile attacks via its proxy groups in Iraq and Yemen, in alleged attacks on tankers in the Persian Gulf, and in the missile attacks on Saudi oil facilities in Abqaiq and Khurais in September 2019. Tensions were further raised, in June, by the shooting down of a US drone by Iranian forces over the Strait of Hormuz, with each side disputing the circumstances of the incident. Escalation also increased on the nuclear front: having consistently been verified by the IAEA as being in compliance with the terms of the JCPOA, from May 2019 Tehran announced a series of incremental breaches of the deal.[69]

In the period following the US withdrawal from the JCPOA, the international community, including many of the US's Middle East partners, directly and indirectly lobbied Washington for a shift in strategy. However, diplomatic efforts led by France failed to bring Trump and his Iranian counterpart, Hassan Rouhani, together at the UN General Assembly in September 2019.[70] Tellingly meanwhile, the UAE undertook a discreet bilateral de-escalation with Tehran.[71] There was a significant ramping up of tensions following a rocket attack by Iraqi militias on a military base near Kirkuk, in December, in which an American civilian contractor was killed and several US service personnel were injured. In January 2020 the head of the IRGC Quds Force, General Qassem Soleimani, was targeted and killed in a US drone strike near Baghdad Airport. Iran countered with ballistic missile attacks against US assets at airbases in Iraq.[72] That no casualties were immediately reported as a result of the retaliation gave rise to speculation that temporary mutual deterrence had been established in advance of the attacks, implying that both sides were willing to 'draw a line' and avoid further escalation at this point.[73]

Rather than alter the course of its maximum pressure strategy, the Trump administration has doubled down on sanctions since 2018. In the meantime, Washington has been seen not to adequately defend Arab Gulf security interests; nor has it sought E3 support for a new multilateral approach to addressing regional tensions.[74] Indeed – notwithstanding Brexit dynamics, and doubtless with an eye on a possible change of administration in the US after 2020[75] – the E3 has remained united in its commitment to shielding the JCPOA from further

69 Katzman, K. (2020), 'US-Iran Conflict and Implications for US Policy', Congressional Research Service, pp. 2–8, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R45795.pdf (accessed 1 Aug. 2020).
70 Wright, R. (2019), 'Trump's Close Call Diplomacy with Iran's President', *New Yorker,* 30 September 2019, https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/donald-trumps-close-call-diplomacy-with-irans-president-hassan-rouhani (accessed 19 Sept. 2020).
71 Jafari, S. (2019), 'Despite heightened regional tensions, UAE seeks de-escalation with Iran', Al-Monitor, 30 August 2019, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/08/iran-uae-heightened-regional-tension-deescalation.html (accessed 19 Sept. 2020).
72 Gaouette, N. (2020), 'Trump says Iran appears to be standing down following its retaliatory attacks against Iraqi bases housing US troops', 8 January 2020, https://edition.cnn.com/2020/01/07/politics/rockets-us-airbase-iraq/index.html (accessed 19 Sept 2020).
73 Szuba, J. (2020), 'Centcom Commander Says Soleimani strike won't deter Iran forever', Al-Monitor*,* 10 July 2020, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/07/intel-centcom-commander-soleimani-strike-deter-iran.html (accessed 2 Aug. 2020).
74 Gause, G. (2018), 'Donald Trump and the Middle East', in Jervis, R., Gavin, F., Rovner, J. and Labrosse, D. (eds) (2018), *Chaos in the Liberal Order: The Trump Presidency and International Politics in the Twenty-First Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 273–286.
75 As presidential candidate, Joe Biden has indicated his intention to return the US to the JCPOA should Iran also return to compliance. See for example Biden, J. (2020), 'There's a smarter way to be tougher on Iran', CNN, 13 September 2020, https://edition.cnn.com/2020/09/13/opinions/smarter-way-to-be-tough-on-iran-joe-biden/index.html (accessed 19 Sept. 2020).

damage. At the UN, France, Germany and the UK have resisted US pressure tactics on the extension of the Iran arms embargo, due to expire in October 2020,[76] or to accept the reimposition of snapback sanctions.[77] The E3 remains deeply concerned about these issues, and about Iran's regional interference, but has pursued its own regional track, including a maritime security initiative for the Persian Gulf, in an effort to carve out space for regional discussions.

Steps to a multilateral future

The US – whether under a second Trump administration or a new one under a Biden presidency – would be well advised to heed the lessons of these continued regional policy failures. Foremost among these is the importance of reaching both domestic and international consensus around any future regional policy coordination. US policymakers will have to recognize that France, Germany and the UK are critical actors whose support will be essential to achieving a meaningful shift in the current balance of tensions. Drawing on the E3 as interlocutors with Iran in order to stabilize the JCPOA must be a priority. Because the E3 countries are perceived as more balanced actors in the region, their involvement would help create assurances for all sides in a regional security dialogue.

The recent trajectory of US Middle East policy under both Republican and Democratic administrations suggests that a regional drawdown will remain the goal whoever is in the White House over the next four years. The EU and the UK would be wise to look beyond the outcome of November's election, and to create their own joint roadmap for this process and prioritize their own security interests, rather than relying on the US to take the lead. Maintaining E3 unity in defending the JCPOA and sharing concerns over regional security serves as a good model for the bloc's future. Moreover, a post-Brexit UK that is truly committed to a role as 'Global Britain' can serve as a critical bridge between Europe and the US. All the same, it is hard to see the E3 as being effective without the support and participation of the US. The bloc, despite its efforts to protect the JCPOA, has been repeatedly pressed by Tehran and Washington to do more.

Should President Trump win a second term, his administration would benefit from objective reflection on the limits and challenges of maximum pressure. Not only has Iran not returned to the negotiating table, but despite the further constraints on its resources Tehran continues to support a wide array of regional militias and proxy groups: its deep commitment to its regional interests remains unchanged. Testifying before the Senate in July 2020, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo acknowledged that while sanctions against Iran 'have clearly had an impact', in terms of diminishing its capacity to finance Hezbollah and Shia militias in Iraq, they have not 'achieved the ultimate objective, which is to change the behavior of the Iranian regime'.[78] This recognition could provide the administration with

76 Manson, K. (2020), 'US appeals for European support to extend Iran arms embargo', *Financial Times*, 13 August 2020, https://www.ft.com/content/b87fe52b-8e46-437b-a158-357ffa85b7a2 (accessed 28 Sept. 2020).
77 Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2020), 'Speech: E3 Foreign Ministers' Statement on the JCPoA', 20 August 2020, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/e3-foreign-ministers-statement-on-the-jcpoa (accessed 19 Sept. 2020).
78 Rev Transcripts (2020), 'Mike Pompeo Testimony Transcript: Secretary of State Testifies on State Dept. Budget', https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/mike-pompeo-testimony-transcript-secretary-of-state-testifies-on-state-dept-budget (accessed 1 Aug. 2020).

an opportunity to reassess its unilateral sanctions-based approach, especially if Trump's offer of a deal with Iran remains on the table.

If the current policy trajectory is maintained under a second Trump administration, this will mean the US exerting more of the same pressure *vis-à-vis* Iran. There is an alternative scenario, in which the Trump administration attempts to rebuild trust with the E3, and through them engage in renewed nuclear negotiations with Tehran. Four years of transatlantic tensions will not be easily brushed aside, however; and the E3 will demand safeguards to protect the JCPOA. Washington would need to provide some sanctions relief for Iran to return to the negotiating table. Tehran is most certainly going to seek compensation for the economic impact of the US withdrawal, and in this respect all sides should consider what face-saving incentives could be offered to ease tensions and build trust. Arab Gulf states, for their part, could be expected to welcome renewed negotiations if they too were consulted through the process this time. Notably, too, Trump would likely have greater ease in obtaining congressional approval for a new deal with Iran. But Iran's Supreme Leader has repeatedly affirmed that Tehran will not negotiate with Trump, and the hardening domestic climate in Iran, and the probable election of a conservative president there in 2021, make it unlikely that the Trump administration could shepherd through wider negotiations on regional issues. At best, then, through a shift in strategy a second Trump administration could stem the tide of a nuclear crisis. It is unlikely to achieve the president's sweeping aim of meeting the Iranian leadership 'anytime they want to'.[79]

In contrast, a Biden administration may be tempted to immediately return to the JCPOA – not simply to reverse Trump's Iran policy, but also to halt Tehran's nuclear advancements. Tehran and the E3 would no doubt back renewed US engagement. However, any attempt to re-enter the JCPOA without first building congressional support would likely be counterproductive and lead to repeated partisan policy swings. The approval of Israel and the Arab states, however difficult to achieve, would also be necessary to a sustainable outcome: their participation in the process would help build confidence. To get their buy-in, therefore, a Biden administration would be advised to move beyond the immediate nuclear focus and instead lay out a detailed roadmap for a regional security process that would seek to lessen Iran's regional interference and manage Arab Gulf security concerns.[80] An inevitable part of this discussion would also be acknowledgment of Iran's threat perceptions, alongside resolution of the rift between Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Here, a Biden presidency would have a unique opportunity to use the US's return to the JCPOA as leverage for wider negotiations with Iran and the region. To do so effectively, his administration would need to think holistically about Iran and Arab Gulf security challenges. In close coordination with the E3, the US should develop a multilateral process that can, over time, through confidence-building measures and international oversight, balance the security needs of all parties. This process critically requires high-level buy-in, and can succeed only if all regional players participate. Each of the regional and external countries involved would

79 BBC News (2018), 'Trump says ready to meet Iran's Rouhani', 31 July 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45013683 (accessed 1 Aug. 2020).
80 Benaim, D. & Sullivan, J. (2020), 'America's Opportunity in the Middle East: Diplomacy Could Succeed Where Military Force has Failed', *Foreign Affairs*, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2020-05-22/americas-opportunity-middle-east (accessed 1 Aug. 2020).

be advised to appoint a non-partisan special envoy to manage the negotiations, which would include bilateral as well as multilateral tracks. Securing the support of Russia and China would be important to the success of this project.[81]

As a first step, the process would need to arrive at a shared set of principles to guarantee the objectives, and to commit to non-aggression and non-interference. The specific circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic provide a level playing field for health and humanitarian collaboration that could in turn foster the goodwill that may enable progress in tackling more contentious issues. Working groups will need to be convened on essential areas: arms control, nuclear security, maritime security, environmental cooperation, cultural exchanges, communication channels, etc. The US and the E3, as external guarantors of the process, should aim to put in place timelines and incentives, such as sanctions relief for Iran and security guarantees for the GCC countries, alongside pressure to keep the process on track. Resolving GCC tensions, including the Qatar dispute, addressing individual security concerns among the smaller GCC states, and stemming the growing militarization of the wider region – from the Persian Gulf to the East Mediterranean and North Africa – will also be critical elements in achieving greater symmetry in the regional balance of power, and in stabilizing conflict zones in Yemen, Libya and Syria. The complexity of these conflicts necessitates winning Russian and Chinese support, too.

If this opportunity is to evolve into a defined process, all parties will need to abandon zero-sum thinking. The GCC should thus focus on the objective of a reduction in Iran's military support for non-state actors; while Iran must be equally modest in its aims, and resist demanding the removal of US troops from the region. A conservative shift in Iranian politics could very well obstruct this process, as could a potential succession in Saudi Arabia. Participation by Israel is necessary to the process, but the political sensitivities mean that this will need to be brokered bilaterally with the E3 and the US. Here, the UAE could also serve as a backchannel interlocutor.

The barriers to such an ambitious multilateral and multi-track process are great, and progress will not be achieved in the absence of committed leadership not just on the part of regional governments, but from the US and Europe. But without some movement towards dialogue and process-building, the Middle East's interlocking tensions and crises will continue to be a source of instability. Ongoing conflicts, and Iran's support for non-state actors across the region, alongside nuclear proliferation threats and growing regional militarization trends, will continue to draw US, EU and UK resources away from their own domestic and wider international security priorities.

The US administration would, above all, need to secure bipartisan support for a sustained diplomatic investment in what will inevitably be a long-term process. Committed EU and UK participation would further increase the chances of sustainability. If it does take hold, such an endeavour could in time stabilize the conflicts in Syria, Libya and Yemen, begin the reconstruction process, and help foster good governance, prosperity and greater regional security for the long term.

81 For a fuller discussion, see Vakil, S. and Quilliam, N. (2019), *Getting to a New Iran Deal: A Guide for Trump, Washington, Tehran, Europe and the Middle East*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2019-10-22-GettingToANewIranDeal2.pdf.

05
What's at stake for global trade?

'Levelling the playing field' with China, and a focus on domestic economic priorities, will remain key principles of US trade policy, no matter who is in the White House.

Marianne Schneider-Petsinger

With the US and global economy severely shocked by the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic outlook will undoubtedly influence the choices facing the US in the months and years ahead. Irrespective of the outcome of November's presidential election, many of the economic challenges will be the same, and how the US responds, as the world's largest economy, will matter for everyone.

Trade was a key tool of the US's global economic and foreign policy engagement even before Donald Trump made it a signature issue of his presidency. And in light of the growing securitization of both economic and tech policy, trade will continue to drive the US's geo-economic agenda. But whether Washington's approach will be more unilateral or multilateral, more inward-looking or focused on global leadership, or more belligerent or cooperative, hangs in the balance with the 2020 election.

What principles guide US trade policy?

Under the Trump administration, tensions between the US and China over trade and technology, trade frictions with some of the US's closest allies (including the EU), the negotiation of a successor to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the president's vocal criticism of the World Trade Organization (WTO) have cemented trade as a key issue.

What have been the driving principles? And will these continue to guide US trade policy for the next four years and beyond? Although some elements of Trump's stance on trade are unique to his administration, others have the potential to become lasting aspects of US trade policy over the coming years.

Trump's focus on the US trade balance has guided the administration to target chiefly those countries with which the US runs the largest trade-in-goods deficits: China, the EU and Mexico.[82] The misplaced emphasis on shrinking the US's bilateral trade deficits is a Trump-specific driver, and will not be an enduring feature of US trade policy in the longer term. Although concerns over large and persistent global trade imbalances may be warranted, protectionist policies are unlikely to address them.

The present 'zero-sum' and transactional approach to trade will come to an end with the Trump administration, be this in January 2021 or 2025. But a focus on 'fair trade' and 'levelling the playing field' will continue to be key principles guiding US trade policy, regardless of who is in the White House.

President Trump has reinforced – albeit more through rhetoric than beneficial action – the nexus between trade policy and national security, and the link between trade and jobs. Structural drivers both at home and internationally mean that future administrations will also use trade policy measures to pursue the goals of strengthening national security and supporting US economic growth.

In particular, China's mercantilist trade policies and practices, combined with the severity of the economic disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic, have intensified the rethinking of globalization. In the context of the fragile US economic recovery, a Trump administration will likely step up efforts to reshore supply chains. As Democratic challenger, Joe Biden has pointed to an approach to supply chains and economic recovery that, not unlike Trump's playbook, emphasizes domestic production and 'Buy American' plans.[83] Thus, protectionist trends will not disappear. In contrast to Trump, however, Biden's supply-chain strategy would focus on working with allies.

On the domestic front, the bipartisan consensus that underpinned broad support for globalization and open trade broke down before Trump was elected president. Paradoxically, even though Americans' broad view of international trade is increasingly positive,[84] free trade has become politically 'homeless' in the US. It is notable that while Democratic voters are gradually viewing trade more favourably,[85] the party in Congress – which has traditionally been more protectionist than the Republican Party – does not reflect this shift. A radical departure from the prevalent anti-trade sentiment in Congress cannot be expected any time soon.

Biden has not set out a standalone plan for US trade policy. Instead, his current (and likely future) approach sees trade policy integrated into a broader foreign policy and domestic agenda. He has said that 'every decision about trade must

82 U.S. Census Bureau (2020), 'U.S. International Trade in Goods and Services (FT900) – Exhibit 20a. U.S. Trade in Goods by Selected Countries and Areas – BOP Basis', https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/Press-Release/current_press_release/exh20a.pdf (accessed 31 Jul. 2020).
83 Biden, J. (2020), 'The Biden Plan to Rebuild U.S. Supply Chains and Ensure the U.S. Does Not Face Future Shortages of Critical Equipment', https://joebiden.com/supplychains (accessed 31 Jul. 2020); Biden, J. (2020), 'The Biden Plan to Ensure the Future is "Made in All of America" by All of America's Workers', https://joebiden.com/madeinamerica (accessed 31 Jul. 2020).
84 Gallup (2019), Trade Under Trump, https://news.gallup.com/file/reports/267425/Trade_Under_Trump.pdf (accessed 31 Jul. 2020).
85 Murray, M. (2019), 'Support for free trade reaches new high in NBC/WSJ poll', NBC News, 18 August 2019, https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/meet-the-press/support-free-trade-reaches-new-high-nbc-wsj-poll-n1043601 (accessed 31 Jul. 2020).

be to build the American middle class'.[86] As president, he would not enter into any new trade agreements until there is sufficient investment at home to enable US workers and businesses to compete globally.[87] Dealing with the long-term public health and economic crisis stemming from the pandemic will also demand significant political capital. In short, much as when Barack Obama entered office in 2009 and focused on bringing the US out of the deep economic recession following the global financial crisis, trade negotiations would not be a priority at the outset of a Biden administration.

Under a Biden administration, many of the concerns raised by the Trump administration will remain, but the rhetoric and the methods employed in addressing them would change. Greater emphasis is likely on working with partners and developing a joint framework on issues of shared concern such as China.

When the time is ripe to launch major trade initiatives, Democrats can be expected to put emphasis on labour standards and the environment. However, a paradigm shift to a progressive trade agenda early in a Biden administration is unlikely, given divisions within the Democratic Party itself and between the two parties. In the event that the Democrats control both houses of Congress, there could be a way forward at the right moment.

The key difference between a Trump and a Biden administration will be in the approach. Under a second term for President Trump, there will likely be a doubling down on an 'America First' trade policy approach, focusing on tariffs and the repatriation of supply chains – especially in light of the increasing tensions with China and the long-term economic effects of the pandemic. Under Biden, many of the concerns raised by the Trump administration will remain, but the rhetoric and the methods employed in addressing them would change. Greater emphasis is likely on working with partners and developing a joint framework on issues of shared concern such as China, and on a less antagonistic approach than seen under the present administration to managing areas of policy divergence among allies.

86 Biden (2020), 'The Biden Plan to Ensure the Future is "Made in All of America" by All of America's Workers'. A similar sentiment is expressed in Biden, J. (2020), 'Why America Must Lead Again – Rescuing U.S. Foreign Policy After Trump', *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again (accessed 31 Jul. 2020).
87 Biden (2020), 'Why America Must Lead Again – Rescuing U.S. Foreign Policy After Trump'.

Key trade policy issues

The China challenge

The number-one challenge for US trade policy will be confronting China's trade and tech policies and practices – including forced technology transfer, intellectual property (IP) theft, industrial subsidies, and the role of state-owned enterprises – and at the same time dealing with China's security crackdown in Hong Kong and its human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

While there is a bipartisan consensus on the diagnosis of these critical concerns, there is disagreement over the remedy. Biden has opposed Trump's unilateral course of action and recourse to tariffs to address China's trade practices. Researchers, including at the New York Fed, have found that Trump's tariffs have meant higher prices for US importers.[88] If re-elected, it will be tempting for Trump to launch yet another round of tariffs to increase pressure on China, but this would undermine the fragile economic recovery at home.

Already, the US–China phase-one trade deal from January 2020 is on shaky ground, as China has fallen behind on its purchasing obligations.[89] The agreement did not address many structural issues, such as China's industrial subsidies and state-owned enterprises, which were meant to be dealt with during a second phase of negotiations. A phase-two deal under Trump is now increasingly unlikely, given the further deterioration in the US–China relationship.

Moreover, a deal with China will only be as good as its implementation. The effectiveness of the phase-one deal's enforcement mechanism remains to be seen. As president, Biden would also seek to hold China accountable through the enforcement of trade rules, although his approach would likely put less emphasis on unilateral action compared with the Trump administration.

The nexus of trade, technology and national security will continue to be a key issue for any administration. US sanctions on Huawei, for instance, are unlikely to be eased. Efforts to cut the Chinese government and its firms off from US technology are set to increase – not only on national security grounds, but increasingly also in response to Beijing's efforts to undermine Hong Kong's autonomy, and human rights violations in Xinjiang. Under a Biden administration, issues of human rights and labour rights, along with digital surveillance and privacy protection, could become elevated points of tension between the US and China. Because it is unlikely that China is willing to address these issues in a meaningful way, the US will probably have to accept limited progress on human rights if it wants concessions on trade.

Linked to US security concerns over China's dominance in high-tech sectors is the increased scrutiny of foreign direct investment (FDI). In 2018 President Trump signed into law new rules that expanded the US government's authority to review

88 Higgins, M., Klitgaard, T. and Nattinger, M. (2019), 'Who Pays the Tax on Imports from China?', Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Liberty Street Economics, 25 November 2019, https://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2019/11/who-pays-the-tax-on-imports-from-china.html (accessed 31 Jul. 2020).
89 Bown, C. (2020), 'US-China phase one tracker: China's purchases of US goods', 25 September 2020, https://www.piie.com/research/piie-charts/us-china-phase-one-tracker-chinas-purchases-us-goods (accessed 28 Sept. 2020).

the national security implications of FDI in the US. While the rules apply to any foreign investment, they were taken with a view to China. A further tightening of investment screening can be anticipated under either Trump or Biden.

The US stands a better chance of success in confronting what it perceives as China's unfair trade and tech practices by liaising more closely with key allies. The US, the EU and Japan are China's most important trading partners, and the three together account for approximately a third of China's trade in goods.[90] Joint efforts could generate more leverage in persuading China to act, in the interests of preserving its trading ties with the major industrial economies that are critical to its own economic growth and access to technology.

There have been some efforts under the Trump administration to work with the EU and Japan to tackle distortions from non-market economies.[91] But if Trump remains in the White House for the next four years, possible greater friction with the US's long-time allies could undermine further joint work on China. If Biden wins in November, his administration has the opportunity to build on the trilateral initiative.

The US stands a better chance of success in confronting what it perceives as China's unfair trade and tech practices by liaising more closely with key allies.

A robust action plan for US collaboration with allies could involve widening participation in talks on countering trade-distortive practices to include the UK, Australia and Canada, among others, alongside the US, the EU and Japan. Under a Biden administration, the US and a coalition of like-minded allies could bring a comprehensive and bold case against China at the WTO.[92] Developing a transatlantic consortium involving Huawei's key competitors – notably Nokia and Ericsson – could help reduce the exposure of 5G infrastructure to Chinese tech firms on both sides of the Atlantic. Foreign investment screening is another area in which closer international collaboration could readily be fostered. In particular, closer cooperation between the EU, the US and its fellow members of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance (Australia, Canada, the UK and New Zealand) could strengthen the effectiveness of the various FDI screening mechanisms by supporting information exchange and coordination on cross-border transactions that raise common national security issues.

Such joint – and potentially mutually beneficial – efforts still raise the question of what the US under a Biden administration would be asking of its partners, and in what form the EU and other allies may be willing to confront China

90 European Commission (2020), 'China, Trade with World', 8 May 2020, https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/isdb_results/factsheets/country/details_china_en.pdf (accessed 28 Sept. 2020).
91 The trade ministers of the US, the EU and Japan have been meeting intermittently since December 2017, and in January 2020 agreed on 'ways to strengthen existing WTO rules on industrial subsidies'. See 'Joint Statement of the Trilateral Meeting of the Trade Ministers of Japan, the United States and the European Union', 14 January 2020, https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2020/january/tradoc_158567.pdf (accessed 31 Jul. 2020).
92 Hillman, J. (2018), 'Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Review Security Commission', 8 June 2018, https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Hillman%20Testimony%20US%20China%20Comm%20w%20Appendix%20A.pdf (accessed 31 Jul. 2020).

more vigorously and risk their commercial ties. Perhaps the US will ask the EU to strengthen its export controls regime and limit the sale of emerging technologies to China. The US could also demand that there is increased scrutiny of the transparency and accountability of Chinese companies listed on stock exchanges in Europe and Asia.

Overall, a second-term Trump administration can be expected to double down on efforts to sever the US's economic ties with China, while a Biden administration would more likely look to manage the relationship to reduce dependence in critical products such as medical supplies or semiconductors. In any case – and with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic having amplified existing calls for national self-sufficiency – at least a partial decoupling in strategic sectors seems inevitable.

Reform of the multilateral trade system and the WTO

The Trump administration has questioned the value of the WTO, and wants a reset of the organization. It has blocked appointments of new members to the WTO Appellate Body, which resulted in its paralysis in December 2019.[93] Despite various reform efforts under way, a second Trump administration will in all likelihood remain uncompromising, perpetuating the Appellate Body gridlock. In the absence of a resolution, more countries will join the interim appeals mechanism set up by the EU and other WTO members.[94] At the same time, the Trump administration can be expected to continue its engagement on other reform issues: the US has been active in discussions regarding an agreement on fisheries subsidies, in e-commerce negotiations, and in identifying new approaches concerning special and differential treatment for developing countries.

Should the US take forward the reform of the WTO Appellate Body under a Biden administration, it would fare better by putting forward a specific reform proposal – instead of simply reiterating current grievances. Even then, the dispute settlement crisis will not easily be resolved, as many of the US's concerns regarding the Appellate Body predate the Trump administration and are shared by many other countries (even if they disapprove of Trump's tactics). Moreover, unless the underlying trade tensions between the US and China – and also between the US and its allies (notably the EU) – are addressed, it is hard to see how there can be any meaningful WTO reform. Thus, while a Biden presidency would certainly mean a return to more collaborative US engagement and leadership in the global trade system, reform of the WTO is not guaranteed.

The coronavirus pandemic has added further complexity to an already packed WTO reform agenda. The wide use of domestic subsidies to fight the severe economic blow dealt by COVID-19 raises the prospect of a wave of disputes at the WTO, as many countries consider these measures to be 'trade distorting'. This could, in particular,

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93 For more background, see Schneider-Petsinger, M. (2020), *Reforming the World Trade Organization: Prospects for transatlantic cooperation and the global trade system*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/reforming-world-trade-organization-prospects-transatlantic-cooperation-and-global-trade (accessed 28 Sept. 2020).
94 European Commission (2020), 'Interim appeal arrangement for WTO disputes becomes effective', 30 April 2020, https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=2143 (accessed 31 Jul. 2020).

end up as a transatlantic minefield. Moreover, US subsidies or tax incentives – for instance to the semiconductor industry – could leave Washington open to accusations of double standards when it comes to disciplining Beijing's practices.

Other trade negotiations

Immediately on taking office as president in 2017, Donald Trump followed through on his campaign pledge to withdraw the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a centrepiece of the Obama administration's trade policy. As vice-president, Joe Biden supported the deal. He still regards it as an important counterweight to China's economic influence, but he would (and could) not take the US straight into what has since entered into force among the remaining 11 signatories as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Instead, Biden can be expected to seek to renegotiate the terms of the agreement in a way that addresses domestic opposition across the political spectrum and across US labour and environmental groups. More than 20 TPP provisions have been suspended in the CPTPP, including rules on intellectual property that the US had pushed for in the original agreement. Many CPTPP countries would in principle welcome the US back with open arms, but the Biden administration would be unwise to expect substantial concessions to its interests.

President Trump also fulfilled his campaign promise to renegotiate NAFTA. Biden has supported what has become the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA), as it leaves most of the original NAFTA provisions intact and also draws on the TPP. However, either administration will likely encounter implementation issues, and this could pose some challenges for the US's trade relationship with Canada and Mexico.

With the phase-one US–China deal, the USMCA and two initial US–Japan trade agreements nominally under its belt, a second Trump administration would likely focus more on trade relations with Europe. Negotiations are already under way for US trade arrangements with the EU and with the UK. Along with the traditional sticking points related to market access, and food and health concerns, bilateral trade tensions (for instance related to the long-standing Boeing–Airbus dispute or the US's imposition of steel and aluminum tariffs in the name of national security) will continue to stall progress. The issue of digital services taxes will likely become an even greater source of tensions in the period ahead. Moreover, if the EU goes ahead with plans for a carbon border tax, this would become a flashpoint in transatlantic trade relations under Trump.

In contrast, a Biden administration may be expected to engage in a way that ought to make the transatlantic trade relationship less fraught and more stable – for example by rolling back his predecessor's tariffs on steel and aluminum, and removing the tariff threat on automobiles and parts. Nonetheless, reviving negotiations with the EU along the lines of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is unlikely, as those talks were already in trouble before Trump entered the White House. Biden could instead pick up the negotiations started by the current administration with the EU, and make progress before the current Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) expires in July 2021 and needs to be renewed.[95]

For a Biden administration, repairing the transatlantic trade relationship, and working with the EU and the UK to fix the multilateral trade system, will require careful management of areas of divergence between the US and Europe. For example, transatlantic differences over digital services taxes need to be isolated from other areas where there is scope for greater progress. This could be achieved more easily if the US recommits to negotiations regarding digital taxation under the auspices of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).[96]

The bottom line

The key challenges facing the US with regard to trade – chief among them how best to deal with an assertive China, reform of the WTO, and strengthening supply-chain resilience for the post-pandemic era – will be the same no matter who occupies the White House next year. Despite significant presidential powers on trade, Congress plays a critical role and could seek to reassert control of US trade policy.[97] Increased partisanship will not go away anytime soon; nor will internal political divisions within the Democratic and Republican parties be readily overcome. These structural factors and constraints limit the potential for a large-scale realignment of US trade policy. At the same time, the trade policies and approaches of a Biden administration would look very different from those of a second Trump administration.

Trade policy begins and ends at home, meaning that either administration will need to build domestic support for its trade agenda. But trade policy also needs to be considered as part of the wider context. It is not the main cause of many of the most pressing challenges facing the US; nor is it the main cure. A well-formulated and well-executed trade policy can, however, play an important role as part of a comprehensive approach to tackling domestic inequality, competing internationally, and addressing climate change.

95 Congress delegates authority to the president to negotiate free-trade agreements through TPA. It sets out negotiation objectives and provides for expedited legislative consideration (via an up-or-down vote without the opportunity for amendments), as long as certain notification and consultation requirements are met. Because TPA is extended only for a limited time, Congress has to periodically renew it and determine future negotiation objectives. TPA – currently authorized to 1 July 2021 – has become a contentious political issue, which has led to lapses in the past.
96 In June 2020 the US paused discussions of Pillar 1 (which concerns the allocation of taxing rights), but it is still seeking to conclude talks regarding Pillar 2 (on a global minimum tax) before the end of 2020.
97 Article 1, Section 8 of the US Constitution gives Congress exclusive power to impose tariffs and 'to regulate commerce with foreign nations'. In 2018–2019, several lawmakers introduced bills to rein in the president's authority on trade policy.

06
The US and climate change

A US administration that is committed to climate action could lead global efforts to build a cleaner recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sam Geall and
Tim G. Benton

The UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) will take place in Glasgow in November 2021, five years after the entry into force of the Paris Agreement on climate change. This is a critical juncture. The latest scientific analysis indicates temperature rise in excess of 3°C over pre-industrial levels if atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations double, which the world is on course to reach around 2060 at current rates of emissions.[98] According to the UN Environment Programme,[99] to reach the global target of 1.5°C set under the Paris Agreement, countries will need to collectively increase fivefold their existing commitments to reduce emissions over the next decade.

All countries and blocs will need to demonstrate their commitment to, and ambition on, climate action in the run-up to the Glasgow talks. What the US does over the coming year, and in particular its relationship with China, may determine the trajectory the parties to the conference take – and, ultimately, whether the world succeeds in averting catastrophic climate change.

The joint announcement on climate change made by President Xi Jinping and Barack Obama[100] in late 2014 drew a line under the 'blame game' that had followed the collapse of climate negotiations at Copenhagen (COP15) in 2009.

98 Forster, P., Hausfather, Z., Hegerl, G., Sherwood, S. and Armour, K. (2020), 'Guest post: Why low-end 'climate sensitivity' can now be ruled out', CarbonBrief, 22 July 2020, https://www.carbonbrief.org/guest-post-why-low-end-climate-sensitivity-can-now-be-ruled-out (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
99 United Nations Environment Programme (2019), 'Cut global emissions by 7.6 percent every year for next decade to meet 1.5 degrees Celsius Paris target – UN Report', 26 November 2019, https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/cut-global-emissions-76-percent-every-year-next-decade-meet-15degc (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
100 The White House (2014), 'U.S.-China Joint Announcement on Climate Change and Clean Energy Cooperation', 11 November 2014, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/11/fact-sheet-us-china-joint-announcement-climate-change-and-clean-energy-c (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).

The rapprochement helped pave the way for the signing of the Paris Agreement. Cooperation on climate became the most productive dimension of the China–US relationship, leading to substantive collaboration and on-the-ground pilot projects through initiatives such as the US–China Climate Change Working Group and the US–China Clean Energy Research Center. This cooperation has diminished significantly under the Trump administration.

Xi Jinping's unilateral pledge, made at the UN General Assembly in September 2020, that China will work to reach carbon neutrality by 2060 highlights how far the US's own standing has fallen on climate action.[101] But the current lack of detail on China's nearer-term implementation measures, and credible concerns that China may still backslide on coal, point to the continued need for international partnerships.

What, then, may be the consequences of the outcome of the November 2020 presidential election for environmental governance? If Donald Trump remains in office, concludes the process of withdrawing the US from the Paris Agreement, and pursues a second term based on creating an enduring legacy for US fossil fuel interests and environmental deregulation, what does this mean for global cooperation on climate change? If Joe Biden is elected president, to what extent will there be a change of direction under his administration? Will it be possible to roll-back the 'Trump effect'?

The Trump effect

As president, Donald Trump has gutted environmental protection in the US. By July 2020 his administration had abolished 68 environmental regulations, including on phasing out inefficient lightbulbs and HFC (hydrofluorocarbon) 'super pollutants' in air conditioners and refrigerators; methane pollution from oil and gas infrastructure; and emissions standards for cars and trucks.[102] The Trump administration has dismantled the Clean Power Plan, replacing President Obama's signature climate policy with a far weaker rule,[103] and has been vocal in his efforts to undermine the science of climate change.[104]

During 2020, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the administration's focus on support for fossil fuel jobs, as already provided for in the 2017 Executive Order on Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth, and the 2019 Executive Order on Promoting Energy Infrastructure and Energy Growth. The federal bailout of US industries affected by the pandemic notably offers no benefits for the clean energy sector, but includes concessions to oil, gas

101 UN News (2020), ''Enhance solidarity' to fight COVID-19, Chinese President urges, also pledges carbon neutrality by 2060', 22 September 2020, https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1073052 (accessed 30 Sept. 2020).
102 Popovich, N. and Tabuchi, H. (2020), 'Tracking the Environmental Rules Reversed Under Trump', *New York Times*, 13 May 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/13/climate/nyt-climate-newsletter-trump-rollbacks.html?searchResultPosition=5 (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
103 Irfan, U. (2019), 'Trump's EPA just replaced Obama's signature climate policy with a much weaker rule', Vox, 19 June 2019, https://www.vox.com/2019/6/19/18684054/climate-change-clean-power-plan-repeal-affordable-emissions (accessed 9 Sept. 2020).
104 Cheung, H. (2020), 'What does Trump actually believe on climate change?', BBC, 23 January 2020, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-51213003 (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).

and coal companies to the tune of billions of dollars – including at least $3.9 billion from the Paycheck Protection Program.[105] Marathon Petroleum is expected to claim a $1.1 billion tax refund due to the coronavirus stimulus law enacted in March.

Of greatest global consequence, in November 2019 the Trump administration formally notified the UN of its intention to withdraw the US from the Paris Agreement, effective one year later.[106] This, as with the administration's wider aversion to multilateralism – discussed in relation to various international institutions in other chapters of this paper – has weakened the global cooperation that is critically needed to mitigate climate change.

Re-election for Trump in November 2020 would likely entrench his administration's commitment to US 'energy dominance' through expanded fossil fuel production,[107] as well as bring further attacks on the science of climate change, including though reduced budgets for related scientific programmes.[108]

Market and technological dynamics mean that the US economy may continue to decarbonize despite the antipathy of the Trump administration. However, the signalled US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, due to take effect the day after the election, could have serious repercussions for other signatories' commitment to cooperation on mitigating climate change. Trump's unilateral 'laggardship', in the assessment of one group of researchers, 'reduces the prospects for reaching the 2°C target to near zero and will entail a substantial effect on long-run global emissions, even if the next president should re-enter the Agreement'.[109]

Can a new administration restore global climate leadership?

If it so chooses, however, the next US administration could take a leading position on global efforts to address climate change. In particular, the US could take the opportunity to lead on efforts to build a cleaner recovery from COVID-19: one that helps to restore nature, climate and health.

The current global health and climate crises both underscore the deep interdependencies of our environment and the globalized economy, and the resulting need for international cooperation, leadership and foresight. It also shows very vividly how each and all of these can be set back by rivalry, suspicion and protectionism among critical global interests.

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105 Raskin, S. B. (2020), 'Why is the FED Spending So Much Money on a Dying Industry?', *New York Times*, 28 May 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/28/opinion/fed-fossil-fuels.html (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
106 The US withdrawal is due to take effect, following a mandatory one-year notice period, the day after the 2020 US elections. Holden, E. (2019), 'Trump begins year-long process to formally exit Paris climate agreement', *Guardian*, 5 November 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/nov/04/donald-trump-climate-crisis-exit-paris-agreement (accessed 9 Sept. 2020).
107 White House (2020), 'President Donald J. Trump Has Unleashed American Producers and Restored our Energy Dominance', 29 July 2020, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-unleashed-american-producers-restored-energy-dominance (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
108 Mervis, J. (2020), 'Trump's new budget cuts all but favoured few science programs', ScienceMag, 11 February 2020, https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/02/trump-s-new-budget-cuts-all-favored-few-science-programs (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
109 Sælen, H., Hovi, J., Sprinz, D., and Underdal, A. (2020), 'How US withdrawal might influence cooperation under the Paris climate agreement', *Environmental Science & Policy,* 108: pp. 121–132, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2020.03.011 (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).

An effort by the next US administration to re-engage with climate change as a central element of foreign policy would be crucially important for global economic coordination on the post-coronavirus recovery, as well as sending a key signal as regards US engagement on climate policy and multilateralism – to allies, to markets and to international institutions – at a time of deep flux and uncertainty. Undoubtedly, too, it would give the US a valuable ‘soft power' boost at a time when its reputation has been severely damaged by the current administration's handling of the pandemic; by heavy-handed responses to protests for racial justice; and by its seeming disregard for the interests of traditional allies and long-standing alliances.[110]

US re-engagement on climate policy has to begin at home, with the next administration first demonstrating a commitment to substantially increase its own mitigation ambitions: for example, by setting a net zero 2050 target for US domestic greenhouse gas emissions; reversing the dismantling of environmental rules since 2017; and putting in place effective laws and regulations to achieve this critical climate goal.

Government intervention is urgently required, beginning with stimulus funding to support the clean energy sector.

While the federal government has given little support to the clean energy sector under Trump's presidency, wind, solar and storage projects are increasingly being planned and approved in the US, driven by markets and economics as well as by political and social pressure. One recent analysis notably projected that the US would add record levels of solar photovoltaic and energy storage capacity – 18 GW and 1.2 GW respectively – in 2020.[111]

Nevertheless, COVID-19 has limited the availability of financing for green energy initiatives. This is hitting important areas like residential energy efficiency hard, and is undermining critical efforts not just to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but also to create and sustain the jobs that the energy transformation could provide. Government intervention is urgently required, beginning with stimulus funding to support the clean energy sector.

A more ambitious vision along the lines of the ‘Green New Deal' concept would entail a huge expansion of public investment that could be used to drive a recovery that benefits workers. Green job creation represents an enormous opportunity. A major report published by the International Energy Agency (IEA) in June 2020 set out a sustainable recovery plan that, in its assessment, could save or create some 9 million jobs annually around the world over the next three years.[112] The ‘modular' nature of renewable energy projects, and the number of households requiring

110 Sonenshine, T. (2020), ‘American prestige hits rock bottom', The Hill, June 26 2020, https://thehill.com/opinion/international/504754-american-prestige-hits-rock-bottom (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
111 Ashmore, J., Cleveland, C. and Fox-Penner, P. (2020), ‘The US Clean-Energy Transition in the Era of COVID-19: The Prospects Remain Robust', *Oxford Energy Forum*, Issue 123: pp. 39–41, https://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/OEF123.pdf (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
112 IEA (2020), ‘Sustainable Energy World Outlook Special Report', https://www.iea.org/reports/sustainable-recovery (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).

energy efficiency upgrades, together with the short lead times of both these areas of activity, mean that a low-carbon stimulus has the potential to create jobs very rapidly, especially compared with traditional infrastructure projects with inherently long lead times.[113]

Without major and sustained investment, the US risks missing out on opportunities to create low-carbon jobs and technology leadership in sectors like electric vehicles. The International Renewable Energy Agency assessed that China accounted for 39 per cent of all jobs in renewable energy globally in 2018, and Asia overall for 60 per cent of the global total.[114] However, for the US to pursue job creation in renewables through a unilateral 'green deal' is not the solution: without global coordination, an aggressive low-carbon pathway brings the risk of carbon leakage, whereby polluting companies relocate to countries with less strict emissions controls.

A US administration that is committed to climate action could make such global coordination, now all the more urgent in the context of the post-coronavirus recovery, a priority. For this to be credible, the US must rejoin the Paris Agreement as a minimum, and as part of this set out an ambitious climate pledge in the form of its nationally determined contribution (NDC – the core commitment of each party to the agreement). But given the long-standing distrust of US good faith resulting from its previous failure to ratify the Kyoto Protocol (from which it withdrew under the presidency of George W. Bush in 2001), since compounded by President Trump's disavowal of the Paris Agreement, rejoining Paris must not be an end in itself.

The US will need to demonstrate commitment to climate science, and to enhancing global climate action – around (but not limited to) resilience, mitigation and finance – through public diplomacy and actions that go beyond the Paris Agreement. These include the rebuilding of bilateral relationships with major emitters – chief among them China, India, Indonesia and the EU – and advocacy through multilateral processes and forums like the G7, the G20 and a reconstituted Major Economies Forum.[115] But perhaps the most important task for a new US administration is to forge a rapprochement with China on climate.

Rebuilding US–China climate cooperation

'[I]f we want to have a free 21st century, and not the Chinese century of which Xi Jinping dreams, the old paradigm of blind engagement with China simply won't get it done,' said Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in his speech at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library in July 2020: 'We must not continue it and we must not return to it.'[116]

113 Quiggin, D. (2020), 'Green Industries Can Accelerate a True Jobs-Focused Recovery', Chatham House Expert Comment, 23 June 2020, https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/green-industries-can-accelerate-true-jobs-focused-recovery (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
114 International Renewable Energy Agency (2019), *Renewable Energy and Jobs: Annual Review 2019*, https://irena.org/-/media/Files/IRENA/Agency/Publication/2019/Jun/IRENA_RE_Jobs_2019-report.pdf (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
115 The Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate was launched by the Obama administration in 2009. For background, see U.S. Department of State (2009–17, archived), 'Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate', https://2009-2017.state.gov/e/oes/climate/mem/index.htm (accessed 9 Sept. 2020).
116 U.S. Department of State (2020), 'Communist China and the Free World's Future: Speech, Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, California', 23 July 2020, https://www.state.gov/communist-china-and-the-free-worlds-future (accessed 9 Sept. 2020).

Pompeo's hawkish doctrine on US relations with China may not endure under the next administration, but the wider geopolitical tensions between the two, which have escalated over the past four years – as explored in other chapters of this paper – are likely to continue for the foreseeable future, as is the potential for escalation. A detente will not come easily, whichever administration is in the White House from 2021.

All the same, the success of any future climate regime will be crucially dependent on there being a cooperative relationship between China and the US; the two are the world's largest carbon polluters, together responsible for more than 40 per cent of global annual emissions. A new US administration will need to work to restore climate change mitigation as a critical element of the relationship with China. As part of this, joint technical cooperation efforts established under the Obama administration – some of which continue to exist in diminished form, as do US–China subnational initiatives – could be reconstituted and reprioritized with relative ease.

Such a relationship on climate change is important for China's climate policies, domestic and international, and for the global climate regime, as much as for the US's standing in the world. President Xi's new announcement of a 2060 carbon neutrality target may have rightly drawn headlines and praise, but nearer-term measures will be critical to mitigation efforts, particularly to avoid locking in high-carbon technological pathways. China is currently formulating its 14th Five-Year Plan, for the period 2021–25, which will include climate targets, at the same time as it is launching a stimulus programme in response to COVID-19 and preparing for next year's COP26.

Early indications about the provisions of the Five-Year Plan are a cause for concern: although it may include a carbon emissions cap for the first time, there have also been proposals for a looser cap on coal-fired capacity – specifically, to allow it to rise by around 200 GW over the next decade, to 1,300 GW in total.[117]

While many of the drivers of China's policies on climate and the environment are domestic, tensions with the US pose an underestimated threat to the climate, not least as they encourage China to pursue energy self-sufficiency through coal. Planning for a possible 'war-footing' in the face of rising geopolitical tensions may mean that policymakers are more receptive to the case made by vested interests that continuing to develop domestic coal improves China's energy security.[118]

Similarly, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), if it acts as an 'escape valve' for Chinese overcapacity and shrinking domestic markets by exporting carbon-intensive production overseas, could undermine the vision of a cleaner, more modern and sustainable power sector in many countries, particularly those at an important inflection point in their development. International engagement – in part supported by the US – may be key to achieving a greener BRI.

117 Baxter, T. and Yao, Z. (2019), 'The 14th Five Year Plan: what ideas are on the table?', China Dialogue, 7 August 2019, https://chinadialogue.net/en/climate/11434-the-14th-five-year-plan-what-ideas-are-on-the-table (accessed 9 Sept. 2019).
118 Geall, S. (2020), 'China still needs to curb King Coal', *Financial Times*, https://www.ft.com/content/a8c082b4-5ac9-4446-bd4f-756bad11f765?segmentid=acee4131-99c2-09d3-a635-873e61754ec6 (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).

A new US administration might not immediately ratchet down tensions with China. But in re-engaging in global efforts on climate change mitigation it could help to bolster low-carbon alternative pathways in partnership with China and BRI countries, as well with partners like the EU; Indo-Pacific allies like Australia, India and Japan; and international institutions in working to shape the rules around finance to least-developed countries.

The global order has changed dramatically in the five years since COP21 and the negotiation of the Paris Agreement. An impact of this that specifically undermines international efforts at climate change mitigation is that the concepts and institutions that guided previous bilateral engagement between the US and China may no longer be fit for purpose, partly because they have been undermined by the Trump administration.

The framing of a new US–China relationship, therefore, will need to take account of a new reality likely shaped by strategic rivalry and sharply contrasting values. Yet common interests in climate security can and should necessitate continued engagement, through technical exchange, the building of trust, and coordinated efforts on climate change mitigation.

An analogy for a possible way forward might be the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), undertaken by the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and which saw a commitment to pursue arms control agreements even at points of deep tension between the nuclear superpowers.

Another approach, alongside other trust-building cooperative actions, could lie in the renewed fostering of more competitive economic dynamics between the US and China, such as through border adjustment taxes (BATs) – currently being discussed in the EU – whereby a carbon-adjusted price on imports from outside the US would be imposed to prevent carbon leakage.

The US and China can and should also work cooperatively on establishing joint clean energy standards and guidelines, and perhaps on international carbon trading. In addition, the US administration could support greater Chinese engagement with (and eventually membership of) the IEA, helping to build reassurance on energy security and joint engagement at multilateral level.

Economic recovery after COVID-19

Regardless, the opportunity exists after COVID-19 for the US president to make global coordination on the recovery – to ‘build back better’, as is frequently repeated – an important aspect of foreign policy, unlocking significant economic effects for the low-carbon technology transition, given the massive financial flows that will be channelled into recovering from the pandemic.

The US still has considerable diplomatic clout, and despite distrust around its engagement with environmental processes, it can send important signals to markets, investors and states that could help to accelerate a low-carbon transition pathway for the economic recovery.

This would play out in a critical year in the run-up to COP26 in November 2021. Not only will states produce their NDCs, but there will be a series of meetings and events that could help to coordinate international ambition, including the World Bank and IMF Spring Meetings; the Convention on Biological Diversity COP 15 (China); the G7 (UK); and the G20 (Italy).

Through all these forums, a US that has reaffirmed its commitment to climate science, reinvigorated its approach to climate action – and shown itself willing to play a constructive role in cooperation with the UK, the EU and other major emitters – could play a transformative role. In the alternative scenario, the US will sit outside the Paris Agreement, dealing a further blow to domestic and global climate ambitions, multilateral cooperation and key bilateral relationships. Recovery from such a blow may be near impossible.

07
The US and global health security

By re-engaging in multilateral cooperation on global health security, the US can better protect its own citizens and economy, and build up capacity to withstand the next public health emergency.

Amy Pope

The COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to the worst public health crisis in a generation. In the US alone, some 7.7 million cases had been confirmed by mid-October 2020, and more than 213,000 deaths.[119] Globally, there have been infections in nearly every country, with cases already numbering some 38 million. The virus has changed the way people live, work, travel and supply goods, and will have far-reaching consequences for years to come. There has been no issue that has more dramatically affected the course of the Trump presidency, and no issue that has so clearly highlighted the negative impact of the US's return to isolationism over the last four years.

The possibility of a severe pandemic with far-reaching health, social and economic consequences has long been predicted.[120] Over the last two decades, there have been a range of infectious disease threats – from H1N1, H5N1 and H7N9 influenza, to the emergence of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). The 2014–16 West African Ebola epidemic was the largest Ebola outbreak ever recorded. And in 2016 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern after

119 World Health Organization (2020), 'WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard', https://covid19.who.int/region/amro/country/us (accessed 14 Oct. 2020).
120 Hoffower, H. (2020), 'Bill Gates has been warning of a global health threat for years. Here are 12 people who seemingly predicted the coronavirus pandemic'. Business Insider, 13 May 2020, https://www.businessinsider.com/people-who-seemingly-predicted-the-coronavirus-pandemic-2020-3?r=US&IR=T#infectious-disease-expert-michael-osterholm-has-also-been-warning-of-a-global-pandemic-for-the-past-decade-3 (accessed 3 Aug. 2020).

a widespread epidemic of Zika fever, caused by a mosquito-borne virus, revealed an association between infection in pregnant women and clusters of microcephaly and other neurological disorders in their infants.

A pandemic caused by a respiratory pathogen has been the main focus of pandemic preparedness efforts. The evidence suggested that the costs of a highly contagious respiratory illness would be inevitable and devastating. SARS, for example, had been estimated to have cost the world well over $30 billion.[121] More importantly, recent outbreaks of various kinds had highlighted key deficiencies in the abilities of countries to quickly contain an infectious disease outbreak. Despite the warnings of experts for the last several decades, and the implementation of programmes designed to strengthen preparedness and response capacities across the world, several assessments had judged that much of the world remained unprepared to respond adequately to a pandemic.[122]

In the US, President Trump's response to the pandemic, and its impact both at home and across the world, has veered between hubris, denial and the shifting of responsibility. This has left constituents and partners confused and disappointed. Not only has the US stepped back from the global leadership role it has typically played in the post-war era; it has undermined its own credibility by failing to manage an effective response to the spread of infection within its own borders.

Without a significant shift in direction in tackling the far-reaching consequences of COVID-19, the US risks permanently losing its capacity to act effectively as a global leader.

There are no grounds for optimism that the coronavirus pandemic will be contained by the time the next administration takes office, in January 2021. The US has already squandered much of the goodwill it had with partner countries on any number of issues over the last four years; and now, without a significant shift in direction in tackling the far-reaching consequences of COVID-19, the US risks permanently losing its capacity to act effectively as a global leader. These consequences are not limited to its ability to build up its own resilience to the next pandemic – although in the age of mass travel, global supply chains and rapid urbanization that is certainly a major risk. What the present pandemic has underscored is that the stress on many already impoverished communities will likely impact governance and regional stability, and trigger new waves of migration, extremism and violence, all of which will have consequences for the US. Furthermore, the Trump administration's handling of the coronavirus, and its lack of regard for neighbouring countries in

121 Lee, J.-W. and McKibbin, W. J. (2004), 'Estimating the Global Economic Costs of SARS', in Institute of Medicine (2004), *Learning from SARS: Preparing for the Next Disease Outbreak: Workshop Summary*, Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, pp. 92–109.
122 See for example European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (2011), 'WHO's Final Report on the functioning of the International Health Regulations (IHR) in relation to the 2009 A(H1N1) pandemic – the Fineberg report', ECDC comment, 13 June 2011, https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/news-events/whos-final-report-functioning-international-health-regulations-ihr-relation-2009-ah1n1; London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (2015), 'Independent panel of global experts calls for critical reforms to prevent future pandemics', https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/newsevents/news/2015/ebola_report.html (accessed 24 Sept. 2020).

their own efforts to fight the spread of infection and mitigate the impacts of the virus, could prolong the outbreak and cause even greater harm to people and economies globally, thus compounding the damage the US has already inflicted on itself.

The US's global health leadership role, pre-Trump and pre-COVID

The US has contributed to international action on global health over many decades, and across both Republican and Democratic administrations. The US was a founding member of WHO in 1948, and while there has always been some tension between national and multilateral interests, the last two decades have witnessed a sustained commitment to US global leadership on this issue. In 1999, the Clinton administration's National Security Strategy equated international epidemics with war or terrorist acts as threats to human life, and recognized that 'the resulting burden on health systems can undermine hard-won advances in economic and social development and contribute to the failure of fledgling democracies'.[123] 'The international community is at times reluctant to act without American leadership,' the report stated. 'In some instances, the United States is the only nation capable of providing the necessary leadership and capabilities for an international response to shared challenges.'[124]

The 9/11 attacks on the US mainland, and the anthrax attacks that followed soon after in the autumn of 2001, brought urgent scrutiny of the US's potential vulnerability to extreme shocks, including not just terrorism and bioterrorism, but biological threats such as an infectious disease pandemic.

Under the presidency of George W. Bush, the US remained committed to its responsibility to engage at the multilateral level on global health. In the wake of the SARS epidemic in 2002–03, for instance, the US participated actively in WHO's work to revise the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005), the binding international legal framework to guide countries in preventing, protecting against, controlling and responding to public health risks. Most significantly, through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), instituted in 2003, the US made the 'largest commitment by any nation to combat a single disease in human history'.[125]

123 United States National Security Council, The White House (1999), *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, p. 3, https://clintonwhitehouse5.archives.gov/media/media/pdf/nssr-1299.pdf (accessed 3 Aug. 2020).
124 Ibid.
125 The White House, President George W. Bush (2008), 'Office of National AIDS Policy', https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/hivaids (accessed 3 Aug. 2020).

President Bush sought relatively significant resources from Congress, amounting to $15 billion over five years, embracing this action as being in the country's 'moral, practical, and national security' interests.[126]

The 9/11 attacks on the US mainland, and the anthrax attacks that followed soon after in the autumn of 2001, brought urgent scrutiny of the US's potential vulnerability to extreme shocks, including not just terrorism and bioterrorism, but biological threats such as an infectious disease pandemic. In 2005 the federal government drafted the first National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza;[127] and in 2008 the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) was established, within the Department of Health and Human Services, with a mission to develop vaccines for unanticipated infectious diseases.[128]

In 2009, within months of taking office, the Obama administration was confronted with the H1N1 pandemic, which infected more than 60 million Americans in the course of a year.[129] As well as managing the domestic response, the US worked with WHO, and through the organization's intergovernmental processes, to mitigate the global impact of the pandemic. Through this cooperation, the US contributed substantively to the development of guidance on surveillance and the use of antiviral drugs, and of the pandemic influenza preparedness framework for the distribution of vaccines.

Building on lessons learned from H1N1 and other infectious disease outbreaks, and recognizing that it was in the US's interest to increase the health capacity of its global partners, in 2014 the Obama administration launched the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA).[130] As part of the GHSA, participating countries identify metrics for assessing the capacity of countries to respond to public health challenges, independently assess them through the joint external evaluation process, then tailor assistance plans to increase that capacity. The initiative was not wholly altruistic. Underlying the US's financial and resource commitment was a recognition that if an infectious disease overwhelms the response capacity of the country in which it originates, it could quickly spread and destabilize others in a region – and perhaps globally.

These principles were tested by the 2014–16 Ebola outbreak in West Africa. Although only a small number of cases were recorded in the US, that they occurred at all revealed gaps in infection control, border controls, public health connectivity and resourcing to manage the outbreak. The US response – to significantly increase

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126 Pilling, D. (2019), 'Why George W Bush is Africa's favourite US president', *Financial Times*, 17 July 2019, https://www.ft.com/content/72424694-a86e-11e9-984c-fac8325aaa04 (accessed 3 Aug. 2020); Dietrich, J. W. (2007), 'The Politics of PEPFAR: The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief', *Ethics & International Affairs*, Volume 21.3 (Fall 2007), https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/journal/21_3/essay/001 (accessed 3 Aug. 2020).
127 Homeland Security Council (2005), *National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza*, https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/pdf/pandemic-influenza-strategy-2005.pdf (accessed 23 Sept. 2020).
128 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2020), 'Public Health Emergency: Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority', https://www.phe.gov/about/barda/Pages/default.aspx (accessed 23 Sept. 2020).
129 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010), 'The 2009 H1N1 Pandemic: Summary Highlights, April 2009–April 2010', updated 16 June 2010, https://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/cdcresponse.htm (accessed 3 Aug. 2020).
130 Office of the Press Secretary, The White House (2015), 'FACTSHEET: The Global Health Security Agenda', https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/28/fact-sheet-global-health-security-agenda; Global Health Security Agenda (undated), 'About the GHSA', https://ghsagenda.org/home/about-the-ghsa (accessed 3 Aug. 2020).

support to West African countries, and to partner with the UK and France, among others, on a comprehensive response strategy – was an investment not just in the region, but in US public health.[131] There was a consensus, since borne out by the experience of the current COVID-19 pandemic, that once there is community transmission of a virus in any US urban area, the ability to quickly contain it – and to minimize public and political anxiety – reduces dramatically. Following the Ebola outbreak, the Obama administration documented these lessons learned in multiple after-action reports, by drafting a detailed early-response 'playbook', and by establishing a National Security Council directorate within the White House, with a primary mission to identify and mitigate possible new infectious disease threats.[132] By bringing high-level political attention to this issue, the goal was to increase support for the strongest possible response in the event of the next outbreak.

The common thread running through these prior administrations, therefore, was the understanding that infectious disease response was apolitical; that it was the responsibility of the federal government to build on the lessons learned from past outbreaks in order to improve response to the next; and that a public health threat such as a catastrophic infectious disease outbreak could be as destabilizing to US national security as a terrorist attack.

Despite the recognition that the US could not effectively control a global infectious disease outbreak on its own, and notwithstanding considerable investments in improving preparedness and response capacity, neither the Bush nor the Obama administration left office having built up sufficient resources and political will to ensure the response capabilities needed to effectively manage a pandemic like COVID-19. While the post-9/11 anthrax attacks, SARS in 2009–10 and Ebola in 2014–16 accelerated investment in infectious disease response, this capability remained relatively weak and fractured in comparison with US investment in 'traditional' counterterrorism measures over the same period.

Thus, while countless officials agreed on the need for greater coordination and investment, there remained significant gaps in the US's ability to manage an outbreak on the scale now seen with the coronavirus pandemic. This was particularly the case with regard to funding, even after a significant injection of resources as part of an Ebola supplemental. Furthermore, the realization that infectious disease response needed to be major part of the national security apparatus still had not taken hold across the federal bureaucracy. The Obama administration took steps to change that perception, but it was anticipated that the successor administration would need to continue to build on this foundational work if the US was to have the capacity to withstand the next major infectious disease outbreak.

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131 Kirchhoff, C. M. (2016), *Memorandum for Ambassador Susan E. Rice: NSC Lessons Learned Study on Ebola*, 11 July 2016, https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6817684-NSC-Ebola-Lessons-Learend-Report-FINAL-8-28-16.html (accessed 3 Aug. 2020).
132 Executive Office of the President of the United States (2017), *Playbook for Early Response to High-Consequence Emerging Infectious Disease Threats and Biological Incidents*, https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6819258-Playbook.html#document/p2 (accessed 3 Aug. 2020).

The US response to COVID-19

As has been clearly seen in its handling of the current pandemic, the Trump administration failed to draw on the lessons of the recent past. The response of the US government to COVID-19 has, moreover, been unprecedented in its politicization, and in its role in heightening the confusion and tensions around the disease. At every turn – from dismantling the National Security Council directorate, to marginalizing the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and publicly disparaging key public health leaders, to offering confusing and conflicting guidance on infection-control procedures – the current US administration has failed to demonstrate effective leadership.[133]

At global level, the US has declined to take a leading role in the collective effort to fight COVID-19. At times, too, the Trump administration's interventions have been antagonistic and counterproductive. Nowhere has this been more striking than in its response to China. While there are legitimate questions about the Chinese government's early reporting of the outbreak, including whether it was fully transparent and timely in transmitting information about the impact, scope and origins of the outbreak, Trump's personal response has been to vilify and alienate the Chinese government. Even before the pandemic, he withdrew CDC staff from the country, and cut funding for research collaboration with researchers in Wuhan, hamstringing its best sources of intelligence and mitigation.[134]

The US appears to have turned its back on its international partners, too, as signalled not least through its efforts to buy up the world's supply of remdesivir and its suggestion that it will not partner internationally on vaccine distribution. This isolationist response to the pandemic, also evident in its conspicuous absence from the Access to COVID-19 Tools ACT-Accelerator – a multinational collaboration between public and private institutions, launched in April 2020, to expedite the development, production and provision of fair access to COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines[135] – doesn't just cause resentment among the US's long-time allies. It also crucially fails to acknowledge the US's own dependence on the success of a global endeavour to counter the transnational threat from COVID-19.

Of even greater concern is the Trump administration's formal instigation, in July 2020, of the process of withdrawing the US from WHO.[136] The US is at present the biggest donor to WHO – providing about 15 per cent of the organization's total budget – and has contributed to major initiatives including the agency's emergency health operations.[137] In isolation, the US itself does not have the capability or the reach that would allow it to unilaterally monitor emerging infectious diseases,

133 Yong, E. (2020), 'How the Pandemic Defeated America', *The Atlantic*, September 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/09/coronavirus-american-failure/614191 (accessed 3 Aug. 2020).
134 Ibid.
135 World Health Organization (2020), 'The Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator', https://www.who.int/initiatives/act-accelerator (accessed 16 Aug 2020).
136 U.S. Department of State (2020), 'Update on U.S. Withdrawal from the World Health Organization', 3 September 2020, https://www.state.gov/update-on-u-s-withdrawal-from-the-world-health-organization (accessed 27 Sept 2020).
137 World Health Organization (2020), 'Assessed contributions overview for all Member States as at 30 June 2020', https://www.who.int/about/finances-accountability/funding/AC_Status_Report_2020.pdf?ua=1 (accessed 3 Aug. 2020).

or to influence their management, yet COVID-19 has shown, on a shocking scale, how susceptible US public health is to the spread of infectious diseases originating beyond its borders. Withdrawing from WHO, even if legally possible, without offering a meaningful alternative to coordinate global efforts to tackle infectious diseases leaves the US considerably more vulnerable with regard to this outbreak and the attendant consequences.[138]

The global health agenda for the next administration

If there is a Biden administration, it will take office likely while the country is still in the throes of managing the response to COVID-19. There will be immediate opportunities for leadership, both domestically in getting the virus under control in the US, and in global stewardship of mitigation efforts. Both scenarios could bring into stark relief the longer-term impacts of neglecting under-resourced communities and countries in terms of fostering sustainable economic and global stability.

It will not be enough for the next administration to recommit to the baseline standards of its predecessors. Too much valuable ground has already been lost. To avoid further harm to US economic and public health, the next president must not only re-establish its starting position at the end of the Obama administration, but also look for opportunities to lead in building a comprehensive global response to the pandemic – and to shore up its position for the next pandemic, when it inevitably comes.

Leading a coalition of willing and well-funded partners, in the public and private sectors, to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 is key to US recovery.

In the first instance, the administration must significantly increase funding and political prioritization of its domestic and global health response to COVID-19. The US ultimately relies on a global economy. Even if the virus is contained in the US, if it is still raging in key supplier markets, and if travel remains severely disrupted, the US economy will continue to suffer. Furthermore, the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 could further destabilize more vulnerable countries, leading to increased migration, extremism, hunger and corruption. Leading a coalition of willing and well-funded partners, in the public and private sectors, to mitigate the impact of the disease is key to the US recovery. The US should not only invest in the ACT-Accelerator; it needs to become a leader in this public–private partner effort. Both as part of the accelerator and multilaterally, it should work with

138 Gaulkin, T (2020), 'Pandemic failure or convenient scapegoat? How did WHO get here?', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 9 July 2020, https://thebulletin.org/2020/07/pandemic-failure-or-convenient-scapegoat-how-did-who-get-here (accessed 16 Aug. 2020).

partners on protocols around resuming international travel and appropriate border controls, building best practices for testing and tracing new outbreaks, and for distribution of key supplies, medical counter-measures and vaccines.

Second, the president must recommit to US investment in the key multilateral organizations – including WHO – so that it is better prepared for the next outbreak. The administration should ensure that there is an unflinching assessment of key lessons learned; but the answer is to reform, not to walk away. The US must ensure that its seat on the WHO executive board is not only swiftly filled, but filled by someone with suitable credibility and expertise. It should marshal like-minded countries to evaluate whether the WHO reforms of recent years have gone far enough. It should work to ensure WHO has the authority and the resources that mean that the organization has sufficient independence to act in the best interests of global public health, and that its recommendations are not compromised by politics. And it should re-energize and recommit to its role in leading the Global Health Security Agenda and ensuring that countries continue to subject themselves to rigorous external evaluation. The US should not try to unilaterally 'own' a global response to the pandemic – nor could it – but it should provide leadership and resources to a common agenda that will protect its own citizens and economy.

Finally, the administration should look to some of the lessons learned from 9/11. It was clear from the attacks that US government agencies had failed to take seriously a series of factors that clearly signalled the likelihood of a major attack against the US mainland. President George W. Bush and Congress commissioned an in-depth report and analysis, led by a bipartisan and well-respected group of experts and political leaders, which set out a roadmap for reform that remains relevant today. The next administration should commit to a similar process, including by re-evaluating the existing bureaucracies, funding, border screening and global partnerships. It must then commit to implementing these recommendations.

There is no question that when it comes to health security and pandemic preparedness, COVID-19 is not the end of the story. The US must be prepared for whatever next comes its way. The only effective strategy is to reverse the isolationist and antagonistic approach of the last four years, and instead lead a collaborative, multilateral effort to build preparedness and resilience for future catastrophic events.

08 Recovering US standing in Latin America and the Caribbean

The next administration will need to work to restore the tools of US soft power in Latin America and the Caribbean, including a more humane approach on immigration.

Christopher Sabatini

The last two decades have seen significant shifts, and expansion, in Latin America's diplomatic, economic and political diversity and agency relative to US influence, and, with it, increasing diplomatic and political fragmentation across the Americas. Successive elections have brought to power governments with differing affinities – and sometimes outright antipathy – towards the US. At the same time, the economic growth of China, India and other countries of the Global South has helped spur economic growth and diversify export markets for most of the countries of South America, and to a lesser extent for Central America and Mexico.

The question for the next US administration – whether under Donald Trump or Joe Biden – is the extent to which the US's leadership style and content can influence Latin America and the Caribbean's future challenges and global orientation, or the extent to which they are determined by structural conditions and momentum, as well as domestic political dynamics.

Many of the relevant issues of economic and political development have been brought into sharper relief as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying economic nosedive in the Americas. As early as June 2020, the IMF was forecasting that the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean would together contract by 9.3 per cent this year, before – in a seemingly optimistic scenario – returning to growth of around 3.7 per cent growth in 2021.[139] The pandemic, and the policy responses of recent months, will have wiped out the region's economic gains of the past decade, and reversed the fortunes of many – including the estimated 50 million citizens who joined the middle class during that time.[140]

The next US administration can serve as an essential partner in helping the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean rebuild their economies and calm the possible social and political turmoil fuelled by the crisis. A critical step would be for it to lead an international response to the looming public debt crisis, stemming from the aggressive stimulus packages that many of the region's governments have launched: the costs of the stimulus measures announced by Peru at the end of March 2020, for instance, are equivalent to some 12 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP).[141]

Why things are different

The traditional tools of US–Latin American relations no longer have the same heft. They have been weakened by shifts in US domestic politics and a politically divided, changing region. Trade has traditionally been a bipartisan means to build closer relations in the Americas. But this has changed with the growth in resistance to trade within the Republican Party base – whereas historically that resistance has come from the Democratic Party's labour wing – and been captured politically by the Trump administration.

During the 2016 election campaign, Donald Trump called the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) 'the worst trade deal ever',[142] and denounced the 12-country Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiated under the Obama administration. Immediately on reaching the White House, Trump withdrew the US from the TPP and set about renegotiating NAFTA – often using threats of selective tariffs or a unilateral withdrawal to force a trade deal more favourable to his 'America First' agenda. The eventual United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA), signed in December 2019, upgraded NAFTA's provisions on labour protection and updated those on technology and intellectual property. The Trump administration has also used trade sanctions on Argentina, Brazil and Canada to protect US steel and/or aluminum.

139 Kristalina, G. (2020), 'A Joint Response for Latin America and the Caribbean to Counter the COVID-19 Crisis', International Monetary Fund, 24 June 2020, https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/06/24/sp062420-a-joint-response-for-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-to-counter-the-covid-19-crisis (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
140 The World Bank (2012), 'Latin America Middle Class hits Historic High', https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/11/13/crecimiento-clase-media-america-latina (accessed 22 Sept. 2020). United Nations (2020), 'Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Latin America and the Caribbean', July 2020, https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_covid_lac.pdf (accessed 22 Sept. 2020).
141 Quigley, J. (2020), 'Peru Tackles Virus with Region's Biggest Stimulus, Eyes IMF Help', Bloomberg News, 30 March 2020, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-03-30/peru-drawing-up-economic-stimulus-package-equal-to-12-of-gdp (accessed 22 Sept. 2020).
142 BBC News (2016), 'Nafta: 'Single worst trade deal ever approved'', 27 September 2016, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-us-canada-37479586 (accessed 22 Sept. 2020).

The vocal and organized resistance to free trade that now spans both Democrats and Republicans in Congress means that, while the style of US trade policy may vary according to who sits in the White House over the next four years, the substance is unlikely to change much. A Biden administration – should there be one – isn't about to rush into new trade deals in the Americas, or globally.

A predictable and humane approach to immigration – and immigration reform – has long been important in the exercise of US regional soft power. But while, under a change of administration, better treatment of immigrants and a decisive move away from negative rhetoric on migrants, particularly those from Mexico and Central America, would go some way towards restoring more positive perceptions of the US in Latin America and the Caribbean, the prospects of comprehensive immigration reform in the short term are dim.

After the failed efforts at immigration reform under the administrations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama, Donald Trump and his supporters have built a national, organized platform for anti-immigrant sentiment that will not easily be dismantled. When, in June 2015, Trump rode down his gilded escalator to announce his bid for the presidency, he spoke of Mexican immigrants as 'rapists' and violent criminals, pledging to build a wall along the US–Mexico border. In doing so, he not only placed immigration at the centre of US political debate, but also made US partisan politics intrinsic to regional policymaking.

Many Latin American and Caribbean governments, and their citizens, regard US attitudes and policies towards immigrants as central to US claims of 'partnership', the term often used by US diplomats to further the country's objectives in the region. Largely because of Trump's stance on immigration, and negative perceptions of his wider foreign policy, public support for the US president has sunk to historically low levels in the region under the present administration. The Pew Research Center's Spring 2019 Global Attitudes Survey, published in January 2020, showed that just 8 per cent of Mexicans had confidence in Donald Trump to 'do the right thing regarding world affairs' – the lowest approval rating of all 32 countries surveyed. Confidence in Trump's handling of foreign affairs also remained low in Brazil, at 28 per cent, and Argentina, at 22 per cent, although there had been an appreciable increase in support in these countries since 2018, from 16 per cent and 11 per cent respectively.[143]

Under a potential Biden administration, policies instituted under the Trump presidency – such as family separation, the housing of asylum seekers outside the US,[144] and the suspension of temporary protected status (TPS)[145] – can be expected to be reversed, and there will likely be greater investment in development in sending countries. These changes may help rebuild a reserve of goodwill and soft power in the region, but the effects of the vocal anti-immigrant sentiment that has taken hold in US public debate will be much harder, or even impossible, to erase.

143 Pew Research Center (2020), 'Confidence in Trump remains low internationally', 7 January 2020, p. 18, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/01/08/trump-ratings-remain-low-around-globe-while-views-of-u-s-stay-mostly-favorable/pg_2020-01-08_us-image_0-02 (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
144 O'Toole, M. and Gomez, M. (2020), 'Trump and Biden on immigration: nearly opposite, but not quite', 17 August 2020, *Los Angeles Times*, https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2020-08-17/trump-biden-immigration-policy (accessed 22 Sept. 2020).
145 Gonzalez, J. (2020), 'Joe Biden and the Future of the Americas', 28 July 2020, *Americas Quarterly*, https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/joe-biden-and-the-future-of-the-americas (accessed 22 Sept. 2020).

Alongside the Trump administration's grandstanding and punitive policies on immigration and trade have come assertive actions to isolate and punish the Cuban and Venezuelan regimes and to warn of China's increasing presence in the region. Early in his presidency, Trump moved to roll back some aspects of his predecessor's easing of the US Cuba embargo by limiting flights and cruises to the island, forbidding US travellers from staying in state-owned hotels once there,[146] and reducing the dollar amounts Cuban-Americans could send to family and friends in Cuba. The Trump administration also ramped up pressure on the government of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, at first using the provisions developed under the Obama administration to increase targeted sanctions on individuals and impose financial sanctions on state entities. When, in January 2019, Venezuela's National Assembly voted to endorse its speaker, Juan Guaidó, as the country's interim president (Maduro's re-election in 2018 being regarded by Venezuela's opposition and much of the international community as illegitimate), the Trump administration, along with more than 50 other governments, quickly recognized Guaidó as head of state. To pressure Maduro to step aside, the White House stepped up measures against his regime, imposing an embargo on US trade (with humanitarian exceptions) with Venezuelan state entities, principal among them the oil company PDVSA and the oil refiner and retailer CITGO. While the measures against Cuba were largely taken unilaterally by the US, its pressure on Venezuela has been more aligned with the responses of a coalition of governments in Latin America and Europe, although it has gone further in terms of sanctions than other countries, collectively or individually.

Over the past four years, one of the Trump administration's top-line narratives in policymaking towards Latin America and the Caribbean has been the challenge from China's involvement in the region. Indeed, over the last two decades China has substantially increased its economic influence in Latin America: it has become a leading trade partner for Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Peru; and a major lender and investor in the oil sectors of Venezuela and Ecuador, and in agriculture in Argentina and Brazil. Even with the rapid increase in China's economic footprint in the region, official bilateral lending by China represents just 6 per cent of public debt in Latin America and the Caribbean, according to Rebecca Ray and Kevin Gallagher of Boston University's Global Development Policy Center.[147] But with economic engagement has come increased diplomatic activity: Panama, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic have all switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to the People's Republic of China in the last decade. Educational exchanges have also increased, as has China's state media presence in the region.

Many of these ties are for the long term, and China's engagement in the region is likely to increase in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic – although perhaps not to the alarming degree implied by the Trump administration. China can still

146 Sherman, A. (2020), 'Trump has largely kept promise to reverse Obama's Cuba policy', Politifact, 15 July 2020, https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/promises/trumpometer/promise/1378/reverse-barack-obamas-cuba-policy (accessed 22 Sept. 2020).
147 Ray, R. and Gallagher, K. (2020), 'China alone can't solve Latin America's looming debt crisis', 5 August 2020, Boston University Global Development Policy Center, https://chinadialogue.net/en/business/china-debt-relief-cant-solve-latin-america-debt-crisis (accessed 22 Sept. 2020).

offer much-needed investment in infrastructure, and while demand has slumped during 2020, China will continue to be an important market for the commodity exports on which the economies of Latin America depend.

The risk remains that regional relations will become entangled in a wider geopolitical competition that goes beyond the warnings and largely symbolic blandishments witnessed so far.

The diplomatic and economic tussles and threats that have characterized US–Chinese relations over the past four years are unlikely to come to a halt under a potential Biden administration – even though they may become less public and be expressed rather differently. The risk remains that regional relations will become entangled in a wider geopolitical competition that goes beyond the warnings and largely symbolic blandishments witnessed so far. Latin American and Caribbean governments may find themselves increasingly pressured to take the US side by actively placing restrictions on Chinese investment and reducing participation in Chinese diplomatic initiatives.

As regards Venezuela, Juan Guaidó has been recognized as the constitutional interim president by mainstream Republicans and Democrats alike. Policies towards the Maduro regime are thus unlikely to change dramatically under a second term for Trump, or in the event of a Biden administration. The latter, however, may be expected to show a greater public commitment to international cooperation in the application of sanctions – and where appropriate their easing – as a central pillar of its Venezuela policy.

Where a Biden administration would be expected to diverge significantly from its predecessor is over the Cuba embargo. A Biden White House would likely move quickly to reverse the travel restrictions and the downgrading of the US diplomatic mission in Havana imposed by the Trump administration, and coordinate more closely with other governments and multilateral blocs – such as Canada, the EU and the UK – on Cuba's human rights record. A complete end to the embargo is unlikely, however, since the required act of Congress would not be expected to be a priority.

The road to a second term for Donald Trump lies through the state of Florida, and its dwindling but still important hardline Cuban-American community and Venezuelan-American expatriates. The president's campaign advisers recognize that his return to the White House depends on winning the state's 29 electoral votes – as is evident from the Trump administration's frequent choice of South Florida as the place from which to make policy pronouncements on Latin America. Should Trump secure re-election, he will have policy debts to pay to South Florida voters, who will demand an even tougher focus on Cuba and Venezuela.

What can be done?

Whoever is in the White House after 20 January 2021, they will find US policy objectives as regards Latin America constrained by a number of factors. Many are difficult, and some impossible, to influence or recast. Either administration will need to operate in the context of the ongoing cycle of elections across the region that will, in the natural progression of politics, bring to power governments of different ideological orientations and policy agendas, internationally and domestically; the economic, social and political fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic; and the continuing expansion of China's economic and diplomatic global influence.

Nevertheless, leadership – both in style and substance – can help shape some processes and outcomes in ways that are more favourable to US national interests, and that can help support economic and political development in the Americas, as well as promote broader global public goods. And the next administration should look beyond a bilateral US–Latin America relationship: many of the areas set out below should be looked on as points of collaboration with other partners, including the EU, the UK, Asian allies, and – in some instances – China.

Shared concerns over matters of security and crime, as well as climate change, are potential points of partnership that the next administration can pursue with governments in the region.

An important first step is for the US to restore its tools of soft power. One critical aspect here is immigration. A more balanced, humane approach to immigration policy – one that shows empathy towards the difficult decisions made by people to leave their home countries and families – will help build a deeper reserve of support for US policy, and influence regional governments' willingness to cooperate across a range of issues.

Next, while the downgrading of new trade agreements across the world may mean that this long-standing tool of US regional cooperation may temporarily be set aside, there are other important areas of common interest that can be leveraged over the next four years. Latin Americans' shared concerns over matters of security and crime, as well as climate change, are potential points of partnership that the next administration can pursue with governments in the region. On climate, recommitting the US to the Paris Agreement is key, but this should not be an end in itself: US and regional engagement will be critical to addressing issues of food security, infectious diseases and economic instability arising from climate change. Shepherding multilateral efforts to build up funds for climate change adaptation targeting at-risk communities, and working in partnership with Latin American state and non-state actors in global forums, will help build regional goodwill. And an essential objective must be to persuade Brazil to re-engage in global efforts on climate change mitigation, and stem the destruction of environmental resources and disavowal of climate change cooperation under the administration of Jair Bolsonaro.

A third element would be to restore full US engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean via established regional multilateral forums such as the Organization of the American States and the Summits of Americas Process. A notable opportunity now lies in the US's presidency of the latter, effective from July 2020, and its scheduled hosting of the ninth triennial summit in 2021. The Trump administration has been absent from, or has sent lower-level representatives to, major summits, including the annual Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly; and the last Summit of the Americas, hosted by Peru in 2018, was attended by Vice-President Mike Pence after Trump himself withdrew. Those absences may have undercut early White House efforts to secure a unanimous vote to condemn the Maduro government under the OAS's democracy clause, and to elect a US candidate to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.[148] The Trump administration has also been antagonistic towards the OAS's Inter-American System of Human Rights, and has cut funding to that body.[149]

A fresh embrace of regional multilateral institutions and collaborative work with Latin American partners could promote goodwill and mutually beneficial cooperation, regardless of who occupies the White House over the next four years.

Perceptions of US disregard for the interests of Latin American governments and citizens, as well as for the main forums for regional engagement, even if not fully justified, have undoubtedly limited the potential for collaboration on issues of regional and global importance. A fresh embrace of regional multilateral institutions and collaborative work with Latin American partners could promote goodwill and mutually beneficial cooperation, regardless of who occupies the White House over the next four years. Restoring the US's full financial commitments to the OAS and the Inter-American System of Human Rights will help reinforce both bodies' legitimacy and authority. Over the past decade, regional divisions and political polarization have weakened these institutions' effectiveness, and this will not easily be reversed. But US leadership can do much to restore their credibility and shore up their role as a platform for collective problem-solving and a forceful advocate for human rights.

US leadership can also help maintain the relevance of the international and regional financial institutions – such as the IMF, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank – by reforming and working with Latin American and Caribbean governments during and after the COVID-19 pandemic to rebuild economies and reduce poverty and rising inequality exacerbated by the economic contraction. Addressing long-standing structural weaknesses in markets – including labour

148 Camilleri, M. (2017), 'What does defeat at OAS meeting portend for U.S. influence in the Americas?', Global Americans, 17 June 2017, https://theglobalamericans.org/2017/06/defeat-oas-meeting-portend-us-influence-americas (accessed 30 Sept. 2020).
149 Sabatini, C. (2020), 'Why is the U.S. joining Venezuela and Nicaragua in discrediting a system to protect human rights?', *Washington Post*, 17 January 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/01/17/why-is-us-joining-venezuela-nicaragua-discrediting-system-protect-human-rights (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).

markets – and reinforcing social safety nets are important factors in allaying social discontent in the region that may threaten democratic governments and political stability and security.

Fourth, the US needs to recover a non-polarizing consensus in its foreign policy and bilateral relations on human rights and democracy. This means maintaining a focus on Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba, while not disregarding other countries – among them Bolivia, Brazil and Honduras – where there is troubling evidence of the erosion of democratic norms and a coarsening of human rights standards. A consistent approach will be all the more important if even greater polarization of societies and undermining of democratic institutions are to be avoided in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Protecting and promoting connections and collaboration among non-state actors – including civil society, academic exchange and business – will also help strengthen the consensus around policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean.

Last, it should not be regarded as inevitable that the US's global competition with China will spill over into relations south of the border. Rather than confront China's rise and growing presence in the region as a zero-sum threat, the next US administration will need to look for ways to collaborate with Beijing in matters such as infrastructure investment, climate change and trade opening. Instead of simply warning or berating governments in Latin America and the Caribbean about the negative consequences of Chinese influence, any future administration needs to offer a more attractive alternative, economically, diplomatically and financially. Part of this demands restoring the US's moral authority on matters of corruption, immigration, human rights and multilateral cooperation. In matters of trade, infrastructure investment, and climate change mitigation and adaptation, there is plenty of scope for collaboration that can build goodwill at the very least within the region, and further mutual goals of development, rules-based predictability and transparency.

09
A values-based US foreign policy?

A renewed focus on values will present difficult trade-offs for the next administration, but demonstrating consistency in its approach to democracy and human rights will be critical.

Leslie Vinjamuri

Donald Trump entered the White House determined to scale back the US's international commitments and embrace a more assertive, transactional approach to foreign policy, one that put 'America First'. One side-effect of this has been the downgrading of support for democracy and human rights in US foreign policy – and as a shared priority with its long-standing allies. Over time, though, his administration has increased its use of human rights-based sanctions, albeit in a highly selective manner. In its most important geopolitical relationship, with China, the president's transactional approach has gradually given ground as his administration – especially Secretary of State Mike Pompeo – and also Congress narrow in on the anti-democratic ideology of the Chinese Communist Party and its violations of human rights. The 'values turn' in US foreign policy looks likely to continue regardless of the outcome of November's presidential election, even if singling out President Xi Jinping and the Communist Party does not. This will create a series of foreign policy dilemmas for the next administration that, if not carefully managed, could set back the prospects of any easing of tensions between the US and China.

A selective embrace of democracy and human rights

The Trump administration has worn its ambivalence to human rights on its sleeve, but Washington's selective embrace of democracy and human rights has a long history. Under Bill Clinton's presidency, the US failed to heed warnings of genocide in Rwanda, but intervened (late) in the conflict in Bosnia to force all parties to the negotiating table and bring an end to ethnic cleansing by Bosnia's Serbian leaders.[150] Following the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, under the administration of George W. Bush, the US's global reputation was severely harmed as evidence emerged that the US government had authorized the use of torture tactics against prisoners held at Abu Ghraib.[151] By the time Barack Obama took office in 2009, democracy promotion had become tainted by its association with the violent disorder that had followed the toppling of Saddam Hussein and regime change in Iraq. In 2011 the US agreed to the NATO-led intervention in Libya's civil war. However, the ensuing descent into chaos meant that the US grew increasingly wary of calls to use military force to intervene in sovereign states for the purposes of protecting civilians. In 2013 Obama threatened to respond with military force if Syria's President Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons against his own people. But when Assad proceeded to cross this stated 'red line', Obama did not follow through. The decision not to enforce the red line came to be seen by many as his defining foreign policy failure.[152]

Trump has reasserted America's sovereignty and been selective in his support for human rights, especially where he has sought to forge deals with autocrats.

Under President Trump's leadership, the US has stepped away from multilateral cooperation on human rights. It withdrew from the UN Human Rights Council in 2018, a decision that recalled George W. Bush's opposition to the body's establishment in 2006.[153] The Trump administration has also stepped up its attacks on the International Criminal Court (ICC), a court that the US has never joined but which, under the Obama administration, it had supported. In June 2020, in response to the Court's investigation of alleged abuses by US service personnel in the conflict in Afghanistan, President Trump issued an executive order authorizing asset freezes and imposing family entry bans not on the alleged perpetrators of

150 Power, S. (2002), *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, New York: Basic Books.
151 Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (2014), *Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program*, S. Report 113–288, 14 December 2020, https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/publications/CRPT-113srpt288.pdf (accessed 12 Oct. 2020).
152 Goldberg, J. (2016), 'The Obama Doctrine', *The Atlantic*, April 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525 (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).
153 United Nations (2006), 'General Assembly Establishes New Human Rights Council by Vote of 170 in Favour to 4 Against, With 3 Abstentions', https://www.un.org/press/en/2006/ga10449.doc.htm (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).

war crimes, but on ICC officials. Most recently, in September, the US government announced that it had designated ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda and another official from the Office of the Prosecutor for sanctions.[154]

Trump has reasserted America's sovereignty and been selective in his support for human rights, especially where he has sought to forge deals with autocrats. The fact that little has come of the president's pursuit of these trademark deals has not deterred him. He has boasted that he gets along well with Russia's Vladimir Putin, but over the last four years Washington's relationship with Moscow has deteriorated. The US has withdrawn from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty; it maintains the sanctions against Russia imposed in response to the annexation of Crimea in 2014; and warnings remain of Russian attempts to interfere in the 2020 US presidential election.[155] In his on-again, off-again dealings with Kim Jong-un, Trump turned a blind eye to North Korea's well-documented human rights abuses;[156] but his summit diplomacy has not brought about the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Trump has openly acknowledged that he refrained from imposing human rights sanctions against China for its practice of forcibly detaining Uighurs in camps because he did not want to undermine trade talks with Beijing.[157] But the phase-one agreement reached in January 2020 has done little to alter China's trade practices; and China has not thus far met its commitment to increase purchases of US goods in line with the terms of the deal.

Where the Trump administration has emphasized human rights, it has done so very selectively. That the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) concluded under the Obama administration expressly did not address human rights abuses in Iran was one of the reasons given by Trump to withdraw the US from the deal. But under his administration, the US has continued to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia, and has provided logistical support to the Saudi-led bombing campaign in Yemen that has killed thousands of civilians, despite bipartisan congressional pressure to end US involvement in the conflict.[158] And, it has been cautious in its approach to sanctioning the Saudi regime for the murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul in October 2018. (In the following month the US imposed sanctions on 17 Saudi officials, the most senior of these being a former close adviser to the crown prince.[159])

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154 Human Rights Watch (2020), 'US Sanctions International Criminal Court Prosecutor', 2 September 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/02/us-sanctions-international-criminal-court-prosecutor (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).
155 The most recent round of sanctions was in September 2020. See US Department of the Treasury (2020), 'Cyber-related Designations; Foreign Interference in US Election Designations; Ukraine-/Russia-related Designations', 23 September 2020, https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/recent-actions/20200923_33 (accessed 12 Oct. 2020); Kanno-Youngs, Z. (2020), 'FBI Director Warns of Russian Interference and White Supremacist Violence', *New York Times*, 17 September 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/17/us/politics/fbi-russia.html (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).
156 United Nations Human Rights Council (2014), 'Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea', 7 February 2014, https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIDPRK/Pages/ReportoftheCommissionofInquiryDPRK.aspx (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).
157 Swan, J. (2020), 'Exclusive: Trump held off on Xinjiang sanctions for China trade deal', Axios, 21 June 2020, https://www.axios.com/trump-uighur-muslims-sanctions-d4dc86fc-17f4-42bd-bdbd-c30f4d2ffa21.html (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).
158 Landler, M. and Baker, P. (2019), 'Trump Vetoes Measure to Force End to US Involvement in Yemen War', *New York Times*, 16 April 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/16/us/politics/trump-veto-yemen.html (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).
159 U.S. Department of State (2018), 'Global Magnitsky Sanctions on Individuals Involved in the Killing of Jamal Khashoggi: Press Statement, Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State', 15 November 2018, https://www.state.gov/global-magnitsky-sanctions-on-individuals-involved-in-the-killing-of-jamal-khashoggi (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).

In 2017 Trump was swift to congratulate Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on the outcome of the national referendum that gave the head of state sweeping new constitutional powers. And in forging a connection with President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines, he has turned a blind eye to the killings committed in the latter's war on illegal drugs.

But, despite President Trump's attempts to be purely transactional, his administration has increasingly made human rights promotion a foreign policy priority. For this, sanctions have been the instrument of choice. Sanctions have served multiple purposes: they signal moral opprobrium and can be costly for those on the receiving end, but in many cases sanctions have also served as a substitute for stronger measures to stop human rights abuses. By the end of 2019 at least 190 individuals and entities had been sanctioned under the authority of the Global Magnitsky Act, passed by Congress in 2016, with 96 targeted in that year alone.[160] In June 2020, more than nine years after the onset of civil war in Syria, and more than 500,000 deaths, the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act came into force.[161] The US has since imposed a series of new sanctions, drawing on this and other Syria-related sanctions authorities, on government officials and business leaders linked to the Assad regime.[162] And in October the US again resorted to sanctions, this time targeting eight Belarusian officials in connection with the fraudulent re-election of Aliaksandr Lukashenka and the subsequent violent crackdown on protesters.[163]

China and the turn to values in US foreign policymaking

The most consequential shift in the Trump administration's focus on values has been in its policy towards China. Over the past several months, US policy discourse has focused in on China's domestic human rights abuses against the Uighur population who have been placed in 're-education' camps in Xinjiang, its repression of democracy in Hong Kong, and – significantly – on the Chinese Communist Party and its alleged role in perpetuating these human rights abuses.[164] The hardening of public attitudes in the context of the coronavirus pandemic has also paved the

160 Sun, M. (2019), 'US Targets More Alleged Human Rights Abusers', *Wall Street Journal*, 31 December 2019, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-targets-more-alleged-human-rights-abusers-11577830885 (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).
161 Human Rights Watch (2019), 'World Report 2019', https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019; U.S. Department of State (2020), 'Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act: Fact Sheet, Office of the Spokesperson', https://www.state.gov/caesar-syria-civilian-protection-act (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).
162 U.S Department of State (2020), 'Syria Sanctions Designations: Press Statement, Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State', 29 July 2020, https://www.state.gov/syria-sanctions-designations (accessed 12 Oct. 2020); Pompeo, M. (2020), 'Syria Sanctions Designations: Press Statement, Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State', 20 August 2020, https://www.state.gov/syria-sanctions-designations-2 (accessed 12 Oct. 2020); Heller, S. (2020), 'What are America's Sanctions on Syria Good For?', War on the Rocks, 29 September 2020, https://warontherocks.com/2020/09/what-are-americas-sanctions-on-syria-good-for (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).
163 U.S. Department of the Treasury (2020), 'Treasury Sanctions Belarus Officials for Undermining Democracy', 2 October 2020, https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm1143 (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).
164 U.S. Department of State (2020), 'Communist China and the Free World's Future: Speech, Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, California', 23 July 2020, https://www.state.gov/communist-china-and-the-free-worlds-future/ (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).

way for a harder line on China. Polling during the summer of 2020 found that 73 per cent of Americans held an unfavourable view of China.[165] This creates the prospect of a broad-spectrum confrontation with China.

Several factors have drawn America's focus increasingly towards China, and especially towards its use of surveillance technology and repression of human rights. As China's share of the world economy has grown, and competition between the US and China has heated up, the prospect that geopolitical rivalry would spill over to include fundamental differences related to ideology and values has been considerable. Even before Trump was elected, US officials had become acutely aware of the potential challenge China poses to US influence. Great powers exert a unique influence on international politics, and part of this influence is a product of the domestic values that are reflected through their external engagement.

Some analysts and former officials, among them Thomas Christensen and Kurt M. Campbell, have argued convincingly that a Cold War analogy is not the right one for understanding the US–China confrontation, but that China's particular form of authoritarianism will nonetheless exert a pull towards autocracy.[166] Christensen argues that China's attempts to undermine democracy have been limited to Hong Kong and Taiwan, both areas that China claims as part of its territory. China's exports of facial recognition technologies and training of foreign powers in surveillance technologies could strengthen authoritarian states, he argues, but the fact that China has not attempted to undermine other democracies is a key factor that differentiates the increasingly ideological confrontation between the US and China from that between the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.[167]

Trump has further stoked tensions between the US and China over the past months, including through his references to COVID-19 as 'the China virus', in what critics see as an attempt to deflect attention from the scale of the ongoing crisis in the US.

But even if China does not seek to alter the internal character of other democracies, the sheer fact of its global influence in international and regional institutions has meant that China's values are increasingly prominent in international affairs. Campbell, too, has argued that China's fusion of authoritarian capitalism and digital surveillance will mean that the international system is pulled towards autocracy. For this reason, values should remain a focus of US foreign policy, especially in its dealings with China.

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165 Silver, L., Devlin, K. and Huang, C. (2020), 'Americans Fault China for Its Role in the Spread of COVID-19', Pew Research Center, 30 July 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/07/30/americans-fault-china-for-its-role-in-the-spread-of-covid-19 (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
166 Christensen, T. (2020), 'No New Cold War: Why US-China Strategic Competition will not be like the US-Soviet Cold War', The ASAN Institute for Policy Studies, 10 September 2020, pp 16-17, http://en.asaninst.org/contents/no-new-cold-war-why-us-china-strategic-competition-will-not-be-like-the-us-soviet-cold-war (accessed 12 Oct. 2020); Campbell, K. (2020), 'The Changing China Debate', Americas' Global Role, Chatham House, 20 August 2020, https://americas.chathamhouse.org/article/the-changing-china-debate (accessed 8 Oct. 2020).
167 Christensen (2020), 'No New Cold War'.

China currently heads four of the 15 specialized agencies of the UN, and it also exerts significant influence through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Few apart from the most careful US China-watchers differentiate between these last two institutions. And the fact that the AIIB is broadly aligned with Western standards for international development assistance has been overshadowed by the widely held perception, particularly in the West, that China is pursuing 'debt diplomacy' through the BRI and fostering a form of dependence on the part of borrowing states.

Other factors have also paved the way for a new US focus on China's authoritarian values. Chief among these is the emergence, during the Trump administration, of a bipartisan consensus on the need to take a tougher line on China. The foundation for this consensus was initially forged around the shared belief that China had failed to comply with international rules on trade, that it was stealing intellectual property, and that it was not playing by the same rules as the US and Europe on the critical matter of subsidies to state-owned enterprises.[168] This consensus has over time given rise to a more comprehensive focus on the nature of the challenge that China presents in international politics. During Trump's first term, the US has drawn attention to China's surveillance state.[169] The national security threat that Chinese technology companies present to Western democracies and the individual privacy rights of their citizens has taken centre stage in US policy discussions on China. Washington has effectively disputed, too, Beijing's assertion that these companies are independent from the Chinese Communist Party.[170]

The COVID-19 crisis has further accelerated tensions between the US and China. The widespread perception that Chinese authorities had withheld information about the coronavirus in the early stages of its discovery in late 2019 quickly became politicized in a US domestic environment marked by President Trump's initial denial of the pandemic and his subsequent catastrophic mishandling of the US coronavirus response.[171] Trump has further stoked tensions between the US and China over the past months, including through his references to COVID-19 as 'the China virus', in what critics see as an attempt to deflect attention from the scale of the ongoing crisis in the US.[172]

168 See Shambaugh, D. (2018), 'The New American Bipartisan Consensus on China Policy', China-US Focus, 21 September 2018, https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/the-new-american-bipartisan-consensus-on-china-policy; Gurtov, M. and Selden, M. (2019), 'The Dangerous New US Consensus on China and the Future of US-China Relations', The Asia-Pacific Journal, 17(15), https://apjjf.org/-Mel-Gurtov--Mark-Selden/5299/article.pdf (accessed 12 Oct. 2020).
169 See for example U.S.-China Economic Security and Review Commission (2019), '2019 Annual Report to Congress', https://www.uscc.gov/annual-report/2019-annual-report-congress; U.S. Department of State (2020), '2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: China (includes Hong Kong, Macau, and Tibet)', https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/china (accessed 12 Oct. 2020).
170 US Department of State (2019), Huawei and Its Siblings, the Chinese Tech Giants: National Security and Foreign Policy Implications, https://www.state.gov/huawei-and-its-siblings-the-chinese-tech-giants-national-security-and-foreign-policy-implications (accessed 12 Oct. 2020). Silver, Devlin and Huang (2020), 'Americans Fault China for Its Role in the Spread of COVID-19'.
171 Ibid.
172 Rogers, K., Jakes, L. and Swanson, A. (2020), 'Trump Defends Using 'Chinese Virus' Label, Ignoring Growing Criticism', *New York Times*, 18 March 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/18/us/politics/china-virus.html (accessed 12 Oct. 2020).

Meanwhile, China's imposition of the Hong Kong National Security Law at the end of June 2020 triggered a backlash from the US and the UK in particular. And reports of the detention of at least 1 million Uighurs in detention camps in Xinjiang have all contributed to a hardening of US public and elite attitudes towards China.[173]

US political scrutiny of China has thus intensified in the months leading up to the US presidential election. In June 2020, Congress coalesced around a human rights agenda, passing legislation authorizing sanctions against Chinese officials for the detention and mass surveillance of Uighurs.[174] Congress also approved the removal of Hong Kong's special economic status, and imposed individual sanctions on key individuals through the Hong Kong Autonomy Act.[175] Perhaps the most consequential shift has been the Trump administration's focus on China's Communist Party. This was evident in Secretary Pompeo's speech at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library in July, in which he narrowed in on the national security threat posed by the Chinese Communist Party.[176]

What lies ahead

A central challenge for a return to a values-based US foreign policy will be the need for the next administration to demonstrate consistency in its approach to human rights.

This will be difficult to achieve at a time when democracy is in retreat among some of the US's most important strategic partners. India is one such example.[177] As tension between the US and China increases, India's strategic importance to the US will continue to grow. But India's own backsliding on democracy is concerning: notably it dropped 10 places, to 51, in the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index for 2019.[178] It is important that the next US administration is rigorous in its naming of democratic regression and attacks on individual rights. It should, though, also devise a principled but pragmatic strategy for promoting human rights that seeks to integrate clear incentives for reform in its diplomacy.

173 Silver, Devlin and Huang (2020), 'Americans Fault China for Its Role in the Spread of COVID-19'; Greitens, S., Lee, M. and Yazici, E. (2020), 'Understanding China's "preventive repression" in Xinjiang', Brookings Institution, 4 March 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/03/04/understanding-chinas-preventive-repression-in-xinjiang (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
174 Congress.gov (2020), 'S.3744 – Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020, 116th Congress (2019-2020), 17 June 2020, https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/3744 (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
175 US Congress (2020), H.R.7440 – Hong Kong Autonomy Act', 116th Congress, 14 July 2020, https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/7440?s=1&r=133 (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
176 Many object that the Commission on Unalienable Rights established by Pompeo in 2019 has sought to restrict the focus of US human rights policies. See Fujimura-Fanselow, A., Huckerby, J. and Knuckey, S. (2020), 'An Exercise in Doublespeak: Pompeo's Flawed "Unalienable Rights" Commission', Just Security, 29 July 2020, https://www.justsecurity.org/71705/an-exercise-in-doublespeak-pompeos-flawed-unalienable-rights-commission (accessed 12 Oct. 2020); U.S. Department of State (2020), 'Communist China and the Free World's Future: Speech, Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State'.
177 Repucci, S. (2020), 'Freedom in the World 2020, A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy', Freedom House, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2020/leaderless-struggle-democracy (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).
178 The Economist Intelligence Unit (2020), 'Democracy Index 2019, A year of democratic setbacks and popular protest', http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy-Index-2019.pdf&mode=wp&campaignid=democracyindex2019 (accessed 18 Aug. 2020).

The first step is to develop a clear strategy that relies on well-established practices for identifying human rights violations. The US will need to evaluate carefully how to insert human rights discourse into its diplomacy. It should seek to avoid the kind of costly escalation of tit-for-tat sanctions that it has experienced with China, and which have revealed the absence of a clear strategy for sequencing diplomacy and human rights sanctions.

In its policy towards China, the US should focus specifically on policies and behaviours that violate established universal human rights standards, rather than more broadly on the ideology of China's Communist Party. This provides a better way forward because it makes it possible to designate the conditions under which sanctions will be lifted. It also guards against the risk of being drawn into intractable and costly ideological confrontation.

The next US administration will also need to re-evaluate its multilateral commitments. Renewing the US commitment to international engagement is important both symbolically and practically. As presidential candidate, Joe Biden has proposed convening a 'summit of democracies', and one of the key objectives is for the world's leading democracies to coordinate their strategies for managing China's rise. Similarly, the UK government has proposed a 'D-10' grouping of democracies, to include the G7 plus South Korea, India and Australia, to focus on issues like 5G and on securing supply chains, in a clear response to the challenge presented by tensions with China.

Regardless who sits in the White House over the coming four years, the next stage of US global engagement is likely to see a renewed focus on values.

The opportunity to work with like-minded groups of states is compelling, especially in an uncertain and competitive global context. But pursuing multilateral forums of this kind should be balanced against the risk that doing so will alienate and antagonize states that find themselves excluded. Reassuring those outside such frameworks that the intention is to enhance rather than diminish the prospects for broader cooperation will be essential. Groupings of democracies may serve as an important part of an overall strategy, but these should be pursued alongside inclusive multilateral institutions. The latter are also essential for managing the most pressing global concerns – whether the protection of human rights or tackling the demands around climate change, international trade and technology policy, and public health.

Regardless who sits in the White House over the coming four years, the next stage of US global engagement is likely to see a renewed focus on values. A robust and articulate embrace of democracy and human rights would be welcomed by America's allies and also by many civil society organizations in states where democracy is receding, and would send a strong signal to adversaries as well as allies that the US is 'back'.

As human rights and democracy are elevated in US foreign policy, this will also lead to intense scrutiny of the US's record at home. So it is critical that the next administration should seek to rebuild unity, address racial injustice and reduce deep-rooted inequalities among its own citizens. The failure to do this will bolster charges of hypocrisy, and further compromise the US's global standing and influence in the years ahead. As always, foreign policy begins at home.

Concluding thoughts

Structural change in the international system compels America to think in new ways about its role in the world. The US is now confronted by a rising China whose political system and domestic values diverge radically from its own, and from those of many of its closest democratic partners and allies. This creates a potentially dangerous and challenging environment at a time when the need to find forward-looking solutions for common global challenges is urgent.

It is imperative that the US work closely with its European partners, and that it extend this cooperation beyond the transatlantic space to also include other democracies that will be critical in managing China's rise, especially Japan, South Korea, India and Australia. This is both necessary and fitting in a world where power is diffused but challenges are global and the upholding of shared values is vital. Ensuring that liberal values are fully integrated and clearly articulated is essential, and this will require the US and its democratic partners to hold each other accountable on these values. But this must happen alongside efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals on climate change, to recommit to multilateral cooperation on health, and to ensure sustainable and inclusive global growth.

Ensuring that liberal values are fully integrated and clearly articulated is essential, and this will require the US and its democratic partners to hold each other accountable on these values.

It will also be critical that the US works closely with its democratic partners to devise and enable realistic, attractive and competitive alternatives to help meet the security and economic needs of states and peoples across the Middle East, Latin America and Africa. Success on this dimension will depend, vitally, on the ability of the US and its democratic partners to offer and enable realistic and effective alternatives that also reflect the standards and values they embrace at home.

Managing these global challenges will have a critical impact on national and international peace, security and prosperity. These are not neutral domains or value-free zones: human rights and values – including individual freedoms and privacy – are at the core of each of these. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored – at often shocking scale – the urgent need for competent state interventions and capable leadership. It has heightened awareness, too, of the need to ensure that state intervention is infused with respect for individual rights.

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Cover image: Voters wearing protective masks stand in line to cast ballots at an early-voting polling location for the 2020 presidential election in Fairfax, Virginia, on 18 September 2020.
Photo credit: Sarah Silbiger/Bloomberg/Getty Images

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