

## FEATURE

# Foreign Policy Priorities - Donald Trump's Positions

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<https://www.cfr.org/election2024/candidate-tracker/donald-trump>

### Summary



*Donald Trump*



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*Former President Donald Trump is vying for another term to continue his “America First” policies, which offer a marked departure from previous Democratic and Republican presidential administrations.*

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## AI and Technology

As president, Trump unveiled the first national strategies on emerging fields such as cybersecurity and [artificial intelligence \(AI\)](#). He has painted the development of artificial intelligence as an arms race with China, while feuding with the U.S. tech giants that are leading the technology's development.

- Trump signed the first U.S. executive order on AI in 2019, setting out a strategy for promoting the technology. One year later, Congress passed the bipartisan National AI Initiative Act, which included funding for non-defense related AI research and development (R&D).

- In 2020, he signed an additional executive order creating guidelines for AI adoption by federal agencies. The [2024 Republican Party platform](#) calls for repealing Biden's 2023 executive order on AI, which it says overly restricts the technology's development.

- He has described competition between the United States and China over AI as a "world-changing race." He says the abundant electricity that will be generated by his energy policies will help U.S. tech giants win the AI arms race.

- Trump has [railed against](#) Silicon Valley giants. He argues that major tech companies such as Google and Meta are a bigger threat to U.S. elections than Russia, due to what he calls their anti-conservative bias.

- In 2019, Trump's Justice Department announced a broad antitrust review of large U.S. technology companies, which he accuses of "unconstitutional" censorship against conservatives.

- Trump says the United States should "embrace" [cryptocurrencies](#) and create a national bitcoin stockpile. The Republican platform warns against government surveillance of crypto transactions and opposes the creation of a central bank digital currency (CBDC).

- Trump also focused on cybersecurity issues. In 2018, he issued guidance that gave U.S. Cyber Command more flexibility in carrying out offensive cyberstrikes. The United States reportedly [began using offensive cyber capabilities](#) to support Ukraine in 2022.

- In 2019, Trump issued an executive order to increase the number of federal employees working on cybersecurity to address what the administration called a shortfall of three hundred thousand practitioners. The shortage of cybersecurity professionals has since grown to almost two million, according to the Department of Defense.

## China

Trump has sought to confront China over what he says is a suite of economic abuses: intellectual property theft, currency manipulation, export and other subsidies, and economic espionage. He says aggressive action is required to protect American workers and to reduce the United States' large bilateral trade deficit.

- Trump [says](#) his policies would "completely eliminate dependence on China in all critical areas," including electronics, steel, and pharmaceuticals.

- As president, he started a [trade war](#) with China, applying tariffs that now average 18 percent to hundreds of billions of dollars worth of Chinese goods. He has floated tripling these tariffs if reelected.

- He has said he would revoke China's "most favored nation" status, a trade status the United States granted China when it joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. He says he would adopt a four-year plan to phase out imports of "essential goods" from China. The Republican platform calls for restricting Chinese investment in U.S. real estate and industry.

- He has emphasized that these tariffs and other import restrictions would apply to

“essential medicines,” such as penicillin, which he says should be [produced in the United States](#).

- The Trump administration condemned Beijing’s state-led industrial policy, which seeks to make China a world leader in advanced technology. While in office, he introduced export controls on semiconductors and chipmaking equipment to prevent China from acquiring such technologies.

- Trump backed a 2018 reform giving U.S. regulators greater power to [review foreign acquisitions](#) by China and other countries and blocked several attempted sales of U.S. technology companies to Chinese firms. He [ramped up restrictions](#) on Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei, worrying that such firms can be manipulated by Beijing, but he now opposes the potential ban of TikTok.

- His administration negotiated a deal with the Chinese government to label the synthetic opioid fentanyl as a controlled substance and [ban its production](#) in China.

- Trump met with representatives of the Uyghurs, a persecuted Muslim minority in western China, and signed legislation sanctioning Chinese officials involved in the widely reported [human rights abuses](#) of the group.

- In 2016, he became the first U.S. president or president-elect since 1979 to speak directly with his Taiwanese counterpart. He [increased](#) U.S. Navy patrols in the Taiwan Strait and pushed for more arms sales to Taiwan but has said the island should pay for U.S. protection.

- In July 2020, his administration [announced](#) that it would reject nearly all Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea, referencing Beijing’s “campaign of bullying” in the disputed waters.

### [Climate Change](#)

Trump has repeatedly questioned the science of climate change and expressed doubts about whether human activity is responsible. He has pledged to greatly expand domestic fossil fuel

production, overhaul Biden’s clean energy initiatives, and withdraw the United States from major global climate efforts.

- Trump has said he will again withdraw the United States from the [2015 Paris Agreement](#), under which nearly two hundred countries agreed to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to limit global temperature rise. Trump pulled the United States out of the deal in his first term, but Biden rejoined the agreement on his first day in office.

- Trump plans to press Congress to gut the [Inflation Reduction Act](#), Biden’s signature climate law that provides tax credits and subsidies for electric vehicles and other clean energy products, criticizing it for being a major tax burden. If reelected, he says he will “rescind all unspent funds” under the legislation.

- He has pledged to remove permitting delays and other curbs on fossil fuel production, as well as significantly increase domestic drilling efforts, which he says will bring down inflation. The party platform pledges to “unleash American energy” and make the country fully energy independent.

- As president, he sought to open nearly all U.S. waters and protected lands to [oil and gas drilling](#), as well as pressed for the construction of new oil pipelines using executive orders to streamline the permitting process. He says he will repeal Biden’s pause on liquefied natural gas export terminal approvals if reelected.

- He [supports nuclear energy](#) and says he will invest more in small modular nuclear reactors. During his first term, his administration directed \$1.3 billion to the [first small-scale nuclear power project](#) and established the National Reactor Innovation Center, which allows private companies to collaborate on reactor research and design.

- Trump spearheaded a broad reduction in environmental regulations, rolling back [nearly one hundred federal rules](#), including requirements to reduce methane emissions, limit water

pollution caused by fracking, and factor carbon emissions into federal decision-making.

- He has pledged to “save” the U.S. auto industry by [rescinding](#) new fuel economy standards implemented under Biden. While in office, he weakened former President Barack Obama’s industry-wide automobile fuel-efficiency standards.

### [Defense and NATO](#)

As president, Trump significantly increased defense spending and created a separate branch of the armed forces to address space competition. He also reoriented the United States’ national security and defense strategy to focus on great-power competition with China and Russia and provoked European allies by threatening to abandon a Cold War-era mutual defense alliance.

- Trump says he will reassess the United States’ role in the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization](#) (NATO), a transatlantic defense alliance founded to counter the threat of a Soviet invasion during the Cold War, and would consider significantly reducing Washington’s involvement with the bloc. He harshly criticized NATO while in office, reportedly telling top European officials in 2020 that “[NATO is dead](#),” and repeatedly threatened to abandon the alliance.
- He has long vocalized his opposition to NATO’s collective defense clause, which stipulates that other NATO allies must come to the defense of a member country if it is attacked. He has often claimed that NATO countries are taking financial advantage of the United States by failing to meet a requirement that members spend at least 2 percent of their gross domestic product (GDP) on defense.
- He issued an [updated missile defense plan](#) in 2019, the first such review since 2010, which emphasized using new technologies and space-based systems to protect Washington and its allies. The 2024 platform calls for the construction of an “Iron Dome” missile defense

shield, a reference to Israel’s missile defense system.

- That same year, he created a sixth branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, the U.S. Space Force, to combat the [growing threat](#) posed by strategic competitors in space.
- His administration’s [2018 National Defense Strategy](#) [PDF] stressed the strategic importance of the Asia-Pacific and European regions, with a particular focus on great-power competition with increasingly aggressive powers such as China and Russia.
- Trump achieved large increases in the U.S. defense budget, having pledged to rebuild the United States’ “[depleted military](#).” He signed a \$700 billion budget in fiscal year 2018, the largest in history at the time, and the budget continued to grow under his administration, surpassing [\\$740 billion](#) in fiscal year 2021.
- Trump moved to reduce the U.S. troop presence abroad, including in Afghanistan. In 2020, he reached a withdrawal deal with the [Taliban](#), which led Biden to fully end the two-decade U.S. military mission there in 2021.
- He has often criticized international organizations such as the [International Criminal Court](#) and the United Nations for undermining national security, and has said they should not have a say in U.S. defense and law enforcement policy.

### [Inflation, Debt, and the Economy](#)

As president, Trump emphasized tax cutting and deregulatory economic policies, which he says spurred growth, innovation, and employment. His term saw a dramatic rise in the national debt due to COVID-19 pandemic-related and other spending, but now he says government spending needs “massive cuts” to bring down inflation.

- Trump oversaw the passage of a 2017 bill that lowered the corporate tax rate from 35 to 21 percent, changed the way multinational firms are taxed, and lowered individual income tax rates,

among many other provisions. Some of these provisions are set to expire in 2025 unless Congress reauthorizes them; the Republican platform calls for making them permanent.

- Trump has called for further lowering the corporate tax rate to 15 percent for firms that make goods in the United States and eliminating taxes on tips and Social Security benefits. The latter proposal would add up to \$1.8 trillion to the federal deficit over the next decade, according to [some estimates](#).

- During his tenure, overall federal spending increased, the [budget deficit grew](#), and the national debt continued its upward climb. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated that the 2017 tax reform would add nearly \$2 trillion in debt over the next ten years. Extending its expiring provisions would increase the debt by an additional \$2.7 trillion. Meanwhile, a raft of emergency COVID-related spending measures added \$3.6 trillion in additional costs when measured over ten years.

- Trump criticizes Biden for persistently high inflation, which he blames on Biden's "reckless" spending, and for continuing to grow the deficit and the national debt, which is now around equal to the country's GDP. He says Congress should take drastic steps to bring down spending, including by using the [debt ceiling](#) as a bargaining chip. However, he has opposed any cuts to the programs that make up the bulk of the budget, such as Social Security, Medicare, or defense.

- He implemented [broad deregulation across the economy](#), including in the energy, financial, health, infrastructure, and agricultural sectors. He prioritized loosening oversight of Wall Street, signing a 2018 reform of the [Dodd-Frank Act](#) that lessens regulations on smaller banks. After some smaller firms that were no longer subject to Dodd-Frank rules [collapsed](#) in early 2023, Trump said he would not bail out failing banks.

- He wants to [radically reduce](#) the power and independence of federal agencies, which he says are responsible for a "regulatory onslaught." He says he would refuse to spend congressionally appropriated money on programs with which he disagrees, and would bring independent federal regulators such as the Federal Trade Commission under his direct presidential authority.

### [Global Health and Pandemic Prevention](#)

Trump oversaw the federal response to the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, which included travel restrictions, widespread lockdowns, trillions of dollars of economic stimulus, and a private-public partnership to develop a vaccine. His administration's response was also characterized by an increasingly acrimonious debate over U.S. pandemic preparedness and response.

- In response to the outbreak, Trump [declared a national emergency](#) and restricted foreign travel to the United States. He also signed two major pieces of pandemic-related legislation that [provided trillions of dollars](#) of economic stimulus, including hundreds of billions of dollars in loans and grants to businesses.

- In May 2020, he launched [Operation Warp Speed](#), a public-private partnership to streamline the process of developing a COVID-19 vaccine, which was first made available in 2021. The rapid development of such [effective vaccines](#) was unprecedented, driven by billions of dollars of investment by governments, multilateral organizations, and private firms.

- Trump referred to the disease as the "China virus," and has advanced the theory that it originated in a Chinese laboratory, one that [has divided](#) the U.S. intelligence community. He says China [owes the world](#) \$10 trillion in compensation for its alleged role.

- In 2020, his administration froze funding to the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), accusing it of "severely mismanaging" the pandemic, and threatened to [withdraw from the body](#).

- Trump [criticized](#) pandemic-related lockdowns and other restrictions, and he often challenged the projections and guidelines offered by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) and other health agencies. Prior to the outbreak, his administration cut CDC staffing levels, including a team tasked with identifying health risks in China. If reelected, he promises to block any current or future COVID-19 mandates and “restore medical freedom.”
- Trump says he believes in exceptions to abortion restrictions for rape, incest, and threats to the mother’s life. Like previous Republican presidents, Trump [reinstated](#) the so-called Mexico City policy that blocks abortion-related programs from receiving U.S. foreign aid, and expanded the measure’s scope. The party platform opposes late-term abortion but says it will support access to prenatal care, birth control, and in vitro fertilization (IVF).
- Trump blames Biden’s border policies for the worsening [U.S. opioid epidemic](#). The party’s platform calls for aggressive measures such as the deployment of the U.S. Navy to achieve a “full fentanyl blockade.” Trump also promises to increase counternarcotics cooperation with neighboring governments such as Mexico, seek the death penalty for convicted drug dealers, and expand federal support for faith-based counseling, treatment, and recovery programs for drug users.

### [Immigration and Border Security](#)

Immigration and border policy remain signature issues for Trump, and the party’s 2024 platform renews his vows to implement a slew of measures to sharply reduce both legal and illegal immigration. This includes building upon actions taken during his first term to drastically reshape asylum, border, and deportation policy.

- Trump promises to [implement](#) “the largest domestic deportation operation in American history,” modeled after President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s mass deportations under the 1954 “[Operation Wetback](#).” At his first debate with Harris, he said the Biden administration’s

immigration policies have allowed “terrorists,” “common street criminals,” and “drug dealers” to enter the country.

- To do so, he says he will invoke the [1798 Alien Enemies Act](#)—one of four laws collectively known as the Alien and Sedition Acts—to allow authorities to bypass due process to deport all known or suspected members of drug cartels or criminal gangs. He also plans to deputize the [National Guard](#) to carry out deportations, despite legal barriers to the military’s ability to engage in domestic law enforcement.
- He has pledged to reimpose limits on [seeking asylum](#), including by reinstating his 2019 “[Remain in Mexico](#)” program that required non-Mexican asylum seekers to wait in Mexico while their cases were heard in U.S. immigration courts. He has also said he would revive the use of Title 42, a law that allows border officials to expel migrants on public health grounds and which has only previously been used during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- He will seek to [end birthright citizenship](#) for children born to illegal immigrants, an idea he has advocated for since 2018.
- He has said he will [expand his first-term travel ban](#) on individuals from “terror-plagued countries, territories, and places” to include the Gaza Strip, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen. He also says he will bar those who hold certain viewpoints, including anti-Israel, Marxist, and fascist ideologies. In 2017, he imposed a ban on immigrants from several Muslim-majority countries that after several challenges was ultimately upheld by the Supreme Court.
- Trump says he will again suspend the United States’ [refugee resettlement program](#), roll back [temporary protected status](#) (TPS) designations for many countries, and tighten access to some [visa programs](#), all of which he did in his first term. He will continue to press Congress for the adoption of a “[merit-based](#)” [immigration system](#) aimed at protecting U.S.

labor rather than the current arrangement that prioritizes family reunification.

- He has said he will continue construction of the wall along the southern U.S. border to keep out migrants. In 2019, he declared a national emergency that allowed him to divert funds to build out the barrier, which has [continuously expanded](#) since the 1990s.

- He will reportedly try again to end [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals](#) (DACA), an Obama-era program that has provided deportation relief to hundreds of thousands of migrants brought to the United States illegally as children. The Supreme Court blocked his previous attempt on procedural grounds in 2020.

### [Israel, Gaza, and the Middle East](#)

Trump's approach to the Middle East has been defined by strong support for Israel and Saudi Arabia, and a confrontational stance toward Iran. He points to his efforts to broker a regional peace deal and his focus on defeating Islamic terrorist groups such as the self-proclaimed Islamic State.

- Trump calls Israel a "cherished ally." As president, Trump backed away from previous bipartisan consensus by saying he wasn't interested in a separate Palestinian state. Following the outbreak of war between Israel and [Palestinian militant group Hamas](#) in 2023, he promised to "stand proudly" with Israel.

- In 2017, he officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moved the U.S. Embassy there from Tel Aviv. In 2019, he recognized Israeli sovereignty [over the disputed Golan Heights](#) territory that Israel seized from Syria in 1967.

- Trump oversaw the [Abraham Accords](#), a series of normalization deals between Israel and Arab countries. In January 2020, he released a [new Middle East peace plan](#) that would have awarded Israel sovereignty over much of the occupied Palestinian territories.

- Trump maintained close ties with Saudi Arabia, approving the sale of billions of dollars a year in arms to the kingdom, and has been a strong supporter of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. He vetoed bipartisan legislation that would have withdrawn U.S. support for [Riyadh's military campaign in Yemen](#). He sought to influence the global oil supply through this relationship; amid the pandemic, Trump threatened to reduce military aid if the kingdom did not limit oil production.

- Trump's presidential term focused on isolating Iran, which he calls "the leading state sponsor of terrorism." He withdrew from the [Iran nuclear deal](#) in 2018 and reimposed sweeping economic sanctions on the country. In 2020, he ordered the assassination of [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#) leader Qasem Soleimani.

- As one of his final decisions in office, he designated the [Iran-backed](#), Yemen-based Houthi rebel movement as a foreign terrorist organization. Biden removed the designation before reinstating it in 2024 after the Houthis began [attacking commercial ships](#) in the Red Sea amid the Israel-Hamas war.

- Trump takes credit for the defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq at the hands of U.S. forces, while also pushing for [troop withdrawals](#) in Iraq and Syria. He has favored leaving some troops in Syria [for access](#) to its oil.

### [Russia-Ukraine](#)

Trump claims he could quickly resolve the war in Ukraine. He also says that he wouldn't commit to approving additional U.S. aid to Ukraine if reelected, saying European countries need to increase their own contributions. As president, he cultivated warmer relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin, though he also extended sanctions on Moscow over its annexation of Ukrainian territory and withdrew from a major U.S.-Russia arms control treaty.

- Trump says it is in the U.S. interest to end the war in Ukraine quickly as people were being

killed “by the millions,” though he has said before that Putin’s stated terms are not acceptable. He has previously [called Putin](#) “genius” and “savvy,” but has also said that Putin “[made a tremendous mistake](#)” when he invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

- He has challenged bipartisan U.S. support for Ukraine, saying he would not commit to [boosting military aid](#) to the country if reelected. He says European countries need to step up their own contributions to Ukraine’s defense.

- As president, Trump sought closer cooperation with Russia despite findings by the U.S. intelligence community that Moscow interfered in the 2016 presidential election. He repeatedly expressed criticism of the accusations alleging Russian interference, though [he later accepted them](#).

- His administration maintained Obama-era sanctions imposed on Russia after its 2014 annexation of Crimea and [expanded sanctions](#) on Russian individuals and firms, focusing on malign cyber activity, election interference, and Russia’s support for autocratic countries such as North Korea and Venezuela.

- In 2019, Trump withdrew the United States from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty that eliminated U.S. and Russian stocks of intermediate- and short-range missiles, claiming that Russia [was in violation](#). He has said he wants to [form a new nuclear pact](#) with Russia that would include China as well. He also withdrew from the [2002 Open Skies Treaty](#), which allowed unarmed surveillance flights over Russia and most of Europe.

- In 2019, he faced his first impeachment inquiry after House lawmakers accused him of withholding military aid to the Ukrainian government to pressure it to investigate Joe Biden and his family over their alleged involvement in Ukrainian politics. Trump was later acquitted.

## [Trade](#)

Trump argues that the global trading system is rigged against U.S. interests and

responsible for large trade deficits, declining U.S. manufacturing, and the offshoring of American jobs. The Republican platform promises to return the United States to the “manufacturing superpower of the world” through “rebalancing trade” towards domestic production.

- Trump has pledged to impose a “universal” tariff on most imports while matching higher tariffs imposed by other countries on U.S. products, as well as additional tariffs on countries who seek an alternative to the U.S. dollar. He has [called this approach](#) “an eye for an eye, a tariff for a tariff.”

- As president, Trump renegotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which he has called “one of the worst trade deals ever made.” The updated agreement made with U.S. neighbors in 2018, known as the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, includes tariff-free access to the U.S. market for most Canadian and Mexican products.

- Post-election, Trump said he would impose a [25 percent tariff](#) on all imports from Canada and Mexico until they meet demands to halt illegal immigration and the flow of drugs, particularly fentanyl. He outlined a separate plan for an additional 10 percent tariff on Chinese goods; he had [previously proposed](#) 60 percent.

- He has vowed to end the [Indo-Pacific Economic Framework](#) (IPEF), a trade initiative between the United States and Asia-Pacific region, “on day one.” Trump withdrew the United States from IPEF’s predecessor, the more ambitious [Trans-Pacific Partnership](#) (TTP), on his first day in office in 2017. He has called IPEF “TTP Two.”

- Trump also renegotiated a trade deal with South Korea, withdrew from trade talks with the European Union (EU), and imposed broad-based tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, including from EU countries and other allies. Biden eased many of these restrictions.

- China was a major target of Trump’s trade restrictions. As president, he imposed tariffs



on \$360 billion worth of Chinese goods, which Biden has maintained. Trump has said he would sharply raise these tariffs and outright prohibit U.S. investment in China as well as Chinese purchases of U.S. assets.

- He also says he would “phase out” imports of Chinese-made electronics, steel, and pharmaceuticals and seek to terminate privileges China gained when it joined the [World Trade Organization](#) (WTO) in 2000.

- Trump has called the WTO a “disaster,” and threatened to withdraw from the body. He accuses China and other members of [abusing](#)

[WTO rules](#) that give developing countries more flexibility.

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