OVERVIEW

Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar doesn’t have a coherent, well-developed foreign policy platform, and most of the positions she does clearly articulate are unacceptably hawkish.
The United States’s Role in the World

**What we’re looking for:** A progressive foreign policy rejects Trump-esque “America First” posturing in which alliances are annoyances, international institutions are burdens, and foreign policy is inherently zero-sum, oppositional, and transactional. A progressive foreign policy also avoids “American exceptionalism” framing, which fails to recognize the harm that some of the United States’s policies have done in the world (including policies instituted before Trump), and it does not view either the US’s permanent, global military hegemony as a prerequisite for a peaceful world, or the rise of other countries as an inherent threat.

**Where Klobuchar stands (and bottom line):** While on the campaign trail, Klobuchar hasn’t offered much insight into her vision of the US’s proper role in the world, other than vague allusions to investing in our democracy and diplomacy, working with allies, and “not conducting foreign policy by tweet.” But when opining on particular regions and issues, she appears to embrace US hegemony as the solution to most world challenges, with no acknowledgment of prior harms caused by our foreign policy.

Investing in Military Dominance versus Other Tools

**What we’re looking for:** The challenges facing the United States often lack military solutions, and prioritizing global military dominance at any cost is both harmful and unsustainable. A progressive budget would instead prioritize increasing the number of expert diplomats, expanding development programs that prevent conflict and reduce poverty, and fortifying peacebuilding institutions, rather than further inflating the already bloated Pentagon budget.

**Where Klobuchar stands:** Though Klobuchar’s campaign has said that she supports a reduction in defense spending, she has consistently voted in favor of increasing the Pentagon budget as senator. She referred to “rebuilding the State Department,” but she hasn’t unveiled a specific plan to do so. Further, many of Klobuchar’s statements indicate she supports a
military “modernization” or buildup, particularly with an eye to countering Russia and China.  

**Bottom line:** Klobuchar’s claim that she supports slashing the defense budget isn’t backed up by her voting record or her campaign plans. She appears to favor more spending on newer weapons, with a goal of maintaining the global hegemony of the US.

### The Crisis in Yemen, and US Military Support to the Gulf States

**What we’re looking for:** A progressive consensus has emerged in favor of ending US military support for a bombing campaign as part of Yemen’s civil war. During the Obama administration, the US began to actively assist a coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, supplying them with intelligence, targeting assistance, refueling aircraft, and weapons sales.

All parties to this conflict, including the Saudi-led coalition as well as their enemies the Houthis, have committed war crimes against the civilian population. But US military support for the Saudis makes the United States directly complicit in their actions targeting civilians and blockading key ports, resulting in a mass famine, a spiraling civilian body count, a cholera outbreak, and currently the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. Congress has voted on a bipartisan basis to end US participation in Saudi Arabia’s war in Yemen, and to halt arms sales to the Gulf states carrying out the atrocities. President Trump, however, has vetoed these efforts. At minimum, a progressive candidate would commit to end US complicity in this tragedy and similar atrocities in the future.

**Where Klobuchar stands:** Klobuchar gets credit for being an early supporter of terminating military support to Saudi Arabia in response to its bombing campaign in Yemen. She has also voted in favor of Senate resolutions to stop US participation in the conflict, and to terminate arms sales to the Saudis.

**Bottom line:** Klobuchar’s position on Yemen and military support to the Saudis is progressive, but even better would be a principled human-rights-based approach governing all US arms sales.

### Ending Endless Wars

**What we’re looking for:** The post-9/11 wars and global military operations have proven ineffective at reducing terrorism. They also seem to be endless, consuming trillions of dollars and tens of thousands of lives. A progressive candidate should explicitly recognize that there is no military solution to transnational groups that perpetuate terrorism, and should reflect the overwhelming consensus among the US public that these wars were a mistake.

Candidates should articulate clear, thoughtful plans for bringing the “Forever War” to an end. These plans should encompass not only ending US military interventions in places like Afghanistan and Syria but also halting the routine use of targeted strikes through drones and raids, and arming and training of proxy forces. Their plans should drastically limit the widespread covert operations of US special forces, and not simply replace active military operations with less-transparent covert operations or with private-sector mercenaries.

Their plans should invest heavily in ensuring a stable and peaceful transition as those operations wind down, placing impacted civilian populations as a top priority through inclusive diplomatic negotiations and aid programs.

Candidates should also focus on fortifying the constitutionally mandated separation of war powers between the Executive Branch and Congress.
Candidates should also work to increase transparency and democratic accountability over the future use of the US military.

**Where Klobuchar stands:** Klobuchar has not taken veterans group Common Defense’s pledge to end the forever war. She has expressed support for withdrawing combat troops from Afghanistan within her first year, but she has left open the possibility of residual forces.

She supported the Trump administration’s air strikes in Syria, and wanted the Obama administration to intervene in Syria as well. Klobuchar supported the Obama administration’s unauthorized bombing campaign in Libya, and still defends the legal rationale used to avoid seeking congressional authorization for those strikes. She has declined to support moving drone-strike operations away from the CIA.

Klobuchar’s campaign has indicated her support for repeal of the wide-ranging 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force, and has acknowledged that Congress is the branch that is supposed to authorize war. Nonetheless, Klobuchar appears to believe that kinetic military operations that are limited in scope and duration don’t rise to the level of war and thus don’t require congressional authorization.

**Bottom line:** While Klobuchar indicates clear support for ending combat operations in Afghanistan, she hasn’t put forward similar commitments to wind down the rest of the global, endless war operations, such as targeted strikes. Further, she appears to embrace a rather broad interpretation of presidential war powers and a preference for military solutions to global challenges.

---

### Russia and China

**What we’re looking for:** Progressive candidates should reject the framing that the rise of Russia and China requires a response akin to a new Cold War, a ramped-up “great-power competition” for unquestioned global military dominance at any cost, or a zero-sum diplomatic approach hostile to targeted cooperation with either state. Human rights abuses and other violations of international norms should not be ignored, but we’d like to see candidates recognize that there is no military solution to these challenges.

Instead, progressive candidates should offer solutions such as diplomatic cooperation to create pressure and incentives through multilateral mechanisms. Candidates’ proposed solutions should primarily focus on domestic investments and on opportunities for transnational partnership in order to jointly address existential, shared global challenges (climate change, nuclear weapons).

Progressive candidates should also recognize that the challenges that Russia and China pose are unique and context specific. In the case of Russia, the primary security challenge to the US consists of disinformation and election interference, like what took place in 2016, as well as the country’s willingness to wage asymmetric warfare, such as in Crimea. In the case of China, the primary security challenge is the increasingly totalitarian nature of the regime and its willingness to weaponize technology and economic resources to the detriment of human rights and human dignity, both inside and beyond its borders.

**Where Klobuchar stands:** Klobuchar explicitly names China and Russia as the US’s chief international adversaries on her campaign website, and pledges to “modernize” the US military to stay “one step ahead” of them.

Klobuchar has focused a lot of time into an effort to promote transparency in digital campaign finances, as she says the 2016 elections were a “dress rehearsal” for what Russia is preparing to do in 2020.

**Bottom line:** While it’s laudable that Klobuchar has spent time on domestic election security solutions, her neo–Cold War rhetoric with regard to both Russia and China is alarming.
Venezuela

What we’re looking for: Mindful both of the crisis unfolding in Venezuela as well as the ugly history of US interventions in Latin America, progressives are looking to presidential candidates to first do no harm. This means recognizing that US options in Venezuela are not “war or nothing,” that a US military intervention will only make things worse, that broad-based sanctions harm the most vulnerable while empowering the Maduro regime, and that there are numerous steps that the US can and should take to help Venezuelans. Most importantly, it means recognizing that the only viable path out of the current crisis is a negotiated process that leads to free and fair elections, allowing Venezuelans themselves to choose their own leaders.

Where Klobuchar stands: Klobuchar has called for Maduro to be ousted and replaced with a new leader. Though she’s supported the extension of Temporary Protected Status to Venezuelans in the United States, and has generally spoken in favor of humanitarian aid, she’s also said that the military option should remain on the table. She hasn’t cosponsored legislation to prevent the US from launching a new war in Venezuela.

Bottom line: There’s very little distance between the substance of Klobuchar’s Venezuela policy and Trump’s.

North Korea

What we’re looking for: Democrats often fail to express a principled, progressive plan for diplomacy with North Korea. Candidates should reject framing that diplomacy is a gift or a concession to North Korea, should recognize how dangerous a military clash would be, and should commit not to strike North Korea first but instead to embrace a sustained, long-term path of diplomacy and peace, including by formally ending the Korean War.

Where Klobuchar stands: Rather than talking about de-escalation and a step-by-step diplomatic approach, Klobuchar has spoken in favor of actually increasing the crippling sanctions on North Korea. Though her campaign has indicated she would meet with Kim Jong-un without preconditions, and she’s indicated she doesn’t oppose direct talks outright, she’s sharply criticized Trump for talking with the North Korean leader as “bringing a hot dish over the fence to the dictator next door.” Bizarrely, she’s also criticized Trump for not siding with John Bolton on the issue, saying that Trump’s actions aren’t projecting “strength.”

Notably, Klobuchar didn’t cosponsor legislation aimed at preventing military action in North Korea during the height of Trump’s “fire and fury” rhetoric. She hasn’t spoken about the role that the unresolved Korean War plays, or the need to South Korea’s lead toward a peace agreement.

Bottom line: While it’s welcome that Klobuchar at least speaks in favor of direct diplomacy, her critiques are often lobbed at Trump from his right and not the left, and her proposals don’t indicate a diplomacy-first approach.

Iran

What we’re looking for: At minimum, we want to see candidates commit both to reentering the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) negotiated by President Obama, which Donald Trump violated, and to declare that they will not start a war with Iran. Furthermore, candidates should not repeat right-wing talking points that criticize the JCPOA deal as “flawed,” or inaccurately assert that Iran “has” or is “actively developing” nuclear weapons. Progressive candidates will realistically assess the challenges posed by Iran, and recognize that only diplomacy can succeed in addressing those challenges, with the JCPOA representing a successful model of international cooperation.
Where Klobuchar stands: Klobuchar’s initial support for the nuclear deal appeared reluctant,34 and she continues to call the deal “imperfect.”35 Even though she opposes Trump’s violation of the deal,36 she appears to couch her desire to reenter it with plans to renegotiate its terms.37

Despite naming Iran as a top security threat, she has also warned against a new military conflict in the region38 and cosponsored legislation to prevent an unauthorized war with Iran.39

Bottom line: While Klobuchar appears to understand the perils of a new war with Iran, she hasn’t put forward a strong diplomatic vision of how to prevent it from happening.

Corruption and the Military-Industrial Complex

What we’re looking for: Progressives recognize that the military-industrial complex, like any other sector of entrenched corporate power, has an undue influence in our politics, our foreign policy, and our framework of national security decision-making. Candidates should recognize this as well, and articulate specific reforms to combat corruption, revolving doors, lobbying influence, corporate welfare, and be willing to take on the power of the defense industry in the same way they’d take on sectors like Wall Street.

Where Klobuchar stands (and bottom line): Klobuchar doesn’t appear to have acknowledged the undue influence of the defense industry or put forward plans to counter it. Like most elected officials, she has pushed for more military spending to go to her home state.40

Nuclear Weapons

What we’re looking for: Progressive candidates should enthusiastically support US participation in key arms-control agreements, including extending the New START treaty and reentering the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. They should also embrace a “No First Use” policy, meaning they’ll commit to use nuclear weapons only to deter nuclear attacks on the US or its allies. They should also support reducing the role of nuclear weapons in US foreign policy, and reject the development of new nuclear weapons.

Where Klobuchar stands: Klobuchar voted in favor of the New START treaty when it was originally ratified,41 supports its extension, and has spoken out against the Trump administration’s withdrawal from the INF treaty.42 She’s also opposed Trump’s proposal to manufacture a new nuclear weapon43 (though she hasn’t cosponsored legislation to prevent it). However, she hasn’t cosponsored legislation to ban new production of additional nuclear weapons,44 nor has she endorsed a No First Use policy.45

Bottom line: Arms control agreements are a comparatively strong issue area for Klobuchar, though her failure to embrace No First Use of Trump’s new “gateway nuke” proposal is disappointing.

The Muslim Ban, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers

What we’re looking for: It should be a top priority for a progressive president to repeal Trump’s Muslim, asylum, and refugee bans—but that’s not enough. A progressive president should live up to America’s aspirational values and undo nearly a century of xenophobic policies by moving to increase refugee resettlements (particularly among refugee populations directly created by US policy), support
reforms that significantly streamline the asylum process, ensure there are no such similar bans in the future, and make direct connections to the US policy decisions framed around “national security” that have systematically demonized Muslims and people of color as inherently suspect and threatening.

Progressive candidates should call out Trump and the Republican Party’s racist “divide-and-conquer” tactics that falsely paint immigrants and refugees as the reason for voters’ problems, in order to distract from the real causes. The candidate should recognize that US foreign policy is deeply intertwined with US immigration policy, and work to make the US a more welcoming nation while also working to create a more peaceful, stable world where fewer people are forced to flee their homes.

**Where Klobuchar stands:** Klobuchar is a cosponsor of legislation to rescind Trump’s Muslim ban and make changes to the law to prevent similar bans in the future, but unfortunately, she often uses sanitized, Trump-preferred terminology, referring to it as a “travel ban.” She’s indicated support for raising the refugee-resettlement target to 110,000 per year, and has opposed the administration’s slashing of humanitarian aid meant to address the root causes of refugee migration.

**Bottom line:** Klobuchar has baseline progressive views when it comes to refugees and asylum seekers, but she hasn’t made the connection between current anti-Muslim and anti-immigration policies and decades of misguided US foreign policy.

---

**Civil Liberties and Human Rights in National Security Policy**

**What we’re looking for:** The US’s approach to national security following 9/11 has produced numerous human rights and civil liberties abuses, from torture and surveillance to racial profiling and indefinite detention. Progressive candidates should propose specific reforms to end these abuses, and roll back infringements on rights in the name of security, particularly those disproportionately impacting marginalized communities.

**Where Klobuchar stands:** Klobuchar’s record on mass surveillance is disturbing. She’s dismissed concerns over the Snowden revelations, and voted in favor of even the most controversial increases in surveillance authorities.

When asked directly about using “commander-in-chief” powers on things like detention and surveillance, she gave a vague answer about using available authorities to protect American security. She has voted in favor of affirming the ban on torture.

**Bottom line:** Klobuchar doesn’t appear to have a specific plan to address or roll back the worst abuses of the post-9/11 era, if elected, and she would likely even carry some of them, like mass surveillance, forward.
Climate Security

**What we're looking for:** Progressives recognize climate change as an existential national security threat, and want candidates to articulate a plan to confront this threat with the scope and urgency that it requires. This is particularly important because the US, and in particular the US military, makes a disproportionately large contribution to carbon emissions.

There is a direct line from the effects of climate change—droughts, crop failures, land loss, desertification, animal extinctions, and increasingly frequent severe weather and natural disasters—to a growing amount of unrest and instability around the world. These disruptions have already led to violent conflict, and unrest will continue to get worse. Climate refugees will be forced to seek new homes, resulting in unprecedented levels of migration. Melting arctic ice has exposed previously buried natural resources, setting off competition among different nations to secure them—a competition that could easily escalate into war. Up to this point, the US has responded to the spiraling level of conflict and instability by fortifying and militarizing its borders, growing its armed forces, and intervening in fragile countries around the world while investing trillions of taxpayer dollars into the increasingly difficult task of maintaining global military dominance.

A progressive candidate should recognize that climate change is both the greatest threat to the safety and prosperity of the US, and the global issue that the US has the greatest power to mitigate. A progressive candidate should recognize that the growing militarization of our society has things exactly backward: It’s a fruitless effort to adapt to the symptoms, instead of treating the rapidly worsening disease.

A progressive candidate should have a serious and detailed plan to prevent further climate change. This should include not only a domestic plan but also a framework for a global Green New Deal, reentering and significantly building upon the Paris Agreement, supporting the UN Green Climate Fund, and recognizing the crucial impact that the current size, structure, and role of the US military has in fueling the climate crisis.

**Where Klobuchar stands:** Klobuchar has called climate change a threat to national security, and pledged to rejoin the Paris Agreement on day one of her presidency. She’s also pledged to strengthen the Paris Agreement targets, and increase funding for the UN Green Climate Fund, but her domestic climate plan falls short of her competitors. She cosponsored the Green New Deal resolution, but she has explained that her support is only in the “aspirational” sense. Additionally, her plan leaves out the role that militarism plays in climate disruption and, as such, is inherently incomplete.

**Bottom line:** Klobuchar has a more detailed climate plan than any of her foreign policy plans, but her plans fall short of matching the urgency of the crisis, which is heavily fueled by the US war machine.
look-at-facts-092922


56. https://www.cnn.com/politics/live-news/amy-klobuchar-town-hall-new-hampshire/h_a7daa4a6cb6687c3e434a5f5ce58f784


59. https://www.dataforprogress.org/gnd-candidates

60. https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/429719-klobuchar-on-green-new-deal-i-see-it-as-aspirational