

# MISSION STATEMENT

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**T**he Council on Foreign Relations was founded in 1921 by businessmen, bankers, and lawyers determined to keep the United States engaged in the world. Today, the Council is composed of men and women from all walks of international life and from all parts of America, dedicated to the belief that the nation's peace and prosperity are firmly linked to that of the rest of the world. From this flows the **Council's mission: to foster America's understanding of other nations—their peoples, cultures, histories, hopes, quarrels, and ambitions—and thus to serve our nation through study and debate, private and public.**

The Council is a national membership organization and think tank with headquarters in New York, offices in Washington, D.C., and programs nationwide. Its widely respected and influential research staff—with backgrounds in government and scholarship in most international subjects—regularly meets with Council members and other leaders and thinkers. These exclusive sessions, known as study groups or roundtables, form the Council's intellectual core. The aim is to provide insights into international affairs and to develop new ideas for U.S. foreign policy, particularly national security and foreign economic policy. Council Fellows produce books, articles, and op-ed pieces and regularly contribute expert commentary on television and radio.

The Council also publishes *Foreign Affairs*, the leading periodical in the field. This magazine has been host to the most important articles about world affairs in this century.

The Council's 3,600 members are divided almost equally among New York, Washington, D.C., and the rest of the nation. They include nearly all current and former senior U.S. government officials who deal with international matters; renowned scholars; and leaders of business, media, human rights, humanitarian, and other nongovernmental groups. Council members choose new members, who aim to educate themselves and then others.

The Council is host to the widest possible range of views and advocate of none. It cultivates an atmosphere of nonpartisanship and nonideological engagement among members and staff. The views expressed in Council-sponsored independent task force reports, by members of study groups, or in articles in *Foreign Affairs* are solely the responsibility of the respective authors or groups. This tradition of impartiality enables the Council to gather contending voices for serious and civil debate and discussion. That special convening power is unique in American society.

In keeping with its mission, membership, and heritage, the **Council now pursues three goals:**

1. **Add value by improving understanding of world affairs and by providing new ideas for U.S. foreign policy.** The Council does this in many ways.

The Council will sponsor an independent task force when an issue arises of current and critical importance to U.S. foreign policy, and it seems that a group diverse in backgrounds and perspectives may nonetheless be able to reach a meaningful policy consensus through private and nonpartisan deliberations.

Council Policy Initiatives (CPIs) focus on current foreign policy issues of great importance where consensus seems un-

likely. By marshaling Council resources—policy research, publications, national reach, and televised debates—CPIs present policy choices with the aim of stimulating a national dialogue. CPIs reach their audience in three ways: a short book of presidential-style policy speeches, each presenting a different option, along with a cover memo as if written by a top-level presidential adviser; nationally televised debates presenting the speeches; and similar debates in key U.S. cities to reach community leaders.

Great Debates bring together experts to discuss and clarify topical foreign policy issues. And *Foreign Affairs* often anticipates future foreign policy problems and educates its influential international readership.

2. **Transform the Council into a truly national organization to benefit from the expertise and experience of leaders nationwide.** The Council aims to energize foreign policy discussions across the country. And as Council membership outside New York and Washington, D.C., continues to grow and diversify, the Council creates new ways to involve these members in intellectual dialogue. The four principal means of involvement are through a special members' area of the Council's website, at an annual National Conference, at dinner seminars based on Study Groups and independent task forces in key cities around the country, and through an interactive videoconferencing system.
3. **Find and nurture the next generation of foreign policy leaders and thinkers.** The Council does this primarily through a special term membership program for younger Americans and a "Next Generation Fellows" program that brings outstanding younger scholars onto the Council staff, as well as the International Affairs Fellowships and several other fellowship programs. These programs aim to spark interest and participation in world affairs and U.S. foreign policy.

In recent months, Council members have heard Madeleine K. Albright, Kofi Annan, James A. Baker III, Warren Christopher, Henry A. Kissinger, and George P. Shultz offer their views of challenges the United States will face in the next century; Charlene Barshefsky, Anatoly Chubais, Bill Clinton, Stanley Fischer, Paul Krugman, Lee Kuan Yew, George Soros, and James D. Wolfensohn discuss the global economy; William S. Cohen and the Joint Chiefs of Staff evaluate future defense policy; King Abdullah, Olusegun Obasanjo, Andres Pastrana, and Grigory Yavlinsky discuss, respectively, the future of Jordan, Nigeria, Colombia, and Russia; Richard Butler, Richard Holbrooke, and George Mitchell muse on war and peace; John Kerry and John McCain suggest foreign policy priorities for campaign 2000; William M. Daley, Hosni Mubarak, and Bill Richardson address business opportunities in the Middle East; Thomas L. Friedman, Bill Gates, and Muhammad Yunus expand on their recent books; and Michel Camdessus and Lawrence Summers consider the future international financial architecture.

As much as at any time during its nearly eight decades, the Council on Foreign Relations today serves its members and the nation with ideas for a better and safer world.