
WHAT ARE THE MAIN NATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES FACING THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION?

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The greatness of a democratic political system is that there is legitimacy with change. When an authoritarian government changes leaders, there is always uncertainty of what it means and what will happen. This year, in the United States, Donald Trump won a legitimate election and is now president-elect.

This was an election that showed how unhappy Americans are with how Washington has performed over the past two administrations. Both political parties adopted postures of obstruction and inaction. The Bush administration decried Democratic congressional obstructionism, and the Obama administration rails at Republican intransigence. The American people became increasingly angry with both parties. President-elect Trump captured those popular sentiments, and in many ways his election represents a hostile take-over of the Republican Party.

President-elect Trump's campaign was more about projecting sentiment than championing specific policy formulas. Building a wall on the southern border and making Mexico pay for it was a sentiment, not a plan. His supporters knew that, while traditional internationalists hung on the specific words as though they constituted real policy direction. Voters wanted to sweep away the stale politics of Washington, but the country still needs the structure and discipline of solid government operations.

Now the sentiment of the Trump campaign has to be translated into concrete policies by the incoming Trump administration. That takes a knowledge of government and how it functions. It takes a knowledge of the historic context for pending issues, and an understanding of the forces that must be accommodated in new policy formulations. The global nature of business and communications today means that

America has to be knowledgeable about the outside world and understand that the actions occurring in other countries have a direct impact on our lives and wellbeing. The new administration will need substantive ideas and quality analysis more than ever.

So what are the principal national security challenges facing the Trump administration when it takes over in January 2017? Below I outline four. These are not the types of problems that will show up in the President's Daily Brief his first day in office, such as defeating ISIS, addressing insecurity in Syria, or dealing with a nuclear-armed North Korea. Instead, these are issues that will create the underlying dynamics that will yield either crisis or opportunity in the years ahead, shaping not only the success of a Trump administration, but also the vitality of America through numerous administrations to come.

First, our domestic situation. Our politics has deteriorated, the government is bloated, our economy is stagnant, and our country is divided. These will all have significant impact on our nation's security.

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Other countries look to America's ability to do big things, to follow words with deeds, to act with efficiency and purpose, and to effectively resource our strategies. When we fail to do these things, either because of a lack of capacity or will, other countries perceive it as a sign of weakness. Allies hedge and adversaries are emboldened.

I have often felt that America's power primarily reflected the vitality of its domestic society and economy. Think of what our country could do—and the signal it would send abroad—if a Trump administration could build domestic political consensus on creating jobs, reforming taxes, strength-

ening education and skills training, rebuilding infrastructure, streamlining regulations, and making government more efficient. While these are all domestic issues, leaders and populations around the world watch us intensely. If our country can solve real problems domestically over the next four years, our international standing and influence will rise dramatically.

To take one example, the Trump campaign has indicated a desire to free the Defense Department from sequestration, the automatic spending cuts imposed after the debt-ceiling crisis of 2011. Sequestration has been harmful and should be ended, but its removal will depend on the Trump administration's ability to find a broadly based consensus on how revenues and resources will be balanced in the years ahead. To date, the parties have promoted only their solution to the structural financial problems the government faces. Durable policy outcomes depend on compromise.

What makes this type of compromise so difficult today is that Congress has dramatically weakened itself by taking the substance out of governing. True power in Washington comes when we harness politics to governing. You govern effectively to win the next election. Today it is politics without governing. Votes are symbolic statements designed to shape the next election. If this continues, we will become little more than a paper tiger in the eyes of the world.

Second, ambivalent allies. Much has been made of the Trump campaign's tough talk about allies. Candidate Trump essentially characterized allies in Europe, Asia, and the Gulf as "free riders" (echoing the same sentiments articulated by President Obama in an interview this summer). The implication was that America alone is carrying the burdens of maintaining an international order, and that we ought to stop that and start to put the burden on other countries that have benefited from our leadership but not paid their fair share for the security we provide.

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It is unclear how President Trump will deal with allies or how he values them. Perhaps he does value allies but simply seeks leverage to exert a greater commitment on their part, something many former U.S. officials have called for publicly and privately. We simply don't know.

The central strategy developed for winning the Cold War—building alliances to share the burden of defense and to establish a normative world order—remains valid and useful. We are committed to defending others so that we will not have to defend ourselves in isolation. The security challenges we face today may be less existential than during the Cold War, but they are dramatically more complex. I cannot think of a single threat we face as a nation that is easier to handle with no allies.

But what happens if our allies and partners assess the value they perceive in their relationship with the United States and find us lacking. Life is filled with examples of key partnerships that are not perfectly reciprocal, and of divergent perspectives concerning who benefits more from a given relationship. What happens if countries begin to doubt our nuclear umbrella, or if the absence of an economic strategy in Asia pushes countries closer to Beijing, or if Europe begins to disintegrate as a cohesive whole, or if Gulf partners look for an alternative guarantor of regional security? None of these scenarios would be good for the United States.

Although candidate Trump believed getting tough with allies would come across as a sign of strength during the campaign, President Trump may conclude that such rhetoric contributes to allied skepticism about American commitment to shared security burdens, further eroding the foundation of America's strategy to lead a network of countries with shared perceptions of mutual interest. How do we reinvigorate that network to more effectively deal with today's security challenges?

Third, more assertive regional competitors. What makes the prospect of ambivalent allies particularly worrisome is the way regional competitors such as China, Russia, and Iran have become more assertive in recent years. These countries have developed methods for challenging U.S. primacy below a threshold that could trigger an overt U.S. response. This has been called ambiguous warfare, hybrid warfare, and gray zone activity.

This 'gray zone' activity has integrated cyber espionage, covert operations, psychological operations, promotion of insurgency elements, subtle military maneuvers, and political and economic subversion into a seamless whole. The doctrine goes well beyond traditional defense activities. It starts with covert means of corrupting politicians in target countries. Because we don't readily see the visible manifestation of this malfeasance and because it purposefully stays below a certain threshold, we have not been quick to take action. Long-standing redlines are rendered meaningless. We know what to do if one of our allies is invaded, but it is more ambiguous if a mysterious commercial entity buys a DoDgy bank and uses the bank to corrupt local politicians of an allied country. This is not warfare, but the net effect has been a loss of U.S. influence in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.

We have the additional problem that our government is not well organized to recognize and address this problem. The threat crosses traditional boundaries between defense, diplomacy, and public diplomacy; between overt activity and espionage; and between security and economics. During the Cold War we were better at taking a comprehensive approach because there was consensus on the enemy at hand. No such consensus exists today. This

is infinitely more complicated than the Cold War. It takes a far more sophisticated and integrated response than what we have mounted to date.

Fourth, the security implications of the communications revolution. The communications revolution—my shorthand for the technological developments that continue to reshape our lives—has had an enormous effect on traditional national security approaches, and will become even more important in the years ahead.

At the most basic level there is the vulnerability of the country's secure information and infrastructure. Lost beneath the politicized rhetoric of this issue during the campaign is a very real danger that could present itself if adversaries were ever to gain access or exert control over, say, U.S. nuclear command and control, our banking system, or our electrical grid. History has proven that it is easier to play offense than defense in the cyber realm, which is cause for concern.

Beyond cybersecurity, we have also witnessed the role that modern communications play in the plotting, motivation, and radicalization of terrorists who seek to do us harm. The lack of trust between the U.S. government and U.S. private sector has made addressing this problem of surveilling and thwarting attacks particularly difficult. Each side sees "security" or "privacy" in maximalist terms, making sensible compromise impossible.

Finally, more indirect but no less significant, we see how modern communications tools have allowed individuals around the world to eschew established institutions, channels, and norms. This is at root democratic and liberating, but it also has had the undesired effect of eroding government's ability to respond adequately to events and craft timely credible responses. Governments will never be nimble enough to keep up with the pace of modern communications. This naturally gives nongovernmental adversaries an edge when interests diverge.

Looking Ahead

These four broad challenges will shape the nature of the crises and opportunities that arise over the next four years. In this publication, CSIS experts seek to flesh out specific policy areas that the

new administration will likely face. I cannot recall another time when an incoming administration faced more questions at home and abroad. The complexity of the challenge is immense.

The job of the president has always been to help America survive as a nation and prosper as a people. But it has never been only about us. The United States has always been the world's hope for a better world. We are a nation that led the fight against fascism and communism, the fight against poverty and oppression. The responsibility is great and our record imperfect, but when it matters most we have been up to the task. There is no reason to think we will not be in the years ahead.

When Senator Bob Dole received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Bill Clinton, only weeks after he lost to him at the polls, he made the following statement:

"Our challenge is not to question American ideals, or replace them, but to act worthy of them... If we remember this, then America will always be the country of tomorrow, where every day is a new beginning and every life an instrument of God's justice."

To act worthy of America's ideals: this is the most serious challenge that any of us truly face. □