[Medea Benjamin](https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/medea-benjamin)

&

[NJSD](https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/nicolas-j-s-davies)

[Nicolas J S Davies](https://www.thenews.com.pk/writer/nicolas-j-s-davies)

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**‘Warmongers or peacemakers’**

Congratulations to Joe Biden on his election as America’s next president! People all over this pandemic-infested, war-torn and poverty-stricken world were shocked by the brutality and racism of the Trump administration, and are anxiously wondering whether Biden’s presidency will open the door to the kind of international cooperation that we need to confront the serious problems facing humanity in this century.

For progressives everywhere, the knowledge that ‘another world is possible’ has sustained us through decades of greed, extreme inequality and war, as US-led neoliberalismhas repackaged and force-fed 19th century laissez-faire capitalism to the people of the 21st century. The Trump experience has revealed, in stark relief, where these policies can lead.

Joe Biden has certainly paid his dues to and reaped rewards from the same corrupt political and economic system as Trump, as the latter delightedly trumpeted in every stump speech. But Biden must understand that the young voters who turned out in unprecedented numbers to put him in the White House have lived their whole lives under this neoliberal system, and did not vote for “more of the same”. Nor do they naively think that deeply-rooted problems of American society like racism, militarism and corrupt corporate politics began with Trump.

During his election campaign, Biden has relied on foreign policy advisors from past administrations, particularly the Obama administration, and seems to be considering some of them for top cabinet posts. For the most part, they are members of the “Washington blob” who represent a dangerous continuity with past policies rooted in militarism and other abuses of power.

These include interventions in Libya and Syria, support for the Saudi war in Yemen, drone warfare, indefinite detention without trial at Guantanamo, prosecutions of whistleblowers and whitewashing torture. Some of these people have also cashed in on their government contacts to make hefty salaries in consulting firms and other private sector ventures that feed off government contracts.

As former Deputy Secretary of State and Deputy National Security Advisor to Obama, Tony Blinken played a leading role in all Obama’s aggressive policies. Then he co-founded WestExec Advisors to profit from negotiating contracts between corporations and the Pentagon, including one for Google to develop Artificial Intelligence technology for drone targeting, which was only stopped by a rebellion among outraged Google employees.

Since the Clinton administration, Michele Flournoy has been a principal architect of the U.S.’s illegal, imperialist doctrine of global war and military occupation. As Obama’s Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, she helped to engineer his escalation of the war in Afghanistan and interventions in Libya and Syria. Between jobs at the Pentagon, she has worked the infamous revolving door to consult for firms seeking Pentagon contracts, to co-found a military-industrial think tank called the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), and now to join Tony Blinken at WestExec Advisors.

Nicholas Burns was U.S. Ambassador to NATO during the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Since 2008, he has worked for former Defense Secretary William Cohen’s lobbying firm The Cohen Group, which is a major global lobbyist for the U.S. arms industry. Burns is a hawk on Russia and China and has condemned NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden as a “traitor.”

As a legal adviser to Obama and the State Department and then as Deputy CIA Director and Deputy National Security Advisor, Avril Haines provided legal cover and worked closely with Obama and CIA Director John Brennan on Obama’s tenfold expansion of drone killings.

Samantha Power served under Obama as UN Ambassador and Human Rights Director at the National Security Council. She supported U.S. interventions in Libya and Syria, as well as the Saudi-led war on Yemen. And despite her human rights portfolio, she never spoke out against Israeli attacks on Gaza that happened under her tenure or Obama’s dramatic use of drones that left hundreds of civilians dead.

Former Hillary Clinton aide Jake Sullivan played a leading role in unleashing US covert and proxy wars in Libya and Syria.

As UN Ambassador in Obama’s first term, Susan Rice obtained UN cover for his disastrous intervention in Libya. As National Security Advisor in Obama’s second term, Rice also defended Israel’s savage bombardment of Gaza in 2014, bragged about the US ‘crippling sanctions’ on Iran and North Korea, and supported an aggressive stance toward Russia and China.

A foreign policy team led by such individuals will only perpetuate the endless wars, Pentagon overreach and CIA-misled chaos that we – and the world – have endured for the past two decades of the War on Terror.

Biden will take office amid some of the greatest challenges the human race has ever faced–from extreme inequality, debt and poverty caused by neoliberalism, to intractable wars and the existential danger of nuclear war, to the climate crisis, mass extinction and the Covid-19 pandemic.

These problems won’t be solved by the same people, and the same mindsets, that got us into these predicaments. When it comes to foreign policy, there is a desperate need for personnel and policies rooted in an understanding that the greatest dangers we face are problems that affect the whole world, and that they can only be solved by genuine international collaboration, not by conflict or coercion.

During the campaign, Joe Biden’s website declared, “As president, Biden will elevate diplomacy as the premier tool of our global engagement. He will rebuild a modern, agile US Department of State – investing in and re-empowering the finest diplomatic corps in the world and leveraging the full talent and richness of America’s diversity.”

This implies that Biden’s foreign policy must be managed primarily by the State Department, not the Pentagon. The Cold War and American post-Cold War triumphalism led to a reversal of these roles, with the Pentagon and CIA taking the lead and the State Department trailing behind them (with only 5 percent of their budget), trying to clean up the mess and restore a veneer of order to countries destroyed by American bombs or destabilized by US sanctions, coups and death squads.

In the Trump era, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo reduced the State Department to little more than a sales team for the military-industrial complex to ink lucrative arms deals with India, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and countries around the world.

What we need is a foreign policy led by a State Department that resolves differences with our neighbors through diplomacy and negotiations, as international law in fact requires, and a Department of Defense that defends the United States and deters international aggression against us, instead of threatening and committing aggression against our neighbors around the world.

Excerpted: ‘Will the Biden Team Be Warmongers or Peacemakers?’

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