

# ELIZABETH WARREN



## OVERVIEW

Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren has clearly given careful thought to US engagement in the world, and her connections between foreign and domestic policy are particularly strong. Among her various bold proposals, she's the only candidate to articulate a plan to root out corruption in the defense industry and dramatically expand the State Department, and she leads on the issue of nuclear weapons. We want to see her fully embrace her progressive instincts and go further in rejecting the concept of "American exceptionalism."

# 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 Warren stands:** Warren sharply critiques Trump-era withdrawals from global engagement, stating that while partners should pay their “fair share,” she insists that “diplomacy is not about charity; it is about advancing U.S. interests and dealing with problems before they morph into costly wars. Similarly, alliances are about shared principles, like our shared commitment to human rights, but they are also about safety in numbers. Not even the strongest nation should have to solve everything on its own.”<sup>1</sup>

Warren also warns against believing that erosions in multilateral engagement began with Trump, and insists that our problems will last beyond his presidency, absent meaningful reform.<sup>2</sup>

In response to a question about the US’s responsibility to intervene militarily in foreign humanitarian crises, Warren cautioned against potential unintended consequences that US interventions can bring, though she does repeat the trope that we can’t “do nothing”—a justification frequently offered in favor of unwise military commitments.<sup>3</sup> She also describes prior US engagement in the world as not perfect, “but

our foreign policy benefited a lot of people around the world.”<sup>4</sup>

Warren seems to worry about the rise of China, saying that China has “weaponized its economy ... to bludgeon its way onto the world stage.” Additionally, she has framed Trump’s approach to NATO as a “gift to Putin,” though she has otherwise criticized Cold War-like framing.<sup>5</sup>

She also states that “a stronger economy, a healthier democracy, and a united people—these are the engines that power the nation and will project American strength and values throughout the world.”<sup>6</sup> This shift of emphasis to domestic prosperity is refreshing, and Warren’s recognition of the role that US corporations play in eroding democracy in human rights abroad is a major step forward, but Warren continues to reinforce the assumption that projecting unchallenged American military strength overseas as an absolute necessity for US security.

**Bottom line:** Elizabeth Warren appears to embrace the benefits of international cooperation in order to confront shared threats and prevent conflicts before they begin. While she goes further than most other candidates, she doesn’t generally point out the harm that the US foreign policy establishment’s approach has caused in the world, even before the current forever wars. She is comfortable sharply criticizing recent US foreign policy blunders, but does not appear willing to dismantle the framework of American imperialism.

## Threat Assessments

**What we're looking for:** We want to see candidates take stock of and prioritize the security challenges facing the United States through a realistic lens that avoids fearmongering and/or inflating the level of actual threat. Candidates should prioritize by looking at physical, social, and economic threats holistically, and put people over power and profits. We want to

see a recognition that many security challenges lack military solutions, and an acknowledgement that there are limits to US power.

**Where Warren stands:** Consistent with the overall theme of her campaign, Warren heavily focuses her foreign policy message on the security challenge posed by elite corruption and rigged economic and political rules, both at home and abroad.<sup>7</sup> She warns that this corruption fuels many of our global challenges: authoritarianism, severe inequality, and the consolidation of wealth and power in the hands of a few.<sup>8</sup> She expertly weaves domestic and foreign policy issues together in this consistent diagnosis, emphasizing that our success in foreign policy starts with health and prosperity at home, in order to solve the underlying problems that cause conflict and instability.<sup>9</sup> Warren also emphasizes the “existential threat” of climate change,<sup>10</sup> and explicitly notes that most of these challenges do not have military solutions.<sup>11</sup>

Warren warns against a “singular focus on counterterrorism,”<sup>12</sup> and correctly identifies that US counterterrorism policies have been counterproductive. Warren points out that “military efforts alone will never fully succeed at ending terrorism, because it is not possible to fight one’s way out of extremism. Some challenges, such as cyberattacks and nuclear proliferation, require much more than military strength to combat. And other dangers, such as climate change and the spread of infectious diseases, cannot be solved through military action at all.”

However, she still uses some language that mimics the justifications for the post-9/11 paradigm of endless war, such as: “America still faces violent terrorist groups that wish to do us harm”; “we need to be smarter and faster than those who wish to do us harm”; and “we can—and must—remain vigilant against the threat of terrorism.”<sup>13</sup> This type of rhetoric feeds an irrational level of fear in the public,

reinforces the trend of militarization of foreign policy, and inflates the significance of the threat to the US. This challenge can only be resolved by addressing local drivers to conflict, including failed governance, lacking economic opportunity, and individual disenfranchisement.

Additionally, Warren sometimes portrays the post-9/11 wars as a mistake primarily because they have been a distraction from other potential confrontations, citing “growing dangers in other parts of the world” including “a long-term struggle for power in Asia, a revanchist Russia that threatens Europe, and looming unrest in the Western Hemisphere, including a collapsing state in Venezuela that threatens to disrupt its neighbors.” She echoes the claims of defense hawks that the Pentagon faces a “readiness crisis,” despite its bloated budget, implying the need for military buildup as part of confrontation with Russia and China.<sup>14</sup>

**Bottom line:** Elizabeth Warren understands the connection between domestic and foreign policy, tells a refreshingly clear story about the causes of global inequality, has a relatively clear-eyed take on our priority challenges, and is mostly consistent in acknowledging the futility of relying on military power to meet our challenges. These strengths highlight her occasionally poor framing of foreign policy issues. Her confrontational rhetoric regarding Russia, China, and Venezuela carries some cause for concern. While Warren has articulated the need to invest in other tools in the national security toolkit to address the challenges with aforementioned nonmilitary solutions, she has not fully laid out what those tools would be, outside of “economic assistance.”<sup>15</sup> Warren stands out as one of only a few candidates most willing to challenge common fearmongering tropes in foreign policy, though she still has some room for improvement.

# 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 Warren stands:** Elizabeth Warren frequently points out that our military budget has ballooned to over \$700 billion—higher than Cold War levels, and more than the combined budgets of many other important priorities put together.<sup>16</sup> She points out that “‘more of everything’ defense budgets are no substitute for sound strategy,”<sup>17</sup> and advocates for sharp cuts and reinvestments in other foreign policy tools, such as diplomacy and development, along with greater investments in domestic priorities.<sup>18</sup> She identifies the worst US foreign policy blunder since World War II as “the failure to understand that domestic human security is the key to true national security.”<sup>19</sup> True to form, she has a plan to aggressively rebuild, reform, and significantly expand the State Department, keeping with her commitment to invest in other foreign policy tools besides the military; this includes excellent proposals like a commitment to end the practice of appointing political donors as ambassadors.<sup>20</sup>

As part of her plan to pay for Medicare for All, Warren suggests getting rid of the Pentagon's Overseas Contingency Operations “slush fund,” freeing up about \$800 billion over ten years.<sup>21</sup>

However, Warren does not appear to outright reject the idea that unchallenged global military dominance as a goal worthy of maintaining at any cost. She talks about the US maintaining a “strong military” for deterrence purposes,<sup>22</sup> and she sometimes frames investments like development and diplomacy as additional tools on top of military supremacy, rather than instead of it.<sup>23</sup>

Warren's campaign policies would reign in the lobbying and political influence of the defense industry. However, she has not consistently utilized the power of her own vote to oppose levels of military spending, which she criticizes as too high. At times, since her election to the Senate, she has voted in favor of authorization and appropriations bills that ramp up Pentagon spending.<sup>24</sup>

These bills are large, complex pieces of legislation that often include important individual policies, but they have consistently followed a trend of lifting mandatory spending caps and growing the Pentagon's budget (often significantly).

**Bottom line:** Warren's threat assessments largely align with her budget priorities. She clearly understands the lack of military solutions to our most pressing problems, and the need for strong multilateralism, development, and diplomacy; she also wants to invest heavily in other tools, accordingly. However, severely cutting the Pentagon budget requires letting go of the goal of unchallenged, global US military dominance, and her voting record shows that she has been inconsistent in voting against the high levels of Pentagon spending that she criticizes on the campaign trail.

# 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 Warren stands:** In addition to cosponsoring the resolutions<sup>25</sup> calling on the administration to cease hostilities in Yemen, Warren supported resolutions disapproving of arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>26</sup> Even better, she used her platform on the Senate Armed Service Committee to elicit an admission from the Pentagon that they aren't even tracking the operations they're supporting in Yemen.<sup>27</sup>

Warren has called for pivoting away from "reflexive embrace" of the Saudi government, has identified defense contractor greed as an obstacle<sup>28</sup>, and has

advocated for a more limited partnership if they are unable to meet certain standards moving forward.<sup>29</sup>

**Bottom line:** Warren's track record on Yemen is great, and she shows a willingness to cut off the blank check of military support that the United States has been providing for Gulf states. We'd love to see her take a step further and commit to ending arms sales to all countries committing gross violations of human rights.

## 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 Warren stands:** Warren has signed progressive veterans group Common Defense’s pledge to end the forever war.<sup>30</sup> She’s clearly and repeatedly stated her commitment to promptly remove troops from Afghanistan, based on the correct assessment that it’s impossible to “bomb our way to a solution,”<sup>31</sup> and that she rejects the naive expectation of “a military victory when a political settlement is required.”<sup>32</sup> She gets bonus points for emphasizing that ending the war shouldn’t mean abandoning the people of Afghanistan, and that we should invest our diplomatic and economic tools into strengthening Afghanistan’s future and supporting a stable transition away from US occupation.<sup>33</sup>

What’s less clear is her approach to future counterterrorism operations apart from the issue of combat troops in Afghanistan. She declined to clarify in response to a question from *The Washington Post* whether she’d support leaving residual forces in Afghanistan—an action that would make a peace deal difficult, if not impossible.<sup>34</sup> She’s stated her desire to get troops out of Syria<sup>35</sup> and to find the best diplomatic solution,<sup>36</sup> but she has also seemed to leave military action in Syria on the table, saying, “There is no military-only solution in Syria, but the world must hold [Assad] accountable for his violations of international law and violence against the Syrian people.”<sup>37</sup> She hasn’t clarified whether she considers ending targeted strikes around the world via drones or special forces to be an essential component of ending endless war, though she has committed to using executive orders to prohibit the CIA from conducting these operations.<sup>38</sup>

She has clearly thought a lot about the civilian casualties of our endless wars, though. She has introduced legislation to require the disclosure of casualties resulting from military operations,<sup>39</sup> suggested there should be a senior Pentagon official overseeing civilian-protection policies, urged more consultations with nongovernmental groups on the ground,<sup>40</sup> and called for investigations of civilian

casualties in prior egregious cases.<sup>41</sup> This push for more transparency is welcome, but it needs to grapple with both the tendency of the Department of Defense to make this type of data classified, and the use of covert paramilitary strikes, which prevents the public from fully comprehending the human cost of these wars.

When it comes to congressional oversight of executive war powers, Warren has a clear and bold vision. She’s committed both to full repeal of the current authorizations used to justify endless war, and to seek congressional authorization for any future conflicts.<sup>42</sup> She’s even articulated a narrow interpretation of inherent “commander-in-chief” authorities in the Constitution: the use of unauthorized force only to repel an attack on the United States and to protect the lives and property of Americans abroad.<sup>43</sup> In her words: “The decision to use force is one of the most important any country can make, and given the risk to our troops, the cost to taxpayers, and the consequences for our country, our allies, and the world more generally, Congress should play the primary role in making this decision.”<sup>44</sup>

**Bottom line:** Warren has strong stances about both constraints on presidential war powers and accountability for civilian casualties, and she correctly observes the lack of a military solution in Afghanistan. Her rhetoric on ending endless war is powerful, but accomplishing that goal will require a plan to wind down the complex and its often covert web of targeted operations across the globe.

## 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 Warren stands:** Warren often invokes the perceived threats posed by Russia and China, framing it mainly as authoritarianism and corruption in a struggle against democracy and human rights.<sup>45</sup> And while she does consistently warn that Russia and China are investing heavily in their militaries<sup>46</sup> (while the US's own military spending easily dwarfs Russia's and China's, combined), and also talks of containing their activities with regard to Venezuela,<sup>47</sup> she appears *not* to be suggesting a new Cold War—esque military approach. Her proposed solutions focus mainly on domestic initiatives to safeguard our own democracy and empower the US to compete economically in the world economy.<sup>48</sup>

**Bottom line:** Warren sometimes uses rhetoric that frames relations with China and Russia as a global showdown with the US, while also arguing for international cooperation through nonmilitary means.

The recognition of nonmilitary solutions is welcome, but we'd like to hear her talk more about the need to cooperate and work alongside China and Russia, and less saber-rattling rhetoric focused on competition and US dominance, which risks zero-sum policies that preclude collaboration on shared challenges.

## 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 Warren stands:** Elizabeth Warren has supported<sup>49</sup> sanctions targeted at those in Maduro's inner circle, and opposed<sup>50</sup> broad-based sanctions that exacerbate the suffering of the people of Venezuela. She has cosponsored legislation to prevent a military intervention,<sup>51</sup> and explicitly stated that a military option shouldn't be on the table. She's also proposed numerous steps including Temporary Protected Status for Venezuelans in the United States as well as diplomatic steps to press for a political solution to the crisis.<sup>52</sup>

**Bottom line:** With too many Democrats openly praising Trump's troublesome Venezuela posture, it's important that Warren has distanced herself from the possibility of military intervention. We hope she continues to reject hawkish rhetoric while insisting on new elections as the path forward.

# 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 Warren stands:** During Trump's "fire and fury" phase, Warren cosponsored legislation to prevent an unauthorized strike<sup>53</sup> on North Korea,<sup>54</sup> and she's also spoken out in favor of an interim, step-by-step deal with North Korea, rather than an all-or-nothing approach.<sup>55</sup>

However, she has resisted committing to continuing direct talks with Kim Jong-un, if elected,<sup>56</sup> and she has frequently suggested talks are a legitimizing concession to North Korea, rather than an essential tool for successfully deescalating tensions.<sup>57</sup> She has blamed previous diplomatic failures entirely on the North Koreans, rather than also acknowledging the US role in those failures.<sup>58</sup>

Lastly, Warren has not yet voiced support for formally ending the Korean War, a key to resolving tensions.

**Bottom line:** Warren too frequently resorts to anti-Trump jabs that veer to the right of his North Korea policy, rather than proposing a progressive, forward-looking alternative vision.

# 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 Warren stands:** Warren was one of the first Democrats to back the Iran nuclear deal,<sup>59</sup> and she appears to have been the first to pledge to reenter it,<sup>60</sup> using diplomacy (if necessary) to bring both Iran and the US into compliance once again.<sup>61</sup> She has also cosponsored legislation to prevent a new war with Iran,<sup>62</sup> and speaks of future plans to address other aspects of Iran's behavior through diplomacy.<sup>63</sup>

However, in the second debate of the Democratic presidential primary, she falsely suggested that Iran has a nuclear weapons program.<sup>64</sup> Iran has long been capable of pursuing a nuclear weapon, which is why the JCPOA imposed strict limitations on Iran's nuclear program while subjecting it to rigorous oversight; however, US intelligence agencies concluded that Iran halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003, and that the country has subsequently refrained from restarting it. Even after Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA, Iran's recent nuclear moves are reversible and appear aimed at bringing the US back into the deal.<sup>65</sup>

**Bottom line:** Warren is a champion of diplomacy with Iran and preventing a new war in the region—but she should be careful not to echo misinformation about Iran's record in the process.



# 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 Warren stands:** Fighting corruption and corporate power is the central theme of Warren's campaign, and it shows in her plans with respect to the defense industry. Whenever she's discussing foreign policy, she expertly ties it back to the need to end the stranglehold of defense contractors over military policy.<sup>66</sup>

She's rolled out a plan to tackle specifically the power of monied interests in our national security, focusing on ending the revolving door between defense contractors and Pentagon, banning Pentagon officials from owning contractor stock, limiting foreign governments' ability to hire national security officials as lobbyists, and increasing the transparency of military-industrial complex's lobbying activities.<sup>67</sup> Her Green Industrial Mobilization Plan also points out the bloated defense-procurement economy.<sup>68</sup>

However, it should be noted that, as a senator, Warren has fought to maintain military-spending projects based in Massachusetts,<sup>69</sup> and has appeared to have a friendly relationship with defense-industry lobbyists.<sup>70</sup>

**Bottom line:** Warren's recognition of and plans to confront the corrupt influence of the military-

industrial complex on a national level are unrivaled. But, as evidenced by her own experience in the Senate, the American economy must undergo a transition away from defense-industry business if its stranglehold is to be truly broken. Warren's proposed reforms are extremely helpful, but cuts to Pentagon spending are a key component of the solution, and Warren's specific vision on that is less clear.

## 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 Warren stands:** When asked about the greatest foreign policy success since World War II, Warren points to the fact that nuclear weapons haven't been used in battle again.<sup>71</sup> She's taken the lead in advocating for a "No First Use" policy, introducing legislation<sup>72</sup> and championing the issue in a presidential debate.<sup>73</sup> Also, she has cosponsored legislation to prevent the Trump administration from pursuing a new nuclear weapon<sup>74</sup> and has publicly committed to a policy of no new nuclear weapons.<sup>75</sup>

Warren has also called for redoubling arms-control efforts, leading the fight against the administration's withdrawal from the INF Treaty,<sup>76</sup> and calling for an extension of the New START treaty.<sup>77</sup> She's also spoken out against spending a trillion dollars on nuclear modernization.<sup>78</sup>

**Bottom line:** Warren's record and proposals on nuclear weapons are terrific. She is a clear leader on this issue.

# 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 Warren stands:** Warren has pledged to rescind the Muslim ban,<sup>79</sup> and to exceed the Obama administration's refugee ceiling—accepting 125,000 refugees in her first year, if elected, and 175,000 by the end of her first term.<sup>80</sup> She's a cosponsor of the NO BAN Act, which would restrict the statutory authorities exploited by the Trump administration to enact the Muslim ban.<sup>81</sup>

To address the root causes of migration in Central America, Warren also has pledged to commit at least \$1.5 billion annually, if elected, and to rally the international community to match that amount.<sup>82</sup>

**Bottom line:** Warren appears deeply committed to undoing the racist and Islamophobic policies enacted under the Trump administration. Even better would be if she directly connected these to the years of harmful US policies disproportionately harming Muslims and people of color at home and abroad, long before Trump.

# 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 Warren stands:** Warren voted in favor of federal law codifying the ban against torture,<sup>83</sup> calling the practice is "antithetical to American values."<sup>84</sup> She's expressed opposition to warrantless wiretapping<sup>85</sup>, and voted against extension of key surveillance authorities.<sup>86</sup>

While on the campaign trail, Warren doesn't appear to have expressly committed to closing the detention camp at Guantanamo Bay.

**Bottom line:** While Warren's record and statements are primarily positive, it's a notable area where she appears not to have detailed plans. That's unfortunate, given the massive national security state that the next president will inherit, the rights and liberties it threatens, and the potential for abuse it can and will continue to cause absent clear constraints.

# 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.<sup>87</sup>

**Where Warren stands:** Warren has identified climate change as a key national security challenge.<sup>88</sup> She's pledged not only to reenter the Paris Agreement but also to go further and to push other countries to do the same.<sup>89</sup> She's an original cosponsor of the Green New Deal<sup>90</sup> and has proposed a Green Marshall Plan to encourage manufacturing and export of renewable energy technology.<sup>91</sup> She's also discussed the importance of leveraging US international development to discourage fossil fuel infrastructure.<sup>92</sup>

Warren has unveiled a plan to make the military part of the solution in fighting climate change.<sup>93</sup> While the plan rightfully recognizes that the US military relies on fossil fuels and is the single largest government consumer of energy, her plan to cut the Pentagon's carbon emissions is framed in terms of "readiness" and doesn't grapple with how the US military's massive size and footprint itself is connected to human and environmental destruction. Progressive criticism points out that this plan amounts to a proposal for a "green-washed" empire, absent significant reductions in the size and mission of the US military.<sup>94</sup>

**Bottom line:** Warren has thoughtfully and aggressively incorporated climate change into her proposals across several sectors, including national security and international cooperation. It is crucial that she similarly tackles the relationship between climate and the militarization of our foreign policy.

ENDNOTES

1. <https://www.amnestyusa.org/elizabeth-warren/>
2. <https://www.boston.com/news/politics/2018/11/29/elizabeth-warren-foreign-policy-speech-american-university>
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24. Warren voted for the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) funding the Pentagon's high budget for 2014 and 2015, while voting against the 2015 and 2016 bills. She voted against the NDAA for 2017, the first year with Trump in command of the U.S. military, but voted in favor for the similarly large bill for 2018, and reversed course again and voted against the 2019 version. She missed the most recent vote for the 2020 defense bill. <https://votesmart.org/candidate/141272/elizabeth-warren?categoryId=22&&type=V#.XZfzlKZKg2w>
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