

Topics for Great Decisions 2027

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1. *American Foreign Policy and the Future of Multilateralism* by **G. John Ikenberry** (Princeton)

Over the postwar decades, the United States played a leadership role in building multilateral regimes and institutions across a wide range of policy areas. It was a founder of the United Nations and champion of the Bretton Woods system, and during and after the Cold War, Washington played an important role in fostering multilateral agreements in trade, public health, environment, foreign aid, and humanitarian assistance. To be sure, Washington was often an ambivalent multilateralist, seeking at various junctures to protect its sovereignty and policy autonomy and exercise power unilaterally. Today, multilateral cooperation is at a low ebb. What is the future of multilateralism, and what are America's choices? Does supporting and operating within multilateral frameworks for cooperation still serve America's interests, and what might the agenda be for rebuilding the global system of multilateralism?

2. *American Options in the Middle East* by **Phil Gordon** (Brookings)

The Trump administration's war with Iran marks another major upheaval in the United States' fraught strategic relations with the region. Looking beyond the day-to-day military dangers and diplomatic maneuvers, what are America's major grand policy options for the region? What are America's choices? Is there a sustainable path forward that allows the United States to remain a security ally to Israel and its Arab allies in the region, while dealing with Iran's nuclear threat and proxy provocations across the region? Is there a path that allows that United States to deescalate its role in the region and rebalance its military commitments, doing so in the face of a rising China and other pressing regional demands? What are America's interests in the Middle East and how are they best advanced and defended?

3. *The Future of Germany in Europe and the Atlantic World* by **Liana Fix** (CFR)

Germany has tied its foreign policy to Europe and the Atlantic alliance, fashioning what some have called a civilian great power role. The Russian war on Ukraine, the return of the Trump administration, and the rise of right-wing movements on the continent have shifted the ground upon which German politics and foreign policy operates. This essay explores the changing debates inside of Germany about its leadership role in Europe, relations with the United States and NATO, and its standing and identity as a great power. What is the future of US-Germany relations, and what choices do Washington and Berlin face in giving shape to those relations?

4. *U.S.-China: The Case for Engagement* by **Jessica Chen Weiss** (SAIS)

The trajectory of US-China relations in the years ahead will be a defining feature of world politics. In a two-superpower world, rivalry and conflict may, to some intent, be inherent and inevitable. But what might be the terms for a more constructive relationship? Can the two countries build guard rails to prevent high-risk, security dilemma-driven conflict? In what policy areas might Washington and Beijing find opportunities to cooperate? What are the choices that the United States faces in forging a steady and sustainable grand strategy toward China? What principles of international order – starting with Westphalian norms of sovereignty and power management – might provide the basis for Washington and Beijing to negotiate the terms for a wider consensus among states in East Asia and the wider world about international order?

5. *Brazil and the Global South: Confronting a New America* by Matias Spektor (FGV)

Under the banner of America First, Donald Trump has redefined the country's relations with the rest of the world, including Brazil and the Global South. Two years into Trump 2.0, what are the responses of Brazil and the Global South to American foreign policy? What sorts of judgements are Brazil and other countries outside the old Western order making? What are the choices that Brazil faces in this shifting geopolitical environment – both in its global relations with China, Europe, and the rest of the world, and within the Western hemisphere? Can Brazil and the United States forge a stable and mutually beneficial relationship in the years ahead, and if so, what would be its terms? What sorts of relationships between Brazil/Global South and the United States might be built in the aftermath of Trump 2.0?

6. *AI and American Choices* by Michael Horowitz (Penn)

The AI is the leading edge of a technological revolution that is shaking the world. How will the AI revolution, and its associated economic, technological, military, and political transformations, alter the terms of international relations? What are America's national security and foreign policy choices in this area? As with the nuclear revolution, the United States faces national security incentives to both use the AI revolution as an instrument of national power, and to seek ways to regulate the international dangers of the new technology. Are there opportunities for the United States to lead in building international rules and arrangements to exploit the opportunities of AI and guard against the worst dangers? For American foreign policy decision-makers, what choices will the country face in dealing with this rapidly unfolding technological revolution in the years ahead?

7. *Energy Security: Challenges for American Foreign Policy* by Daniel Yergin (Vice Chairman of S&P Global)

The American/Israeli war with Iran and the ongoing blocking of the flow of oil from the Strait of Hormuz has triggered a crisis in the global oil and energy economy. For all regions of the world, the basic terms of energy security have been rendered unstable and uncertain. Not since the 1970s have the entanglements of oil, energy, and geopolitical been so fraught. How should American foreign policy decision-makers think about the problem of energy security in today's world? What are America's choices? What new global energy realities frame these choices? After Trump, if the United States wanted to again step forward as a global leader in this area, what should it seek to do? What allies and partners might the United States work with in advance national and international energy security?

8. *Organized Crime in the Americas* by Jorge Castaneda (NYU)

Organized crime in the Americas has become a sprawling and multifaceted transitional activity, unfolding on many fronts -- drug smuggling, human trafficking, illegal mining, cybercrime, money laundering, private militaries, narco-violence, and so forth. Behind this activity are weak political institutions in countries across the Americas, manifest in corruption and poorly functioning legal and law enforcement systems, both within countries and between them. The transnational character of this problem calls out for policy coordinate between the United States and its hemispheric neighbors. How might countries in the Western hemisphere increase their cooperation in addressing these complex problems? What are America's foreign policy choices? This essay will explore how U.S. drug policy intersects with diplomacy and border security in Latin America and what strategies might reduce cartel power without undermining the fragile governments we partner with?

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