

The United States in an Interconnected World: An Agenda for 2021

Academy Election 2020 Project

Working Group: Advance National Interests in a Changing Global Context

Background

Although the United States remains the world's most powerful nation, the unipolar moment of the early post-Cold War years has been replaced with a much more diffuse international system and a wider array of complex issues. These complex issues include issues of global health, public diplomacy, democratic institutions, and internal management capacity. Against this backdrop, there are important opportunities to reassert and advance America's global interests, values, and leadership. Should America choose to retreat from leadership on these issues, we face the prospect of a more uncertain, less free, and less prosperous world.

Recommendations for 2021

- 1. Establish a U.S. Global Crises Response Corps**, starting immediately with a program focused on health, particularly on Covid-19. This should soon be followed by similar programs on natural disasters, cybersecurity, and other international risks that require coordination across borders.
- 2. Establish a national commission on public diplomacy, cultural exchange, and sustainable development** charged with helping American diplomacy present and represent U.S. values abroad.
- 3. Develop a Presidential-Level sustainable democratic institutions strategy** to integrate efforts from across the federal administration.
- 4. Establish cross-agency standards for monitoring and evaluation** by federal departments and agencies administering foreign assistance as called for in the current Administration's "Guidelines for Monitoring and Evaluations of Foreign Service."
- 5. Align U.S. efforts with those of other nations and the private sector to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 16.**
- 6. Increase management capacity** by first exploring greater flexibility in systems for the domestic service—that is, those positions with the Department of State outside of the Foreign Service.

The Challenge: Advance National Interests in a Changing Global Context

Even as public administration and policy issues cross national boundaries more than ever, many Americans and citizens of allied countries are questioning the value of global engagement. Many people are concerned that globalization has negatively impacted their lives and reduced their nation-state's ability to provide protection and promote the general welfare. In this context, many of today's international institutions are under significant stress. Given that major global issues cannot be addressed without effective international collaboration, many international institutions may need to be reformed and modernized.

Additional Resources

These resources provide additional information and recommendations in the line with the Election 2020 paper, *The United States in an Interconnected World: An Agenda for 2021*.

[The Academy: Election 2020: The United States in an Interconnected World](#)

[GAO: Foreign Assistance: Federal Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines Incorporate Most but Not All Leading Practices](#)

[UN: Sustainable Development Goals](#)





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