

Elizabeth Warren



“We need to refocus our international economic policies so that they benefit all Americans, not just wealthy elites. At the same time, we must refocus our security policies by reining in unsustainable and ill-advised military commitments and adapt our strategies overseas for the new challenges we’ll face ... It’s time to create a foreign policy that works for all Americans, not just the rich and powerful.” — Senator Elizabeth Warren

At a Glance

Warren’s first foray as Senator on foreign policy mixed progressive instincts, her signature wonky bent, as well as cautious, conventional foreign policy thinking. In 2014, she gave a foreign policy [speech at Georgetown University](#) where she highlighted concern about the civilian casualties caused by U.S. wars. “It is critical to consider the chaos and factionalization that can arise in the wake of military intervention,” Warren told those gathered at Georgetown University, “it’s critical to evaluate the potential for military intervention to spark an insurgency or fuel a civil war, critical to consider the possibility that civilian casualties in one conflict could be used as a recruiting tool or rallying cry for extremists in other parts of the world.” While the speech was refreshing in its focus on civilian lives, it failed to address the U.S. drone program. You couldn’t be certain from that speech, whether Warren would stake out a truly progressive platform on foreign policy.

Time has moved on and so has Warren. Even in the early days, most of Warren’s foreign policy moves on controversial issues put her on the dovish end of the Democratic spectrum. She’s also chosen a few places to lead: her leadership on a nuclear “No First Use” policy became a flash point in one of the Democratic presidential debates. She’s articulated what she calls [“a foreign policy for all”](#) and made “ending endless wars” and cutting the “bloated Pentagon budget” a central part of her foreign policy platform. Warren does [have her critics](#) in the dove’s camp, some point to her conventional foreign policy campaign team, and her vote for drone-assassination champion, [John Brennan](#), as CIA director. After a

lackluster start, Warren has surged into the top tier of candidates, it will be interesting to watch her refine her foreign policy platform. You can find her thoughts, comments, and plans on issues of war and peace below.

Ending Endless Wars

- Warren wanted to end the Iraq war authorization as early as 2014, early in her Senate career. She supported a bill spearheaded by Senators Rand Paul and Kirsten Gillibrand to repeal the Iraq authorization of military force. Warren [said at the time](#), “This bill is a reminder that Congressional authorization for the use of force should be limited and that military action is always a last resort.”
- Warren opposed arming the Syrian “moderate rebels” In another early vote, also in 2014, voting against the continuing resolution to fund the government because it authorized military aid to the rebels. [Warren said](#), “I do not want America to be dragged into another ground war in the Middle East, and it is time for those nations in the region that are most immediately affected by the rise of ISIS to step up and play a leading role in this fight,”.
- With the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen, Warren was one of the war’s early opponents as [one of 4 cosponsors](#) of a 2017 resolution to block a key arms transfer to Saudi Arabia. She also supported Bernie Sanders’ legislation directing the president to withdraw U.S. military support for the war in Yemen. More recently, she picked up on reports that U.S. arms were finding their way to al Qaeda (through Saudi Arabia and the UAE), [sending a letter to the Secretaries of State](#) and Defense asking 13 pointed questions and publicizing the letter in the media.
- Warren has been clear about withdrawing troops from Syria and Afghanistan, even while Trump was getting panned by the media and many Democratic and Republican politicians about tweeting out a plan to withdraw troops from Syria. When asked about the president’s tweets Warren bluntly [told Rachel Maddow](#), “I think it is right to get our troops out of Syria, and let me add, I think it is right to get our troops out of Afghanistan. I think those in the defense

establishment, who are saying “no, no, no” we can’t get out need to explain what winning in those wars looks like.”

- Critics have pointed out that while she has opposed military intervention in Venezuela she has waffled on sanctions. [She told the Huffington Post](#) she opposed both sanctions and military force saying, “Instead of reckless threats of military action or sanctions that hurt those in need, we should be taking real steps to support the Venezuelan people.” But later when she was on [Pod Save America](#) supported sanctions as long as they were combined humanitarian aid. But aid would be less needed if it wasn’t for the harsh sanctions the U.S. is imposing.
- Warren does not share the same militarist paranoia about threats from China and Russia as the Trump administration but still talks of China and Russia as key competitors. She speaks of cooperating with those countries on issues like climate change. At the same time she looks at China and Russia as competitors who “hope to shape spheres of influence in their own image” and who are “working flat out to remake the global order to suit their own priorities.” It’s not clear how Warren would seek to address this competition. While she steers clear of articulating this as mainly a military competition, she has not articulated a strong vision of how diplomacy could address this rivalry.

Nuclear Weapons

- Warren’s leadership on the issue of a Nuclear No First Use policy has brought that issue to the presidential race in debates and on social media. She authored [S. 272](#), legislation to establish No First Use of nuclear weapons as U.S. policy. A No First Use policy, where the U.S. pledges never to initiate a nuclear war, is seen by arms control advocates as immediately making the world safer and as a key step towards limiting the salience of nuclear weapons in U.S. defense posture.
- Warren laid out her opposition to the \$1.2. Trillion update to the nuclear arsenal as well as her core principles on nuclear weapons as a centerpiece of her approach to foreign policy in her [speech at](#)

[American University](#). “One: No new nuclear weapons...Two: More international arms control, not less. We should not spend over a trillion dollars to modernize our nuclear arsenal, at a time when the President is doing everything he can to undermine generations of verified arms control agreements. Three: No first use.”

Iran

- Warren has consistently supported the Iran Nuclear Agreement, and has [said she will reenter the agreement](#) if elected president as long as Iran continues adhering to the terms of the agreement.
 - Warren opposes military action against Iran without congressional approval and voted with all her Democratic colleagues to prevent funding to such action in the Senate defense budget bill.
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Pentagon Spending & Diplomatic Funding

- Warren has made cutting the Pentagon budget a centerpiece of her foreign policy platform. In [her speech at American University](#) she said “Let’s cut our bloated defense budget. The United States will spend more than \$700 billion on defense this year alone. That is more than President Ronald Reagan spent during the Cold War. ...This is unsustainable. If more money for the Pentagon could solve our security challenges, we would have solved them by now.”
- Warren’s Senate voting record on defense bills has been mixed. In 2017, she voted for the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) touting [that her legislation had been integrated into the so-called “must-pass” bill](#), including language from her bill on preventing civilian casualties. She also touted funding for military programs in Massachusetts. However, she voted against it both in 2018 and 2019.
- Yes, Elizabeth Warren [has a plan to rebuild the State Department](#). After pointing out that the Pentagon is nearly 40 times bigger than the State Department and that we employ more people to work in [military grocery stores](#) than we do foreign service officers,

Warren calls for a doubling of the size of the foreign service. She calls for growing the hiring pool for State to diversify our foreign service. She calls for greater career-long training for the U.S. diplomatic corps. She says she will end the practice of handing out Ambassadorships to wealthy donors.

- [Warren also has a plan](#) to go after the revolving door between contractors the Pentagon and military contractors. Warren's plan would "ban giant defense contractors from hiring senior DOD officials and general and flag officers for four years after they leave the Department." It would increase disclosure by Defense contractors about the true scope of their lobbying activities. Warren codifies her plan in her [Department of Defense Ethics and Anti-corruption Act of 2019](#) introduced in the Senate this May.
- In line with this, Warren [led a lonely charge against](#) the nomination of Mark Esper as Defense Secretary, best known as the former top lobbyist for the huge defense contractor Raytheon. She grilled Esper about conflicts of interest in his confirmation hearing before [being one of eight Senators to vote no](#).

Korean Peninsula

- Warren opposes a preventative military approach to North Korea and was one of only 3 Senate cosponsors of Senator Ed Markey's "[No Unconstitutional Strike Against North Korea Act of 2017](#)".
- While most Democrats panned the Singapore summit as an abject failure to achieve anything meaningful, Warren's statement after the [June 2018 Singapore supported diplomacy](#) and went as far as saying "I want to see the president succeed". But she balanced that with harsh criticism of Trump's diplomatic prowess and North Korea's past behavior. "Generations of North Korean leaders have made and broken promises before ... We're at the beginning of a diplomatic process that will require patience, experience, and close coordination with our allies. I want to see the President succeed, but a handshake is no substitute for a binding, verifiable deal." Some peace advocates felt that Warren's statement could have been more supportive of the historic summit.

Israel/Palestine

- In 2014, when voters were trying to get a sense for Elizabeth Warren's take on foreign policy one of the first issues she spoke out on was Israel. During the 2014 Israeli war on Gaza, which led to the death of more than 2,200 Palestinians, many of them civilians, one of her constituents challenged her on sending military aid to Israel. Warren recited standard pro-Israeli [government talking points saying](#) that Hamas has attacked Israel "indiscriminately" — which is certainly true — but without noting Israel's well-documented use of indiscriminate force.
- Also in 2014, Warren cosponsored the [United States–Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014](#), an [AIPAC-backed](#) bill that codified Israel is a "major strategic partner".
- She was one of 60 Democrats to boycott Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's address to a joint session of Congress, one of eight Senators to boycott the speech. She consistently opposed the AIPAC position on the Iran deal. In fact, Warren may have began to sour on uncritical support for Israel as part of the fight over the Iran deal.
- More recently a [number of observers](#) have seen a [dovish shift in Warren's positions](#) on Israel including with her opposing the effort to criminalize BDS activity.
- In 2017 she [criticized](#) the Trump administration for recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and announcing the relocation of the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.
- She [opposed Israeli home demolitions in a letter to Netanyahu](#) with 9 other liberal Senators, also in 2017.
- In April 2018, Warren was one of the few Senators criticizing Israel after Israeli forces shot dozens of Palestinian protesters in the Gaza Strip. "I am deeply concerned about the deaths and injuries in Gaza," she said in a statement. "As additional protests are planned for the coming days, the Israel Defense Forces should exercise

restraint and respect the rights of Palestinians to peacefully protest.”