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.

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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