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A Strategic Roadmap for Reentry 2021 and Beyond:

U.S. Institutional Commitments in a New Geo-strategic Environment

Acknowledgments

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Report Author

William Burke-White, Professor of Law, University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School, Inaugural Director, Perry World House (2014-2019), Non-Resident Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution

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Contents

Background

On October 15 and 16, 2020 the University of Pennsylvania's Perry World House and the Foreign Policy Program of the Brookings Institution jointly convened a virtual, non-partisan workshop to assess the state of U.S. multilateral policy and develop strategic recommendations for U.S. reengagement with the international order under the next administration. This report draws on those conversations, taking into account the subsequent outcome of the 2020 U.S. presidential election, to assess the shifting global landscape of multilateralism, develop a set of principles to guide U.S. multilateral efforts going forward, and offer concrete action items for a new administration seeking to re-engage the international order. While the report includes inputs and insights from the range of substantive academic and policy experts listed in the appendix, it is not intended to reflect the consensus view of participants nor does it carry their endorsement.

Executive Summary

As the Biden administration takes office, it confronts a radically transformed global landscape in which it must advance a range of U.S. priorities through multilateral policy tools, including international institutions, international law, and multilateral diplomacy. Neglect of the international order and exits from international commitments under the Trump presidency have positioned the United States as a relative outsider in the multilateral policy space, decreasing its leverage and influence. Simultaneously, a rising China has become far more effective and assertive in shaping international norms and setting the agendas of international institutions. Even with unified Democratic control of the U.S. government, the new administration's policy options are severely constrained by deep political divisions over America's role in the world and the value of the international order. This new landscape demands fresh approaches to how the United States works with its partners, confronts its rivals, and advances its interests multilaterally.

The six "Philadelphia Principles" proposed in this report can guide the United States toward more effective multilateralism and involve shifts to its global strategic approach, changes to how the United States builds and stewards partnerships and alliances, and a renewed focus on the domestic political and bureaucratic context of multilateral engagement. Two principles operate at the global strategic level. First, the United States must recognize that the multilateral order is now defined by great-power rivalry, particularly with China, and respond in kind. Second, addressing transnational threats, especially climate change, must be the fundamental goal of U.S. multilateral strategy. The next two principles shape how the United States builds and stewards alliances. First, multilateral approaches should start with the countries that share U.S. values and commitment to democracy. Second, successful multilateralism requires the strategic use of multiple institutions, including informal processes, club-models, and non-binding commitments. The final two principles guide bureaucratic reform and domestic political engagement. First, multilateral priorities must be integrated into overall U.S. diplomatic strategy, especially by leveraging the strengths of bilateral relationships. Finally, multilateral objectives must align with the values the United States embodies at home and the interests of the American people.

While the implementation of these principles is critical to the effectiveness of U.S. multilateralism over the long term, the new administration must also take a series of concrete steps to re-engage the multilateral order early in the new term. In substantive areas including national security, international economics, and transnational threats, there are politically viable, substantively meaningful, and symbolically powerful actions that can advance U.S. interests and enhance the U.S. position in the international order. The report proposes several key early steps, some of which the Biden administration has already begun, including continuing the processes of rejoining the Paris Agreement and the World Health Organization (WHO), and negotiating an extension to the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START). Over the course of the next four years, the Biden administration must also build the foundation for even more significant multilateral moves, including ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), reforming the World Trade Organization (WTO), and strengthening the global architecture of climate governance. Operating consistently with these six principles and taking significant but politically feasible steps toward reform and reengagement will ensure that multilateral policymaking can advance the well-being and security of the American people.

Part I: The New Landscape of U.S. Multilateral Policy

As the United States begins to re-engage the international order under new presidential leadership in 2021, it faces a drastically reorganized geopolitical landscape for multilateral policymaking.[1] Three significant shifts characterize this new multilateral environment. First, the United States finds itself an outsider in the multilateral policy world. During the Trump administration, the United States has exited numerous international organizations, stepped back from leadership roles within others, and withdrawn from numerous international legal commitments. Second, China has emerged as a rival in multilateral affairs. Under President Xi Jinping, China has meaningfully enhanced its prominence in the multilateral system both by virtue of its increasing geopolitical power and strategic efforts to set the agenda within multilateral institutions. Third, multilateral policy has become politically divisive at home. Growing skepticism of international institutions and commitments in both political parties will require the new administration to carefully steward political capital. While President Biden has committed to "restor[ing] [U.S.] credibility and influence" on the world stage, he will have to develop strategies that are able to operate in this significantly altered global landscape.

The United States as an Outsider in the Multilateral Space

Despite the fact that the United States served as the primary architect of the international institutional order some 75 years ago,[2] today it finds itself as a relative outsider in the multilateral policy space. For much of the Cold War era, U.S. leadership involved security commitments to broad coalitions of aligned states. In the post-Cold War era, U.S. leadership focused largely on the provision of public goods. As the United States has retreated from both of these functions over the past four years, its allies and adversaries alike have doubted, questioned, and even challenged its leadership. Going forward, to reassume a leadership role in the international system, the United States will have to find ways of both offering security and backstopping the global provision of public goods.

The United States' new outsider status stems in part from a long history of under-investment in the very institutions that the United States championed after World War II but has been markedly exacerbated during the Trump administration.[3] Over the past four years, the United States has exited an unprecedented number of international institutions and legally binding commitments. Specifically, the United States has withdrawn or begun the withdrawal

U.S. Initiated Exits		U.S. Threatened Exits
Institutions	Treaties	Institutions
• UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) • World Health Organization (WHO) • UN Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) • UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)	• Paris Climate Accord • Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) • Open Skies Treaty • Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) • Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) • Optional Protocol to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations • Global Compact on Migration	• World Trade Organization (WTO) • North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) • Universal Postal Union (UN) • United Nations (UN)

process from four key institutions: The UN Human Rights Council,[4] the World Health Organization,[5] the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),[6] and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.[7] So too, the United States has terminated, withdrawn from, or indicated that it will not ratify a number of significant international treaties including the Paris Climate Accord,[8] the Trans-Pacific Partnership,[9] the Open Skies Treaty,[10] the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA/ Iran Deal),[11] the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty,[12] the Optional Protocol to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations,[13] and the Global Compact on Migration.[14] Beyond these actual exits, the Trump administration at times threatened to withdraw from several institutions, a few of which comprise the bedrock of the international order including the World Trade Organization (WTO),[15] the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO),[16] the Universal Postal Union,[17] and even the UN itself.[18] Not all of these exits or threatened exits are of equal consequence, of course, but many—the WHO, the WTO, and NATO among others—have real significance. Collectively, they symbolize a distinct turn away from the international institutional order. These exits were part of Trump's "America First" strategy that systematically sought to reduce U.S. multilateral commitments. In the words of then Secretary Pompeo: "Our mission is to reassert our sovereignty, reform the liberal international order … Our administration is thus lawfully exiting or renegotiating outdated or harmful treaties, trade agreements, and other international arrangements that do not serve our sovereign interests…"[19]

> While these exits comprise but a small slice of the U.S. overall portfolio of institutional and legal commitments, they are substantively and symbolically significant.

Substantively, across a range of policy domains from arms control to global health, trade to climate, the United States has relinquished its voice in multilateral institutional settings, sacrificing its ability to influence and shape institutions and policy trajectories from within in favor of what Secretary Pompeo described as an effort to "reassert our sovereignty."[20] Symbolically, these exits signaled to foreign governments and international institutions that the United States does not prioritize its commitment to the international order and may no longer be a reliable partner. As a result, the United States finds itself isolated in the multilateral policy environment, looking in on institutions it was once a part of, watching as alternate leadership patterns emerge, and receiving, rather than setting, global agendas.

China's Emergence as a Global Institutional Influencer

Concurrent with a U.S. retrenchment from the multilateral architecture, China has assumed global prominence in multilateral diplomacy. China's newfound role results from both its increasing economic and political weight and from a strategic effort under President Xi Jinping to assert influence in international institutions. Addressing the UN General Assembly in 2020, Xi called on the UN to recognize China's political clout: "The global governance system should adapt itself to evolving global political and economic dynamics."[21] This demand for recognition has translated into concerted campaigns for Chinese leadership within and beyond the UN. Chinese nationals now lead four of the fifteen UN Specialized Agencies—far more than any other country—including the UN Food and Agriculture Organization,[22] the International Civil Aviation Organization,[23] the International Telecommunications Union,[24] and the UN Industrial Development Organization[25] and previously led the World Health Organization[26] and INTERPOL.[27] In 2020, China ran a significant campaign for one of its nationals to lead the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), which was only thwarted by last minute U.S. and European diplomacy.

While many of the organizations China leads may not be household names, they have considerable influence in shaping rules, norms, and policies. China is now actively asserting its newfound influence to steer multilateral institutions towards its own interests. For example, under the leadership of Margaret Chan, the WHO significantly scaled back disease surveillance efforts, which became readily apparent in the organization's COVID-19 response.[28] At the International Civil Aviation Organization, China has pushed to exclude and marginalize Taiwan.[29] Taking advantage of its seat in the UN Human Rights Council, China has sought

to limit the roles of UN Special Rapporteurs "to shield Beijing from scrutiny of its abuses."[30] At the International Telecommunications Union, China has endeavored to generate support for its own Digital Silk Road initiative[31] and backed Huawei in its disputes with the United States.[32] Beyond these individual policy shifts, China's expanding multilateral leadership sends a powerful signal that China's position and interests must be respected.

Over the past decade, China has built the capacity and shown the willingness to link its bilateral diplomacy with its multilateral policy objectives. The vast financial commitment of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has given China significant new leverage over individual countries across the globe and China is now showing a willingness to tie these financial commitments to support in multilateral policy settings.[33] In its campaign for leadership of the Food and Agriculture Organization and in the above-mentioned race for the directorship of WIPO, China directly linked major economic and development commitments for countries such as Uganda and Cameroon to their support of its candidates,[34] and China has used its power within the UN, particularly at the UN Industrial Development Organization, to cloak its Belt and Road Initiative in the guise of international development, encouraging more than 30 UN agencies to sign memoranda of understanding in support of the BRI.[35] China has built mutually reinforcing synergies between its bilateral and multilateral diplomacy that cement its new global leadership and threaten U.S. influence.

A Divided America

For most of the past 75 years, the basic U.S. commitment to, investment in, and leadership of the international order has stood strong.[36] Of course, successive American governments have differed on exactly how that commitment should translate into policy, but the commitment itself remained firm. Today, however, the United States finds itself deeply divided—both across party lines and within the Democratic and Republican parties—as to whether leadership of the international order remains in the U.S. national interest. In his inaugural address, President Trump directly questioned the value of operating through the multilateral system, noting, "We've made other countries rich while the wealth, strength and confidence of our country has disappeared over the horizon … From this moment on, it's going to be America First."[37] Notwithstanding the incoherence of Trump's "America First" foreign policy, it created political space within the Republican party to question the value of international institutions, the utility of multilateral policy, and the benefits of a global order.[38] Within the Democratic party, populist and progressive voices alike have questioned the alignment of the international order with America's values and whether that order benefits the American people. Senator Bernie Sanders, for example, has denounced international trade agreements as "threat[s] to our democracy"[39] and progressive thinkers have urged the party to focus more on how foreign policy impacts "economic inequality at home" than on the stability of the international order itself.[40]

These political divides reflect—and are reflected in—the American people's shifting views of international organizations and cooperation. In the 2020 election, more than 74 million Americans voted for Donald Trump, at least tacitly backing an "America First" approach to foreign policy. Pew Research Center data from 2020, suggests that while 62% of Americans view the UN favorably, 31% view it unfavorably.[41] The divisions on party lines are stark: while only 35% of Republicans believe the "UN advances the interests of countries like ours," 77% of Democrats do.[42] A 2020 report from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace underscored the skepticism of many middle class Americans that the international system advances their interests and the need to correct "for the overextension that too often has defined U.S. foreign policy in the post-Cold War era."[43] In short, there is no domestic political consensus that the United States can or should invest significantly in the international order itself or that it can best advance its interests through multilateral action. While the 2020 election of President Joe Biden signals a shift away from Trumpism and "America First, divides within the American government and people remain. These divides and the growing politicization of international commitments will constrain the new administration and circumscribe U.S. multilateralism.

Part II: "The Philadelphia Principles for Multilateral Policy"

Collectively, the U.S. position as an outsider in the multilateral policy space, China's emergence as a global institutional influencer, and an America divided over its own role in the world have fundamentally altered the geostrategic context of U.S. engagement with the multilateral order. This is not the environment President Obama operated in in 2009, much less the one President Clinton inherited in 1993. Rather, this new landscape requires a new approach involving decisive shifts in the U.S. strategic and tactical approach to the international institutional system. The Perry World House and Brookings Foreign Policy workshop developed a new set of guiding principles, referred to here as "The Philadelphia Principles", that should inform the U.S. approach to multilateral and international legal policy at three distinct levels within the international system: globally, among U.S. key partners and allies, and in domestic and bureaucratic politics.

I. Global Principles

Principle 1: The multilateral order is now defined by great power competition, especially with China.

Going forward, the United States must recognize that the multilateral order has become a geopolitical space of great power competition, notably with China but also with other competitors such as Russia. China's far more assertive approach within multilateral institutions and its quest for leadership roles within those institutions, as outlined above, will continue and accelerate.[44] The contestation over institutional leadership recently seen in both the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Intellectual Property Organization is indicative of challenges China will present in the years and decades ahead.[45] China and Russia will continue to use multilateral fora both to advance their own interests and to disrupt U.S. leadership efforts.[46] Recent examples, such as China's exploitation of its seat on the UN Human Rights Council, to which it was reelected in

I. Global Principles

- 1. The multilateral order is now defined by great power competition, especially with China.
- 2. Addressing transnational threats, especially climate change, must be a fundamental goal of U.S. multilateral policy.

II. Partnerships and Cooperation Principles

- 3. Multilateral approaches should start with the countries that share U.S. values and commitment to democracy.
- 4. Successful multilateralism requires the strategic use of multiple institutions, including informal processes, club-models, and non-binding commitments.

III. Domestic Political and Bureaucratic Principles

- 5. Multilateral priorities must be integrated into overall U.S. diplomatic strategy, especially by leveraging the strengths of bilateral relationships.
- 6. Multilateral objectives must align with the interests of the American people and the values the United States seeks to embody at home.

October 2020, to block criticisms of its actions in Xinjiang and Hong Kong[47] and Russia's effort to disrupt U.S. leadership of UN working groups on cyber-norms likely foreshadow future power competition.[48] To an ever greater degree, the functioning of multilateral institutions will be defined by great power rivalry and contestation.

For the United States to effectively advance its interests in this context of multilateral great power competition, it too must engage in great power contestation in these multilateral institutions. To do so, the United States must recognize that the ability to shape the rules of the international order is critical and that the mere fact that the United States was instrumental to the establishment of that order does not ensure long-term leadership or influence. The United States must invest political and economic capital in the maintenance and reform of the international institutional order, even where such investment may not yield short term benefits.

So too, the United States must continue to earn its voice within—and leadership at—the multilateral table by ensuring its own conduct at home and abroad conforms with international norms and rules such that it is viewed as a consistent and committed shepherd of the system.[49]

In its multilateral strategy and diplomacy, the United States must be vigilant of and prepared to check (where appropriate) competitors' efforts to alter norms or assert authority within the full range of multilateral institutions. Those competitors have taken advantage of both U.S. exits from some institutions and a narrow U.S. focus on highly visible institutions, such as the UN Security Council, to gain influence within lesser known institutional settings and outside the UN system. Similarly, the United States must begin to see the connections among institutions in the system which its rivals may use to drive policy and influence. The multilateral policy space is no longer a set of individual institutions in issue-specific silos but rather a single chess board on which gains in one institution can have consequences in others. Competitors will use influence in one institutional context or issue domain as leverage across the broader multilateral architecture. The United States must be prepared to respond to these moves and to advance its own agenda through complex strategies across multiple institutions.

Finally, the United States must develop new approaches to working with competitors where interests align.[50] Such issue-specific cooperation remains essential to the functioning of the international architecture as a whole and to advancing U.S. interests. Similarly, international legal agreements, especially with great power rivals, can bound competition in ways that make the United States more secure and prosperous.[51] The need for cooperation, particularly as it relates to transnational threats is urgent. However, that need must not blind the United States to the underlying great power competition playing out within international institutions nor can the United States be seduced into believing the international environment is fundamentally one of cooperation.

Principle 2: Addressing transnational threats, especially climate change, must be a fundamental goal of U.S. multilateral strategy.

Transnational threats, including climate change, human movement, and pandemic disease, present growing and potentially existential threats to the United States and the globe. The scientific evidence on the risks of global warming to human welfare and wellbeing is not new.[52] If anything, the risks of catastrophic impacts of climate change are accelerating.[53] The refugee crises of past decades underscore the human and security risks posed by unmanaged migration.[54] The COVID-19 pandemic has shown all too clearly the economic and human cost of pandemic disease.[55] The potential interplay of climate change, population displacement, and pandemic disease could increase these risks exponentially. Multilateral policy coordination is indispensable to any effective approaches to mitigating, managing, and preventing these and other transnational threats.

While bearing in mind the environment of great power competition in which multilateral policy now operates, the United States must focus its multilateral efforts to an ever-greater degree on collective global responses to transnational threats. It is essential to cooperate through international institutions and legal agreements in responding to these

threats to U.S. security and prosperity.[56] Such efforts must establish and affirm basic norms and rules to govern transnational issues, encourage deeper commitment and compliance by broad coalitions of states, and strengthen institutional architectures for implementation, monitoring, and enforcement. To do so, the United States must make meaningful (and potentially costly) commitments of its own, invest politically and economically in critical institutions, and exercise targeted global political leadership that expands consensus in advancing effective solutions.

Transnational challenges may present opportunities for alignment of interests, even among great power rivals, in international institutional settings. U.S. diplomatic strategies must seek to identify, accentuate, and act on those potential interest synergies, building coalitions that, where possible, include even allies and rivals alike.[57] At times, the imperative to address transnational threats through collective multilateral policy may be in tension with the need to check great-power rivalry in multilateral settings. In such cases, the United States will need to find ways of advancing collective goals without ceding institutional advantages or allowing rivals freedom of action. In some circumstances, it will be necessary to identify and operate through alternative institutional arrangements that circumvent uncooperative rivals. Ultimately, the success of U.S. multilateral policy and U.S. collective security for decades to come will turn on the efficacy of U.S. response to transnational threats through the full range of multilateral tools.

II. Partnerships and Cooperation Principles

Principle 3: Multilateral approaches should start with the countries that share U.S. values and commitment to democracy.

Effective multilateralism requires working with other states to advance common interests. As the United States considers which states to work with in various contexts, shared interests and values will, no doubt, be critical. In building coalitions, establishing cooperation, or designing club governance models, U.S. multilateralism should start first with a commitment to a core set of common values, including democratic governance and human rights.[58] Partnerships built on such shared values will be more robust than mere interest-based alliances. They are far more likely to stand firm in the face of competition from rivals who do not share them.[59]

> Even where interests may not align in the short-term, shared values offer a strong foundation from which to identify commonalities, look over the time horizon at broader interest conversion, or even shift preferences that ultimately align policies.[60]

Building coalitions of states that share U.S. values is ultimately the best way to confront great-power rivals and to advance collective multilateral goals in the face of great power competition. The primary great-power rivals to the United States—China and, to a lesser extent, Russia—espouse very different values and governance structures. Our very commitment to rights and democracy may in and of itself threaten and check non-democratic rivals.[61] Even where potential partners of the United States—from Europe to India, South Africa to Australia—may find common economic interests with China or Russia, a values-based partnership with the United States will help ensure that they stand with us when it matters. Such partnerships can significantly increase our leverage in multilateral institutions, as demonstrated by the recent rejection of the Chinese candidate to lead WIPO after a concerted U.S. diplomatic effort to court countries that share our values.[62]

Coalitions based on shared values can also offer a strong foundation for new initiatives, institutions, and clubs that address both transnational threats and political challenges. Through such new initiatives, a group of states bound together by shared values and commitments to democratic governance may be able to build redundancies into the international institutional architecture to step in where universal institutions are gridlocked or ineffective. Their mere existence may pressure traditional, global institutions to reform and deliver results. So too, such a group may be able to tackle issues that rivals like China or Russia are unwilling to address or would stymie. Political objectives with countries such as Iran or North Korea that

require multilateral policy coordination may be better addressed through such values-based coalitions than through global institutions that have repeatedly failed to act. Ultimately, these new initiatives can make the international order more resilient and more effective.

Values-based partnerships, however, require consistent stewardship that has been all-too-lacking over the past four years. That lack of stewardship may well explain the willingness of Europe—a natural values-based partner—to enter into a new investment agreement with China at the end of December 2020.[63] To consistently encourage values-based partnerships, the United States must first recommit to its own democracy at home. U.S. commitment to values and democracy appears weak after four years of a Trump presidency and, particularly, after the January 6, 2021 attacks on the U.S. Capitol.[64]

> In restoring its commitment to rights and democracy, the United States also clearly signals to the global community that it lives and stands by the values it expects of its partners, thereby enhancing U.S. credibility at a time when many are beginning to doubt the long-term reliability of American leadership.[65]

Beyond its borders, the United States must invest significantly in building values-based partnerships. President-elect Biden's proposed Summit of Democracies[66] is a potentially promising first step, provided it is not mere window-dressing.[67] Cultivating values partnerships requires deeper and more sustained engagement beyond what any summit alone can provide, including connections across and throughout networks of government and civil society.[68] A range of mechanisms must be employed, from Boris Johnson's nascent proposal to invite a broader group of democracies to the G-7 annual meeting,[69] to a proposed D-10 democracies forum,[70] or an alliance framework for democratic technology policy.[71] Once strong values-based relationships are built, the United States will need to turn to like-minded partners first in its multilateral diplomacy to develop a policy consensus and a common approach. Only then can the collective values-based partnership confront rivals on issues such as China's unfair trade practices or Russia's cyber-operations.

Principle 4: Successful multilateralism requires the strategic use of multiple institutions, including informal processes, club-models, and non-binding commitments.

Traditionally, the United States has advanced policies multilaterally through formal international institutions, including the UN Security Council, certain subsidiary bodies with the UN, the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, among others.[72] This is not surprising given the preferential position the United States holds in several of these organizations, their structural powers, and their ready availability. Yet, these institutions are becoming less effective due to political gridlock,[73] lack of policy consensus, and the growing influence of U.S. rivals.[74] Many of these traditional institutions require significant reform and even reimagination to regain their effectiveness. Over the long-term the United States must be committed to meaningful reforms of these organizations that rejuvenate their political energy, reestablish their effectiveness, and realign their policies with the interests of the American people.[75]

While the United States cannot ignore these traditional international institutions, multilateralism today demands a more creative and flexible approach. Where traditional institutions appear ineffective, the United States must be ready to turn to or even build new institutional structures, just as U.S. rivals have done.[76] Among the most effective of these alternate international structures may be ad hoc coalitions, informal processes, and issue-specific partnerships. Such initiatives offer numerous benefits including the potential to build a coalition with the will and capacity to act on a particular issue, the possibility of excluding rivals or spoilers where necessary and including them where appropriate, the ability to prioritize shared values in building a coalition, and the capacity to take on politically divisive global issues. The United States must recognize that a range of less prominent existing institutions may be effective venues for norm generation, policy coordination, and

implementation. For any given issue the United States must carefully and strategically select the institution(s) most likely to advance its transnational interests in the context of great power rivalry.[77]

Within this variable geometry of international institutional engagement, the club model offers perhaps the most attractive yet underutilized opportunity. In a club-model, states are given the opportunity to join an exclusive group based on their own commitments and policies on a relevant issue.[78] Other criteria, such as upholding rights and democracy, can also be considered. Benefits adhere to those within the club and are denied to those outside. Correctly designed, the pull of club membership may expand the pool of participating states.[79] The club model offers particular promise in the climate space, where a like-minded "coalition of nations [could] commit to strong steps to reduce emissions and mechanisms to penalize countries that do not participate."[80] Similar clubs could help address a range of transnational challenges in which limited public-good resources must be shared and managed.

The United States should become a leader in the establishment and operation of such clubs on key transnational challenges, alongside or—where necessary—instead of traditional international institutions.

To operationalize this more flexible and varied approach to multilateral diplomacy, the United States must become far more strategic and creative in how it maps particular multilateral policy priorities with existing and potential institutional architectures. Within the U.S. government bureaucratic restructuring must facilitate a holistic vision of the overall international institutional architecture, whether such capacity is built within the Bureau of International Organizations at the State Department or at the National Security Council (NSC).[81] In U.S. diplomatic practice, multitasking is needed to work numerous issues simultaneously in overlapping institutions. So too, the United States must commit the political will and diplomatic capital to engage and steward a larger number of international institutional structures. Finally, this approach demands strong bilateral diplomacy that can lay the foundation for ad hoc partnerships and issue-specific cooperation.

When the United States seeks to formalize structures for international cooperation or lock-in international commitments, it usually turns to the tools of international law, particularly international treaties.[82] Of course, the formal mechanisms of international law still have an important role to play in U.S. foreign policy, but the United States must also be more creative in the use of non-binding agreements, voluntary commitments, "soft law," and informal mechanisms of rulemaking. Critically, these approaches to international agreement avoid the notorious political difficulty of treaty ratification by the U.S. Senate.[83] They can be structured to allow more politically palatable individualized commitments, as illustrated by the voluntary commitments of the Paris Climate Agreement.[84] They can evolve overtime to reflect shifts in U.S. interests, global norms, scientific innovation, or geostrategic context, as exemplified by the evolution of the Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations.[85] Finally, such rules can more effectively engage non-state and sub-state actors, whose participation in rule-making and implementation is of growing urgency, through instruments such as the Chicago Climate Charter.[86]

III. Domestic and Bureaucratic Principles

Principle 5: Multilateral policy must be better integrated into U.S. global diplomatic strategy.

Within the U.S. government, multilateral policy has long operated in its own bureaucratic and diplomatic silo, walled off from—and usually secondary to—bilateral diplomacy. That siloing limits the effectiveness of both U.S. multilateral and bilateral diplomacy. In today's more competitive global landscape, effective multilateralism requires deeper integration of these two co-equal pillars of diplomacy. More specifically, bilateral diplomacy must be understood as a cornerstone of multilateral policy action. Relationships must be developed and issues must be worked both in national capitals and at institutional headquarters in New York, Geneva, and beyond. Only when that groundwork is laid can allies and partners be called upon to join the U.S. in advancing

collective interests multilaterally. Multilateral diplomacy can and must be part of U.S. bilateral diplomacy, assisting allies and checking adversaries in multilateral arenas. While the United States should not adopt China's transactional approach to these linkages, it must be prepared to operate in a world in which competitors make explicit bargains that leverage bilateral and multilateral diplomacy.[87]

Various initiatives have suggested reforms to enhance U.S. multilateral diplomatic capacity and better link multilateral and bilateral efforts.[88] Given the urgency of transnational threats, and the growing multilateral capabilities of U.S. rivals, the time for such reform is now. While it is beyond the scope of this report to fully detail the needed changes in bureaucratic capacity, several common elements emerge. First, at a strategic level, multilateral and bilateral diplomacy must be understood as equally critical to advancing U.S. interests.[89] On any issue, U.S. foreign policy strategy must consider both bilateral and multilateral action and the potential synergies between them. Second, the United States must invest in training Foreign Service Officers and civil servants in multilateral diplomacy.[90] Third, multilateral diplomacy must be elevated in stature and respect, such that it is no longer viewed as a step-child to bilateral diplomacy. Fifth, the International Organization Bureau at the State Department and the multilateral affairs directorate at the NSC must be vested with a broader remit to coordinate engagement across a wider array of international institutions, including those outside the UN system. Finally, Deputy Assistant Secretary-level leadership on multilateral engagement is needed in both regional and functional bureaus at the U.S. Department of State.

Principle 6: Multilateral objectives must align with the interests of the American people and the values the United States seeks to embody at home.

Economic and political shifts of the past decades have led many Americans, particularly the middle class, to conclude the international order does not serve their interests or advance their livelihoods. A recent Carnegie Endowment report observes that "middle class Americans … stressed how prior administrations had not done enough to make foreign policy work better for America's middle class."[91] Trump's "America First" rhetoric has exacerbated this growing perception of a disconnect between U.S. foreign policy on one hand and American lives and livelihoods on the other. The result is a widening partisan divide over whether the United States should support and work through the UN and other international institutions.[92] American skepticism of global engagement and a stark partisan split within the U.S. government undermine the effectiveness of U.S. multilateral diplomacy. The political lift to pass legislation relating to international organizations, much less ratify a treaty, is enormous. Political efforts at global leadership and financial investments in international institutions are rarely rewarded at the ballot box. U.S. allies and partners are ever more doubtful that U.S. engagements and commitments will be durable beyond a given presidential administration.[93]

Ultimately, for U.S. multilateral diplomacy to effectively advance U.S. interests and respond to pressing transnational threats, the American people and the U.S. government as a whole must come to see such efforts as beneficial, even indispensable, to U.S. security and prosperity.

> The purpose of multilateralism is to advance the interests of the American people. That requires, first, listening to and understanding those interests and, second, advocating for those interests through multilateral diplomacy.

At times, particularly in the international trade and economic sphere, U.S. multilateral policy has diverged from the immediate interests of average Americans. On issues such as trade and investment, meaningful policy realignment and institutional reforms will be needed to ensure the international order serves Americans' interests.[94] In other domains, such as human rights and security, the United States must ensure that multilateral policy priorities truly reflect the values that define America.[95] On issues such as climate change and pandemic disease, the U.S. must ensure that international institutions and multilateral efforts, such as the WHO and the UNFCCC, actually work to counter transnational threats that endanger American wellbeing.[96]

A second critical component of restoring the

	Transnational Threats	Global Economics	International Security
Immediate Steps	The United States should continue the processes launched on day 1 of the Biden administration to rejoin institutions that address transnational threats, including the Paris Agreement and the World Health Organization, and demonstrate tangible commitment to these organizations.	The United States should recommit to the World Trade Organization by: 1. Allowing for the appointment of Appellate Body Judges. 2. Institutionalizing U.S.-China trade disputes through the WTO.	The United States should re-enter security treaties that had been allowed to terminate or were exited, including: 1. Renegotiate and rejoin the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) 2. Negotiate extension to the New START treaty.
Longer-term Goals	1. Strengthen the UNFCCC climate negotiations through active U.S. leadership. 2. Develop alternate club-style governance models on climate change. 3. Renew domestic human rights and racial justice commitments and reflect these values in international actions.	1. Transform the international trade system to better serve the interests of the American people. 2. Steward domestic and international political capital toward a new pacific-trade agreement/club that reflects America's interests.	1. Build political support to ratify for UNCLOS 2. Develop stronger cyber governance structures (e.g. through 2015 GGE norms list).

confidence of the American people in multilateralism is better communication of the positive impacts multilateral leadership and international institutional engagement has for the American people. Too often, the contributions of multilateral efforts to American wellbeing go unseen. The chorus of voices criticizing multilateralism is loud and persistent.[97] A new approach to communication must emphasize that multilateralism is not an end in and of itself, but a critical toolkit to advance specific interests and priorities of the American people. Such a strategy must directly link tangible outcomes that benefit Americans with our investments in, commitments to, and leadership of international institutions. Such a strategy must demonstrate why collective action through multilateralism is absolutely essential both to addressing transnational threats, like climate change and global pandemics, and to protecting American security in light of a growing Chinese threat. While better messaging capabilities will be needed within the U.S. government, better communication with the American people demands that our government and our diplomats truly hear and understand their interests, needs, and aspirations.

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The Philadelphia Principles offer a broad roadmap for a new U.S. approach to multilateralism that responds to a starkly altered geopolitical landscape. These principles seek, first, to recognize that multilateral arenas are now a space of global competition and to respond to the increasing dangers posed by transnational threats. They serve as a reminder that shared values can motivate effective policymaking and refocus attention on the potential value of alternative institutional structures. Finally, they highlight the importance of both building synergies between bilateral and multilateral diplomacy and better understanding Americans' interests and values. Collectively, they frame a set of strategic and tactical changes to U.S.

multilateral policy, institutional engagement, and international legal commitments that will better prepare the United States to operate in the competitive multilateral environment that lies ahead.

Part III: Action Items for the Biden Administration

The Philadelphia Principles outlined in Part II offer a broad reframing of how the United States should approach multilateral affairs in light of a new geostrategic environment. While these principles chart a path toward greater effectiveness of multilateral policy over the medium-term, tangible steps must be taken early in the Biden administration to re-engage the international order, reverse where appropriate detrimental exists over the past four years, and restore U.S. credibility in the eyes of U.S. allies and partners. Over the longer-term, political capital must be built and shepherded for urgently needed issue-specific multilateral actions throughout the next four years. Given the pressing nature of many transnational challenges and the relative U.S. absence from the multilateral scene under President Trump, the institutions and issues calling for U.S. attention are nearly endless. Yet, the new Biden administration is highly constrained with limited financial resources, a deeply divided domestic polity, a tenuous majority in the Senate, and a depleted bureaucracy.

In light of those constraints, careful strategic choices must be made about where and when to deploy political capital. The Perry World House and Brookings Foreign Policy workshop developed a set of priority action items in three broad issue domains: transnational threats, global economics, and international security. In each issue area, workshop participants identified one to two immediate steps and several longer-term goals for the new administration, as indicated in the table below. These proposed actions seek to maximize restoration of U.S. leadership and credibility in the international order, contribution to addressing pressing transnational threats, and the reimagination of the international order to better serve the interests of the American people in light of real political and financial constraints.

Given the critical role multilateral action must play in addressing the growing risks posed by transnational threats, U.S. multilateral policy must prioritize these collective challenges. The Biden administration's day 1 actions, including launching the process of rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement[98] and halting the withdrawal from the World Health Organization were important first steps.[99] Now the United States must demonstrate tangible commitments to these processes through international engagement and domestic implementation. The United States should use any leverage it can gain from its reentry to push for needed reforms of both the climate and health governance architectures.

> Over the course of the next four years, the new administration must significantly strengthen the capacity and resilience of the international institutional architecture to respond to transnational threats.

To do so, the Biden administration should strengthen the UN climate process through active leadership within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change while simultaneously pursuing new club based models for climate governance.[100] The United States must also reaffirm its commitment to universal human rights by first advancing human rights and racial justice at home and then reflecting those values in its foreign policy.

In addressing global economics and trade, the new administration must move quickly to recommit to the World Trade Organization both by facilitating the appointment of judges to the WTO Appellate Body (which were blocked under the Trump administration)[101] and by institutionalizing its trade disputes, particularly with China, in the WTO system. Ultimately, a strong WTO serves U.S. interests and concerted efforts at the WTO with its allies will increase U.S. leverage against China.[102] Over the longer term, the United States will be well served to champion a meaningful reform of the WTO system and the rules of international trade to better align with the interests of the American people, rather than letting its rivals write rules that serve their interests.[103] Only once such reform efforts bear fruit visible to the American people, can the United States advance a new version of the Trans-Pacific Partnership that will secure U.S. economic and political interests in the Asia Pacific and counter China's Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).[104]

Finally, in the international security space, the new administration must prioritize using the multilateral framework and international legal commitments to buttress the safety of the American people from both traditional and new threats. As an immediate matter, that demands renegotiating and rejoining the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to prevent the development of an Iranian nuclear weapon[105] and negotiating an extension to the New START treaty with Russia.[106] Over the longer-term, the Biden administration must both build the political support necessary for the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which will significantly increase U.S. leverage in addressing China's growing naval capacities,[107] and lead a process toward the development of more effective and enforceable cyber security norms to address the threat of cyber conflict.[108]

The need for re-engagement, reform, and restoration of the international order and U.S. engagement with that order is overwhelming. As the Biden administration begins that effort in light of a new geostrategic environment, a series of early steps, ideally within the first one hundred days of the new administration, must reverse the most counterproductive moves of the past four years, signal to its partners and allies that the United States is returning to the multilateral table, and begin to show the American people that the multilateral system can serve their interests. Other key priorities require a longer-term effort that builds support with allies and partners, with the American people, and within the legislative branch. Small steps now, a concerted effort to build strong values-based partnerships, and meaningful engagement with the American people can pave the way for those bolder moves in the years to come.

Part IV: Conclusion

The United States is at a critical juncture in its engagement with the global institutional and international legal order. In light of a radically changed geostrategic and domestic political landscape, the U.S. ability to effectively advance its interests through the international institutions it created 75 years ago is waning. Longstanding underinvestment in international institutions and recent exits from international commitments could leave the United States a permanent outsider in the multilateral policy space. Rival powers, notably China, could soon cement leadership roles and lasting influence in international institutions that allow them to shift global norms and rewrite the rules of the road. The American people's confidence that multilateral engagement advances their interests and values could soon be irreparably broken.

To avoid this dangerous world in which America's influence has been squandered, other powers can unilaterally write the rules of the global order, and collective responses to transnational threats prove illusive, the United States needs a bold new approach to multilateralism.

Such an approach requires new thinking in our global strategy, changes to how partnerships and alliances are built and stewarded, and renewed attention to domestic politics and bureaucratic structures. The Philadelphia Principles can guide U.S. multilateral policy in that direction.

Globally, the United States must recognize that international institutions are now defined by great power competition and respond in kind. Simultaneously, the United States must work zealously to advance solutions to pressing transnational challenges—notably climate change. In building partnerships and alliances, the United States must put values first and prioritize working with countries that share common commitments to human rights and democracy. To an ever-greater degree the United States must adopt a variable approach to the institutions it uses, focusing efforts both in traditional fora and on a broader array of informal institutions and non-binding commitments. In domestic political and bureaucratic processes, U.S. policymakers must better integrate multilateral and bilateral diplomacy strategically and structurally so that these two pillars of U.S. diplomacy are mutually reinforcing. Finally, and perhaps most critically, the U.S. government must ensure that multilateral policy objectives actually serve the interests of the American people. Collectively, these principles can make multilateralism an effective tool to advance American interests and ensure lasting U.S. influence in a more competitive global landscape.

With the Philadelphia Principles guiding a new U.S. approach, the Biden administration must take immediate steps to re-engage the

international order across a range of substantive issue areas. In the domains of international security, global economics, and transnational threats there are substantive and symbolic actions that are politically feasible in the first one hundred days. These first steps can pave the way toward realizing longer-term objectives for institutional reform and reimagination that can enhance U.S. prosperity and security.

Annex I: List of Participants

The following persons participated in the Perry World House/Brookings Foreign Policy Workshop on which this report is based in their individual capacities. Their participation does not signal endorsement of this report or its recommendations.

- Catherine Ashton, Chair, Global Europe Woodrow Wilson Center
- Anu Bradford, Henry L. Moses Professor of Law and International Organization, Columbia Law School
- Esther Brimmer, Executive Director and CEO of NAFSA: Association of International Educators
- Chris Brummer, Agnes N. Williams Research Professor; Faculty Director, Institute of International Economic Law, Georgetown University
- William Burke-White, Professor of Law, University of Pennsylvania Law School; Non-Resident Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution
- Tarun Chhabra, Non-Resident Fellow, Security and Strategy Team, The Brookings Institution; Senior Fellow, Georgetown Center for Security and Emerging Technology
- Julia Ciocca, Research Fellow, Perry World House
- Wendy Cutler, Vice President and Managing Director, Washington DC Office, Asia Society Policy Institute
- Ashley Deeks, Professor of Law, University of Virginia Law School
- Jacques deLisle, Steven A. Cozen Professor of Law, Professor of Political Science and Director, Center for the Study of Contemporary China, University of Pennsylvania
- Christopher Ashley Ford, Assistant Secretary for International Security and Non-Proliferation, U.S. Department of State
- Lindsey Ford, David Rubinstein Fellow in Foreign Policy, The Brookings Institution
- Courtney Fung, Assistant Professor, Department of Politics and Public Administration, The University of Hong Kong; Associate Fellow, Asia Pacific Program, Chatham House
- Rebecca Heinrichs, Senior Fellow, The Hudson Institute
- Michael C. Horowitz, Director and Richard Perry Professor, Perry World House
- Bruce Jones, Director, Program on International Order and Strategy, The Brookings Institution
- Soumaya Kaynes, Trade and Globalization Editor, The Economist
- Colin Kahl, Co-Director, Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University
- Lauren Kahn, Research Fellow, Perry World House
- Harold Kongju Koh, Sterling Professor of International Law, Yale University
- Christian Ruhl, Global Order Program Manager, Perry World House
- Kori Schake, Director of Foreign and Defense Policy Studies, American Enterprise Institute
- Randall Graham Schriver, Chairman of the Board, The Project 2049 Institute
- Beth Simmons, Andrea Mitchell University Professor, University of Pennsylvania
- Barbara Smith, Vice President, Peace Programs, The Carter Center
- Todd Stern, Non-Resident Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution

- Alexander Vershbow, Wolk Distinguished Visiting Fellow, Perry World House, University of Pennsylvania
- Koko Warner, Perry World House Visiting Fellow, The University of Pennsylvania
- Matthew Waxman, Liviu Librescu Professor of Law, Columbia Law School
- Tom Wright, Director, Center for the United States and Europe, The Brookings Institution
- Mark Wu, Vice Dean for the Graduate Program and International Legal Studies; Henry L. Stimson Professor of Law, Harvard University

Annex II: List of International Institutions

International Organizations

- World Health Organization (WHO)
- World Trade Organization (WTO)
- United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)
- United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
- Universal Postal Union (UPU)
- United Nations (UN)
- United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)
- International Telecommunications Union (ITU)
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)
- World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
- Group of Seven (G-7)
- International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- United Nations Group of Governmental Experts (UN GGE)

Treaties and Agreements

- Paris Agreement Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Paris Climate Agreement; COP21)
- New Strategic Arms Recution Treaty (New START)
- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)
- Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)
- Treaty on Open Skies
- Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA; Iran Deal)
- Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF)
- Optional Protocol to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations
- Global Compact on Migration
- Chicago Climate Charter
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

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PERRY WORLD HOUSE

University of Pennsylvania

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