

ELECTION ANALYSIS - PART II

In a Nation Divided, Global Pandemic Upends 2020 Election

November 11, 2020

WHAT BIDEN'S ELECTION MEANS FOR AMERICA'S ROLE IN THE WORLD

LONG TRACK RECORD. President-elect Joe Biden has a long track record on foreign policy, having served on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for 34 years — as Chairman for four years — and Vice-President for eight. Biden ran on a platform elevating diplomacy as the “premier tool of our global engagement,” renewing alliances, reinvigorating global democracy, and leading the world in addressing urgent global challenges.

USGLC HONOREE. In 2013, the USGLC honored then-Senator Biden at our annual Tribute Celebration for his leadership in support for global development and diplomacy. When the late Senator John McCain presented the award to him that evening, McCain cited Biden’s leadership: “He’s always been a fighter for the progress of American values in the world... from combating violence against women to helping save millions of lives threatened by HIV/AIDS.”

OUR STATEMENT. After major networks called the presidential race, the USGLC extended our congratulations to President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. You can read our [statement here](#) about standing ready to work with the next Administration and the 117th Congress in support of America’s leadership around the world.

HIGHLIGHTS OF PRESIDENT-ELECT BIDEN'S VIEWS ON DEVELOPMENT & DIPLOMACY

AMERICA AT HEAD OF FOREIGN POLICY TABLE. In a January 2020 Foreign Affairs oped, President-elect Biden asserted his vision for the United States to be “back at the head of the table, in a position to work with its allies and partners to mobilize collective action on global threats.” Reports from his transition camp indicate plans to re-join the Paris Climate

Agreement and the World Health Organization on his first day in office and host a “Summit of Democracies” in his first year.

REINVESTING IN DIPLOMACY AND DEVELOPMENT. President-elect Biden has pledged to invest in the State Department and called for USAID to play a leading role in the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and “assist vulnerable nations in detecting, treating, and minimizing the spread of COVID-19.” He has also called for renewed focus on Latin America and on strengthening global health preparedness in the hemisphere, drawing on his leadership of the Obama Administration’s Alliance for Prosperity.

SUPPORT FOR CIVILIAN-LED INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT. As SFRC chair, then Senator Biden fought for strong funding for civilian-led tools of global engagement. In 2008, he led a major bipartisan effort with Senator Richard Lugar that successfully restored critical funds for development assistance and diplomacy, restoring \$4 billion in funding to the Fiscal Year 2009 International Affairs Budget.

For more on Joe Biden’s foreign policy priorities, you can view an October USGLC [interview with top Biden foreign policy advisor Tony Blinken](#) from our Impact 2020 event.

TURNING TO TRANSITION

PERSONNEL IS POLICY. All eyes turn to who will fill the 4,000+ political appointed positions that will be led by the Biden Transition Team. The USGLC makes the foreign policy focus a bit easier with the updated release of our “[Global Plum Book](#)” – the likely top 100 most influential political appointed foreign policy and national security positions in the federal government. Expect President-elect Biden to tap into his deep network of skilled foreign policy hands drawn from his years in the Senate and the Obama-Biden Administration.

BIDEN TRANSITION TEAM. Led by former Biden Chief of Staff and U.S. Senator Ted Kaufman, the team has been operating for months, as mandated by law. Avril Haines, former Deputy National Security Advisor, will lead on policy development, and Suzy George, former NSC Chief of Staff, will oversee personnel. In addition, the Biden-Harris Transition Team published the Agency Review Teams, which you can visit [here](#). Review teams are on hold until GSA releases approval to meet with current personnel.

COVID-19 TRANSITION TASK FORCE. Less than 48 hours after being declared the winner, President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris announced a 13-person COVID-19 Task Force, which includes strong voices on the global impact of the pandemic, including former Global AIDS Coordinator Eric Goosby and Global Health Council President Loyce Pace.

TIMING FOR KEY POSTS. Nominations for Secretaries of State and Defense have historically been among the first named and fastest confirmed in a new administration:

- Foggy Bottom Announcements of Colin Powell, Hillary Clinton, and Warren Christopher were all named in December and confirmed a day after Inauguration.
- USAID Administrators have been announced later – Mark Green was nominated by President Trump in May 2017, and President Obama did not nominate Raj Shah until November 2009.

WORLD LEADERS CALL. In the days since the presidential election was called, leaders from across the globe have reached out to congratulate the President-elect. In recent calls with the leaders of America's allies France, Germany, Ireland, and the United Kingdom, leaders emphasized with President-elect Biden their desire for strong bilateral relations with the United States. Notably, in President-elect Biden's conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron, global health security, human rights, and security and development in Africa were top of the agenda.

FOREIGN POLICYMAKING CONTINUES. If past is prologue, foreign policy actions during a transition are not unusual. The outgoing Clinton Administration attempted a Mideast peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and signed the treaty establishing the International Criminal Court. The outgoing Administration of President George W. Bush signed a three-year status of forces agreement in Iraq, and there are questions about what President Trump might do, especially in Afghanistan where he has promised to bring all troops home by Christmas against the advice of military leaders.

HOW LAME IS THE LAME DUCK?

KEEPING THE GOVERNMENT OPEN. The current Continuing Resolution (CR) funding government operations expires on December 11. Additional sticking points, including funding for a border wall, will present obstacles to a funding deal.

EMERGENCY COVID-19 FUNDING. While the House has already passed 10 of its 12 annual appropriations bills, including \$10 billion in emergency funding of international COVID-19 response efforts, the prospects for a large, comprehensive lame duck package look remote. The Senate released its 12 appropriations bills without additional COVID-19 response funding for either domestic or international priorities. Positive unemployment news and vaccine developments could also reduce Republican willingness to pursue a large deal between now and January.