

A Blueprint for America to Win in the World



The world is entering a new era, where growing threats, geopolitical rivalries, and worsening humanitarian disasters pose grave challenges to American interests at home and abroad. To meet the moment, the United States is poised to return to a Peace Through Strength approach – leveraging international assistance and diplomacy, alongside defense, as essential tools for navigating the complexities of today’s world and promoting America’s national security, economic prosperity, and values.

This Blueprint outlines ten practical recommendations that Congress and the Trump Administration can implement to ensure U.S. international assistance delivers for the American people and makes our nation stronger, safer, and more prosperous.

10 Practical Ideas to Ensure U.S. International Assistance Delivers for the American People

1. Unleash the Private Sector: Support American Businesses

One of America’s greatest strengths is the talent, agility, and innovation of our nation’s business community. It’s time to ensure the private sector has a meaningful seat at the table, alongside government, to drive economic growth globally that benefits America and helps us compete with China and other rivals. This means more effectively leveraging U.S. tax dollars, tapping into U.S. capital markets and engaging the private sector to scale their boldest, most transformative ideas.

Winning Ideas:

- **Strengthen U.S. government-led programs that de-risk private investment and create markets, promote the rule of law, combat corruption, reduce poverty, and pursue conflict resolution.** These efforts stabilize tumultuous regions and prevent rivals from gaining footholds, while building confidence among private investors that their capital is secure and impactful.
- **Bring to scale public-private sector co-creation**, which was effective during President Trump’s first Administration. To achieve this, agencies leading international assistance need a single connection point with effective and capable U.S. personnel with private sector experience to drive enhanced collaboration.
- **Ensure U.S. diplomatic posts have the expert capacity** to integrate economic statecraft and commercial diplomacy with U.S. international assistance to support U.S. business and economic interests abroad.
- **Expand America’s development financing tools, debt swaps, and smartly leverage World Bank Group financing.** As an example of a strong return on U.S. investment: by leveraging the capital markets as well as contributions from other sovereign donors and philanthropies, U.S. contributions to World Bank’s International Development Association (IDA) [generates](#) \$4 for every \$1.

2. Ensure Burden Sharing and Pathways to Self-Reliance

Burden sharing with our allied donors ensures every U.S. dollar is maximized and delivers the greatest return for American taxpayers – all while reinforcing America’s leadership on the global stage.

Winning Ideas:

- **Urge donor countries** – from Europe to the Gulf to regional players that have graduated from aid – **to increase their commitments** alongside U.S. investments in overseas development assistance, global health, and humanitarian response.
- **Use upcoming multilateral replenishments as high leverage moments** to invest in these impactful programs, while pressing for greater burden sharing from fellow donors.
- **Leverage the multilateral development banks**, pressing other countries to also step up their contributions, while preserving U.S. influence in these critical platforms.

3. Align U.S. International Assistance with Strategic Interests

As [reported](#) by the U.S. intelligence community, Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea are increasingly and collectively challenging U.S. interests at home and abroad. At this pivotal moment, it is critical U.S. international assistance is aligned with U.S. foreign policy priorities to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

Winning Ideas:

- **Focus U.S. international assistance on critical strategic priorities**, including competing with rivals, **securing access to critical minerals, fortifying supply chains** including global health, promoting economic growth, advancing energy solutions, and saving lives.
- **Leverage U.S. international assistance to bolster security cooperation and partnerships with key countries**, including connections to security assistance, narcotics control, and law enforcement.
- **Bolster longstanding U.S. priorities** – including international religious freedom, women’s economic empowerment, and democratic values and freedom – alongside emerging strategic interests.
- **Align the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, Millennium Challenge Corporation, U.S. Trade and Development Agency, Export-Import Bank of the U.S., and other investment tools** to fully leverage each agency’s unique assets and deliver even greater impact for U.S. national interests.
- **Remove technical barriers and adjust budget rules to treat equity investment** as assets to ensure our investments are strategically impactful. Restrictive eligibility rules and outdated statutory constraints prevent our most impactful agencies from operating in strategic countries and at full scale.

4. Expand Winning Model of Negotiated Compacts

Pioneered by a Republican President and bipartisan leaders in Congress, the Millennium Challenge Corporation’s negotiated compact model has demonstrated that tying U.S. international assistance to measurable and tangible results is a win for America and partner countries. A compact model empowers our diplomats to ensure every dollar spent delivers tangible outcomes for American interests.

Winning Ideas:

- **Require country partners to have “skin-in-the-game”** to invest in their own citizens alongside the U.S. through their own resources and/or domestic resource mobilization to drive self-reliance.
- **Incorporate U.S. priorities in country compact negotiations** such as anti-corruption, legal and regulatory reforms, and pro-business policies, while tailoring solutions to each country’s needs.
- **Include specific outcome benchmarks, clear accountability metrics, and “sunset” exit strategy planning** with an agreed upon compact end date when using the compact model approach.
- **Incorporate greater funding flexibility** to respond to emerging threats or opportunities including humanitarian crises , or shifting geopolitical conditions.

5. Reduce Redundancy, Bolster Capacity in Global Health and Biosecurity Preparedness

The world has learned the hard way that the deadliest infectious diseases – such as Ebola – are only a plane ride away. Global health programs save lives and keep Americans and the world safer. Now is the time to streamline programming, remove bureaucratic and funding stovepipes, and drive smart investments in what’s working to keep us safe.

Winning Ideas:

- **Build on successes** by supporting investments that save lives abroad and protect Americans’ own health – **including PEPFAR, The Global Fund, Gavi, PMI, and bilateral Global Health Security** and infectious disease programs.
- **Invest in strengthening health system preparedness**, disease monitoring, and outbreak response to detect, prevent, and help stop biothreats at their source before they reach our shores.
- **Press for increased coordination through country-led health sector planning** to leverage U.S. investments, promote burden sharing, and enhance cooperation across these financing mechanisms.

6. Prioritize Life-Saving Humanitarian Assistance

At a time of rising global threats, it is critical for America to remain a leading first responder to humanitarian crises around the globe. When the U.S. leads with speed, strength, and generosity, we save lives, advance our national interests, and project the best of American values to the world. Our leadership brings unmatched goodwill and strengthens America's position on the global stage.

Prioritizing humanitarian effectiveness is not just a moral imperative – it is essential to U.S. national security. Swift, strategic action prevents today's crises from spiraling into tomorrow's instability. When America fails to act, adversaries like China and Russia step into the vacuum to expand their influence at our expense, as seen in Burma and beyond.

In addition, at a time when food security is national security, the vital work of American farmers helps feed those on the brink of starvation and stabilizes communities, while delivering a return for Americans.

Winning Ideas:

- **Increase the effectiveness and impact of lifesaving efforts** by decreasing redundancies and focusing investments on highly cost-effective programs.
- **Prioritize lifesaving humanitarian operations such as food assistance** (including food grown by American farmers), clean water and sanitation, shelter, and health responses.
- **Ensure U.S. humanitarian operations have the capacity to respond to multiple rapid onset disasters simultaneously** with expeditionary teams – supported by highly capable technical staff – and unhindered by internal bureaucracy.
- **Include early, proactive, and preventive efforts** in life-saving interventions to reduce long-term costs to the American taxpayer. Resilience must be built into programming so that communities hit by multiple natural and man-made disasters do not require multi-year operations.
- **Push for smart reforms** to streamline and improve the efficiency of the global humanitarian system.

7. No More Wars: Target Drivers of Instability

As Congress and the Administration advance the Global Fragility Act, U.S. international development programs can be further leveraged to address major threats to U.S. national security emanating from beyond our borders – including migration, civil unrest, drug trafficking including fentanyl, famine, and lack of economic opportunity. Getting this right can help avoid costly wars and save significant U.S. taxpayer dollars. Studies have found that every \$1 invested in conflict prevention can save \$16 in response costs. These fundamental investments are the best and most effective way to ensure stronger and more stable communities – and bolster U.S. security in the long-run.

Winning Ideas:

- **Return to the first Trump Administration's "Journey to Self-Reliance"** that required partner country buy-in by prioritizing development programs that not only improve the economic outlook in a country but also lay out a path to graduation.
- **Prioritize international development programs that address the causes of instability** and make Americans safer, including in fragile and conflict-affected countries. For example, low- and middle-income countries with low levels of food insecurity are three times less likely to be crisis zones with violent conflict.
- **Leverage U.S. support for UN peacekeeping to avoid costly wars**, promote stability in fragile environments, and help keep U.S. service members out of harm's way.
- **Strengthen capacity at the local level** by implementing U.S. assistance, when possible, through local organizations in partner countries that can be properly vetted and deliver successfully.

8. Focus on Strategic Regional Priorities and Partnerships

At a time when U.S. resources are increasingly stretched, prioritizing investments through data and evidence can drive meaningful change, strengthen alliances, and counter rivals in critical regions.

America needs a coordinated effort in emerging economies and developing countries focused on economic security and prosperity, integrating international assistance, trade, and strategic communications. Critical support in fragile and conflict-affected countries to ensure that young people are not drawn into violence and terrorist-related entities should be prioritized. Special efforts should be implemented in strategic regions where rivals are playing to win and the U.S. cannot afford to cede ground, including Ukraine, Africa, the Indo-Pacific, and our own hemisphere.

Winning Ideas:

- **In the Western Hemisphere**, reducing migration, strengthening the rule of law, countering drug trafficking including fentanyl, and bolstering supply chains will be critical.
- **In Africa**, as the youth bulge explodes, it is critical to sharpen America's economic focus to counter China, bolster U.S. exports, confront terrorist threats, defend against disease, and secure access to critical minerals essential to U.S. supply chains and national security. Strengthening programs including Prosper Africa, Power Africa, the Lobito Corridor effort, and AGOA (the African Growth and Opportunity Act) will be key.
- **In the Indo-Pacific**, countering China's expansionism, bolstering Taiwan's democracy and defense, diversifying supply chains, and protecting key security interests will be essential.

9. Up Our Tech Game, Drive Accountability and Transparency

As Congress and the Administration work together on the future of U.S. international assistance, strengthening transparency and accountability to ensure continued U.S. leadership and investment abroad is necessary to demonstrate economic and security benefits at home. Harnessing new technology tools will improve our ability to predict crises and respond appropriately.

Winning Ideas:

- **Pursue clear goals and rigorous progress tracking with evidence-driven data** to ensure cost-effective, strategic outcomes for the American people. Expanding public accountability mechanisms will highlight successes, expose inefficiencies, and ensure continuous improvement.
- **Leverage AI and technology to anticipate and respond quickly** to the most intractable global threats – including hunger and disaster prediction – and to support program design, including market data and mapping.
- **Pursue simplified procurement processes and systems** to secure necessary technical expertise, oversight, and in-country capacity for successful U.S. programs.

10. One Brand – “From the American People”

For too long, the image and impact of U.S. international assistance projects have been diluted by far too many accompanying logos. In this era of great power competition – when our rivals do not shy away from taking credit – the United States can no longer afford to downplay the quality and impact of its investments. No country does more for the world or does it better than America.

Winning Ideas:

- **Brand U.S. international assistance with one identity and one logo** – the American flag. And we should keep the old tagline from USAID: “**From the American People.**” Where necessary, partner agency logos can be listed on brochures.
- **Continue the waiver practice** for branding exceptions for security reasons – in line with past practice – but, whenever possible, America should get credit.

Conclusion

In a world where our rivals are seeking to undermine America’s interests and values, it is time for our nation to go on both offense and defense. This means modernizing, retooling, and strongly deploying U.S. international assistance programs alongside our diplomatic and military toolkits to protect our national and economic security.

- **American taxpayers deserve confidence that every dollar spent on programs is accountable, transparent, and results-driven** in the interest of the American people. Any waste, fraud, or abuse should be surgically eliminated.
- **At the same time, American taxpayers deserve to know that sufficient resources – both financial and personnel – are being invested to protect their security and economic interests.** President Reagan had a deep understanding of how to win on the global stage. During the height of President Reagan’s Peace Through Strength agenda, the U.S. invested 0.6% of GDP on U.S. international assistance programs. Today, our nation spends just 0.2%.

Today’s challenges are no less complex and demand that we back up America’s team with the resources and capacity required to match the scale of threats to make America stronger, safer, and more prosperous.

The Road to a Safer, Stronger, and More Prosperous America

Addendum to USGLC's Blueprint for America to Win in the World

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The Case for Strategic International Assistance

In today's era of great power competition, global instability, and transnational threats, America's safety, strength, and prosperity require more than just military might alone. Strategic investments in international assistance are vital foreign policy tools that work to prevent crises, counter adversaries, and build strong economic and security partnerships that help Americans win around the world.

By prioritizing smart, targeted investments in development and diplomacy abroad, we:

- Prevent instability before it reaches U.S. borders
- Compete effectively with China and other rivals
- Protect supply chains, public health, and critical mineral access
- Build long-term global partnerships aligned with U.S. values

The following addendum complements USGLC's "[A Blueprint for America to Win in the World](#)" with additional practical policy recommendations that Congress and the Trump Administration can implement to ensure U.S. international assistance delivers for the American people and makes our nation safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

The addendum was contributed to by retired military leaders, national security experts, and Republican and Democratic policymakers, including:

1. **Hon. Steve Benjamin**, Former Mayor, *Columbia, SC*; Former Senior Advisor to the *President for Public Engagement*
2. **Sean Callahan**, President & CEO, *Catholic Relief Services*
3. **Carrie Filipetti**, Executive Director, *The Vandenberg Coalition*
4. **Representative Lois Frankel** (D-FL)
5. **Julia Frifield**, Director, Communications, Policy & Advocacy, *Rockefeller Foundation*
6. **Vice Admiral Robert Harward**, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
7. **Representative Peter Meijer** (R-MI), *Former*
8. **Lt. General Richard Newton**, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
9. **Gabriel Noronha, President**, *POLARIS National Security*
10. **General Laura Richardson**, U.S. Army (Ret.)
11. **Representative Peter Roskam** (R-IL), *Former*
12. **Dr. Bill Steiger, Chief of Staff**, *USAID (2017-2021)*
13. **Lt. General Jon "Ty" Thomas**, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
14. **Hon. Andrea Thompson**, Undersecretary of State, *International Arms Control and International Security Affairs (2018-2019)*

Building the Road to a Safer America

U.S. national security and safety depend not just on military strength but on strategic and effective international assistance. From countering adversaries and reducing migration to stabilizing fragile regions, targeted economic growth and development programs are essential national security tools. Smart investments – from the Western Hemisphere to Africa and the Indo-Pacific – help prevent crises before they reach our shores, while promoting stability, rule of law, and partnerships aligned with U.S. interests.

RECOMMENDED AREAS OF STRATEGIC FOCUS

Align U.S. International Assistance with National Security and Defense Strategies

- **Leverage the Administration's forthcoming defense and national security strategies** to underscore the importance of aligning U.S. international assistance with U.S. national and economic security interests, including for critical priorities like:
 - Countering rivals like China, Russia, and Iran
 - Investing in strategic regional priorities with greatest return on investment
 - Planning for fragile states
 - Integrating diplomacy, international assistance, and defense
 - Connecting economic security and national security

Drive U.S. International Assistance for National Security Impact

- **Prioritize U.S. assistance in countries and regions where American national and economic security interests are most at stake**, including in the Western Hemisphere, Africa, and the Indo-Pacific.
- **Pursue consistent and transparent planning processes for U.S. international assistance** – in partnership with Congress – with clear guidelines **and transition plans** to fully leverage resources, prioritize target countries, and gain local input.

Strengthen Civil-Military Coordination

- **Build on the Global Fragility Act to strengthen coordination between State Department regional bureaus and U.S. Combatant Commands to advance U.S. national security** – and bolster civilian-military preparedness and synergy where appropriate.
- **Reinforce coordination between U.S. civilian and military capabilities in crisis stabilization and humanitarian logistics**, while ensuring civilian leadership in key areas, including disaster response, international development, and economic growth.

No More Wars: Address Root Causes of Instability

- **Target U.S. international assistance to address the underlying drivers of conflict and terrorism in fragile states** – including smart investments to combat extremism and youth recruitment, strengthen governance, and confront food insecurity.
- **Leverage U.S. programs to strengthen security cooperation with key countries**, including through security assistance, narcotics control, and law enforcement partnerships.
- **Reinvigorate the “Journey to Self-Reliance” model with country-led, reform-driven programs** with clear, benchmarked transition and graduation goals for partner countries. Detail clear, realistic exit strategies, including in multi-year programs.

Burden Sharing: Partners Must Invest Too

- **Engage directly with partner governments to ensure buy-in, co-investment**, and understand how country priorities align with U.S. national interests.
- **Require contributions from partner countries and ensure the consistency of U.S. programs** – through the appropriations, authorization, and obligation processes – to allow countries to better plan for their eventual graduation and transition from U.S. assistance.
- **Deploy U.S. international assistance to strengthen local capacity** – and, when possible, deliver through local organizations in partner countries that can be properly vetted and deliver successfully.

Building the Road to a Stronger America

A stronger America relies not just on economic and military power, but on leading global humanitarian and health efforts. Programs like PEPFAR reflect our values and strengthen both national and economic security. To maximize impact, we must reinforce what works, implement smart reforms, and ensure the right systems and personnel are in place. Targeted assistance helps prevent outbreaks, respond to crises, and build resilient communities – all vital to U.S. strength.

RECOMMENDED AREAS OF STRATEGIC FOCUS

Strengthen Global Health and Biosecurity

- **Strengthen investments in global health security** and build on effective, quantifiable results in bolstering health system capacity for protecting Americans from deadly diseases and outbreaks.

- **Double down on proven global health programs with clear, evidence-driven results and bipartisan support**, including PEPFAR, PMI, Gavi, and the Global Fund. Build upon PEPFAR's consistent and transparent annual planning processes with participation from the government, private sector, and civil society.
- **Leverage compacts and agreements in the global health space** as a winning idea to speed the delivery of programs, strengthen economic wins, and promote partner government investment and country-led health planning to bolster sustainability and burden sharing.
- **Put a new emphasis on ensuring global health programs address acute needs and have built-in exit strategies** for national governments to step in and continue programs started by the U.S. Clear guidelines and guardrails should be established to ensure country-level ownership and avoid abrupt withdrawals that set recipient countries back in progress.

Bolster Life-Saving Capabilities and Pursue Smart Humanitarian System Reforms

- **Ensure the U.S. humanitarian response to natural disasters is a top U.S. priority** through civilian expeditionary teams, implementer partnerships, and, when appropriate and strategic, U.S. military logistical capabilities.
- **Strengthen the U.S. humanitarian response team within the State Department**, ensuring the U.S. has a capability to scale rapidly to respond to multiple crises with professional, multisector humanitarian aid programs – all partnered with global health functions.
- **Establish a single State Department function dedicated to all food and non-food assistance** – alongside the global health bureau – to build greater efficacy in delivering assistance. An Under Secretary position above these bureaus would strengthen synergy between the food, assistance, and health sectors, which often are bifurcated in many countries.
- **Leverage the strengths of America's non-profit and faith-based humanitarian implementers** – who often play an important role in the immediate stage of a crisis – as an integrated part of America's rapid response. With U.S. government support and credibility, these groups can continue to respond quickly to disasters on behalf of the American people.
- **In conflict-driven crises, increase U.S. focus on countries with governments where the U.S. has influence** to promote conflict resolution and leverage compacts, when possible, to encourage reform.

Strengthen Personnel and Systems for Effective U.S. International Assistance

- **Accelerate the nomination and confirmation processes for ambassadorial nominees** to avoid ceding influence to China in strategically important countries with no significant U.S. leadership presence.
- **Ensure the State Department and other international affairs agencies have the necessary personnel in place**, including technical expertise, grant and contract managers, and in-country capacity to deliver effective and accountable U.S. international assistance.

Building the Road to a More Prosperous America

America's prosperity and ability to remain the #1 economy in the world depends on our nation's global competitiveness, and strategic international assistance is a powerful but underused tool. From infrastructure and critical minerals to energy and supply chains, well-designed assistance can deliver win-win outcomes for partners and the U.S. economy. Initiatives like the Lobito Corridor show how aid can align with private investment and national priorities. Modernizing aid and targeting key sectors will strengthen U.S. economic interests and global competitiveness.

RECOMMENDED AREAS OF STRATEGIC FOCUS

Lead and Prioritize Assistance with U.S. Economic Interests

- **Align U.S. international assistance with economic and national security priorities** and bring scale where we can have the highest returns on investment for American taxpayers, including on critical minerals, infrastructure investment, agricultural investments, women's economic empowerment, and global health.
- **Bring the full U.S. diplomatic and international assistance toolkit to bear to outcompete China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, particularly in the Western Hemisphere, Africa, and the Indo-Pacific.
- **Deploy compact models to advance U.S. national interests**, ensure mutual accountability, and provide platforms to scale results-driven, high-impact investments. This includes agile compacts with countries and partnership models like the Lobito and Luzon Economic Corridors that help advance clear U.S. economic interests and support U.S. businesses.
- **Leverage the State Department and embassy teams to weigh in on behalf of U.S. businesses abroad.** Deploy State Department personnel and programs to aggressively set the rules of the road and strengthen the ability of American companies to compete in new and emerging markets.

Unleash the Power of the Private Sector

- **Expand the impact of U.S. international development agencies and programs to stabilize tumultuous regions** and prevent rivals from gaining footholds, de-risk private investment, and scale opportunities and build confidence for American companies and private investors.
- **Create new public-private partnership models to invest in basic infrastructure – including energy, water, health, and education** – to support economic growth, job creation, and opportunities for American exports.
- **Increase investment in U.S.-led ventures**, including through insurance and debt-swap programs, and leverage the strong return on investment the U.S. receives through the World Bank and other multilateral development banks.

Modernize Assistance Architecture

- **Align investment tools and streamline coordination across U.S. international development agencies to maximize impact.** Allow for greater simplicity and flexibility in compacts and financing, including increased DFC budget caps, better waiver mechanisms, and a focus on basics including anti-corruption, legal reform, and business friendly policies.
- **In alignment with forthcoming national security and defense strategies, the State Department and interagency teams should engage in a prioritization effort for pursuing regional, country, and sector deals** and partnerships – leveraging the best assets of the DFC, MCC, USTDA, and others.
- **Leverage technology and AI to drive new ways of working at the State Department** and elsewhere across U.S. international affairs agencies. Increase the deployment of cyber and digital trade officers to U.S. embassies around the world.

Conclusion: Strategic International Assistance = A Win for Americans

From preventing instability and pandemics to driving economic growth and deterring adversaries, U.S. international assistance is a powerful force multiplier. But only if it is:

- Prioritized wisely
- Structured for transparency, effectiveness, and accountability
- Aligned with America's self-interests
- Backed by private sector and partner country engagement

A safer, stronger, and more prosperous America depends on how smartly we deploy our tools abroad, not just because of our humanitarian values, but for our own national interests of security and prosperity.



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