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PROJECT 2025

**An Anti-Gender Promise to Upend
Foreign Assistance and Multilateralism**



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Ipas works to advance reproductive justice by expanding access to abortion and contraception, using a comprehensive approach that addresses health, legal and social systems. We believe every person should have the right to bodily autonomy and be able to determine their own future. Across Africa, Asia and the Americas, we work with partners to ensure that reproductive health services, including abortion and contraception, are available and accessible to all.

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Summary

The Heritage Foundation's [Project 2025 Presidential Transition Project](#) (hereafter Project 2025) is the [far-right's gameplan](#) to [dismantle democratic norms](#) in the United States. It seeks to carve up the federal infrastructure, dissociate from customary international relations, and upend the historical balance of power in favor of executive control. While Project 2025 addresses the whole of government, it reflects underlying Christian nationalist principles with an anti-gender approach. Because of the project's potential to do real harm, it has drawn attention for its possible impact on [democracy](#) in the United States and its targeting of [sexual and reproductive health and rights \(SRHR\)](#)¹ and the [rights of LGBTQ+ people](#).

What is less understood is the Heritage Foundation's goals for U.S. foreign policy and official development assistance (ODA), particularly considering a global geopolitical landscape shifting towards the right. To this end, this briefing paper analyzes the damage Project 2025 would have on international cooperation, particularly as it relates to advancing gender equality, SRHR, and engagement in multilateralism and human rights systems. To understand where Project 2025 could affect these issue areas, we examine the 2017-2021 Donald Trump administration financial and policy actions related to ODA that are explicitly referenced by Project 2025. We then use U.S. fiscal year (FY) 2022 obligated foreign assistance funds under the Joe Biden administration to forecast potential impacts.

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1. Project 2025 is unsparing in its attacks against abortion rights, and women who have abortions. According to estimates by the [Center for American Progress](#), 48 million women in the United States would lose access to no-cost emergency contraception if Project 2025 were implemented. Heritage's chapter devoted to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advocates that these federal departments "use every available tool, including the cutting of funds, to ensure that every state reports exactly how many abortions take place within its borders, at what gestational age of the child, for what reason, the mother's state of residence, and by what method." As for the CDC, that agency "should require monitoring and reporting for complications due to abortion and every instance of children being born alive after an abortion."

Our findings show that an administration guided by Project 2025 would:

- Revive anti-gender U.S. human rights policy frameworks like the [Commission on Unalienable Human Rights](#) and the Geneva Consensus Declaration (GCD), favoring international anti-rights alliances and networks with other authoritarian regimes.
- Reinstate and expand the anti-abortion foreign policy known as the Global Gag Rule (GGR, see below) to all U.S. foreign assistance, affecting upwards of \$51 billion (FY 2022) in overseas aid (should U.S. foreign assistance hold stable in a Project 2025-informed administration, which is not guaranteed.)
- Take a transactional and punitive approach to foreign assistance and multilateralism, putting not only a substantial percentage of U.S. foreign assistance at risk, but also the entire \$18.1 billion (FY 2022) U.S. contribution to the United Nations. Particularly vulnerable are the U.S. contributions to the World Health Organization (WHO) of \$122 million (FY 2022) and the UN Population Fund's (UNFPA) at \$32.5 million (FY 2022), among other UN agencies that have been defunded in previous conservative administrations.

Any administration that uses the Heritage Foundation's recommendations for SRHR, global health, and multilateral engagement would have a ruinous global impact. Project 2025 uses the 2017-2021 Trump administration as a launching point for expanding its conservative agenda. During that time, U.S. foreign policy and funding cuts threatened to destabilize UN agencies and civil society. In response, many European bilateral agencies and others stepped in to fill funding gaps and express solidarity with civil society partners. The ascendancy of the European and Latin American far right means that, increasingly, there are more global leaders who share regressive values and "illiberal" approaches to democracy and governance. Civil society should prepare for significant reductions in U.S. foreign assistance without being able to rely on the [groundswell of support](#) from progressive bilateral governments.

Finally, Project 2025 is not some far-off future policy plan. Many of its recommendations have already been implemented in the United States and [abroad](#). The success of the Heritage Foundation's administrative policies depends on the current supermajority conservative U.S. Supreme Court, the support of U.S. congresspeople who are willing to break democratic norms in service of Christian nationalism, and [Project 2025's civil society](#) allies operating domestically and internationally in line with other far-right movements.

While the Heritage Foundation launched Project 2025 in 2022, only two years later did it begin gaining public attention. The [Stop Project 2025 Task Force](#), formed in June 2024 and comprised of U.S. congresspeople and civil society, is a promising step to counter this agenda. Yet much more is needed. Bilateral and other donors must attend to the anticipated funding gap for U.S. foreign assistance and develop coordinated responses to U.S. anti-gender policies abroad. We know from past conservative administrations that these policies have a devastating impact on global health outcomes and that they disproportionately impact women, girls, and LGBTQ+ people.

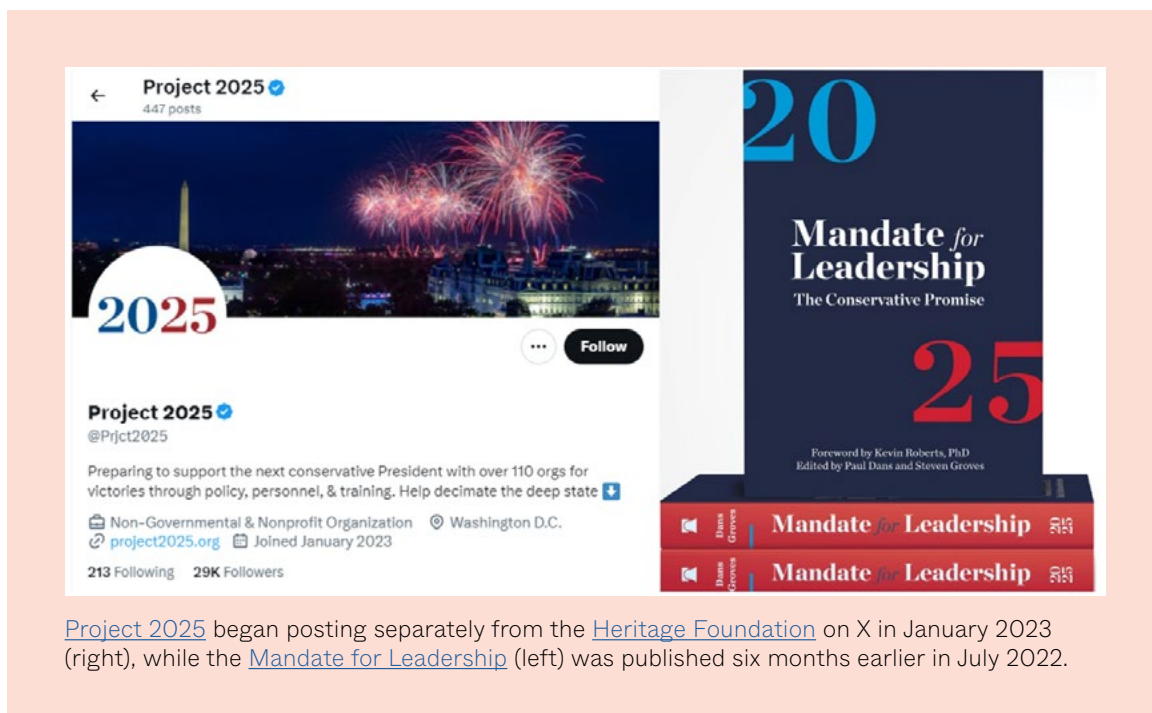


Background: Project 2025

“Conservatives should be confident that we can rescue our kids, reclaim our culture, revive our economy, and defeat the anti-American Left—at home and abroad.”

—“Mandate For Leadership: The Conservative Promise,” page 2

Project 2025’s [920-page policy agenda](#) is the Heritage Foundation’s blueprint for a 2025 conservative administration. It relies on a Christian nationalist worldview and is grounded in anti-gender narratives, both key elements of the far-right worldview in and outside of the United States. In Project 2025, the rejection of “gender” justifies targeting certain human rights in the United States, including abortion rights and the rights of LGBTQ+ people, as well as the amorphous “Left.” It also rejects science while advancing disinformation on topics ranging from the Coronavirus-19 pandemic to the WHO and the climate crisis. Project 2025’s focus on ending abortion is uncompromising and permeates the document as its authors promise to “push as hard as possible to protect the unborn in every jurisdiction,” including internationally.



[Project 2025](#) began posting separately from the [Heritage Foundation](#) on X in January 2023 (right), while the [Mandate for Leadership](#) (left) was published six months earlier in July 2022.

Heritage Foundation: High-Level Reach in Washington

The Heritage Foundation is a far-right think tank founded in 1973 that has been highly influential in Washington, DC, politics. It finds friends in other ultra conservative groups, including [anti-abortion organizations](#) like [Alliance Defending Freedom](#), [Concerned Women for America](#), and the [Center for Family and Human Rights](#). They also have ties to international groups, including Hungary's [Danube Institute](#). Heritage has been producing the “Mandate for Leadership” policy agenda series for every conservative administration since 1980. According to the foundation, [more than 60 percent of its recommendations became policy](#) by the end of Ronald Reagan's first year in office in 1981; and [Donald Trump reportedly implemented 64 percent](#) of the foundation's recommendations during his 2017-2021 term.

There is an open channel between the Heritage Foundation and previous conservative administrations: Project 2025 contributors include former administration officials and allies, and many Heritage Foundation staff [were part of the 2017-2021 administration](#), while some also served in the 2001-2009 George W. Bush administrations. Project 2025 is one of Heritage's tools to bring “quick relief to Americans suffering from the Left's devastating policies.” The others include a [personnel database](#) for aspiring presidential administrative staff, as well as a [Heritage “academy”](#) to coach conservative activists.

Reading Project 2025 is to be immersed in a world permeated by fear and fearmongering. The Heritage Foundation relies heavily on conspiracy theories like “the Great Awakening [sic]” to amplify the idea of the “Left’s institutional powers,” whose wielders allegedly “don’t think all people have an unalienable right to pursue the good life.” It pits a “globalist” ruling elite in Washington, DC, against the American everyman—ignoring its authors own Ivy League pedigrees.² Rather than tackling actual social or economic issues in good faith, Project 2025 is full of contradictions, pseudoscience, and spurious charges all in service of drumming up moral panic.

The contradictions in the document are many. While Project 2025 claims that “conservatives desire a smaller government not for its own sake, but for human flourishing,” they also want to increase the power of certain government agencies to force citizens to cleave to their beliefs. Project 2025 states that a conservative president must “do away with these vast abuses of presidential power,” while also proposing to give the president power to use “his or her office to reimpose constitutional authority over federal policymaking.”

Finally, Project 2025 is backed by significant political clout and money. As reported by the U.S. congressional [Stop Project 2025 Task Force](#)—first formed in June 2024—over half of the [100 conservative coalition partners](#) that support Project 2025 received \$21.5 million from Leonard Leo’s dark-money network. Leo has played an outsized role in Washington, DC, as a conservative kingmaker: he is largely responsible for the extreme rightward shift of the [Supreme Court](#), which overturned the federal right to abortion enshrined in [Roe v. Wade](#) in June 2022 and most recently ruled on [presidential immunity in July 2024](#), among other decisions that put U.S. democracy at risk.³

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2. The majority of Project 2025’s 34 authors and its two editors attended Ivy League universities like Harvard, Columbia, and Yale for their medical, law, and PhD degrees; they also hold prestigious appointments at these and other universities. Their extensive pedigrees are listed in [“Mandate for Leadership.”](#)
 3. Presidents now have [immunity for their actions taken while in office](#).

Table 1: Project 2025's Four Anti-Gender "Promises"

1. "Restore the family as the centerpiece of American life and protect our children." Project 2025 blames "woke culture warriors" for a perceived crisis afflicting families in the United States, and they pit their regressive interpretation of the family against gender and SRHR. In prioritizing "the well-being of the American family," they recommend that every federal rule, agency regulation, contract, grant, regulation, and piece of legislation delete the terms "sexual orientation and gender identity ('SOGI'), diversity, equity, and inclusion ('DEI'), gender, gender equality, gender equity, gender awareness, gender-sensitive, abortion, reproductive health, reproductive rights, and any other term used to deprive Americans of their First Amendment rights" (page 7).
2. "Dismantle the administrative state and return self-governance to the American people." The anti-gender focus features throughout Project 2025, including as justification for reducing the size and scope of the U.S. federal government. They blame the United States' social problems on a power-bloated Congress, accusing it of everything from injecting "racist, anti-American, ahistorical propaganda into America's classrooms" to undermining "girls' sports and parents' rights to satisfy transgender extremists" to infusing "U.S. foreign aid programs with woke extremism about 'intersectionality' and abortion" (page 8).
3. "Defend our nation's sovereignty, borders, and bounty against global threats." Project 2025 claims that "progressive elites" use "rhetorical Trojan horses concealing their true intentions," to, among other things, upend U.S. constitutional authority. Positioning itself against a "Wilsonian order" of the global elite, Project 2025 claims that the United Nations, the European Union, and even "the rights of the child" (page 10) are inherently un-American. The document calls for abandoning "international organizations and agreements that erode" U.S. sovereignty.
4. "Secure our God-given individual right to enjoy "the blessings of liberty." Referencing the 1776 [U.S. Declaration of Independence](#), Project 2025 reimagines a history where "the American people rejected European monarchy and colonialism just as we rejected slavery, second-class citizenship for women, mercantilism, socialism, Wilsonian globalism, Fascism, Communism, and (today) wokeism." The authors call on Americans to "take back their sovereignty", leaning on victimhood narratives around freedoms of religion, speech, and assembly. Coupled with the Project 2025's anti-gender framing, this is a dog whistle for Christian nationalists, pitting multilateralism against national sovereignty.

Extreme Expansion of Anti-Abortion Foreign Policy: The Global Gag Rule

“Protecting life should be among the core objects of United States foreign assistance.”

—“Mandate For Leadership,” page 260

During the 2017-2021 administration, much of the anti-abortion activism at the federal level was led by Roger Severino, the former head of the HHS Office of Civil Rights. While in office, [Severino prioritized](#) abstinence-only education and favored religious exemption for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) care. Severino is currently the vice president for domestic policy at the Heritage Foundation and has been active internationally mingling with conservative political leaders in global far-right spaces.

Severino is also the author of Project 2025’s chapter on HHS, which he recommends [renaming](#) the “Department of Life”. The first step in Project 2025’s HHS overhaul is “Protecting Life, Conscience, and Bodily Integrity,” which includes rescinding



On [the left](#), [Severino presents](#) at the May 2024 far-right [Europa Viva 2024](#) conference hosted by Spain’s far-right Vox Party. On [the right](#), Severino (right) sits next to unsuccessful Mexican presidential candidate and far-right darling Eduardo Verastegui (center), with Vox’s José Antonio Ortega Lara (left). In addition to political aspirants, the event also drew global far-right leaders including Argentina’s Javier Milei, Hungary’s Viktor Orbán, and Italy’s Giorgia Meloni, among other conservative politicians and activists.

approval for the [medication abortion drug mifepristone](#). It also proposes [ridding the department of programs for LGBTQ+ populations, especially those supporting transgender people](#), and shifting financial support to favor heterosexual, married couples. For a section ostensibly about health, it plays freely with both science and fact, and repeatedly emphasizes religious freedom.

Project 2025’s Christian nationalist, anti-abortion, and anti-gender goals extend beyond the HHS and the national arena. “Protecting life,” it insists, “should be among the core objectives of the United States foreign assistance.” A key aim in Project 2025’s section on the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is to stop “supporting the global abortion industry” by reintroducing the implementation and expansion of the GGR.

The Global Gag Rule

[The GGR](#), first established in 1984 as the Mexico City Policy, has since regularly been applied by Republican administrations and subsequently revoked under Democrats. The [1973 Helms Amendment](#) to the Foreign Assistance Act [prohibits the use of any U.S. funds](#) “to pay for the performance of abortions as a method of family planning or to motivate or coerce any person to practice abortions.” The [application of the GGR](#) takes these restrictions further, targeting a non-U.S. nongovernmental organizations (NGO) funding by barring them from using funds from any source to: provide information, referrals or services for legal abortion or to advocate for the legalization of abortion in their country. In 2017, [the Trump administration reinstated and expanded the GGR](#) as Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance (the term Project 2025 also uses) to apply not just to U.S.-funded family planning and reproductive health programs but to all global health assistance.

[Analysis by the Kaiser Family Foundation](#) (KFF) outlines how Project 2025’s proposal is an even more extreme version of the GGR. Under its last implementation from 2017-2021, the GGR was expanded to include all U.S. global health assistance. KFF found that, using FY 2020 data, this affected \$7.3 billion in U.S. foreign aid. Under prior administrations, the policy had only applied to family planning and reproductive health programs, but by the end of 2020 maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, malaria, and global health security programming was affected.⁴

4. Other figures reported by the [U.S. Congressional Research Service \(CRS\)](#) stated this figure was \$8.8 billion in funding for programs through the Department of State, USAID, and the Department of Defense. CRS provides nonpartisan legislative analysis for the U.S. Congress. It has done several evaluations of the GGR.

Project 2025 proposes further expansion, calling for the policy to be applied to virtually all U.S. foreign assistance, including humanitarian aid. Under Heritage’s scheme, the GGR would cover more than 20 U.S. federal agencies and include not just bilateral U.S. assistance, but all U.S. multilateral support. Further, whereas the last GGR implementation applied only to non-US organizations receiving U.S. funding, the Project 2025 expansion would include U.S. organizations as well.⁵ Using FY 2022 figures, KFF estimates that the funding directly implicated by Project 2025’s GGR proposal could be upwards of \$51 billion, a nearly sevenfold increase from its last implementation.

Table 2: Potential Project 2025 Expansion of the GGR		
	2017-2021 GGR application	Project 2025 using FY 2022 obligations
Total U.S. foreign assistance	\$7.4 billion (global health only)	\$51 billion (all U.S. foreign assistance)
Examples of the breakdown by:		
Multilateral agency recipients	Not applicable	\$29.8 billion
U.S. humanitarian assistance	Not applicable	\$16.4 billion
U.S. global health assistance	\$7.4 billion	\$10.6 billion

For more information on U.S. international assistance funding, please see ForeignAssistance.gov.

Project 2025 does not specify whether it would include the previously standard GGR [limited exceptions](#) for abortion in cases of life endangerment, rape, or incest. Even with these exceptions in its prior implementations, as [The Lancet HIV reported](#), the “effects of the GGR have been stark.” Research by reproductive rights organizations like [Guttmacher](#) and [PAI](#), as well as [peer-reviewed journal articles](#) and the [CRS](#), have recorded the many harmful impacts of the last GGR.

5. In addition to reinstating the GGR, the 2017-2021 administration also used the Kemp-Kasten determination to withhold funding from UNFPA. [Kemp-Kasten](#), first enacted by Congress in 1985 and included in appropriations language annually, states that no U.S. funds may be obligated to “any organization or program which, as determined by the president of the United States, supports or participates in the management of a program of coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization.” To date, Kemp-Kasten has only been applied to UNFPA.



They include:

- Forcing the closures of projects serving vulnerable communities including youth, people living with HIV/AIDS, and rural populations.
- Increasing unsafe abortion.
- Disrupting integrated health programs and referral networks.
- Creating contraceptive commodity insecurity and reversing progress on expanding access to modern contraception.
- Diverting resources away from direct service delivery.
- Stalling SRHR policy development at the national level.
- And, deterring both U.S. and non-U.S. organizations from providing post-abortion care for fear of violating the policy, despite it being a permitted exception under the GGR.

To justify its expansion, Project 2025 calls out loopholes under the previous version of the GGR that “allowed support for the global abortion industry to continue.” Project 2025 pointedly names certain U.S.-based organizations that provide SRH services, claiming they “receive tens of millions more in U.S. taxpayer dollars in foreign assistance annually without any oversight.”⁶ This means that professional organizations with extensive experience in SRH service delivery, including contraceptive commodities, would likely be cut as USAID partners, with devastating impacts on health outcomes and human rights. This also reflects the Heritage Foundation’s goals of gutting and restructuring the State Department and USAID.

Gender Decimated at USAID under Project 2025

As [reported by Foreign Policy](#), Project 2025 has explicit plans to tackle gender within U.S. federal agencies, especially USAID. It calls to:

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6. Project 2025 calls out specific organizations working on SRH: [Population Services International](#) (which had over \$131 million in U.S. government awards in FY 2022), [Pathfinder](#) (\$65 million), [PATH](#) (\$73 million), the [Population Council](#) (\$10 million), [EngenderHealth](#) (\$4 million), and [WomanCare Global International](#) (neither WomanCare nor parent company DKT have received a U.S. award since 2012). Using FY 2022 awards data, this means that Project 2025 would cut out experienced SRH and global health partners, and approximately \$283 from U.S. federal agencies could go to organizations that are unwilling to provide certain SRH services, including comprehensive contraceptive care. Witness, for example, the goals of Project 2025 supporter and abstinence-only proponent [Valerie Huber](#) and her organization [Institute for Women's Health](#).

- Eliminate the word “gender” altogether, as “Democrat Administrations have nearly erased what females are and what femininity is through “gender” policies and practices.”
- Remove all “references to ‘abortion,’ ‘reproductive health,’ and ‘sexual and reproductive rights.’”
- Fire more than 180 gender [advisors](#) and points of contact, who work alongside USAID colleagues “to integrate gender and advance gender equality objectives in USAID’s work worldwide.”
- Reverse years of USAID “incorporating gender into all aspects of its programming to ensure the agency addresses the needs of women, including unique development obstacles they face.”
- Rename the Office of Gender Equality to the Office of Women, Children, and Families.

The projections made here assume that U.S. foreign assistance would remain at comparable levels to the current administration. However, the 2017-2021 administration attempted to slash overall foreign assistance allocations annually by 20 to 30 percent. During those four years, foreign aid averaged approximately [\\$47.02 billion per year](#) and Congress rejected the administration’s proposed \$9 to \$14 billion cuts.⁷ Nonetheless, the administration [attempted to rescind foreign assistance](#) after it had been appropriated by Congress through a “foreign aid review” that was never released. The March 2024 federal budget, with a majority conservative Congress in place, saw a [\\$530.5 million decrease for global health programming](#) from FY 2023 enacted levels.⁸ Favoring the “America First” approach, Project 2025 recommends further cuts to foreign assistance, as demonstrated by their ambition to return USAID’s budget to pre-2019 levels [“at a minimum.”](#)

7. \$50.0 billion in 2017; \$46.89 billion in 2018; \$47.2 billion in 2019; and \$44 billion in 2020. See [ForeignAssistance.gov](#).

8. [Devex interviewed Heritage Foundation](#) staff member Max Primorac, a former USAID adviser during the 2017-2021 administration, who reiterated Project 2025’s narrative that the 2021-2025 administration is pushing “an international campaign of ‘social reengineering,’” including forcing development partner countries to take up priorities of “abortion, gender equality, and climate change” through USAID funding.

U.S. Christian Nationalism: Implications for Multilateralism

“If an international organization is ineffective or does not support American interests, the United States should not support it.... Serious consideration should also be given to withdrawal from organizations that no longer have value, quietly undermine U.S. interests or goals, or disproportionately rely on U.S. financial contributions to survive.” —“Mandate for Leadership,” page 191

In addition to applying an anti-abortion worldview to foreign assistance programming, [Project 2025 calls for restructuring](#), reducing funding to, or withdrawing from human rights systems. A January 2021 CRS [report](#) on foreign aid priorities concluded that the 2017-2021 administration “pursued changes to foreign aid funding and policy priorities consistent with its ‘America First’ foreign policy orientation.” CRS acknowledged that the administration “in some instances sought to dismantle long-standing U.S. programs and policies.” At that time, the administration [promoted international law-defying policies](#), pitting “America First” against multilateralism, [dividing](#) the world “between friends and enemies,” attacking multilateral institutions, and instituting “politically motivated funding cuts to some countries and politically motivated humanitarian aid to others.”

This approach was reflected in the 2017 reduction of U.S. contributions to the [UN’s general operating budget by \\$285 million](#).⁹ Between FY 2018 and FY 2019, [the administration further reduced UN contributions](#) from \$631 million to \$463 million annually, a 27 percent reduction. This was not the worst possible outcome, however, as the administration had proposed cutting the overall U.S. contribution to the UN by 50 percent. Though such a drastic maneuver did not succeed, the administration did cut other UN agencies’ funding, including the 2020 [withdrawal of support from the WHO](#) in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As Project 2025 states, when “[multilateral] institutions act against U.S. interests, the United States must be prepared to take appropriate steps in response, up to and including withdrawal.” From 2017-2021, many of the funding cuts to and withdrawals

9. The United States also pressured the UN itself to cut its peacekeeping budget by [\\$600 million](#).

from UN agencies—including the Human Rights Council, UNESCO, UNRWA, and the WHO—were carried out over the course of the four-year administration. With Project 2025’s promise to tackle multilateralism on day one, the harm will be much greater. For years, conservatives have called for the full defunding of the UN and withdrawal from all UN mechanisms, most recently in a 2023 [House bill](#). Using FY 2022 obligated funds, that would amount to an estimated \$18.1 billion.

Table 3: Projections for Project 2025 U.S. Defunding Multilateral Agencies		
	2017-2021 administration cuts	Funding at risk based on FY 2022 obligations
UN Overall	27 percent reduction	\$18.1 billion – should the U.S. withdraw entirely from the UN
WHO	\$107 million	\$122 million
UNFPA	\$32.5 million	\$32.5 million core and \$131 million in humanitarian response
UNESCO	Not applicable	\$619 million
UNWRA	\$360 million	\$344 million

This table represents assessed contributions for some UN agencies that were previously defunded. It does not include additional voluntary contributions the United States made to the UN system in 2022.

Funding is just one Project 2025 approach to dismantling multilateralism. It also [calls for replacing U.S. foreign aid professionals](#) and civil servants with appointed conservative actors pulled from its roster, as well as reintroducing specific policies that impact multilateralism. This approach pulls from two ideological foreign policy plans laid out in the final year of the 2017-2021 administration: the [Commission on Unalienable Human Rights](#) and the [Geneva Consensus Declaration \(GCD\)](#). Both are featured in Project 2025. The former, Project 2025 states, “focused on the primacy of civil and political rights” and “remains an important guidepost for bilateral and multilateral engagement on human rights.” The commission created a hierarchy of human rights, which, as [Amnesty International reported](#), “undermines commitments to international human rights standards, treaties, and agreements” by elevating religious liberty and the right to private property over other rights. It altogether dismisses SRHR, the rights of LGBTQ+ populations, and the right to non-discrimination. The commission’s work did not continue in the subsequent administration.



Operationalizing the Geneva Consensus Declaration through Protego

The [GCD is an anti-abortion initiative](#) developed by Valerie Huber, who occupied several high-profile roles at HHS under the 2017-2021 administration. The document—which has no enforcement power and no mechanisms for accountability—was, at the time, intended to stake the United States’ claim to global leadership against abortion and LGBTQ+ rights. Since leaving the administration, Huber has continued to advocate for the GCD and has succeeded in adding new signatory states. On paper, [the GCD](#) commits signatories to advancing four “pillars”: improving women’s health, protecting human life, strengthening the family, and protecting each country’s national sovereignty “to support their own core values.” “Family” in this context, as in Project 2025, is understood to be in opposition to LGBTQ+ rights, and “protecting human life” means denying all access to abortion.

Following the end of the 2017-2021 administration, Huber has kept the GCD alive through her organization, the [Institute for Women’s Health](#), continuing to push the GCD at the embassy and national levels, as well as creating an implementation mechanism for the document through her organization’s project, [Protego](#). Additionally, congressional Republicans have [repeatedly called for the United States to rejoin the GCD](#).

Contributors

The contributors listed below generously volunteered their time and effort to assist the authors in the development and writing of this volume’s 30 chapters. The policy views and reform proposals herein are not an all-inclusive catalogue of conservative ideas for the next President, nor is there unanimity among the contributors or the organizations with which they are affiliated with regard to the recommendations.

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise

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Huber is [listed as a contributor](#) to Project 2025 on page xxviii.

While the United States has since also withdrawn from the GCD, the initiative continues to have a long shelf life as an anti-abortion, pro-sovereignty, authoritarian approach to international cooperation. Project 2025 refers to the GCD as a guiding document for decision making on foreign policy and abortion. Included under the chapter decimating the State Department, Project 2025 instructs that “all U.S. foreign policy engagements” under the Obama and Biden administrations must be revised to align with the GCD, and that USAID should focus on implementing the declaration’s pillars in partnership with religious groups.

Project 2025 goes on to state that while, “technically, the United States can prevent its international funding from going toward abortions,” a new administration will have greater leverage to prevent abortion access worldwide if they simply work through the GCD coalition’s dozens of member nations to shape “the work of international agencies by functioning as a united front.” These would likely include the [current GCD secretariat state](#), Hungary, and other authoritarian, anti-LGBTQ+ allies like Russia. Russia and other GCD signatories are [the same countries leading the call against any references in UN spaces to gender](#), sexual orientation and gender identity, or multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.



Support for Gender and Human Rights in a Global Far-Right Era

“The next Administration should use its voice, influence, votes, and funding in international organizations to promote authentic human rights and respect for sovereignty based on the binding international obligations contained in treaties that have been constitutionally ratified by the U.S. government. It must promote a strict text-based interpretation of treaty obligations that does not consider human rights treaties as “living instruments.”

—“Mandate for Leadership,” page 191

Should a future administration choose to implement Project 2025’s priorities for SRHR, global health, and multilateral engagement, these efforts would largely operate unchecked in the current geopolitical landscape. [Europe is sliding to the right](#), and SRHR support in Latin America is mixed, with gender champions like [Colombia](#) and [Mexico](#) on the one hand, and recently-elected gender antagonists in [Argentina](#) on the other. Compounding violent conflicts, [skepticism of multilateralism](#), climate crises, and the rise of far-right politicians will inform what happens in 2025.

Civil society must prepare for reduced [support](#) from progressive bilateral governments that initially came together in response to the previous conservative administration. In 2017, the [Netherlands rallied allies from 20 countries](#) for the [She Decides](#) fund to replace \$600 million that were to be impacted by the 2017 reinstatement of the GGR; in 2023, the Dutch [elected](#) a right-wing government that now includes several far-right ministers.

But the global donor community has long been underperforming in its support for SRHR. In a 2018 report, the [Gutmacher-Lancet Commission](#) detailed the scope of the unfinished SRHR agenda, highlighting the benefits of investing in SRHR for health as well as for social and economic development. And yet, as of FY 2024, under a more progressive administration, the U.S. has continued its [flat funding](#) for both bilateral and multilateral investment in international



SRH.¹⁰ This is despite the need for increased investment to adequately address the unmet need for SRH services and contraception.¹¹ Similarly, in the formerly progressive context in Europe, according to [Countdown 2030 Europe](#), funding for SRHR has been a small percentage of European ODA.¹²

This situation would only be worsened by any potential cuts to SRH or the defunding of UNFPA and other foreign assistance by the United States, or the 2023-2024 proposed ODA cuts from previously reliable SRHR defenders like [Sweden](#) and the [Netherlands](#). [Women's rights defenders](#) in Europe are urgently calling for increased funding for abortion within the Europe Union given the results of the June 2024 European Parliament elections.

Any [U.S. efforts to defund the UN](#) would be devastating: the [United States is its largest contributor](#), supplying nearly a third of the system's budget. With the funding delays and arrears, there is a concern that UN agencies are increasing turning to the private sector for more support to fill the budget shortfalls. There seems to be an assumption by the UN that the private sector is an appropriate actor to fill these gaps. However, such corporate capture not only puts the UN's integrity at risk and reduces its ability to defend human rights broadly, but also throws into question the role of civil society, already experiencing shrinking space at the table.¹³

10. Funding has remained stagnant since 2011 at just over \$600 million annually, with \$575 million earmarked for bilateral programs and \$32.5 million earmarked for UNFPA.

11. [As noted by PAI](#), there is also a need to offset the effects of inflation over the last 14 years and account for the growth of the population of reproductive age in low- and middle-income countries in that time period.

12. Data from 2021 shows allocations to SRHR of between 0.8 percent and 7.5 percent for European bilateral donors. Of the 65.1 billion Euros UNFPA estimates are necessary to safeguard access to contraception alone between 2020-2030, only 8.1 billion Euros are expected for that period—less than 13 percent of the total needed.

13. In 2022, [UN Women, the UN agency responsible for promoting gender equality, was under fire](#) for its proposed memorandum of understanding with the investment firm BlackRock, from which it eventually withdrew. [BlackRock is known](#) to prioritize profit over human rights and the environment.



UN Liquidity Crisis

[Many UN Members States did not pay their 2023 assessments in full](#) and are lagging for 2024, including the United States, which finally passed its budget with [UN funding in March 2024](#). As of June 2024, only [115 of the 193 Member States](#) had made their contributions. In a [January 2024](#) letter, the UN Secretary General warned that the UN would begin taking cost-saving initiatives to avert a default in meeting the UN's legal obligations by August 2024.

Conclusion

Project 2025 outlines what the U.S. far right is hoping to achieve in the United States and how it would do so step-by-step and arm-in-arm with a conservative administration willing to adopt its recommendations. Taken on its own, the blueprint is a threatening document: if implemented, it would imperil democracy in the United States; impose a theocratic-like style approach to government; and do immeasurable harm to people, the environment, and the economy. In the current geopolitical climate, Project 2025 is operating in promising conditions to create a perfect storm that will batter human rights and democracy at the domestic and global levels.

Project 2025 represents the culmination of decades of transnational organizing by anti-gender movements. The global solidarity first expressed in 2017 from governments like Canada, the Netherlands, and Sweden, which did so much to marshal resistance in the face of attacks on global SRHR, has been weakened. The rising far right in some of these same countries and their like-minded European allies means that previous support for progressive issues is uncertain, at best, as some countries have already begun making cuts to ODA as of 2023-2024.

Additionally, some Project 2025 promises are already being carried out. This includes the work of [Project 2025 civil society allies](#) like [Alliance Defending Freedom](#) who are working to curtail abortion rights at the [state level](#) and in their [international activities](#). The anti-gender agenda has been rolled out at the policy and legislative levels, addressing everything from abortion to gender recognition to foreign appropriations bills. Even [flying the pride flag at U.S. embassies](#), which Project 2025 specifically addresses, was banned in the March 2024 U.S. budget.¹⁴ This anti-gender ideology and “[anti-wokeness](#)” sentiment is shared by far-right groups, individuals, and political allies, including autocratic world leaders, as highlighted by major conservative and [far-right global gatherings](#) of the last few years.¹⁵

14. “The U.S. “should focus on core security, economic, and human rights rather than impose radical abortion and pro-LGBT initiatives. Divisive symbols such as the rainbow flag or the Black Lives Matter flag have no place next to the Stars and Stripes at our embassies,” [“Mandate for Leadership”](#), page 88.

15. President Javier Milei [has embodied this ethos since coming to office in December 2023](#).

In terms of human rights, SRHR, and multilateralism, an administration that would implement Project 2025 would, at a minimum, reinstate harmful anti-abortion policies, defund certain UN agencies and withdraw from others, all the while collaborating with authoritarian leaders at the global level. We recommend that bilateral donors and like-minded progressive actors:

- Prepare both joint and individual responses to a reinstated GGR to mitigate the impacts to implementing partners, especially local civil society organizations.
- Work to fill the funding gaps for defunded UN agencies, particularly the WHO, UNFPA, UNESCO, and UNWRA.
- Anticipate that the United States will withdraw from the Human Rights Council as well as from international agreements and that it will operate as a hostile presence in UN negotiations alongside far-right allies. Now, more than ever, it is imperative that progressive allies from the Global North and South have clear strategies, red lines, and common language to counter anti-gender Member State groups at the UN.
- Respond to the GCD with diplomatic demarches that demonstrate commitment to the human rights system.
- Educate governments, implementing development agencies, civil society organizations, and their sub-recipients in all spaces where there might be harmful impacts of U.S. foreign anti-gender policy and disinformation, especially around the Protego project.

By attending to these projected risks, the global human rights community can help stymie some of Project 2025's most harmful initiatives. Additionally, worst-case scenario planning that involves an illiberal United States with a muscular executive branch must be considered— particular one that is, as of July 2024, immune to criminal prosecution according to the U.S. Supreme Court. Now more than ever, both the Global North and the Global South need a progressive approach to ensure the protection of civil society as human rights guarantors and development partners, and to provide an alternative to the rising international far right.



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