



A BETTER WAY

OUR VISION FOR A CONFIDENT AMERICA

ACHIEVING U.S. SECURITY THROUGH LEADERSHIP & LIBERTY

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Report of the Task Force on National Security

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The Responsibility of Congress

Congress plays an essential role in protecting our nation from threats, foreign and domestic. Article I, section 8 of the Constitution charges Congress with providing for the common defense, regulating commerce with foreign nations, establishing the rules for naturalization, declaring war, raising an army and maintaining a navy, regulating the land and naval forces, and making “all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.” These grants of authority endow the people’s representatives with broad responsibilities for defending the country and advancing American interests abroad. Guided by the Constitution’s timeless principles, this report lays out a robust national security agenda with specific actions that a Republican Congress can take to fulfill its responsibilities.

Introduction

American foreign policy is failing at nearly every turn. After eight years of broken promises, concessions, and retreat by the Obama administration, America’s adversaries sense weakness and are pressing their advantage around the globe. From refusing to enforce its red line in Syria, to legitimizing Iran’s nuclear enrichment program, to its failed reset with Russia, to tolerating a more bellicose North Korean regime, to cavalierly dismissing the threat while the most dangerous terrorist organization in history emerged, the administration has experimented with a new foreign policy concept—leading from behind—that can now be declared an unambiguous failure. Predictably, the absence of U.S. leadership has created voids filled by terrorists and rogue regimes, leading to a humanitarian catastrophe in Syria that is causing the worst refugee crisis since World War II. We believe these collective failures can be encapsulated in one simple statement: *Our enemies no longer fear us and our allies no longer trust us.*

House Republicans believe we need to fundamentally rethink American foreign policy, relying on the tried and true principles of American leadership and exceptionalism that have long guided us through challenging times. While America alone cannot guarantee international security, it is the sole, indispensable power that can lead the world in confronting and defusing global threats. We are not ashamed of this truth, nor do we apologize for it. To the contrary, we are inspired by it.

In order to reform American foreign policy, we need to strengthen our national defense and bolster our homeland against terror threats. In doing so, we must recognize that U.S. economic competitiveness is integral to our national security. The erosion of our defense posture as well as our economic pre-eminence has led to chaos and instability that will pose enduring challenges for the next American president.

Republicans in the House of Representatives believe we must tackle these challenges head on. This document lays out the key themes and specific policy actions that should guide U.S. foreign policy and national security going forward.

Keeping Americans safe at home

America faces the highest terror-threat level since 9/11. Extremist groups have opened up new battlegrounds across the world, even turning our own city streets into the frontlines. They are on the offensive, sending operatives to our country and radicalizing Americans to launch acts of violence from within. But it is not just terrorists trying to exploit all routes into the United States. We are being targeted by criminals, cartels, and agents of foreign governments who are exploiting vulnerabilities to enter our country, from border crossings to cyberspace. These security gaps put us at risk. Before all else, the role of government must be to protect the people and to defend the freedoms we hold dear, which is why we are committed to an ambitious agenda for protecting the homeland.

House Republicans propose that the United States:

- Keep terrorists out of America and confront homegrown threats by
 - Pushing our defenses outward and closing security vulnerabilities in our transportation and immigration systems.
 - Streamlining our security programs and strengthening information sharing.
 - Pressing our allies to better combat terrorist and foreign-fighter travel.
 - Preventing domestic radicalization and recruitment.
 - Preparing to respond to and recover from attacks.

- Secure the border and enforce our immigration laws by
 - Putting in place robust, layered defenses to stop unlawful entry.
 - Gaining operational control and situational awareness across the entire border.
 - Conducting enhanced screening of aliens seeking admission to the U.S. and bringing security vetting into the digital age.
 - Developing the means to track illegal aliens within the United States.
 - Detaining and removing criminal aliens and restoring overall immigration enforcement within the United States.

- Enhance our cyber defenses by
 - Treating U.S. network security as a central element of national security.
 - Keeping pace with cyber threats and deploying effective countermeasures.
 - Improving federal assistance to state, local, and private-sector entities to protect networks.
 - Deterring cyber adversaries and delivering justice to cyber assailants.
 - Finding responsible solutions to the challenge of extremists and criminals “going dark” by using virtual safe havens.

Keep terrorists out of America and confront homegrown threats

Terrorists are determined to infiltrate the United States. We must constantly reassess our defenses in order to find and close security gaps so that Islamist militants cannot slip into our country undetected. We must also address the unprecedented spike in radicalization here at home. Accordingly, the U.S. government should focus on preventing our people from being recruited by extremists and on better engaging communities to confront the threat. If terrorists strike, we must be prepared to respond and recover quickly.

Terrorist activity is surging worldwide, targeting America and its interests specifically. ISIS alone has been linked to more than 30 plots against the United States and has helped drive a sharp uptick in terror at home. Since 9/11, there have been around 150 homegrown jihadist plots in our country, with the majority occurring in just the past three years. Indeed, 2015 was the most active year on record for such terror cases and the deadliest since 2001. The vast majority involved aliens and naturalized citizens who were inspired, encouraged, or directed by groups like ISIS and al Qaeda.

Our intelligence and law-enforcement professionals have stopped many attacks, yet they are still struggling to keep pace with the growing threat. Radicals are luring Americans overseas in unprecedented numbers to train in their safe havens. ISIS, for

instance, has recruited thousands of Westerners, including U.S. citizens, to become foreign fighters in its sanctuary in Syria and Iraq. These fighters strengthen extremist groups on the ground, serve as top recruiters and attack instigators, and can return home battle-hardened and prepared to strike.

We will take decisive action to deny terrorists access to our territory and continue pushing our defenses outward to stop threats before they reach our shores. We must also ensure that the executive branch comprehensively reviews our defenses against terrorist travel and continually addresses weaknesses. In particular, we will identify and eliminate vulnerabilities in our transportation and immigration systems that could allow jihadists to enter and remain in the country undetected.

Terrorists are moving at the speed of broadband, so we cannot move at the speed of bureaucracy. We must reform and improve our security agencies so they can stay ahead of today's threats. We have made a great deal of progress since 9/11 in disrupting jihadists, but our enemies are continually changing their tactics. Moreover, many of our government programs have not adapted quickly enough or are not devoting resources to where they are needed most. We will streamline the government bureaucracy and ensure agencies are cooperating with each other while also working to enhance intelligence sharing at all levels of government.

We will also hold our foreign partners accountable. Many countries still operate in a pre-9/11 mentality, lacking the necessary border security, screening, intelligence, and law-enforcement tools to catch terrorists when they travel. This puts America at risk by allowing extremists to crisscross the globe with greater ease, affording them more opportunities to find a way into the United States. Accordingly, we will press our allies to ramp up their efforts to combat terrorist and foreign-fighter travel, and where necessary for our security, we will offer assistance and expertise to help them do so. For countries with visa-free travel to the United States, we will continue to require extra layers of security so terrorists do not slip through the cracks.

One of our top priorities will be keeping Islamist militants from recruiting Americans to join them overseas and from inspiring them to conduct attacks here at home. In the past year, federal law-enforcement agencies say an unprecedented number of terror cases have been opened across all 50 states. Yet the current administration has still spent more money combating climate change than countering radicalization at home. We will re-prioritize the national security agenda to better address significant threats, and we will boost engagement with communities to help spot and prevent terrorist recruitment. This includes empowering non-governmental partners to push back against the hatred of militant Islamists.

Finally, we will make sure our nation is prepared to respond to—and recover from—man-made and natural disasters. The threat environment is evolving, and our first responders need the tools and training to stay ahead of the curve. For instance, violent extremists are increasingly migrating toward “do-it-yourself” terror, relying on readily available weapons and homemade explosives. Such plots are easy to put together and hard to stop, so America's frontline defenders must be ready to pick up on the warning signs and rapidly respond to active attacks. Overall, we will ensure that America's preparedness programs are robust and that our critical institutions are resilient in the face of disaster.

Secure the border and enforce our immigration laws

The surge of illegal immigrants across our borders cannot just be a wake-up call—it must be a call to action. As a nation of laws, we must insist that everyone come here legally and maintain legal status. A porous border puts our communities and our nation at risk. America must secure the border once and for all by accelerating the deployment of fencing, technology, air assets, and personnel. We must also protect our country and promote fairness by enforcing our immigration laws.

Americans know our borders are not secure—and so do criminals, drug cartels, and violent extremists. A flood of illicit traffic across our borders has destabilized communities and damaged our national security. The problem is vast. Our southern border is nearly 2,000 miles long, and the northern border is twice that length, in addition to the thousands of miles of our maritime border that must be patrolled and monitored. Glaring weaknesses in these areas provide bad actors with a potential path into our country.

Securing the borders is no small task, but it is a fundamental responsibility of our government. The current administration has failed to live up to that obligation and has no realistic plan to fulfill it. In fact, the American people have been misled with utterly false claims that security is improving. Make no mistake: The borders are not secure, and the threats along them are growing more dynamic by the day.

We must show unwavering determination to fix this crisis permanently. Our goal is to develop a complete understanding of what is happening at the border and to deploy cutting-edge tools to stop illegal traffic. We need more than just fencing. We need a strong, multi-layered approach to prevent illegal entrants from defeating any one part of our security. Due to the diverse terrain across our long borders, every area requires a different mix of assets, from Border Patrol agents and high fencing to aerial surveillance and radar. We should also provide the Border Patrol with easy access to federal lands to facilitate enforcement activities.

But border security is about more than just catching those who cross illegally. It is about deterrence. Our response must be so overwhelming that it not only halts illicit activity but discourages it from ever happening. We will work to deploy the right assets to the right places so that dangerous individuals and illegal entrants are convinced they will be detected in real time, not after they have disappeared into our country. America will send a clear message to outsiders: If you try to enter our country illegally, you will be detained and face the full force of the law.

The U.S. border must also be protected against weapons of mass destruction (WMD). We know that radical groups are constantly seeking to acquire chemical, biological, radiological, and even nuclear weapons to threaten us. While such attacks are unlikely, the consequences would be devastating. As such, we will redouble our efforts to equip ports of entry, frontline defenders, and other partners with the critical tripwires for detecting WMD threats before they are smuggled into America and used against our people.

We also must overhaul our immigration system for national security reasons. Terrorists have used virtually every major immigration route to enter our country, including citizenship applications, tourist and student visas, and even refugee status. Each of the 9/11 hijackers came into the United States through legal means. But time and again, we have failed to eliminate serious vulnerabilities in the system. For instance, we lack the tools to verify comprehensively whether visitors actually leave the country after their visas expire.

We are a nation of immigrants, but we cannot tarnish that heritage by allowing bad actors to exploit the system for personal gain or criminal activity. It is time to enforce our immigration laws and to tighten up security at all stages by conducting better screening of those seeking admission, tracking aliens in the United States, removing terrorists and criminals, and improving interior immigration enforcement. We also need to bring our system into the 21st century so that Americans have confidence it is effective.

Screening in particular must be more comprehensive. If visa applicants have pledged support for a terrorist group online, we cannot afford to detect it after they have entered the United States. In today's world, an applicant's social media presence might be as important to review as his or her work history and education. Accordingly, we will work to ramp up visa security, moving our investigations into the digital age and integrating all relevant data. Additionally, we must expand the Visa Security Program to additional high-risk locations in order to focus more attention on places where terrorist groups have a presence or where extremists frequently transit. Because no system is foolproof, we should also expand the ability of agencies to revoke the visas of foreign nationals when needed to protect the country.

We will continue to improve the integrity of the refugee-screening process as well. America has a proud tradition of welcoming innocent civilians fleeing violence and instability. But terrorists have pledged to exploit humanitarian programs to slip into the West and attack us. Our top law-enforcement and intelligence officials have expressed grave concern about this, which is why we will adopt measures to weed out terror suspects so that legitimate refugees can be resettled safely without compromising our security. Finally, we should require agencies to crack down on fake documents, complete a fraud assessment of the refugee-processing system, and regularly review the online postings and digital footprint of applicants.

Enhance our cyber defenses

The web has become a weapon. Yet America remains deeply vulnerable to cyber-attacks against our government, critical infrastructure, businesses, and personal systems. Accordingly, strengthening cyber defense should be a top national security priority. We must also confront the “going dark” phenomenon in which terrorists hide their messages on secure, online platforms—a method increasingly used by criminals.

A silent war is being waged against America in cyberspace. The battles happen every day across our country, with the effects reverberating from kitchen tables to corporate boardrooms. Our cyber adversaries are seeking not only to steal the private data of our citizens, they also want our nation's secrets and innovations. U.S. companies are being raided by faceless intruders,

who seize our ideas to compete against us and diminish our prosperity. They are also breaching our government networks to spy on the United States and threaten our interests.

The digital frontier is like the Wild West. Often acting at the behest of foreign governments, these hackers usually operate anonymously and beyond the reach of U.S. authorities in places like China, North Korea, Iran, and Russia. They easily escape justice by covering their tracks, masking their identities, and deceiving law enforcement in the depths of the Internet.

In recent years we have seen other countries use “digital bombs” to destroy entire computer systems and menace our people. The nation’s critical infrastructure—such as power plants and gas pipelines—are at particular risk of being hit with these types of attacks. We know, for instance, that our cyber adversaries are working to hack into critical infrastructure systems in order to coerce us, in both times of peace and conflict.

We must aggressively defend our systems against attack, treating our network security as a central element of our national security. Our priority will be to secure federal government networks while also helping U.S. companies and everyday Americans protect their systems. Crucially, much as we had to break down information-sharing walls in order to “connect the dots” after the 9/11 attacks, we must enable greater information sharing in order to identify and disrupt cyber intrusions. We will facilitate data exchanges nationwide and improve the federal government’s assistance to state, local, and private-sector entities trying to protect their networks.

We will also focus on deterring and responding to cyber-attacks. America cannot stand by passively as criminals and hostile states steal our data and target our digital systems. Instead we must put forward clear rules of the road in cyberspace. This includes implementing credible means to dissuade our adversaries from attacking, and developing appropriate response options to deliver justice if they do. We need to be able to withstand attacks while also being agile enough to respond as needed. To do that, we need to develop the full range of capabilities, from legal prosecutions and sanction regimes to punish rogue actors, to the use of offensive cyber tools to allow us the freedom of action to conduct operations at the time of our choosing, with the tools of our choosing, and with the effects we want to achieve.

Finally, we must more effectively balance digital security and national security. Finding shelter in virtual safe havens, terrorists and criminals are using secure online communications to avoid detection. Their ability to “go dark” can cause law enforcement to “go blind,” degrading the government’s ability to detect and disrupt terrorist plots and crimes in our communities. In confronting this challenge, however, we must not undermine American citizens’ privacy protections. Tools like encryption are the bedrock of Internet security—without them, the web would be a far more dangerous place. We must work together in finding a path forward to keep our people—and our data—secure.

Defeating Terrorists

We are at war. Terrorist groups are not on the run, as the president has argued. They are on the march and extending their reach at great cost to the security of the free world. We have allowed radical Islamist groups to gain new momentum, growing from terrorist cells into full-fledged armies. Plotting every day to kill Americans at home and abroad, these organizations are going global with their ideology of hatred, repression, and murder. Today, one of America's most pressing national security missions is to defeat these groups—including ISIS, al Qaeda, and their affiliates—and to prevail in the wider war against Islamist terror.

House Republicans propose that the United States:

- Take the fight to the enemy by
 - Using all elements of national power to deny terrorists sanctuary to keep them on the run.
 - Adopting a wartime approach and keeping all options on the table.
 - Shutting down terrorist ratlines to and from conflict zones and safe havens.
 - Building a more active international coalition under strong U.S. leadership.
 - Developing a global strategy to win the war against Islamist terror.
 - Pursuing long-term political solutions to keep terrorists from reemerging.

- Win the battle of ideas by
 - Combating extremist propaganda and empowering credible voices.
 - Modernizing America's overt outreach efforts.
 - Working with allies and partners to build capacity to counter-message terror groups.
 - Engaging the private sector to leverage new technology and reach new audiences.
 - Promoting liberty and human dignity as the great alternative to repression and terror.

Take the fight to the enemy

America must take the fight to the enemy so that our homeland does not become the primary battleground. This requires decisive action, a broad international coalition, and a strategy to deny terrorists the ability to attack the United States, our allies, and our interests. We cannot be satisfied with short-term successes and temporary safety in this generational conflict. To defeat Islamist terrorism in the long term, we must force terrorists out of their sanctuary and prevent them from passing the torch to a new generation. In particular, we must fully implement the 9/11 Commission's recommendation to stop the spread of terror groups by depriving them of their safe havens.

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, our country embarked on a broad struggle against Islamist terror. Now, nearly 15 years after that fateful day, we have entered a new phase of the war. Recruiting online, across borders, and at broadband speed, our enemies have brought the war back to our doorsteps. Western inaction has allowed them to gain more foot soldiers and operating space than ever, resulting recently in the deadliest year on record for global terrorism.

Though our adversaries have evolved, many of the battle-tested principles we learned after 9/11 are still relevant. For instance, history has shown that if we do not confront terrorist groups where they are based, they will attack us around the globe. They exploit ungoverned spaces to find sanctuary, solicit recruits, and plot against us. From the streets of Paris and Brussels to San Bernardino, militant Islamists have projected their violence well beyond their safe havens and have franchised it to radical followers.

That is why we must act to eliminate terrorist sanctuaries. The Obama administration has failed to act decisively—and the delay has been deadly. The rise of ISIS is proof that we cannot wait while threats gather, nor can we simply contain them. America should work with our allies to quickly identify terrorist safe havens and to destroy them. Ultimately, Washington should use “all elements of national power,” as the 9/11 Commission advised, to keep terrorists on the run, and we must have a plan to do so wherever they emerge.

Leaders in Washington should also level with the American people by calling the threat what it is. You cannot defeat an enemy you refuse to define, so let's state it plainly: We are at war with Islamist terrorists. They are not limited to a single group but are an evolving network of militants leading a dangerous global movement. These fanatics have perverted the Islamic faith into a hateful ideology, and they are dead set on undermining open societies and subjugating millions under their barbaric rule.

To win the war against these extremists, we must act like we are fighting a war. Terrorists are not routine criminals. They are intent on undermining the very foundations of free countries and are quite clearly waging war against us. We will respond accordingly. Wherever possible, we should rely on local forces to defeat terrorists, but we must also be prepared to do what it takes to win. We cannot take options off the table, because doing so telegraphs weakness to our enemies and emboldens them. Our generals and diplomats should not feel that their hands are tied behind their backs, nor should we deprive our troops of the resources and authorities required to succeed.

We must also cut off the enemy's financial and human capital flows. Terrorists work every day to replenish their funds and foot soldiers. Thus, the United States must press allies to accelerate information sharing in order to deprive terrorists access to cash, and we should work with partners to help them detect and disrupt terrorist travel. Only then can we shut down the pipeline to and from jihadist sanctuaries.

Furthermore, we should not be releasing our enemies back onto the battlefield in the middle of a war. The current administration has been more focused on relocating and releasing hardened terrorists than on capturing new ones. This is unconscionable, especially when they are going back to the fight and killing U.S. citizens. The American people expect their leaders to focus on winning the war rather than finding new homes for captured jihadists. We will put a stop to this.

Because confronting terrorism is a shared responsibility, the United States should assemble a more robust coalition of allies. The Western world is under attack, which is why critical organizations like NATO must be more actively brought into the fight. We should also press regional leaders to assume greater responsibility for tackling conflicts in their own neighborhoods, and we must empower indigenous forces to fight back against Islamist terrorists who are attempting to overrun their communities. But a coalition is not a substitute for American leadership. To get others to join us, the United States must lead the charge. When America is absent, our partners step back and our adversaries step up, worsening the threats we face.

America must develop a global strategy to win the war against Islamist terror. We cannot play global whack-a-mole with jihadists. An ad hoc, reactive policy will fail, leaving the world vulnerable to the violence and repressive ideology of our enemies. Today, the fight goes beyond Syria and Iraq. We must develop plans to reverse terrorist gains in places like Libya and to keep nations like Afghanistan from falling back into chaos. And the United States must work to prevent other weak states from becoming terrorist hotbeds.

Finally, it must be the policy of the United States to roll back and defeat terrorist groups—not just contain them—and to work with our partners to prevent their reemergence. In the long run, political solutions are the key to creating stability. Terrorists thrive on lawlessness, and they exploit political and religious grievances. Accordingly, once extremist groups are defeated on the ground, foreign governments face the crucial task of keeping them at bay by establishing lasting security, building inclusive political systems, and growing their economies to create jobs and opportunity. We should assist such efforts when it is in our interests, recognizing that the stability of foreign countries is critical to the security of our own.

Win the battle of ideas

This war is not just a military struggle—it is an ideological one. We can destroy groups like ISIS and al Qaeda and roll back their territorial gains, but their repressive, hateful ideology respects no borders. Just as the United States fought Communism and fascism, we must counter Islamist terrorism by undermining the lies that fuel it. America should work with key foreign partners to counter the perverse narrative of these fanatics and put forward an alternative.

Terror has gone viral. Social media and other online tools have allowed jihadist groups to spread their hate instantaneously across the globe. They recruit with the ease of a retweet and have begun crowd-sourcing their attacks. Just as we cannot cede the physical battlefield, we must not allow terrorists to use the digital battle space to locate and radicalize new followers and foot soldiers.

We must amplify credible voices to combat extremist propaganda. Sadly, the current administration has been slow in doing this, and nascent efforts to “counter-message” groups like ISIS have failed to produce measurable results. Official U.S. government responses are unlikely to influence potential extremists, as terrorist groups peddle conspiracy theories that demonize and scapegoat the United States. That is why it is important for the United States to rely on voices with credibility in the target communities. For instance, we should empower moderate religious figures to speak out against those hijacking their faith.

The words of former extremists can have an especially powerful impact. So-called “jaded jihadists” have returned from places like Syria and warned their peers not to be deceived by extremist propaganda. As one ISIS defector from Virginia told reporters, “My message to the American people is: The life in [ISIS territory], is really, really bad. . . . They don’t represent the religion. I don’t see them as good Muslims.” These are the kind of voices we need to amplify to prevent more young people from going down the path to terror.

Washington should also reform overt outreach efforts, such as the State Department’s public diplomacy activities, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Broadcasting Board of Governors. We cannot champion the counter-narrative effort if our public image is managed through outdated organizations and methods. These organizations must adapt to the age of viral terror and the new-media landscape. In addition to clarifying misperceptions about U.S. policy, they can help discredit repressive ideologies by demonstrating the superiority of democratic development and free markets.

Our allies abroad must play a key role in winning the battle of ideas. Many are on the frontlines of this fight and face a greater threat from domestic radicalization than the United States. We should work with these foreign partners to coordinate counter-messaging activities and to share proven outreach methods that are having an impact on the ground. We should likewise assist less-capable governments by exchanging best practices.

It is also important for us to engage the private sector in fighting terrorist propaganda. Extremists are using popular social media tools to get their message out, often in violation of user agreements and website policies. But when companies do not respond quickly enough, the messages of these terrorist groups can spread like wildfire across the Internet. Without compromising free speech, we should continually press companies to keep their platforms from becoming megaphones for terrorists. This includes removing known-terrorist users and taking down inappropriate content. Silicon Valley can also be a partner in helping reach broader audiences with counter-messaging campaigns.

This war will not be won with bullets and bombs alone. It will be won by the force of our ideas. In the 20th century, our nation overcame repressive ideologies by offering a better alternative. The motive power of Islamist terror is a worldview based on oppression—one that is as morally bankrupt and unsustainable as Communism or fascism. America can undermine this system of beliefs by countering it with our own. Accordingly, we must promote liberty and human dignity as the antidote to tyranny and terror—and show our enemies that their evil vision will never prevail over our enduring values.

Defending Freedom and Advancing American Interests

America has a long history of protecting liberty and free markets around the world. We accept this responsibility because expanding the community of free and prosperous peoples serves the interests and values of the United States. Nations that respect the fundamental human, civil, and religious rights of their people are less likely to engage in hostile acts against us or to serve as breeding grounds for terrorists. Moreover, nations that are enmeshed in the mutually beneficial international economic regime are less inclined to throw up barriers to the open markets that are the basis of our international prosperity.

House Republicans propose that the United States:

- Restore American leadership on the international stage by
 - Decisively tackling emerging threats before they metastasize.
 - Recognizing that leadership will at times require the use of military force and the attendant sacrifices.
 - Leading our allies to secure our common interests.
 - Insisting that our allies carry their share of the common burden.
 - Affirming that no foreign power will be allowed to dictate American action.

- Counter our adversaries and support our allies by
 - Underscoring the importance of transatlantic alliances and modernizing NATO.
 - Standing up to Russian aggression and bolstering countries like Ukraine.
 - Recognizing that our alliance with Israel is a cornerstone of stability in Middle East.
 - Stopping appeasement of Iran by tightening sanctions and confronting regime hostility.
 - Engaging allies and partners in Asia to counter a nuclear North Korea and to manage China's ambitions and aggressive actions.
 - Combating proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and reemphasizing deterrence.
 - Deepening relations with emerging powers like India.
 - Increasing joint military exercises, training, and assistance and expediting defense sales.

- Promote prosperity through free markets and strategic investments by
 - Negotiating beneficial trade agreements that improve our economy and create jobs at home.
 - Advancing the role of trade in expanding development abroad.
 - Prioritizing foreign aid programs that build self-sufficiency in partner countries.
 - Holding foreign aid recipients accountable and using clear benchmarks to measure success.

- Expand the community of free societies by
 - Recognizing that promoting freedom and human rights aligns America's values with its strategic self-interests and bolsters our alliance structure and international standing.
 - Prioritizing human freedom as part of diplomatic relations with foreign governments.
 - Strengthening civil society, transparency, accountability, and the rule of law abroad.
 - Supporting reforms to empower women in closed and transitioning societies.
 - Advancing economic reforms and trade pacts that further democratic development.
 - Using U.S. assistance and strategic investments to incentivize political progress and stimulate improvements in education and health.

Restore America's international leadership

The Obama administration's policy of "leading from behind" has led us into danger, and its philosophy of "strategic patience" has eroded our influence and the trust of our allies. Throughout the world, a lack of U.S. leadership has created power vacuums that have been filled by adversaries, despots, rogue regimes, and terrorist groups. America must reassert its influence and use it to advance our interests, shape global events, and stabilize the international system.

America is exceptional, unmatched in fortitude and unrivaled in strength by any other nation. But our might is not all that separates us from others. We are defined by the ideas on which we were founded and by an enduring defense of those principles, at home and abroad. Indeed, the influence of America's example and our willingness to act have lit the way toward a world that is safer, freer, and more prosperous for our people. Without that leadership, the United States and the wider free world would be forced to live at the mercy of foreign powers who do not share our interests.

The Obama administration does not to hold this view of America's role in the world—as either exceptional or indispensable.

The administration has presided over America's retreat, and the consequences have been dire. The premature drawdown of forces in Iraq and Afghanistan allowed Islamist terrorists to reverse our hard-fought gains and reemerge stronger than ever. "Leading from behind" in Libya created a power vacuum that extremists exploited to plot against America and our allies. And the rush to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay has put terrorists back on the battlefield.

When the President proclaimed that the use of chemical weapons by Syria's brutal Assad regime would be a "red line"—and then failed to enforce it—both our allies and our enemies took notice. It sent a signal that the United States is reluctant to act in defense of its values and interests, which has encouraged adversaries such as Russia and Iran to take belligerent actions. They now doubt that America will hold them accountable.

The "strategic patience" that the administration showed North Korea has emboldened the country's rogue regime to test nuclear weapons and new missile systems that can reach our territory. Meanwhile, testing American resolve, China has ramped up and militarized its claims in the South China Sea—a vital shipping area for international commerce. These developments are undermining American influence in Asia and the confidence of our allies in the region.

The bottom line is this: Our allies no longer trust us, and our adversaries no longer fear us. It is imperative that we counter this growing perception of U.S. decline and restore American leadership in the world. If we fail to guarantee international stability, no other nation will. Moreover, continued retreat will not relieve America of its global burdens; it will saddle us with new ones—and increase the threats against us.

While we will seek to avoid conflict wherever possible, we must understand that the use of military force—and all the accompanying sacrifices—is sometimes necessary to prevent greater danger in the future. Furthermore, because the premature withdrawal of U.S. forces can create destabilizing power vacuums, we must listen and respond to the judgment of military commanders on force levels, especially in unstable regions. Our national security decisions should be based on past experience and prudent analysis, not political expedience.

In particular, America must have the confidence to suppress emerging threats before they grow. As we have learned from the spread of ISIS and other terror groups, the longer we wait to confront challenges, the worse our options for countering them become. Indeed, if we do not shape events now, they will shape us later, which is why our foreign policy must be proactive.

However, this does not mean that every threat is ours alone to confront. Our message to allies and partners alike must be that we will help them defend themselves, but our responsibility is not greater than their own. In NATO, for instance, our partners must increase defense spending or risk letting the alliance fall into disrepair, or worse, irrelevance. Many governments have recognized these responsibilities, and America should hold them accountable.

Multilateral action is often the right approach for securing our common interests, particularly when using military force. However, no foreign power or international organization—including the United Nations—should be allowed to dictate our interests and obligations. America will reserve the right to act unilaterally when we deem appropriate, and we will not let fear of criticism prevent us from doing what is right to protect our people.

America must also use its economic leverage when necessary to advance our policies and interests. The strength of our economy and scope of our financial institutions give us a potent tool, especially when targeting rogue regimes with sanctions. Time and again, when faced with a choice, banks and companies would rather do business in the United States than be associated with international pariahs like Iran or North Korea. We will be unafraid to use this leverage, knowing that sanctions allow us to negotiate from a position of strength.

We are the descendants of the free world's bravest pathfinders, and our charge is to remember this: Their courage is our heritage. As we restore American leadership in the world, we must summon their resolve and be unafraid to confront challenges before they reach our shores. Our preeminence is the result of battle-tested principles and has been paid for by the sacrifice of generations of Americans. We will honor them by defending our interests across the globe.

Counter our adversaries and support our allies

In recent years, American foreign policy has often focused on appeasing rather than opposing our adversaries on vital issues of national security. Interpreting U.S. attempts at rapprochement as weakness, countries like Russia and Iran have expanded their influence at the expense of America and our allies. As a result, other countries are beginning to ignore our demands, warnings, and red lines, damaging America's influence and credibility. The United States must begin decisively confronting adversarial powers and rogue regimes when they threaten our interests. We must also restore the confidence of our allies, who often feel ignored and even abandoned by Washington.

The Obama administration took office with the misguided goal of conducting closer engagement with America's adversaries. They extended an open hand to governments in Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Russia, Syria, and Venezuela, and made damaging concessions often from a position of weakness. In the process, they have emboldened those regimes, alienated our allies, and left America in a more vulnerable strategic position. Now we must take immediate action to repair alliances and partnerships around the globe and to be clear about how the United States treats friends and foes.

The revival of American foreign policy must begin with our closest allies in Europe. Our transatlantic relationships are critical to international security, and yet the current administration has often treated them as a mere afterthought when setting priorities and crafting policy. Whenever possible, we should act in concert with our partners in Europe, as they share our values and have stood side by side with America as we defended our interests and shaped the international system to favor free nations. From intelligence-sharing to investments, we should seek to tighten bonds with these allies.

We can start by modernizing and solidifying NATO. U.S. forces should maintain a strong NATO presence in Europe, particularly by providing training and assistance to East European member states to strengthen the alliance's deterrent on its frontier. We must also press our allies to increase defense spending and military readiness, recognizing that NATO cannot be held together by a few main contributors and depended upon by a wider group of free-riders. States should meet their commitments so the alliance remains credible and effective. We also will seek to modernize NATO to ensure it keeps pace with the evolving threat landscape.

Our alliances will be pivotal as we stand up to Russian aggression. The Obama administration's ill-considered "reset" with Moscow has manifestly failed. Rather than achieve mutual respect, the policy has resulted in Russia taking advantage of the United States at nearly every opportunity in furtherance of its desire to reestablish power regionally and globally. Putin's burgeoning militarism—from his illegal seizure of Ukrainian territory to his support for the murderous Assad regime—poses a threat to the United States, our allies, and our partners.

America cannot look the other way as Moscow seeks new hegemony. We must contest Putin's advances and deter future actions that threaten U.S. interests. For instance, we must be assertive in responding to its actions in Syria and scrap the current policy of denying Ukrainians lethal weapons to defend themselves against Russian aggression. As the Ukrainian president told Congress, "One cannot win the war with blankets. Even more, we cannot keep the peace with blankets." Exports of American energy resources should also be used to blunt Russian energy dominance over Europe.

The Obama administration's outreach to Iran also provides a textbook example of the failure of appeasement. Almost immediately after coming into office, the president faced a choice—stand with Iranians protesting in the streets, or stand aside to preserve secret talks with the regime. The president chose the latter and negotiated a nuclear deal with Iran. The agreement allowed tens of billions of dollars to flow into the coffers of the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism and provided

sanctions relief that will inhibit America's ability to counter Iranian belligerence. In a decade, even without Iranian cheating, the deal will put Tehran on the verge of acquiring a nuclear bomb.

Iran is seeking to build a regional empire, and we must do all we can to stop it. Unwisely, the nuclear deal has taken pressure off Tehran allowing it to expand its influence, step up support for terrorist groups, continue its ballistic missile program, and to bolster its regional proxies. We will take action against Iran's terrorist proxies, including Hezbollah and Hamas, and prevent it from developing new ones. We must also impose severe sanctions on Iran to punish its aggression, and we should assert that America will keep all options on the table—including military force—to stop Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

Iran's declared enemy, Israel, should be at the center of our engagement in the Middle East. The country is one of our closest allies and a shining democracy in a region beset by autocracy and instability. Our agenda should include strengthening mutual economic relations, particularly in ways that drive innovation; maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge in the region; and defending our ally against political attacks at the United Nations and other international forums. We support a negotiated path to peace, but cannot ignore the fact that Israel faces persistent terror threats emanating from the Palestinian territories or that Israel has the responsibility to defend itself from this threat.

In the Middle East and North Africa, our partnerships are critical for fighting terror and achieving stability. In addition to working with traditional partners like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, we should strengthen bonds with Gulf countries, particularly those who are embracing reform and development, and accelerate counterterrorism cooperation and training across the region. Most immediately, those who need assistance to fight ISIS on the ground—such as the Kurds and various Sunni tribes—must get it, and we must follow through on our years-long demand that Assad step down in Syria. Our training of African forces, which are on the front-lines of ISIS's expansion, should be a top priority, especially in Tunisia where we need to work aggressively to shore up its emerging democracy.

Sustained U.S. involvement is also imperative in the region's failed states, like Libya and Yemen. In these places, political solutions are the only path to long-term stability, and American leadership can play a critical role in paving the way. But the immediate imperative is to prevent these ungoverned spaces from being used to threaten us, and we should work with our regional partners to keep threats in check and roll back terror groups on the ground.

In East Asia, our allies are desperate for a greater American role. Our top priority must be to counter the threat of a nuclear North Korea. And we must respond strategically to expansionist China's rise, including checking its territorial ambitions. These challenges create opportunities to bring together Japan and South Korea while strengthening our ties with Taiwan and the Philippines. We cannot allow our alliances in East Asia and the Pacific to atrophy and must shore up our defense arrangements to deter China from tilting the global balance of power toward autocracy.

We must also embrace emerging partners that could help keep the peace in their region and beyond. India, the world's largest democracy, shares common interests with the world's oldest democracy, the United States, and we must build upon that foundation to work together in shaping world events.

Those threatened by expansionist countries like Russia, China, or Iran must be invited to participate in increased joint military exercises and training. Arms sales to allies and partners should likewise be expedited and streamlined. When appropriate, intelligence sharing should be strengthened. These are important tools for deepening engagement and being able to confront crises with other nations.

Across the world, we must do more to combat the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The administration's appeasement of Iran may well lead to a new wave of proliferation, and we should be on the lookout for telltale signs of covert nuclear programs, as well as chemical and biological efforts that might threaten us. We will need to strengthen the ability of less-capable partners to detect and interdict the movement of WMD-related materials and reemphasize that deterrence and early action are the most effective policies for keeping dangerous regimes from acquiring WMD capabilities.

Finally, in our own backyard we will continue to work with our friends and stem the influence of foes. Our relations with Canada and Mexico are crucial, especially in managing trans-border trade and countering trans-border threats. But we cannot blindly follow the administration's normalization plan with communist Cuba, a regime that is fundamentally opposed to U.S. policy and that represses an entire population only 90 miles from our coastline. Instead, we will work to restore U.S. leverage, hold the Castro regime accountable, and make sure any further accommodations are met first with real concessions from the Cuban government. A first step should be to ban financial transactions with the Cuban military.

Promote prosperity through free markets and strategic investments

The United States must promote open markets and expand free trade. Not only does trade grow the American economy, but it spreads global freedom, thereby making the world safer for America. We must also advance our humanitarian and security goals by recognizing that poverty will not be defeated through dependence. Rather, America should make strategic investments worldwide that foster self-sufficiency and contribute to long-term growth.

Trade plays an important role in our economy, supporting roughly 40 million jobs in the United States—more than one in five—and providing immeasurable benefits to American consumers by lowering prices and improving our standard of living. Because the vast majority of the world's consumers live outside our borders, we must continue to open new markets for our businesses and build the capacity of tomorrow's trade partners. For that reason, the United States must do more to support trade agreements with clear benefits, including job growth, to our economy. Trade can also play a key role in strengthening U.S. alliances.

Technology is transforming the global economy, eliminating some career fields while creating new employment opportunities and changing how existing jobs are performed. Meanwhile, the United States faces greater competition from countries with less regulation and lower labor costs. For the United States to maintain our economic leadership, we must reduce the regulatory and tax burdens at home and ensure that trade deals level the playing field for America's workers and businesses. Deals that do not meet this standard are unacceptable.

By delaying the development of strong trade deals, we give our competitors time to undermine the global system of trade that the United States has worked so hard to build. Countries like China and Russia are creating their own closed trading systems. A modern, successful strategy will break down the barriers to trade and investment, open markets, create opportunities for American businesses, and enable countries to grow their way out of poverty. These agreements create common, high standards for trade around the world and make it easier for U.S. workers to compete.

In addition to promoting free trade, we must deepen our efforts to spread economic freedom. This entails eliminating economic exclusion—including for women—and accelerating economic growth through foreign aid. Our commitment to market-based economic growth should underpin every aspect of the U.S. development strategy.

Extreme poverty overseas threatens the economic and security interests of the United States. The world has seen that American leadership in opening global markets for trade and investment has helped lift more than 1 billion people out of poverty. Foreign aid must take the form of strategic investment that promotes the growth of stable societies by stimulating economic growth.

The Obama administration failed to prioritize economic growth in its approach to foreign aid and development, preferring high-profile “presidential initiatives” and short-term responses such as loan guarantees and enterprise funds. In places like Pakistan, the administration has made major investments in infrastructure but failed to accomplish the reforms necessary to create a positive environment for economic growth. Without reform, these initiatives will do little to improve livelihoods.

Countries are ultimately responsible for their own development—there is no right to foreign aid. Evidence shows that foreign aid is at its most effective in poor but well-governed countries that embrace economic freedom and invest in their own people. An efficient development strategy will enable countries to better help themselves, including by building capacity to deliver public services, strengthening the rule of law, combating corruption, and breaking down barriers to growth.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation, an agency chartered under a Republican administration, focuses on reducing poverty through economic growth—and demands results as a condition of continued assistance. This is how we should be approaching foreign aid generally. Indeed, the organization should receive broader authority to promote market-based economic growth, economic integration, and trade in poor but relatively well-governed countries.

We should also prioritize programs that build trade capacity and enable developing countries to capitalize on trade and investment opportunities; the use of trade hubs; policy reforms that eliminate red tape, empower women to participate freely in the economy, and promote land tenure; the expansion of access to capital; and the connection of people to markets.

We must always remember that the objective of foreign aid should be to *eliminate* the need for continued assistance in a given country. Clearly defined benchmarks and indicators of success should be built into all country assistance strategies. Our ultimate goal must be to transform developing countries from aid recipients into trading partners.

Expand the community of free societies

The defense of liberty at home depends on its success abroad. In recent years, “democratic backsliding” has been evident around the world as numerous free countries have slipped back into autocratic tendencies. America must hold tyrannical regimes accountable and work to assist countries with peaceful democratic transitions. This is essential for avoiding the emergence of power vacuums and preventing international conflicts that harm U.S. interests.

For decades, American values of freedom, democracy, and human rights have inspired global political change, including the fall of numerous tyrannical governments at the end of the Cold War. The U.S. is more secure when these values are energetically promoted, thereby providing the United States with more like-minded and reliable partners. Promoting freedom and human rights is thus a strategic imperative as well as a moral one.

However, the historic expansion of freedom worldwide has been eroded by democratic backsliding. Many of the democratic transitions that marked the end of the Cold War and were sustained over the following decade have stalled or reversed. Freedom House reports that 72 countries experienced a decline in freedom in the last year, while only 43 countries posted gains, continuing a decade-long decline in global freedom.

In China, for example, the continued imprisonment of Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo for his democratic manifesto is emblematic of that regime's harsh policies against free speech. In Russia, President Vladimir Putin's stiff regulation of civil society has ended the National Endowment for Democracy's operations. More ominously, Russian opposition leader Boris Nemtsov was murdered with impunity. In Rwanda, a constitutional referendum on presidential term limits will effectively allow President Paul Kagame to stay in power until 2034. In Venezuela, the regime has cracked down on the opposition and imprisoned its leaders such as Leopoldo Lopez.

The regime in North Korea likely has the worst human rights record in the world. Over 140,000 North Koreans are kept in forced labor camps where many are worked to death. Yet for years, the global community, including U.S. administrations, largely ignored this barbarity in a failed attempt to arrest North Korea's nuclear development. With North Korea having flagrantly demonstrated its nuclear and ballistic-missile capabilities, the international community is finally bringing deserved attention to these abhorrent human rights abuses. International condemnation of the regime's human rights abuses is not only morally justified, but it also weakens the regime's autocratic grip on power.

In Iran, the Obama administration turned its back on millions of Iranians who protested their brutal theocracy during the 2009 Green Revolution, refusing to show solidarity with everyday Iranians who risked their lives for freedom and democracy. Incredibly, the administration continues to side with the regime against the Iranian people by downplaying human rights concerns for the sake of negotiating and maintaining its ill-conceived nuclear deal.

The United States must continue its long tradition of promoting global freedom. We will speak out against regimes that disregard human rights or disallow meaningful political participation. While standing with democratic activists who ask for our support, we should oppose anti-democratic groups seeking to exploit political vacuums and hijack democratic movements. The Obama administration must understand the mistake it made in 2011, when it fell silent as popular democratic protests in the Middle East were usurped by radicals, eventually fueling the civil wars and failed states we see today in Libya, Yemen, and Syria.

While there is much we can do to encourage global freedom, we must recognize that democracy ultimately must be homegrown—it cannot be imposed on the unwilling. Each country's unique circumstances must be considered in our democracy promotion campaign. Those efforts should occur with a forward-thinking analysis of “What comes next?”—especially with respect to countries that are critical security partners.

Our leverage to promote democracy and human rights should never be squandered. The Obama administration sought to normalize relations with the Castro regime in exchange for the promise of democratic and human rights progress in Cuba. One year into the agreement, which included reopening the American embassy in Havana, the Castro regime is as repressive

as ever. In the first two months of 2016 alone, the Cuban Commission for Human Rights registered 2,588 political arrests. Nevertheless, President Obama reneged on his vow to refuse to travel to Cuba until human rights had improved.

Elsewhere, U.S.-backed anti-corruption efforts helped lead to a peaceful change of government in Guatemala, while our efforts to defend human rights, including congressionally passed sanctions, saw the people of Venezuela vote against repression in favor of greater freedom. The U.S. should continue assisting Mexico in professionalizing its law enforcement and modernizing its judicial system to bring greater transparency and rule of law, particularly along our shared border.

Additionally, promoting women's security and emancipation should be a key element of our broader commitment to democracy and human rights. In many countries women and girls are denied the opportunity to go to school, to be part of the formal economy, to be represented in government, and to receive equal protection under the law. The disenfranchisement of women is a democracy and human rights issue. It is also a security and economic one, since no country can achieve security or long-term economic development if half its population is repressed and denied participation in politics, business, or society overall.

Religious freedom deserves particular protection. Tragically, the Obama administration has been slow to recognize that ISIS is conducting a genocidal campaign against Christians, Yazidis, and some sects of Islam. Meanwhile in Burma, the Muslim Rohingya population is systematically repressed, with many forced to live in appalling camps. Overall, international religious freedom must be seen not just as an isolated human rights issue, but as a vital component of promoting the national security of the United States.

The work of the National Endowment for Democracy, International Republican Institute, and the National Democratic Institute deserve continued support for their work with indigenous partners to build democratic institutions abroad. These organizations recognize that democracy is more than an election. It is a way of life. The fundamentals of a free media, rule of law, robust civil society, and respect for individual liberties are essential components of an enduring free society.

Political freedom is stronger when it is paired with economic freedom. With its direct ties to civil society, the United States Agency for International Development is well-positioned to promote both objectives at the grassroots level. USAID should be more focused on strengthening property rights, the rule of law, and transparency abroad, which in turn will promote economic development and empower citizens against political repression. As we saw in Tunisia in 2010 and in Iran today, often the greatest threat to tyranny is an educated, empowered population denied economic opportunity.

The United States must effectively counter repressive regimes by promoting the free flow of news and information. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, and other U.S.-backed broadcasters play an important role in breaking the media monopoly of repressive governments. These outlets were critical during the Cold War but are not nearly as effective today. They must be modernized to keep pace with the speed of information and be freed of the federal bureaucracy.

The voice of the President is a powerful tool. History will forever remember President Reagan's resounding demand, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall"—two years before it fell. East Germans, Poles, and Russians rejected Communism for many reasons, but Reagan's clarion call inspired millions behind the Iron Curtain. By contrast, in both word and deed, President Obama has wavered in opposing repression worldwide. In his determination to reach rapprochements with oppressive regimes, the president has given short shrift to the strivings of Iranians, Cubans, and other peoples living under the boot of his new negotiating partners.

Renewing our National Security Tools

Since World War II, America has been successful in shaping the world to our benefit and to the benefit of mankind. Through international engagement, the United States plays a unique and indispensable role in the world. When America disengages, the world becomes a more dangerous place and our security suffers.

Our national security institutions were largely built in the wake of World War II to prepare the United States to weather a long Cold War with the Soviet Union. While these institutions have been tremendously successful, it is time for Congress to update and reform our national security agencies and departments to meet the new challenges of the 21st century.

Enhancing military readiness is also key to safeguarding our security. It is wrong to send our servicemen and women out on missions for which they are not fully-prepared or fully-supported. Yet, tight budget over the last few years, coupled with the pace and the number of deployments, have created a readiness crisis across each of the Military Services. Unfortunately, we are beginning to witness the tragic consequences. We must invest in readiness and in our national security in a way that makes a clear statement to friends and adversaries that the United States will have the means to defend itself.

House Republicans propose that the United States:

- Reform diplomacy and assistance for a new era by
 - Reauthorizing and reforming key agencies including the State Department and the United States Agency for International Development.
 - Revitalizing our international broadcasting.
 - Protecting freedom of the Internet.
 - Reforming our development assistance.

- Improve military strength and ensure agility by
 - Providing the resources and support our troops and their families need.
 - Supporting the military readiness of our troops and directing needed resources to the manpower, skills, equipment, and capabilities necessary to perform, efficiently and effectively, the missions assigned by the commander in chief.
 - Conducting fair, aggressive, and thorough congressional oversight of the Pentagon, its policies, and its programs.
 - Continuing foundational defense reforms in a numerous areas, such as military health care, the commissary system, military justice, and the acquisition system.
 - Delaying and simplifying the DOD's organizational structure to improve performance, efficiency, and effectiveness.

- Honor our commitments to those who serve by
 - Reforming the military healthcare system to safeguard the readiness of our armed forces while ensuring sustainable access to care for all beneficiaries.
 - Ending the Department of Veterans Affairs's monopoly on veterans' care, forcing the VA to operate more like a hospital system that must compete for its funding, and affording veterans the option of receiving care through a community partner instead of the VA.
 - Requiring the VA to expand its partnerships with community providers.
 - Supporting research on the physical and mental health issues prevalent in the veteran community and incorporating promising developments into the veterans' healthcare system.
 - Aggressively overseeing the VA to foster a new sense of commitment to its mission.
 - Reforming the VA personnel system so that employees who do not meet the standards of service rightly expected of them will no longer be tolerated.

- Strengthen law-enforcement tools and information sharing by
 - Enhancing our intelligence capabilities by increasing integration and investments in technology.
 - Increasing cyber-threat sharing with the private sector.
 - Maintaining the legal authorities necessary to gather information on foreign intelligence targets.

Reform diplomacy and assistance for a new era

We are confronting 21st century challenges with 20th century tools and a 19th century bureaucracy. America must overhaul its foreign affairs, development assistance, and public diplomacy programs to account for rapid changes in the international system and to properly adjust to the social media age. The U.S. military has worked tirelessly since 9/11 to defeat our enemies. But to win the peace, we must strengthen the civilian elements of our national security.

Under the Obama administration, the State Department has often taken a back seat to the White House and its preference for conducting secret negotiations directly, without involving professional diplomats. This neglect, combined with the president's five-year failure to nominate a permanent inspector general to conduct oversight, has limited the effectiveness of American diplomacy and contributed to significant lapses in security and transparency.

In response, we must enact a State Department reauthorization that clearly defines the Department's mission and begins transforming it into a modern institution capable of responding to today's challenges.

The Department of State must update its antiquated workforce structure, which fails to acknowledge that diplomacy is no longer the exclusive domain of governments. It must create a workforce structure that is fluid—expanding by acquiring skillsets and personnel from the private sector as needed, and contracting when those skills are in surplus or no longer required. This will entail competing with the private sector for the best minds and most skilled workers by expanding pools of recruitment while encouraging personnel to move between public and private-sector institutions so they can bring in new ideas and innovation.

The Internet and other communications technologies have transformed the way we buy, sell, educate, and socialize—it is time for American diplomacy and development strategies to take these advances into account. We must fully integrate technology into our foreign policy. The United States should encourage our foreign partners to adopt policies—including cybersecurity, data sharing, and Internet freedom and governance policies—that maintain an open Internet, ensure market access for American companies, and support free speech.

The State Department must also secure its computer systems and ensure that all personnel, including senior officials, use official accounts while conducting all official business. This is essential for maintaining security and transparency when records are requested by Congress, an inspector general, or the American people.

The security of our diplomatic personnel and facilities overseas is paramount. Unfortunately, those programs have atrophied under the Obama administration. This was clear in Benghazi, Libya, where numerous requests for additional resources were denied by State Department officials in Washington, leading to the tragic death of four Americans, including our ambassador, in a terrorist attack. The State Department must continually reassess the security of diplomatic personnel and facilities overseas, including the role of senior officials. The Department must assign its most experienced security and diplomatic personnel to high threat posts; it must no longer allow individuals to take easier assignments because of their seniority. But security must always remain in service of the mission. Outposts cannot become prisons that effectively keep America's diplomats from interacting with foreign populations.

While the Department of State must continue to lead America's official diplomatic effort, other agencies will play an important part. Some agencies must undergo radical reform to meet new challenges.

The Broadcasting Board of Governors is charged with promoting the United States overseas and countering anti-American propaganda through international broadcasting. Having atrophied in the aftermath of the Cold War, this agency must make reforms and embrace new technology in order to respond to challenges posed by ISIS, Russia, and other adversaries.

The United States Agency for International Development must keep pace with innovation. The development of new technologies—from vaccines to mobile banking—has accelerated advances in global health, food security, and development finance. With a few notable exceptions, USAID's programs and workforce have failed to keep pace with the rapidly changing development landscape. It must modernize its approach to development by embracing science and technology, incentivizing innovation, and leveraging private-sector expertise and investment.

We must make expanding access to the Internet a development priority. Roughly 2.7 billion people are currently online. That leaves more than 4 billion people—or two-thirds of the world's population—without access to the Internet. With the Internet

becoming as fundamental to economic growth as electricity, highways, and ports, our development assistance should promote partnerships that allow for cost-effective investments in Internet infrastructure.

The United States must maintain sufficient control of the Internet to repel continued efforts by dictators and authoritarian regimes to censor, intimidate, and control their citizens. While Internet usage has climbed to more than 40 percent of the world's population, global Internet freedom has declined for the fifth year in a row, according to Freedom House's *Freedom on the Net 2015* report. American diplomacy should address the proliferation of repressive laws and push back against increased demands for the private sector to self-censor.

When earthquakes, drought and other disasters strike, the United States is quick to respond. However, we need to stop undercutting our own development efforts. We should expand our toolkit for assistance by making better use of flexible food aid tools, including electronic vouchers and local and regional food purchases, that can stimulate economic activity, facilitate early recovery, reduce long-term dependence, and enable the United States to reach more people in less time at less expense.

The introduction of Ebola into the United States several years ago and the looming threat of Zika serve as stark reminders that diseases know no borders and that an outbreak abroad can have direct implications at home. We must confront these threats with urgency and resolve by continuing, along with private sector partners, to invest in disease surveillance, vaccines and immunizations, and prevention and treatment programs.

Improve military strength and ensure agility

Our military has recently been subject to damaging rollbacks, reducing some of our capabilities to pre-9/11 levels. We cannot expect our allies to increase their commitments to international security while we decrease ours. Nor can we expect to deter and defeat our adversaries by drawing down our forces and capabilities. We must maintain a fighting force that is prepared to confront the challenges of a new age while being appropriately equipped to face both state and non-state actors.

Military strength is a cornerstone of U.S. national security that reassures our allies and enhances peace and prosperity. Military strength is also a key component of deterrence—the ability to convince potential adversaries that they cannot achieve their aims, thus dissuading them from undertaking undesirable actions.

To maintain the most capable fighting force in the world, we must have adequate, predictable budgets that provide sufficient resources to our armed forces and their families, and we must invest these resources wisely. This requires maintaining our current weapons systems and equipment, expanding our technical superiority over our adversaries, and developing and fielding the capabilities we need to counter future threats. And these investments must continue over the long term; we cannot continue to send our troops into harms' way when they are not fully prepared and not fully supported.

We must prioritize investments in the safety, security, and reliability of our nuclear deterrent, which is the foundation of all our defense efforts. We must support our special operations forces to ensure they have adequate resources and are not overused. We also need to strengthen train and equip efforts for the security forces of friendly nations.

And while we meet the challenges of today, Congress must conduct rigorous oversight to ensure the Department of Defense is tracking the larger trends that will shape future security challenges. This oversight will inform and help identify the investments in science and technology needed to give our military a decisive edge against our enemies. One area of particular concern is cybersecurity, for which we must ensure the DOD has the resources, authorities, and personnel it needs to improve offensive and defensive capabilities.

But strength alone is insufficient; our forces must be agile enough to use their strength effectively. Institutional agility is critical to quickly getting the capabilities we need to the places we need them. That is a necessity when the nation faces a wide variety of threats in nearly every corner of the world.

As the taxpayers' voice on national security, Congress must conduct fair, aggressive, and thorough oversight of the Pentagon, its policies, and its programs. That oversight has already identified one area in dire need of reform: acquisition. By reforming the defense acquisition process, we will get more security for our dollar and greater accountability from those making buying decisions.

But reform should not be limited to acquisition. The DOD must reform to ensure that national security decisions are made rapidly and effectively, with a minimum of wasteful bureaucracy. The structure of the Department of Defense must be simplified to improve performance, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Finally, we must maintain robust military intelligence and ensure military intelligence analysis remains a priority at the national level. Overall, we need to confirm that the DOD is constantly improving how it collects and analyzes intelligence to support the needs of the combatant commanders and warfighters.

Honor our commitments to those who serve

The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, is directly proportional to their perception of how the veterans of earlier wars were treated by their nation. We will honor those who served by modernizing the institutions that serve them.

When Americans volunteer to join the military, they and their families risk everything in order to serve others. We must honor that sacrifice by providing, in a timely way, the resources, pay, and benefits our troops have earned. Doing so will help us continue to recruit and retain our nation's best and brightest and meet their needs once their service is complete.

It is vital that Americans have confidence in our national institutions, including the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and its system of benefits and health care. One of the salient lessons of the Vietnam War and its aftermath is that a nation that abandons its veterans does so at its own peril.

As a major source of support for veterans—and to a limited extent, for those on active duty—the VA plays a key role in fostering a willingness to serve and in reinforcing confidence in the nation's commitment to its veterans. Its obligation is not just to provide care to those injured in service, but also to assist the injured and uninjured alike in the transition back to civilian life.

The U.S. military's unique strength derives in large part from the professionalism fostered by its all-volunteer character. To ensure the viability of the all-volunteer force, we must care for those who have "borne the battle" as well as their dependents. This involves efforts on the front end to incentivize continued voluntary military service, such as attractive compensation packages, and a promise of care, disability assistance, education, vocational training, employment help, and other benefits upon separation from service.

This assistance must not be stifled by intra- and inter-governmental barriers. For example, despite spending billions of taxpayer dollars, the VA, DOD, and the Department of Labor still do not enable a seamless transition from military service to civilian life. Instead, there are overlapping benefit responsibilities (health care, disability, employment, etc.) and the departments' inability to integrate their tools present veterans with a confusing array of inconsistent services. As a result, the delivery of services is made more difficult by the lack of interoperable medical record systems and an unresponsive bureaucracy.

When government agencies fail to provide the care and benefits that are the reason for their existence, alternative streamlined private options must be provided, such as offering greater choice in using community providers for veterans' healthcare. In addition, unaccountable bureaucracies must be reformed to ensure that when a veteran chooses to seek care and benefits from the VA, those programs are delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible. If such reform is not possible, then alternatives must be in place. In short, the VA is not sacred, the veteran is.

The ability to hold employees accountable is the sine qua non of any organization. In light of the recent scandals at the VA, Congress must increase accountability at the Department for the billions of tax dollars it spends. There seem to be endless examples of unresponsive VA bureaucrats providing shoddy care and inconsistent, delayed benefits. Our veterans deserve better care—much better—and we intend to ensure they receive it.

Strengthen law-enforcement tools and information sharing

Our law enforcement and intelligence professionals have stopped many attacks against our country. However, in an age of peer-to-peer terrorism, intelligence and law-enforcement agencies are struggling to monitor every threat. As we saw in Garland, Texas, the first sign of a plot might be an Internet hashtag tweeted just minutes before an attack. We must ensure that our law-enforcement and intelligence agencies are positioned to keep up with the changing threat environment, and that we can get the right information to the right people at the right time to protect our country.

Since the 9/11 attacks, U.S. law-enforcement and intelligence professionals have thwarted numerous plots against our country, acting aggressively to prevent our enemies from reaching the homeland. However, our enemies' methods are constantly evolving. As a result, the United States faces the most complex global threat environment in decades.

The United States must be prepared to overcome aggressive actions from countries like Russia and China, which can bring to bear significant resources against U.S. interests. At the same time, we need to retain the flexibility to target non-state actors like ISIS and al-Qaeda. Meanwhile, we must always prioritize the protection of the homeland for the American people.

Intelligence is our first line of defense against terrorists and hostile states. We must continually strengthen our defenses by ensuring that we get timely information to the right people when they need it. Budgetary uncertainty also places a significant burden on intelligence agencies as well as law enforcement. So these agencies need the best resources and the right tools to get the job done.

Since foreign governments and non-state actors may inspire nefarious activities anywhere in the world—including inside the United States—we must also ensure vital information is integrated with our law enforcement systems at all levels of government and within our military. In particular, we should ensure the communication with state and local law enforcement is robust in both direction so that we can connect the dots more quickly.

We also rely on our friends to provide us information about threats that we have failed to detect, and we provide them with intelligence for interdicting dangerous individuals before they come our way. But we still have a long way to go, as terrorists, criminals, and spies are crossing borders faster than the information needed to stop them. In Europe, for instance, law enforcement and intelligence agencies within—and between—countries are often firewalled from each other. America must help our allies break down these barriers, much as we did after 9/11, in order to prevent attacks that affect us all.

Rapid innovation in information technology has made this task difficult. Our nation's success will increasingly depend not only on how much information we can access, but on how well we use that information to make critical national security decisions. The United States is at the epicenter of the world's technology boom; we must tap into that cutting edge expertise and seek new opportunities to change the way we process information.

The United States needs a more comprehensive approach to sharing information on cyber threats. Today, since most networks are interconnected, weaknesses in security can create significant vulnerabilities in both civilian and government infrastructure. Likewise, information that is valuable to one network defender is helpful to all network defenders—and must be shared. Although some private-sector actors may be reluctant to share cyber-threat information, government and industry have a common goal: to prevent cyber criminals and cyber terrorists from disrupting commerce, disabling critical infrastructure, and weakening national defense.

Law enforcement and intelligence agencies must maximize the nation's capacity to discourage aggression or any form of coercion against the United States and our allies. We must maintain—and where appropriate, strengthen—the legal authorities that underpin U.S. efforts to gather information on foreign intelligence targets, including authorities that are critical to stopping terrorist attacks. Without impinging on Americans' privacy rights or civil liberties, we must ensure the Intelligence Community has the tools and authorities it needs to stay one step ahead of our enemies as they plot to do us harm.

Conclusion

From America's founding days, the country has been a beacon of hope for those seeking liberty, peace, and prosperity. Our ability to continue playing that role in the future fundamentally depends on the strength of our economy and the willingness of the country's leaders to face the world with clear eyes and the determination to secure America's values and interests.

The United States today faces an array of security challenges unprecedented in their complexity. To meet them, House Republicans propose this energetic national security policy that brings to bear all of the resources of the U.S. Government to defeat the terrorists, keep Americans safe at home, defend freedom and advance America's interests, and renew our national security tools.

