

Options in Brief

Option 1: Lead the World to Democracy

Although the world is changing rapidly, the United States remains the most powerful country on earth. For years, the international community has depended on us to maintain order and support the principles of democracy and free trade. Globalization has created new threats to the international system, and the United States needs to use its strong military to address these threats. The United States should seek to dictate global economic and political policy, and transform undemocratic regimes into governments based on U.S. political principles.

Option 2: Protect U.S. Global Interests

We live in a dangerous and unstable world. U.S. foreign policy must strive for order and security. International terrorism, change in the Middle East, poverty, and globalization have created an international minefield for U.S. leaders. We must concentrate on protecting our own security, cultivating key trade relationships, ensuring our access to crucial raw materials, and stopping the spread of nuclear weapons to unfriendly nations or to terrorist networks. U.S. citizens have no choice but to accept the world as it is and respond pragmatically with whatever actions are necessary to keep our country safe and strong.

Option 3: Build a More Cooperative World

Today's world is interdependent and interconnected. We cannot stand alone. National boundaries cannot halt the spread of HIV/AIDS, international drug trafficking, or terrorism. We must end U.S. policies that contribute to global problems, and take the initiative to bring the nations of the world together in the pursuit of global security, human rights, and equality. We should lead efforts to strengthen and reform the UN. Using the UN is the best way to maintain peace, fight terrorism, address humanitarian crises, and enforce sanctions against countries that violate the standards of the international community.

Option 4: Protect the U.S. Homeland

The attacks of September 11, 2001 brought a new message to U.S. citizens: we are vulnerable. We have spent hundreds of billions of dollars a year defending our allies in western Europe and East Asia and distributed tens of billions more in foreign aid to countries throughout the developing world. These high-profile foreign policy programs have only bred resentment against us and even fueled terrorism. It is time to sharply scale back our foreign involvement. We must turn our national attention to the real threats facing the United States: a sagging economy, loss of jobs, decaying schools, a shaky health care system, and inadequate resources to protect us against terrorism. We have to put our own needs first.

Option 1: Lead the World to Democracy

Although the world is changing rapidly, the United States remains the most powerful country on earth. For years, the international community has depended on us to maintain order and support the principles of democracy and free trade. Globalization has brought more countries than ever into the international system we helped to develop. We must continue to maintain an international order based on U.S. political and economic principles. A strong United States can work to ensure that all countries and groups conform to standards of democracy, free trade, and human rights.

The United States should seek to dictate global economic and political policy, and take the lead in addressing global problems. We should set the agenda in international organizations, and work with other countries only if they support our goals of democracy and free trade. Globalization has created new threats to the international system, and the United States needs to use its strong military to address these threats. Undemocratic leaders pose a danger to global peace and security. We cannot not seek to coexist with tyrants and must transform undemocratic regimes into governments based on U.S. political principles. The United States must be prepared to attack those who threaten us before they can harm us.

Option 1 is based on the following beliefs

- We have a special responsibility to promote and protect U.S. values around the world, even if we have to act alone.
- Liberal democracy and free-market capitalism are the best political and economic systems on earth. The spread of free trade and democracy through globalization will

help solve problems like inequality and environmental destruction.

- Tyrannical regimes are the main cause of human suffering in the world. To support them or turn a blind eye to their repression and aggression is dangerous and immoral.

What policies should we pursue?

- **Economy:** Tear down barriers to free trade between democratic governments, and promote free-market capitalism around the globe. Encourage U.S. corporations to tap into foreign markets and utilize overseas labor.
- **Security:** Use our strong military to address security threats before they become serious. Lead a worldwide offensive against terrorist groups, and take out dictators that do not respect U.S. values or seek to obtain nuclear weapons.
- **International Relations:** Do not rely on the UN. The United States should not hesitate

to act alone to solve the world's problems. Promote democracy by all means necessary, including military action.

- **Health and Environment:** Eliminate governmental regulations designed to protect the environment and public health. Let the free market solve these problems with technological innovation.
- **Culture and Values:** Promote U.S. culture and values abroad, particularly the rights found in the U.S. Constitution.

Arguments for

1. As the events in Afghanistan and Iraq have shown, aggressive tyrants and oppressive regimes will be stopped only when the United States intervenes decisively to change these regimes.

2. The UN and other cooperative organizations take too long to deal with threats to world security. We cannot delay in countering terrorists and dangerous dictators; the costs could be enormous.

3. Democracies are much less likely to start wars against other democracies. We will be making the world a more peaceful place in the long run by spreading democratic values.

4. As new democracies take root and their economies prosper, they will become strong trading partners for the United States.

5. We need innovative technology to solve the world's environmental problems. Competition in a global free market spurs this innovation.

Arguments against

1. Pressuring other governments to adopt U.S. democratic principles will spark international criticism that the United States is trying to control the world.

2. Efforts to transform authoritarian states are unlikely to succeed and will create a backlash against the United States. We must learn from our experience in Iraq, understand that our power is limited, and focus our resources at home.

3. Stressing the division between democratic and undemocratic countries will split the world into two opposing camps, as in the Cold War. Valuable allies such as Saudi Arabia will be lost, while emerging powers, such as China will be branded as enemies.

4. Refusing to trade with undemocratic countries will only hurt the U.S. economy; the United States will cut itself off from vital sources of oil and other raw materials.

5. The United States does not have the right to impose its own political systems on another country. Democratic governments must be developed by the people they will represent.

Option 2: Protect U.S. Global Interests

We live in a dangerous and unstable world. U.S. foreign policy must strive for order and security. International terrorism, change in the Middle East, poverty, and globalization have created an international minefield for U.S. leaders. In order to address these difficult issues we cannot be distracted by crusading idealists—either those who want to impose U.S.-style democracy on the world or those who think that cooperation and human rights can solve the world’s problems. At the same time, we should not cut ourselves off from the international community. We should remain actively involved in international affairs and protect ourselves—at home and abroad—against any threats to our security and prosperity.

To promote U.S. interests, we must concentrate on protecting our own security, cultivating key trade relationships, ensuring our access to crucial raw materials, and stopping the spread of nuclear weapons to unfriendly nations or to terrorist networks. Whenever possible, we should work with allies to protect our interests. If this fails we must be ready and able to act—alone if necessary—to protect ourselves. U.S. citizens have no choice but to accept the world as it is and respond pragmatically with whatever actions are necessary to keep our country safe and strong.

Option 2 is based on the following beliefs

- Protecting the economic and security interests of the United States and its citizens worldwide is more important than promoting lofty ideals like democracy or human rights.
- Most states put their own interests above the interests of other states. The United States must do the same.
- The United States should resolve international issues using whatever approach is most effective. This includes everything

from military action, to diplomacy, to trade agreements.

- International economic and political stability depend largely on the United States. The United States has the strength to keep power-hungry states in check and solve international problems.
- Unsavory as it may seem, U.S. interests often require that we maintain friendly relations with undemocratic governments such as Saudi Arabia and China.

What policies should we pursue?

- **Economy:** Pursue policies that benefit the U.S. economy and produce jobs and wealth in the United States.
- **Security:** Avoid large military operations if possible, but use unmanned drones, special operations soldiers, and covert tactics to protect the interests of the United States. Maintain a strong nuclear arsenal.
- **International Relations:** Maximize working relationships with other countries to ensure peace and prosperity for people in the United States.

- **Health and Environment:** Prioritize the economy over the environment. Make access to affordable oil a top priority. Ensure that international treaties do not harm the United States. Take advantage of U.S. know-how to develop new technologies and medicines.

- **Culture and Values:** We are a shining example to the rest of the world. Democracy and free-market capitalism benefit all countries who adopt them, but efforts to impose these values are likely to backfire.

Arguments for

1. Maintaining our long-standing military alliances in Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia will help protect U.S. interests and keep the international system on firm ground.
2. U.S. involvement in unstable areas such as the Middle East and the Korean peninsula will reduce the possibility of war. In a more stable international environment, countries will be less likely to seek nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.
3. A forceful but selective U.S. presence in international affairs will discourage emerging powers, such as China, from expanding their influence at the expense of the United States.
4. By not letting human rights issues interfere with our business interests, the United States will gain new markets for our products and enjoy access to the raw materials and inexpensive manufactured goods critical to our economic prosperity.

Arguments against

1. Acting only in our own interest and without regard for others breeds resentment against the United States. This has led to an angry backlash against us and undermined international cooperation on critical global issues such as stopping terrorism, controlling nuclear weapons, and cleaning up pollution.
2. The United States should never support dictators. Doing so sets back the cause of human rights and the worldwide movement toward democracy. In addition, the people of these countries will eventually come to resent and distrust the United States.
3. Acting only where our immediate economic and political interests are at stake will mean turning our back on future incidents of genocide and “ethnic cleansing,” as was the case in Rwanda.
4. Our foreign policy agenda is too full and distracts politicians from the issues that they should focus on here at home.
5. Concentrating on preserving access to oil perpetuates our dependency on petroleum and postpones our developing alternative energy resources.

Option 3: Build a More Cooperative World

Today's world is interdependent and interconnected. We cannot stand alone. National boundaries cannot halt the spread of HIV/AIDS, international drug trafficking, or terrorism. Environmental problems threaten the well-being of humans everywhere. Financial panic spreads quickly throughout the interconnected economies of the world. Political upheaval abroad can send waves of refugees to U.S. shores. For too long, selfish U.S. policies have contributed to many of these global problems. Our excessive use of military force and support for dictators have had devastating effects on individuals around the world, our overconsumption has depleted the earth's resources and contributed to climate change, and our unfair trade policies have exploited poorer countries.

We must take the initiative to bring the nations of the world together in the pursuit of global security, human rights, and equality. We should lead efforts to strengthen and reform the UN. Using the UN is the best way to maintain peace, fight terrorism, address humanitarian crises, and enforce sanctions against countries that violate the standards of the international community. In addition, we must welcome new powers as permanent members of the Security Council and ensure that all countries have their voices heard. We should engage in military action abroad only as a last resort and with the cooperation or approval of the UN or another regional institution. We should join with other wealthy allies to help countries lift themselves out of poverty. Building a more cooperative world will not be easy. In the end, however, we must recognize that our fate as U.S. citizens is bound together with the fate of all of humanity.

Option 3 is based on the following beliefs

- It is the responsibility of wealthier nations to assist impoverished ones. Good global citizenship will bear positive returns for us economically and politically.
- The United States should not force its values or style of government on others; people abroad should have the right to choose their government and maintain their culture.
- Human rights are crucial for global peace and security. International human rights agreements and initiatives should encompass the views of all cultures.
- The United States is but one of nearly two hundred countries; we do not have the right to dominate the rest of the world. We must work cooperatively to address global problems that affect us all and share decision making and leadership with others.

What policies should we pursue?

- **Economy:** Take a leadership role in making global trade more fair. Promote human rights, safe working conditions, and a clean environment.
- **Security:** End programs that foster resentment of the United States, such as drone attacks and the abuse of terrorism suspects. Take the lead in nuclear disarmament.
- **International Relations:** Work to strengthen and reform the UN so that it is a more effective and equitable institution.
- **Health and Environment:** Work with others to achieve a globally sustainable balance of development and environmental preservation. Support UN efforts to combat disease and hunger, and assist countries that are most vulnerable to climate change.
- **Culture and Values:** Strive to be a more democratic and equitable society, and align our conduct and foreign policy with our values. Do not allow globalization to destroy the world's diverse cultures.

Arguments for

1. Giving more power and authority to international organizations does not make us powerless. On the contrary, by bringing nations together to solve common problems, we will gain the strength to deal with the world's challenges.

2. By working through international organizations, the United States will change the nature of the international system. Cooperation, not conflict, will come to be accepted as the basis for international relations.

3. The economic assistance we gave Western Europe and Japan after World War II helped boost international trade and strengthen the U.S. economy. Aiding poorer countries will likewise benefit the United States in the long run.

4. This approach will allow the United States to restore its reputation and gain the respect of the rest of the world.

Arguments against

1. By handing over power to international organizations, we will lose much of our international influence. China, Japan, Russia, and other leading powers will take advantage of our cooperative spirit to make themselves stronger at our expense.

2. Our fundamental values are in conflict with those of large parts of the world. Cooperation not only won't work, it could be dangerous.

3. Constraining our ability to use military force unilaterally will limit our ability to defend ourselves, respond to international events, and will encourage our enemies. International organizations are too slow, too ineffective, and cannot be counted on to act when vital U.S. interests are at stake.

4. Many countries are run by corrupt and cruel tyrants. Strengthening international organizations in which dictators have a voice will send a message that we accept their leadership.

5. Spending billions of dollars trying to solve the world's ills will deprive us of the resources we need to address the many problems we face at home.

Option 4: Protect the U.S. Homeland

The attacks of September 11, 2001 brought a new message to U.S. citizens: we are vulnerable. Since the late 1940s, the United States has spent hundreds of billions of dollars a year defending our allies in Western Europe and East Asia, and distributed tens of billions more in foreign aid to countries throughout the developing world. And what do we have to show for our efforts? Our high-profile foreign policy programs have only bred resentment against us and even fueled terrorism. Our recent military involvement overseas—most notably in Iraq—makes this situation even worse. When we took the initiative to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq, even our traditional allies turned against us.

Enough is enough. We must make it clear that the United States should not be expected to solve the world's problems. It is time to turn our national attention to the real threats facing the United States: a sagging economy, loss of jobs, decaying schools, a shaky health care system, and inadequate resources to protect us against terrorism. We must sharply scale back our foreign involvement. U.S. troops overseas should be brought home and strict limits put on military spending. We have to put our own needs first.

Option 4 is based on the following beliefs

- A country's first responsibility is to defend its citizens from harm. Focusing on other countries' problems is a waste of precious resources when those resources are needed at home.
- Most of the problems afflicting the world beyond U.S. borders cannot be solved by the United States. We are not as powerful as we think.
- Our foreign policy has led to resentment and hatred of the United States.
- International power and influence in today's world are measured in terms of economic strength, not military might. Our military and foreign entanglements are a burden on our country.

What policies should we pursue?

- **Economy:** Protect U.S. industries from unfair foreign competition and U.S. jobs from cheap foreign labor. Reduce our dependence on foreign oil by encouraging U.S. oil companies to invest at home and by promoting alternative sources of energy and energy conservation.
- **Security:** Phase out our military alliances and make it clear that we will join other countries militarily only when our security is directly threatened. Cut military spending.
- **International Relations:** Encourage other countries to solve the problems in their regions. Avoid involvement with international organizations.
- **Health and Environment:** Do not hurt the U.S. economy with environmental restrictions. Devote money and resources to improving public health in the United States—not overseas.
- **Culture and Values:** Stop trying to force U.S. values and culture on others. Focus our resources on allowing these values to flourish in the United States.

Arguments for

1. We can avoid unnecessary conflicts and making ourselves the target of resentment by not interfering in other parts of the world.

2. Eliminating costly and ill-conceived foreign policy ventures—such as building democracy in Iraq or helping African countries out of poverty—will free up resources needed within our own borders.

3. Giving top priority to our domestic problems is the best way to strengthen our country.

4. Sharply cutting U.S. military spending will encourage other leading powers to reduce their spending on defense and will lower tensions worldwide.

Arguments against

1. We cannot isolate ourselves in this interdependent world. Borders will not halt the spread of HIV/AIDS, financial crises, environmental problems, and terrorism.

2. The United States has been a leader of the international community since World War II. Why would we want any other country to set the agenda? Giving up our leadership position will harm our security and economy.

3. Cutting our military will leave the United States incapable of standing up for democracy or protecting our security and economic interests. As we learned before both World Wars, the United States will eventually be forced to undertake a costly military build-up to combat threats from overseas.

4. The United States has the world's largest economy that depends on resources and trade from around the world. We cannot cut ourselves off from this and hope that our economy will flourish.

5. We cannot afford to abandon our commitments around the world. Regions where we had a strong presence will become unstable, and as our strength abroad declines, those who oppose us will exploit new opportunities.