USA Report

Sustainable Governance Indicators 2024

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Executive Summary

The United States remains the most powerful country in the world. Yet power within the United States is famously fragmented, disjointed, and elusive. The president of the United States holds tremendous symbolic influence, but on closer inspection, actual presidential authority is often highly constrained. To answer Robert Dahl (1961)'s famous question, "Who governs?," any serious inspection of the government of the United States must include analyses of its formal structures – the president, the federal bureaucracy, Congress, the judiciary, and state and local governments.

A study of "who governs" cannot simply dwell on the institutions. It must consider the actors who place demands on and through those structures – political parties and voters, organized elites and lobbyists, grassroots activists and social movements. These actors seek to use government to achieve specific goals, such as redistributing resources, protecting certain constituencies, enriching themselves, preserving a way of life, or punishing other citizens.

Sustainable governance in the United States is an extremely complex matter, with no straightforward answers. A great deal of focus is placed on the presidential administration, and this is appropriate. The federal executive branch plays a key role in shaping policy through the articulation of national policy goals and wider social objectives. The president oversees a significant array of programs that help promote these goals.

At the same time, presidential administrations are highly constrained. They depend heavily on the legal authority granted by Congress and the funding allocated by Congress to their initiatives. Presidential administrations must also coordinate with other institutions, which may sometimes play a supportive or hostile role, most notably the federal judiciary and lower levels of government. A significant amount of U.S. policymaking originates in the states, resulting in high variation on matters ranging from labor law and welfare provision to environmental protection and civil and voting rights.

Since January 2021, President Joe Biden has demonstrated a significant commitment to sustainable governance initiatives. He has supported the

expansion of trade union organizing, the protection of voting rights, the inclusion of diverse social groups into the fabric of American society, and more generous welfare provisions. Biden's most notable contribution to sustainable governance, however, has been in the field of climate policy. It is not an exaggeration to say that Biden has been the most successful environmentalist president in U.S. history since Richard Nixon, whose administration established the modern framework for federal intervention in environmental and climate policy.

Joe Biden's legacy has already been established by four major spending bills: the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act of 2021, the Chips and Science Act of 2022, and the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. These bills collectively provide trillions of dollars for investment in public services, public infrastructure, supply chain resilience, and climate change prevention. The Biden administration's investment in the public realm and active industrial strategy has not been seen since the days of Franklin Roosevelt.

Key Challenges

Despite President Biden's achievements, U.S. democracy is in a very fragile state. Biden entered the White House after an attempted insurrection by supporters of his predecessor, Donald Trump, who actively encouraged their cause. America's electoral processes are dysfunctional, largely because they are managed by state governments. Trump holds a much different view from Biden on sustainable governance, maintaining a strong stance against policies aimed at tackling climate change. His record on social welfare and labor protections is mixed, although the mainstream position among his party's elected officials is clearly hostile. If Trump is elected in November 2024, he will reorient the federal executive branch's priorities in direct opposition to those of Joe Biden.

Nonetheless, both presidents' legacies are not entirely within their own control. For example, while Joe Biden has become a supporter of a woman's right to choose in his later political career, it was during his presidency that the Supreme Court ended the national constitutional right to an abortion, devolving abortion law to state governments and depriving millions of women of access to abortion in the meantime. Likewise, Donald Trump might find

that some of his efforts – such as his increasing desire to use the legal system to persecute his political opponents – may run into trouble from forces within the judicial branch itself.

There is a growing sense that the United States has lost its swagger on the world stage. Its self-confidence has taken significant blows recently, and the challenge posed by the rise of China is more palpable now than ever. However, this report does not uniformly paint a bleak picture of the country's prospects or its commitment to sustainable government. The capacity of the federal government is vast; it remains an enormous investor in science and technological research. The United States is a wealthy country with extensive human and natural resources that are productively deployed. Although the country is characterized by high levels of inequality, even the living standards of lower-income Americans are relatively high.

The United States now operates in a more competitive international space than it did after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The threats to U.S. power are clearer than ever. It can no longer rest on its laurels as it once perhaps did. However, the Biden administration has demonstrated a strong understanding of this among U.S. policymakers. Biden's four signature spending bills are only understandable when seen from the perspective of arresting American decline.

In the years ahead, significant benefits from Biden's policy legacy will emerge, even if Donald Trump is elected president. Infrastructure investment will provide long-term advantages, strengthening the U.S. economy and enhancing productivity. Biden's investments in science, research, and specific manufacturing sectors help build the country's resilience against potential future shocks to the international system. Biden's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is the largest climate and industrial strategy legislation in the free world, aiding the United States in meeting its global commitments to tackling climate change.

A future Trump presidency will not be able or even willing to overturn these investments. The U.S. political system will contain some, but not all, of his governing instincts. Trump cannot be a dictator in a way familiar to the outside world. There are too many limitations on the presidency. Policymaking in the U.S. is too sclerotic. The federal system and separation of powers constrain his policy options. However, Trump will do his best to continue to erode faith and trust in the U.S. political system, and it is here where he may do – and already has done – lasting damage.

Democratic Government

I. Vertical Accountability

Elections

Free and Fair
Political
Competition
Score: 7

The United States is characterized by a highly decentralized and fragmented system of electoral administration. The Constitution provides broad criteria for federal candidate eligibility, the general structure of the electoral process, and protections for certain categories of voters. Beyond this, however, further electoral criteria and election administration are left to the 50 state governments.

The U.S. Constitution has fairly basic criteria for eligibility to stand for federal office. Specifically, candidates for the House of Representatives must be at least 25 years old, candidates for the Senate must be at least 30, and candidates for the presidency must be at least 35. Additionally, candidates for the presidency must be "natural born" citizens, which has been interpreted to mean that a person must be a U.S. citizen at birth. They must also have been a U.S. resident for at least 14 years. The Constitution specifies that the number of senators per state must be equal (two), and federal statute regulates the size of the House of Representatives and broad features of the system of congressional representation (for example, mandating that each member of the House represents a single-member district).

In addition, the U.S. Constitution guarantees individuals' political participation, both in their ability to vote and in their ability to run for office. For example, the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause is generally taken as a guarantee that a person cannot be barred from running for office based on arbitrary characteristics such as race. The Religious Test Clause prohibits the exclusion of candidates on the basis of religion or lack thereof. There are also protections against voting discrimination based on race

(Fifteenth Amendment), sex (Nineteenth Amendment), failure to pay taxes (Twenty-Fourth Amendment), and age (Twenty-Sixth Amendment).

The formal constitutional criteria to stand for national office in the United States are quite broad and generous. There is no bar, for example, against a criminal or even a prisoner from standing for office. The Supreme Court has confirmed in multiple rulings that additional formal requirements, such as term limits, cannot be placed on candidates for federal office by state governments.

States, however, have greater leeway in restricting the voting franchise. For example, a small number of states impose a lifetime ban on people convicted of crimes from voting (Johnson 2019).

State governments are entrusted with carrying out elections. They also manage ballot access criteria. Since the 20th century, ballots have been printed by states, and parties and candidates have different levels of entitlement to appear on the ballot depending on the state. Some states are extremely inhospitable to minor party candidates. In Alabama, a party must secure a petition equivalent to 3% of the total number of votes cast in the previous gubernatorial election to appear on the ballot. The deadline for submitting this petition is in March. Additionally, the party must win at least 20% of the vote in a statewide election every time to remain qualified on the ballot (https://www.sos.alabama.gov/alabama-votes/candidates/qualifications-public-office).

A key challenge to U.S. democracy is widespread gerrymandering, particularly in states where elected officials revise the boundaries of electoral and congressional districts, favoring partisan influence in the process. Redistricting occurs once a decade, and there is strong evidence that it has a deeply corrosive impact on U.S. democracy, including in Congress at the federal level (Kirschenbaum and Li, 2021).

Finally, the last time a third party – not the Democrats or Republicans – appeared on the presidential ballot in Alabama was in 2000. In contrast, Louisiana has one of the easiest routes to ballot access. A party need only submit a filing fee of $1,125 to run for president in that state. Not surprisingly, Louisiana had 32 candidates on its 2016 presidential ballot.

Free and Fair
Elections
Score: 7

The United States does not have a definitive standard for voting eligibility. The U.S. Constitution contains certain protections against discrimination that, by process of elimination, define the parameters of the eligible voting electorate.

According to the federal Constitution, a person may not be deprived of voting on the basis of race, sex, failure to pay taxes, or age (unless under 18). Federal law also prohibits non-citizens from voting.

States are allowed to enact further restrictions on voting as long as they do not violate any of the aforementioned principles. Consequently, most states deprive individuals of the vote if they are currently or have previously been incarcerated. Additionally, all states prohibit individuals who are not U.S. citizens from voting for state offices.

States are responsible for election administration, including maintaining the electoral rolls of eligible voters. In 1993, the federal government made this a legal requirement for state governments. Over time, if voter rolls are not properly maintained, they can become inaccurate with an increasing number of ineligible voters. States have different rules about how these rolls are maintained. Often, states lack sufficient resources to conduct a detailed analysis of the voter rolls (Johnson 2019).

States have wide discretion in administering election day, including setting polling station locations and rules about campaigning near these stations. However, there are certain federal limitations on states' power to manage elections. For instance, polling station locations cannot be determined in a way that disproportionately excludes voters based on race or disability. The former is governed by the Voting Rights Act and the latter by the Americans with Disabilities Act. In both cases, voters must pursue legal action against a local or state government seen to discriminate against them, which is costly and time-consuming.

Before 2013, the federal government had the power under the Voting Rights Act's Section 5 to "pre-clear" changes to election administration made by jurisdictions with a history of voter discrimination. However, the Supreme Court rendered this part of the legislation inoperable in its decision in Shelby County v. Holder (King & Smith 2016).

Quality of Parties and Candidates

Socially Rooted
Party System
Score: 7

The United States party system has undergone substantial internal transformation in recent decades, even though on the surface it appears much the same as it has since the mid-19th century. Since the 1850s, U.S. politics has been dominated by two main parties: the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. These parties have historically been large, varied coalitions.

For example, in the early 20th century, the Democratic Party was a coalition of urban Catholic immigrants in the North and anti-immigrant rural Protestants in the South (Abramowitz 2018). Federalism and the decentralization of American politics allowed the parties to maintain electoral coalitions that contained voters with quite divergent perspectives.

From the 1930s, American politics began to "nationalize" as the federal government became more involved in policy areas that had once been largely left to the states (Hopkins 2018). This was especially true of social policy, which had largely been a state competence until the massive expansion of federal welfare provision in the 1930s and again in the 1960s. For the first time, the Democratic Party came to be seen at the national level as the party of the "left" and the Republican Party as the party of the "right" (Levendusky 2009).

However, voters were still able to distinguish between the national party and their state parties. Political scientist Nelson Polsby famously said that the United States is not a country of two parties but of 102 parties. Each state's Democratic and Republican parties had their own set of policy priorities, which, in turn, differed from the national parties' agendas.

Party loyalty was guided by a variety of factors, including clientelism and patronage. Often, voters supported a particular party because the local party was seen as aligned with the interests of a specific local group. These alignments were frequently based on historic reasons and only loosely connected to policy programs (Polsby 1983).

Today, this is no longer the case. The American party system has nationalized. The policy priorities of Democrats in Massachusetts and Mississippi are more similar to each other than ever before. In turn, the parties' ideological character has finally crystallized in the eyes of the electorate at all levels.
In this respect, American political parties "look" more like conventional political parties in the rest of the developed democratic world. They are ideologically coherent, programmatic parties. Voters support these parties, for the most part, on the basis of policy alignment rather than on non-policy reasons like religion, local history or geography.

By their very nature, U.S. political parties need to be "big tent" or "broad church" parties. They must still accommodate a wide set of interests, but these interests are now more closely sorted according to ideology than they ever have been. Nonetheless, there is space for "moderates" and "extremists" of the left and right within both parties' coalitions.

Effective Cross-
Party
Cooperation
Score: 5

Bipartisanship, or cross-party cooperation, was once a hallmark of the U.S. political system. Until the party realignment in the South in the late 1960s, cross-party cooperation was more the norm than the exception in Congress. National unity scores were quite low at that time – lower than 60%.

When the parties were ideologically heterogeneous, bipartisan cooperation between elected officials on a range of significant policies was common. However, since the party realignment in the South, the U.S. parties have become nationalized – they have adopted ideologically coherent and nationally consistent policy platforms. Consequently, they are much less likely to engage in bipartisan cooperation in a context of increasing partisan polarization, a major source of gridlock. Party unity scores in Congress have grown to over 90%.

This trend aligns the United States more closely with oppositional parliamentary systems, such as in Westminster parliaments, where parties tend to take on "government" and "opposition" functions (Pierson and Schickler 2020). This parliamentarization in the presidential system is one reason for legislative gridlock in Congress.

Access to Official Information

Transparent
Government
Score: 8

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) was first enacted in 1966 after many years of campaigning by public disclosure advocates. The FOIA has become one of the most important tools for the ascertainment of public information in the United States and sets a high standard. The federal and state governments generally maintain transparency and release a significant volume of information into the public domain (Hopkins 2018).

Requesting information through the Freedom of Information Act is relatively straightforward, though experiences can vary depending on the agency and the volume of the request. Legally, agencies are required to respond within 20 days, but unequal resources can cause delays. This has occasionally led citizens to take agencies to court for their slow response times.

One area of controversy is the declassification of documents. Many public documents are not fully released for reasons of national security. In these instances, citizens may seek redress through the court system, and there have been high-profile cases where the courts have forced the government to declassify more than it had originally intended.

II. Diagonal Accountability

Media Freedom and Pluralism

Free Media
Score: 9

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is regarded as a major legal protection for freedom of speech and the press. The United States has historically had a very pluralistic media culture, and news outlets typically operate without much evidence of direct or indirect government interference (Arcenaux and Johnson 2013).

There is limited censorship in the United States, with courts typically adopting a relaxed view about the content of materials published by private individuals and companies.

While the mainstream media in the United States generally operate free from government interference, many popular news outlets are owned by a few wealthy individuals. In a diverse global media landscape, local news has declined significantly in recent years. A growing interest in partisan media threatens objectivity, and public confidence in the media has fallen dangerously. After four years of President Trump constantly denigrating the press, President Biden signaled his administration's desire to see the U.S. reclaim its global status as a model of freedom of expression, reinstating regular White House and federal agency press briefings. Despite these efforts, many underlying chronic issues impacting journalists remain unaddressed by authorities – including the disappearance of local news, the polarization of the media, and the weakening of journalism and democracy caused by digital platforms and social networks.

Pluralism of
Opinions
Score: 8

The fragmented nature of the American media landscape allows for a reasonably pluralistic environment across digital, print, and broadcast media. Citizens and media outlets regularly engage in criticism of the government, with little sense of formal or informal reprisal from government officials. Indeed, robust criticism of the government and debate are generally seen as valuable parts of the political culture (Reuning and Dietrich 2019).

Media pluralism is weakest in local journalism. Declining readership and viewership have eroded the profitability of local media companies. Consequently, most local broadcast and print media are owned by a small

number of national networks (Hayes and Lawless 2015).

A major characteristic of the U.S. media landscape is the hyper-partisan nature of many media outlets (Iyengar and Hahn 2013). For the last several decades, cable television and talk radio have made little attempt to be neutral or balanced in their editorializing about politics (Levendusky 2013). These outlets create an echo chamber effect where viewers often choose media sources based on their politics, and then their views about current affairs are reinforced by these sources (Arcenaux and Johnson 2013). This is not new to the American media landscape. In the 19th century, local newspapers were often hyper-partisan and would, in some cases, actually advertise their political allegiances in the newspaper name. Hence, many older local newspapers contain the words "Democrat," "Republican," or even "Whig" in their names.

Civil Society

Free Civil
Society
Score: 9

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects the freedom of assembly. Americans have robust rights to form political groups without unwarranted state intrusion or interference in their activities. Similarly, citizen groups usually possess strong rights to use public and private spaces to assemble and promote their ideas (Abrams 2017).

The Supreme Court has permitted a certain degree of government regulation regarding the time, place, and manner of assemblies, adhering to reasonably strict criteria. The court insists that any administrative regulation of the right to assemble must remain strictly neutral concerning the content of the assembly. Alternative means of communication must also be allowed (Nossell 2020).

Effective Civil
Society
Organizations
(Capital and
Labor)
Score: 5

Unions underwrote the affluence of the American working class in the twentieth century. They secured higher wages, limited working hours, improved working conditions, and a range of "fringe benefits," including health insurance and pensions for their members (Moody 2014).

Trade union membership in the United States is still largely governed by the framework established in the National Labor Relations Act, known popularly as the Wagner Act, passed in 1935 during the New Deal Era. The legislation created the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), a federal agency that enforces labor law in the U.S. The NLRB regulates union activity, including ballots and strikes. It also has a quasi-judicial function, issuing rules on the application of labor law, some of which can be quite consequential. The board comprises five individuals, each appointed by the president for five-year

terms. The chairperson is chosen from among them by the president and serves at the president's pleasure (Milkman 2019).

The peak density of the unionized workforce occurred in 1954, when 35% of non-farm workers were unionized. The peak number of total union members was in 1983, with 17.7 million workers in a union, or about 20% of the workforce. Today, only about 10% of workers are in a union. This decline has been driven by the collapse of private sector unions. In 1970, 30% of private sector workers were in a union. Forty years later, that figure had dropped to just 6%. In contrast, 34% of public sector workers are currently unionized, a level equivalent to the peak of the unionized private sector workforce in the 1950s (Walker 2014).

There is a significant disparity in unionization across industries. In local government, including public safety, 40% of workers belong to a union. In education, the figure is 34%. However, in retail, only 3% are union members, and in food and drink services, it is just 1%. Women make up 46% of union members. One in three union members are non-white. African Americans have the highest union density at about 13%; Asian Americans have the lowest at about 8% (Frymer and Grumbach 2020).

In the United States, the labor movement has a comparatively limited impact on policymaking in most areas. Low unionization rates in the private sector limit the social and political influence of labor unions, and the absence of a stand-alone labor party helps explain this relatively limited impact (Maioni 1998).

Effective Civil Society Organizations (Social Welfare) Score: 7

The United States has a thriving charity sector. The federal tax code treats contributions to charitable organizations generously. Social welfare organizations have a charitable aim but legally enjoy greater scope to lobby and engage in political activity than straightforward charities (Johnson 2018). Since the 2010 Citizens United case, social welfare organizations have been allowed to raise and spend unlimited funds to advocate for their causes (Witko 2017). They are also typically permitted to engage in such activities without disclosing their donors. This has led to accusations of "astroturf" activism, where groups that appear to be large-scale grassroots campaign organizations are actually well-funded initiatives by a small number of wealthy donors, or even a single individual, bankrolling the entire effort (Charnock 2020).

Religious organizations are another form of important social welfare organization in the United States. The United States has a much higher level of religious belief and participation than peer rich democracies. Many religious

denominations and religiously inspired organizations are highly active in politics, lobbying on behalf of causes they care deeply about, including abortion, family, environment, poverty, and much else (Chand 2017).

Effective Civil Society Organizations (Environment) Score: 7

The environmental movement has a long history in the United States (McCright et al. 2014). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, various groups (e.g., the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society) were formed. The movement had a second wave in the 1960s and 1970s, which saw significant legislative advances. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which remains the premier federal agency for the management of the natural environment, was established in 1970 by executive order by President Richard Nixon and subsequently placed on statutory footing by Congress (Price 2021). The agency enforces environmental regulations (e.g., regarding air, water, hazardous waste) and funds environmental research in over two dozen federal laboratories.

The 1970s was a decade of significant climate legislation. These include the Clean Air Act of 1970, the Clean Water Act of 1972, the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (RCRA), the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 (TSCA), and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA) (Turner 2018).

Today, there are a significant number of environmental CSOs with sizable public memberships. The National Wildlife Federation, for example, has over 4 million members, while the National Resources Defense Council has 2.5 million members.

These organizations, however, face stiff competition from industry, which can afford high-powered lobbyists and lawyers to advocate for their interests in courts and in the corridors of Congress and state legislatures. In 2022, for example, the Supreme Court ruled against the EPA's Clean Power Plan as an overreach of its statutory authority. The consequence of this ruling was to limit the EPA's power to regulate emissions (Gonzalez 2019).

III. Horizontal Accountability

Independent Supervisory Bodies

Effective Public
Auditing
Score: 8

In the 1970s, in response to the Watergate scandal, Congress created numerous regulatory agencies responsible for overseeing the executive branch, including those from within the executive branch itself (Roberts and Dull 2013). These independent agencies and auditors have collectively become known as the "accountability state" (Hilliard, 2017).

Inspectors general play an important role in the federal government, regularly monitoring for unlawful or inefficient behavior by the agencies (Potter 2019). They are generally regarded with a high level of respect and seen as having mostly avoided the partisan politicization that characterizes much of the U.S. government (Spence 2019).

Some concerns have been raised about a chilling effect caused by U.S. presidents dismissing inspectors general who seem to frustrate or embarrass their administration (Dodds 2020). Various presidents have entered office and tried to remove inspectors general. Ronald Reagan removed more than a dozen in his first few weeks in office. His successor, George H. W. Bush, tried to remove all of them but came under intense political pressure and relented. More recently, Donald Trump was known for removing inspectors general whom he found troublesome (Thompson et al. 2020).

Congress can insist on the reinstatement of inspectors general, and this sometimes happens, but generally the president's party in Congress tends to side more with the president of their own party than with government bureaucrats in such disputes (Michaels 1997).

Effective Data
Protection
Score: 5

There is no single national authority for data protection. With some exceptions, such as banks, credit unions, and insurance companies, the Federal Trade Commission has jurisdiction over most commercial entities. It has the authority to issue and enforce federal privacy regulations, including those for telemarketing, email marketing, and children's privacy, and to take enforcement action to protect consumers against unfair or deceptive trade practices, including materially unfair privacy and data security practices.

Many state attorneys general have similar enforcement authority over unfair and deceptive business practices, including the failure to implement reasonable security measures and violations of consumer privacy rights, which harm consumers in their states.

Because the costs of varying privacy protections by state can be prohibitively expensive, many businesses follow the rules set by the state with the highest standards, which is currently California. This follows the California Consumer Privacy Act of 2018, subsequently amended by the California Privacy Rights Act of 2020 (Shatz and Chylik 2020). The Californian legislation gives consumers robust protections against businesses holding their data, and many companies, especially those that do business on the internet with clients in California, now follow this standard (Pardau 2018). The California legislation also created the California Privacy Protection Agency, the first state agency dedicated to the protection of consumer privacy rights (Harding et al 2019).
At the federal level, there is the Federal Privacy Council, created by an executive order in 2016 by President Barack Obama. The order requires agency heads to designate a Senior Agency Official for Privacy who must maintain an agency-wide data privacy program. The federal government also has a body known as the Chief Information Officers (CIO) Council, a collection of CIOs who come together to improve IT practices across the federal government (Hyman and Kovacic 2019).

Rule of Law

Effective Judicial
Oversight
Score: 7

The United States has two legal systems: federal law and state law. In both, judges exercise strong judicial review, with the authority to issue sweeping judgments that can strike down legislation and constrain executive action (Whittington 2007).

Federal judges interpret the U.S. Constitution and review federal statutes in relation to it. They also interpret federal statutes passed by Congress and evaluate the actions of various actors, including the executive branch, to ensure their compatibility with these laws. The U.S. Constitution is brief and vague on many of its core principles, granting the court significant discretion in its interpretation and application (Levinson 2011). For example, the Supreme Court must ultimately determine what punishments are impermissibly "cruel and unusual" or what constitutes individual "liberty."

The Supreme Court is the highest court in the land, and its judgments are supreme over all lower levels of the federal court system and the state court systems (Amar 2012). However, the vast majority of litigation in the United States takes place in the state court systems (Zackin 2013). These judges interpret and apply their state's constitution as well as relevant state law. When federal and state law conflict, if the power is properly one accorded to the federal government in the U.S. Constitution, then federal law is supreme. However, if the federal government has wrongly become involved in an area of law that properly belongs to the state governments, according to the U.S. Constitution, the Supreme Court might rule in favor of the state government. In this respect, the federal courts play a very important role in policing the boundaries of national and subnational authority (Riker 1964).

The Supreme Court is a very powerful institution and has been a venue for major policy shifts throughout U.S. history (Hall 2017). There are a couple of reasons for this. First, as the final interpreter of the U.S. Constitution, the Court serves as a potent and almost unchallengeable authority on the law. If citizens disagree with a Supreme Court decision based on the justices' interpretation of the Constitution, they have limited recourse, each demanding significant effort. They might amend the Constitution, though no newly proposed amendment has been successful in more than half a century, or they might seek to change the composition of the Court, a challenge given that justices serve for life.

Another reason for the Court's influence is its ability to regulate the boundaries of federalism, shaping the relationship between state and national authority. In this respect, the Supreme Court can act as a powerful nationalizing force for federal policy (Dahl 1957). If the Supreme Court declares an issue to be a fundamental individual liberty protected by the Ninth and Fourteenth Amendments, it can overturn any state laws that seek to minimize that right.

For instance, while marriage regulation has traditionally been considered a state government competence, the Court has ruled that marriage is a fundamental liberty that cannot be infringed upon based on the race or gender of the partners. Additionally, the Court has determined that protected sexual intimacy is a fundamental right of marriage that state governments cannot limit either.

The process for appointing judges at the federal and state levels has been subject to criticism (Tushnet 2022). At the federal level, judges are appointed by the president – subject to confirmation by the Senate – and serve for life with good behavior. At the state level, the systems differ. In nearly all states,

judges undergo some form of election (Kritzer 2019). In some states, judges are directly elected, sometimes standing on a partisan label. In other states, judges are appointed but then subjected to a confirmatory public election where voters can choose to remove them from office (Canes-Wrone et al. 2014).

In both systems, courts are regarded in political and even partisan terms (Nicholson and Hansford 2014). Neither appointment nor election seems to mitigate this fact. Federal judges are appointed based on a legal philosophy that aligns with the policy aims of the incumbent president. Democrats tend to favor judges with an expansive interpretation of the Constitution's vague elements. Republicans tend to prefer those who interpret the Constitution more narrowly or strictly.

Subjecting judges to elections, as many states do, is also politicizing. Many state judges must campaign for election or reelection, which requires them to raise funds, produce leaflets, and run advertisements like other candidates. This is an unusual aspect of the U.S. political system. It might be seen as more "democratic," but at the same time, critics argue it undermines judges' role to remain above politics. Ironically, many state constitutions established judicial elections because their framers wanted to promote the independence of the judiciary. They were concerned that if state judges were appointed similarly to federal judges, they could not be truly independent of the executive or legislative branches. By giving them their own separate electoral mandate, judges in state courts do have greater "independence" from these two branches, if not from politics itself (Baum 2018).

Universal Civil Rights
Score: 7

Since the 1870s, the U.S. federal government has maintained a department dedicated to upholding the fundamental rights of citizens: the Department of Justice (DOJ). The DOJ is one of the most significant institutional actors in the federal government and has played a vital role in U.S. history in pursuing those who seek to infringe upon individual rights, both inside and outside of the government (Foner 1988).

Ultimately, the effectiveness of the DOJ is tied, in part, to the quality of its staff. Generally speaking, the DOJ staff have a high reputation for competence and commitment to the department's historic mission (Johnson 2019).

The head of the Justice Department is the attorney general, and leadership from attorneys general has varied over the years. There have been instances of attorneys general who appeared to be more committed to the political project of the president in whose Cabinet they served. For example, Alberto Gonzales,

attorney general under George W. Bush, was accused of orchestrating the removal of federal prosecutors deemed unfriendly to Republican politicians or failing to pursue Democrats for alleged wrongdoings (Eisenstein 2007).

Individuals who believe their fundamental rights have been violated can pursue their claims through the judicial process. The federal courts have heard various cases relating to sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability, health, age, ethnic origin, social status, political views, or religion. Most of these characteristics are protected by the Constitution – for example, the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment – or federal statutes such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its subsequent amendments. The Supreme Court has also expanded historic legislation to cover new groups. For instance, the Court recently ruled that the Civil Rights Act protects gay and transgender employees from discrimination, even if this was not part of the original interpretation by the drafters of the legislation in the 1960s (Valenti 2021).

Effective
Corruption
Prevention
Score: 7

The U.S. Constitution has few explicit rules limiting corrupt activities by members of Congress. The Ineligibility Clause bans members of Congress who vote for an executive branch pay increase from subsequently being appointed to that office (Mayer and Sulkowski 2018). However, this restriction can be easily circumvented. For example, when Barack Obama appointed Senator Hillary Clinton as his Secretary of State, she was constitutionally ineligible because she had voted for a pay increase for the Secretary of State position as a senator. Clinton circumvented this by accepting a voluntary pay decrease. The Twenty-Seventh Amendment, the final amendment to the U.S. Constitution, prohibits members of Congress from voting for their own pay increase without another election intervening (Tillman 2018).

Beyond this, the Constitution leaves each chamber of Congress with the responsibility to regulate its own internal affairs (Thompson 2000). This means that the House and the Senate can set their own rules to guard against corruption. As a result, certain practices that may be banned in one chamber can be permissible in the other. For example, House members are not allowed to sit on corporate boards, but senators are allowed to do so.

Over the years, various ethics laws have been passed to limit members' activities.

There are many loopholes in the existing arrangements. For example, members of Congress and their families are permitted to hold financial interests in businesses they oversee in Congress.

Enforcement is left to each chamber of Congress, which each have their own ethics committees. These committees enforce the rules inconsistently. It is rare for a member to be ejected from Congress for violating ethics rules, but it is not unheard of. In December 2023, the Republican-controlled House of Representatives voted to expel Republican Congressman George Santos after the House Ethics Committee accused him of misusing his campaign funds for personal gain (Martin 2023).

The problem of self-regulation also applies to the Supreme Court. Some members of the Court claim that Congress cannot regulate them, but this is inconsistent with long-standing practices in other areas. In 1922, Congress created the Judicial Conference of the United States, which sets administrative standards for the federal court. Although the body consists of judges and is currently self-regulating, Congress could establish more stringent ethics standards (Gephardt 2023).

Legislature

Sufficient
Legislative
Resources
Score: 10

The United States is an example of a system with a "strong" legislature (Polsby 1968). The executive branch has little control over Congress.

Congress accrues its own financial resources, sets its own operational rules, can sit at a manner and time of its choosing, and allocate time to legislation as it sees fit. Congress has the legal authority to compel members of the executive branch to provide evidence and testimony and can even imprison individuals who resist its subpoenas (Kornberg 2023). Until a century ago, Congress held prisoners in the Capitol building, but now it allows penalties to be determined through the courts (Jones et al. 2019). For example, in January 2024, Peter Navarro, an adviser to President Donald Trump, was sentenced to four months in prison for failing to adhere to a subpoena from the House of Representatives to testify about the Jan. 6, 2021, attacks on the U.S. Capitol.

Congress has extraordinary legislative powers (Johnson 2020). The president's signature is not required for legislation to go into effect. If the president fails to sign a bill within ten days (excluding Sundays) of its passage by both houses, it will become law without his signature. A president can try to prevent a bill from becoming law by vetoing it, but if two-thirds of each chamber override the president's veto, the bill will become law anyway. This enables Congress to pass legislation that might be opposed by the president. Although this happens rarely in practice, in theory, Congress could pass transformative legislation even if the president did not support it.

In addition, the Senate has the special power to block the president's appointments to the federal judiciary and executive branches (Swift 2019). This is an extraordinarily powerful authority, which the Senate regularly uses to stymie presidents. For example, a president cannot even reshuffle a Cabinet without the Senate's votes for each individual change, making such changes within the executive branch rare during a president's term (Mayhew 2005).

Effective Legislative Oversight Score: 8

Congressional committees routinely compel executive branch agencies to furnish documents about their functions as a form of oversight. Some of this oversight occurs through regularly scheduled reports submitted to relevant congressional committees (Kornberg 2023). However, Congress can also direct these agencies to provide information on an ad hoc basis (McCubbins and Schwartz 1987).

The executive branch sometimes attempts to withhold information by claiming executive privilege (LaPira et al 2020). The Supreme Court has confirmed the existence of this privilege, though it is qualified. The privilege is most clearly defined in cases where confidentiality is considered a matter of national security. The judicial branch can, albeit infrequently, evaluate whether information held by the executive should be deemed materially important for legislative or judicial oversight.

Effective Legislative Investigations Score: 6

Congress has the power to remove any executive branch official for treason, bribery, or other "high crimes and misdemeanors." This last category of offense is undefined and gives the legislative branch, in theory, wide discretion to investigate and prosecute members of the executive branch (Gerhardt 2024).

In practice, however, the impeachment power is rarely exercised. Only eight individuals have been successfully convicted and removed from office by the Senate. All of these were judges, not members of the executive branch. The threat of impeachment, however, has occasionally driven executive branch officials to resign. President Richard Nixon resigned from office in 1974 rather than be convicted by the Senate, as he expected. William Belknap, the Secretary of War, resigned in anticipation of being impeached in 1876 over his corrupt dealings with Native American trading posts.

The threshold for a successful removal is quite high – two-thirds of the U.S. Senate. It is almost unheard of for a single political party to enjoy that kind of strength in the Senate. Thus, impeachments must be bipartisan to be successful. Because they are deeply embarrassing for the party affected, there

is rarely such widespread support.

There is a serious issue at the presidential level because it is generally accepted that presidents cannot be tried for criminal offenses while in office. For them to face penalties for crimes committed as president, they must first be impeached and removed from office. In practice, this means presidents can evade consequences for crimes as long as one-third of the Senate is willing to back them up, which is a troubling state of affairs (Howell and Moe 2023).

Legislative
Capacity for
Guiding Policy
Score: 7

Congressional committees have sometimes been described as "Congress at work" (Bianco 2000). They are where bill drafting, markup, debate, investigation, and information collection take place (Kornberg 2023). Congress has strong committees that are well-resourced and contain expert staff who support committee members. Committee places are highly coveted and usually assigned based on some familiarity or connection with the policy area. Members can spend many years on the same committee, building policy expertise and gaining insights into the workings of the relevant executive branch agencies they are responsible for scrutinizing.

One issue for congressional committees today is the significant difference in their willingness to investigate the executive branch, depending on whether the committee's majority party aligns with that of the president. This discrepancy has led some commentators to suggest that the United States now has a system more clearly structured by the separation of parties than by the separation of powers (Rubin 2017).

Governing with Foresight

I. Coordination

Quality of Horizontal Coordination

Effective
Coordination
Mechanisms of
the GO/PMO
Score: 6

The closest comparison to a government office or prime minister's office in the U.S. system is the White House staff, along with other units of the Executive Office of the President (e.g., the Council of Economic Advisers, the Office of Management and Budget, and the National Security Council).

In the U.S. system, coordination involves how the executive departments and agencies engage the president and the White House staff in their work. Long-established practice, however, shows that the president and the White House staff are dominant within the executive branch, allowing them to prioritize issues that align with the president's agenda. During the Trump administration, agency policy development was heavily influenced by Trump's desire to cut regulations and reverse actions taken by the Obama administration, with little focus on long-term agency missions or priorities. Upon entering the White House, President Biden took steps to rebuild federal departments and agencies by hiring a large number of senior officials to address the "talent exodus" (Zhao and Lippman, 2021) that occurred during the Trump years.

Effective
Coordination
Mechanisms
within the
Ministerial
Bureaucracy
Score: 5

Historically, federal government departments have established their own policy autonomy and operate fairly independently from other departments. Departmental autonomy was seen as a major initiative of strong departmental leaders, and this instinct still operates today (Carpenter 2001).

Once appointed, agency leaders tend to stay in place for at least the political lifecycle of their appointer. A department might see just one or two leaders over a four-year presidential term. For example, despite the personnel difficulties of the Trump administration, Trump had the same secretaries of the Treasury, Agriculture, Commerce, Housing, Transportation, Education, and Trade for his full four-year presidency. State, Interior, Health, and Energy had

just one change during his presidency. It is difficult for presidents to reshuffle their Cabinets because Senate approval is required for any new appointment, including moving an already confirmed departmental head to another department (e.g., from Education to Health). This gives department leaders greater staying power, even when the president might have some buyer's remorse in appointing them to a position (Jenkins and Milkis 2014).

The Executive Office of the President (EOP), created during the 1930s reforms to the federal government bureaucracy, serves as a crucial coordinating institution at the core of the federal government. The EOP provides the president and his White House team with the capacity to develop policy and produce broad administration initiatives. However, much of the actual policymaking occurs within individual departments, and cross-department coordination is variable and sometimes quite weak (Skowronek et al. 2021).

The Biden administration released its President's Management Agenda (PMA) in 2021, which defines government-wide management priorities for all federal agencies. The PMA is designed to support progress and opportunities beyond the reach of any single federal agency.

Complementary Informal Coordination
Score: 7

Informal coordination across departments plays a significant role in cross-departmental coordination (Nou 2016). It relies primarily on personal networks, constituency relationships, and other methods. The nature of this coordination is context-specific and often depends on the issue at hand. For instance, during crisis situations, various government departments may come together to manage the situation by sending representatives to ad hoc cross-agency crisis meetings. Departments and agencies also distribute briefs and other forms of information to relevant agencies to keep them updated on their activities.

Since 1980, the federal government has operated a Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), which brings together various law enforcement agencies from both the federal government and local authorities (Herman 2005). Relevant federal agencies in the JTTF include the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Department of Homeland Security, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The JTTF helps coordinate informal information sharing, allocate resources on an ad hoc basis when necessary, and manage responses during crisis situations. Agencies also share memos with each other using the JTTF as a conduit.

The Trump administration's lack of experienced personnel in key agency positions led to an increased role for informal coordination. The executive branch under Trump saw calamitous coordination failures. These failures

largely reflected general problems of understaffing and a lack of competent leadership in the departments and agencies during the Trump presidency.

The Biden administration is currently addressing these challenges by hiring more staff and appointing competent leaders across departments and agencies. The Biden administration is also adopting a management style reminiscent of the Obama administration's, which was more orderly than the Trump administration's chaotic approach.

Quality of Vertical Coordination

Effectively Setting and Monitoring National (Minimum) Standards
Score: 4

The system of federalism in the United States creates very uneven delivery of public services across the nation (Singh 2012). The Constitution gave Congress limited powers, including the ability to lay and collect taxes, pay debts and borrow money, declare war, and raise and support an Army and Navy. Powers not listed belong to the states. Since 1887 Congress has been using the interstate commerce clause to regulate interstate commerce – a powerful tool for Congress to expand its power vis-à-vis the subnational level.

The most powerful tool the federal government has to enforce uniform standards, beyond Supreme Court judgments, is imposing conditionality on national funding to states and localities. It is very common for the federal government to seek to achieve its policy priorities by making funding conditional, either as a condition of receipt of the funds or as a condition for receipt of further funds. This method of central control is known in the academic literature as "fiscal federalism" (Hackett 2017).

While fiscal federalism can be a powerful tool, it is an imperfect one. The ability of federal officials to monitor the activities of state actors is ultimately limited by the information state governments provide or that federal agents can try to collect. More significantly, state governments often attempt to bend the conditions of funding to pursue their own policy aims. In some cases, states simply refuse the funding altogether in an expression of disagreement with the federal government's policy priorities (Miller 2008).

Jamila Michener (2018) has compellingly discussed how Medicaid, a federally funded public health insurance program for those in poverty, is unevenly delivered. Although most of the funding comes from the federal government, states are empowered to shape the delivery of the service. This means some states impose higher levels of conditionality on Medicaid qualification than others, leading to substantial variation in the types of conditions and services Medicaid funds from state to state. This has repercussions for the internal

mobility of poor Americans, who might be hesitant to move to a different state – even if employment opportunities are more attractive – due to the potential loss of health insurance for themselves or a dependent. Overall, federalism tends to exacerbate conditions of inequality within the United States, with poorer areas trapped in poverty and wealthier areas hoarding their wealth (Kelly and Witko 2012).

Effective
Multilevel
Cooperation
Score: 5

The quality of collaboration between federal and state governments depends on the specific policy area. For example, some areas, such as transport infrastructure (especially interstate transport), public health, and emergency management, have tended to show good levels of coordination and interaction between federal and state governments (Bloom 2019).

Yet, in many policy areas, state governments exercise a reasonably high degree of autonomy (Grumbach 2019). Although the federal government is a major financer of health, education, and welfare programs, ultimately, the delivery of these largely rests with state governments (Merriman 2019).

The frequency of meetings between federal and state officials depends on context and policy area (Bakvis and Brown 2010). The closest moments of interaction are typically tied to specific emergencies or threats (Rossi 2013). For example, when concerns over public health emerge, the Department of Health and Human Services may meet with state health departments to coordinate a response.

The president occasionally convenes "White House Summits," which are intended both to signal the president's policy priorities and to serve as coordinating and networking opportunities for state and local officials at a high level.

Government departments that provide funding for major programs administered by state and local governments may regularly meet with subnational officials to monitor the progress of these programs. Officials in the U.S. Department of Education, for example, will meet with state education policymakers and officials to discuss issues such as curriculum, student performance, and funding inequalities (Hackett 2017).

Some departments have joint federal-state programs. This is especially true in law enforcement, with federal agencies like the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Justice working with local agencies on matters such as anti-terrorism or immigration enforcement (Stuntz 2001).

II. Consensus-Building

Recourse to Scientific Knowledge

Harnessing
Scientific
Knowledge
Effectively
Score: 9

The U.S. federal government is well-resourced and supports an impressive array of in-house scientists who help monitor federal programs and better inform federal policy (Jasanoff 1990).

One of the major sites of science in federal policymaking is the Department of Energy. With an annual budget of $30 billion and 10,000 employees – only 138 of whom are political appointees chosen by the president – the department has chief responsibility for energy production and research in the United States. It supports the National Laboratories System, which consists of 17 laboratories across the U.S., and the Office of Science, the largest funder of science in the United States (Lewis 2018).

The Department of Energy's Loan Program Office provides $40 billion annually in loans for energy projects. It allocates special loans for advanced technology vehicles and Native American tribes. The Loan Program Office has supported many significant scientific achievements and made a substantial contribution to the United States economy. For instance, it financed Tesla's factory in Fremont, California (Loris 2016).

The Department of Energy has ARPA-E (Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy), which models itself after the Department of Defense's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) (Bonvillian and van Atta 2011). With a $309 million budget, this program provides funding for risky but high-reward energy-related projects (Bonvillian 2018).

In 2022, the Biden administration signed into law the Chips and Science Act, a $280 billion bipartisan bill to boost domestic high-tech manufacturing and increase funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) and other research agencies, including the Department of Energy's Office of Science and the National Institute of Science and Technology.

Involvement of Civil Society in Policy Development

Effective
Involvement of
Civil Society
Organizations
(Capital and
Labor)
Score: 7

There are many ways in which labor and businesses can influence government policymaking in the United States. The Department of Labor and the Department of Commerce operate as an institutional hub for contact between the federal government and labor and business, respectively (Bensman and Kesselman 2020).

Both labor and business employ full-time lobbyists to advocate for their members and interests. They also have their own campaign organizations and participate in elections through fundraising, advertising, and donations. Labor and business are well-integrated into the party culture of both the Democratic and Republican parties, although labor has historically had, and continues to have, much closer links with the Democrats (Milkman 2019).

Federal agencies occasionally solicit input from labor and business groups during public consultations. For instance, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) seeks comments from various advocacy groups, including unions and businesses, on potential environmental regulations or standards. During the public comment period, unions and business organizations contribute to this process (Hertel-Fernandez 2019).

Various federal agencies also invite unions and business leaders to sit on advisory committees, task forces, and in behind-the-scenes meetings. For example, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regularly invites representatives from labor and business to sit on its advisory committees concerning workplace health and safety (Schickler and Caughey 2011).

Effective
Involvement of
Civil Society
Organizations
(Social Welfare)
Score: 7

The extent to which the U.S. federal government facilitates the participation of leading social welfare civil society organizations is contingent on a variety of factors, including the political affiliation of the presidential administration, the type of policy area, and the differing structures and reputations of the CSOs.

Federal agencies welcome input during public comment periods as they revise rules and practices. This process provides opportunities for civil society organizations (CSOs) to contribute. For example, a housing charity or campaign group might participate in a public comment period initiated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) or the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

In some cases, CSOs might be welcomed by the federal government to become formal or informal advisers or even partners in the delivery of certain programs. For example, Feeding America is the largest hunger relief charity in the United States. It runs over 200 food banks across the country and collaborates with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in several areas (Handforth et al. 2013). Feeding America's food banks are used by the USDA's TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) to distribute federally funded food packages to those in need (Levedahl et al. 1994). Equally, Feeding America works with FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) to provide food packages to individuals who might be affected by short-term loss of resources due to a disaster, such as a hurricane or tornado.

The federal government also provides a range of grants to support the work of social welfare CSOs (Balio 2023). For example, the Department of Health and Human Services' Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds social welfare CSOs involved in alleviating poverty (Spar 2008). This support might include job training, childcare, counseling, and housing assistance.

Effective Involvement of Civil Society Organizations (Environment)
Score: 6

The ability of environmental CSOs to engage with federal government policymakers largely depends on the political inclinations of the administration in power. Democratic administrations tend to be favorable to environmental groups, whereas Republican ones, especially in recent times, tend to be relatively hostile or neutral (Turner, 2018). This partisan divide on environmental issues was not always the case; one of the greatest environmentalists in the White House was Republican Richard Nixon, founder of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (McCright et al. 2014).

During the development of the EPA's Clean Power Plan, the Obama administration invited environmental CSOs, such as the Sierra Club and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), to participate in crafting these regulations and to provide recommendations on how to best reduce carbon emissions from power plants (Gonzalez 2019).

In some cases, CSOs are integrated into the infrastructure of the environmental agencies in the federal government. For example, the EPA's Clean Air Advisory Committee includes representatives from environmental CSOs. This committee advises the EPA on air quality standards and accompanying regulations (Reversz and Lienke 2016).

The Department of the Interior, responsible for managing federal lands and relations with Native American tribal communities, frequently consults with

environmental CSOs on its conservation initiatives. For example, representatives from the Wilderness Society provide guidance on national park management plans. Experts from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) serve on the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee and advise the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on marine conservation strategies.

Openness of Government

Open
Government
Score: 9

The U.S. federal government has various mechanisms to share data and other information with the public, which citizens can use to hold the government accountable (Joyce 2011).

The federal government makes a vast amount of data available online, accessible to the public (Birchall 2015). Data.gov is a major platform where a wide array of government datasets can be found (Krishnamurthy and Awazu 2016). USAspending.gov offers extensive information about federal spending, including grants, loans, contracts, and other government transactions. This information helps citizens track federal spending and understand where their tax dollars go. Regulations.gov is a portal where citizens can find and comment on proposed federal regulations. Performance.gov provides information about the goals, strategic plans, and progress of various government agencies, enabling citizens to hold these agencies accountable for their performance (Bryer 2013).

Most federal agencies have substantial data available for public sharing. The Bureau of Labor Statistics, for example, is one of the world's foremost repositories of historical and current employment information, as well as other data related to workers, such as union density.

Inspector general reports are another way citizens can be informed about the workings of federal agencies. Inspectors general conduct audits, investigations, and other evaluations regarding the behavior of government officials (Brass 2012).

III. Sensemaking

Preparedness

Capacity for
Strategic
Foresight and
Anticipatory
Innovation
Score: 7

There is no central body that coordinates strategic foresight and anticipatory innovation for the entire federal government. However, a wide range of entities within the federal government provides this functionality (Halloran). The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) proposes initiatives aimed at shaping trends in science and technological research (Hart 2014).

The Information Technology Management Reform Act of 1996 created Chief Information Officers (CIOs) in executive branch agencies (Daminescu 2016). The Chief Information Officers (CIO) Council brings together CIOs from various government agencies to enhance IT practices throughout the federal government. The initiative aimed to foster "mid-stream" connections across agencies to improve information technology management (McClure and Bertot 2000).

One of the most significant areas of federal government support for innovative research is the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). DARPA funds high-risk but potentially high-reward science projects, helping to keep the United States at the cutting edge of science and technology research (Fuchs 2010).

Analytical Competence

Effective
Regulatory
Impact
Assessment
Score: 7

There is no statutory legal requirement for the use of Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIAs) for new legislation. However, executive orders and agency guidelines encourage the use of RIAs, especially as part of the executive rule-making process (Jacobs 2007).

Ronald Reagan's Executive Order 12291 in 1981 was the first attempt to use RIAs systematically to improve regulatory outcomes in the federal government (Harrison 2009). In 1993, President Bill Clinton issued Executive Order 12866, titled "Regulatory Planning and Review." This executive order requires all federal agencies to assess the costs and benefits of significant regulatory actions (Hahn et al. 1999). Agencies are encouraged to take a

systematic and consistent approach to regulatory planning and review.

In addition, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issues guidance to agencies on how they should conduct RIAs, especially when it comes to assessing the economic impacts of their proposed legislation (Kirkpatrick and Parker, 2010). OMB Circular-4 sets out this information. The OMB contains the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), to which agencies must submit their RIA. OIRA evaluates the quality of these RIAs and may provide feedback. This helps ensure consistency across departments.

There are limitations with this approach, however. Some agencies have limited resources to conduct comprehensive RIAs, which affects the depth and rigor of these documents. Uniform standards are not possible in all contexts, so a degree of subjectivity is inevitable.

Effective Sustainability Checks
Score: 7

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 requires all federal agencies to prepare Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and Environmental Assessments (EAs) when pursuing policies that affect the environment (Eccleston and Doub 2016). However, some types of actions can be granted a categorical exclusion (Tzoumis and Finegold 2000).

NEPA also established the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), which sits within the Executive Office of the President (EOP) and is tasked with coordinating environmental and sustainability objectives across the federal departments (Conant and Balint 2011).

There is no overarching statutory requirement for sustainability assessments in RIAs. However, several executive orders and agency guidelines address this issue. President Joe Biden issued Executive Order 13990, which instructs federal agencies to prioritize environmental justice and consider climate change impacts in regulatory actions (Polk 2021).

The Office for Management and Budget (OMB) has issued circulars (A-4 and A-11) that instruct agencies to include environmental impact assessments in the Regulatory Impact Analyses (RIAs) (Ellig and Brito 2009). Although the term "sustainability" is not explicitly used, the instructions effectively aim at sustainable goals.

Effective Ex Post Evaluation
Score: 8

Federal agencies commonly use ex post evaluations – sometimes called post-implementation reviews – to assess the impact and effectiveness of federal policies (Kovacic 2006). For example, the Department of Education or the Department of Health and Human Services will conduct ex post evaluations to determine if federal grants have achieved the desired program goals and, if

not, identify and correct the shortcomings. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses such reviews to determine whether housing programs are reducing homelessness or ensuring housing stability. The Department of Transportation regularly conducts evaluations of infrastructure projects to assess their impact on safety, efficiency, economic development, and other factors. There are many more examples across federal departments and agencies, demonstrating the importance of ex post evaluations to federal policymaking.

Since 2018, the Evaluation Officer Council has served as a forum to exchange information between departments, consult and advise the OMB on issues that affect evaluation functions, and coordinate and collaborate on areas of common interest.

Although no statute requires such activities, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has issued guidance to federal agencies on how to conduct such reviews, encouraging them to be rigorous and to use their results to inform better evidence-based policymaking. In addition, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conducts its own independent evaluations and audits of federal programs. These reports usually contain recommendations for improvement in the future (Kinney and Nelson 1996).

Sustainable Policymaking

I. Economic Sustainability

Circular Economy

Circular
Economy Policy
Efforts and
Commitment
Score: 7

The Biden administration has demonstrated a clear commitment to advancing a transition toward a circular economy. It is resolute in its efforts to tackle climate change, promote clean energy, and adhere to principles of environmental justice. The National Climate Strategy includes elements related to the circular economy, such as the promotion of sustainable practices and waste reduction (Mildenberger 2021).

The administration has issued executive orders related to environmental sustainability and climate action. Executive Order 14008, titled "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad," reaffirms the U.S. federal government's commitment to taking immediate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Nussdorf 2021). It establishes a National Task Force, chaired by the National Climate Advisor and consisting of representatives from various federal agencies, to coordinate the federal government's response to the climate crisis (Brush and Bailey 2021). It directs the State Department to generate a strategy for integrating climate considerations into U.S. foreign policy and international relations.

One of the weaknesses of these executive branch-driven initiatives is their uncertain durability. Should Donald Trump win the next election, it would be quite easy for him to pass new executive orders overturning these plans.
In contrast, Biden's landmark "Inflation Reduction Act of 2022" was actually a major green industrial strategy bill (Bistline 2023). It includes billions of dollars in funding for clean energy, climate resilience, and sustainable infrastructure.

Viable Critical Infrastructure

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to a Resilient
Critical
Infrastructure
Score: 8

The U.S. strategy for updating and protecting critical infrastructure is distributed across a combination of legislative and executive branch measures. While there is no single binding document, several key documents provide insight into this strategy and reflect the government's commitment to achieving it.

In 2013 President Barack Obama issued Presidential Policy Directive 21. PPD-21 outlines the federal government's approach to enhancing the security and resilience of critical infrastructure and established a risk management framework to identify and assess risks to critical infrastructure. Relatedly, the National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP) was developed by the Department of Homeland Security. NIPP outlines a risk management framework for identifying, prioritizing, and protecting critical infrastructure sectors.

In March 2022, President Biden signed into law the Cyber Incident Reporting for Critical Infrastructure Act (CIRCIA). CIRCIA requires the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) to develop and implement regulations requiring covered entities to report covered cybersecurity incidents and ransomware payments to CISA.

As is characteristic of U.S. public policy, including that from the Democrats, U.S. critical infrastructure plans tend to rely heavily on the private sector. PPD-21 encourages collaboration between public and private sectors, acknowledging that much critical infrastructure in the United States is privately owned.

There are sector-specific orders relating to critical infrastructure as well. For example, President Joe Biden issued Executive Order 14028, which focuses on improving America's cybersecurity.

Decarbonized Energy System

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to Achieving a
Decarbonized
Energy System
by 2050
Score: 8

In 2020, Joe Biden ran for president on the most ambitious climate agenda of any major candidate in U.S. history (Tollefson 2020). In April 2021, Biden set a new national target of reducing emissions by 50% from 2005 levels by 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

Joe Biden has achieved more on the climate transition front than any of his predecessors, particularly due to his landmark Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 and his Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 – commonly known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Since the enactment of these laws, the United States has seen a surge in clean energy manufacturing (Vangala et al. 2022).

There are encouraging signs of progress (Elder 2021). Over a million electric vehicles were sold in the United States last year, bringing them to nearly 10% of new car sales in the United States. Americans can now access consumer tax credits for electric vehicles. One of the challenges to the expansion of electric vehicles is the lack of chargers. However, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides billions of dollars in subsidies to build 500,000 electric charging points by 2030 under a National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure program (Case 2023). Moreover, the administration has allocated additional funds to maintain the existing chargers.

There are other areas of progress as well. In September 2022, the U.S. Senate ratified the Kigali Amendment on reducing hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has taken action to phase out HFCs (Tan et al. 2023). In November 2022, the Biden administration released a new Methane Action Plan, which includes $20 billion in funding to reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas industry. Biden's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) also taxes methane emissions as a disincentive to firms (Lashof 2024).

While more action is still needed, Biden's administration, in just three years, has achieved far more than any of its predecessors. The administration continues to show strong determination to tackle climate change as part of a bold investment and infrastructure program (Medlock 2021).

Adaptive Labor Markets

Policies
Targeting an
Adaptive Labor
Market
Score: 7

The federal government has some capacity to shape the adaptability of the U.S. labor market to sustainability, but it is ultimately limited by the system of federalism. Nonetheless, some initiatives are worthy of comment. One is "Tech Hire" (Gertner 2015). This was a $150 million program established by the Obama administration aimed at transitioning blue-collar manual workers to coding and other tech career paths, reducing reliance on polluting heavy industry as a source of blue-collar employment (Eyster et al. 2016). The Tech Hire program allocated grants to various initiatives, such as coding "boot

camps" – intensive courses over a few months – to train individuals how to make computer code (Brock 2019).

Labor market policies are significantly shaped by labor law in the 50 different U.S. states. Some states, for example, have "right-to-work" laws under the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act. These laws allow beneficiaries of union-negotiated contracts to refuse to pay toward the union that negotiates those contracts, facilitating a free rider effect that diminishes private sector union membership.

It is notable that while public sector union density remains at about 1 in 3 public sector workers – similar to the levels reached during the heyday of American union density (peak density was about 35% of the non-farm workforce in 1954) – private sector density today is about 1 in 18.

Defenders of a flexible labor market, however, would praise such schemes for reducing the power of unions, who are associated with greater labor market rigidity (which is not always a bad thing) (Moody 2014).

Local governments can hinder labor market adaptability through their licensing practices (Kleiner 2000). For example, some localities impose rigid licensing rules on who can be certified as a taxi driver, hairstylist, or interior designer, which inhibits people's ability to switch careers (Gelhorn 1976).

Policies
Targeting an
Inclusive Labor
Market
Score: 7

Several key federal statutes foster an inclusive labor market. These include the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (and its successor acts) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. These laws prohibit discrimination against workers based on race, religion, sex, or disability. The Supreme Court has recently interpreted the Civil Rights Act to extend protections to gay and transgender Americans as well. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Fair Pay Act of 2009 provide women with protection against pay discrimination in the workplace.

The federal government also funds active labor market programs (Bradley 2015). The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 finances job training, education, and support services (Spaulding 2015). The U.S. Employment Service (USES), a federal agency created in 1933 by Franklin Roosevelt during the New Deal, provides counseling services, job search and placement assistance, and information about job opportunities to the unemployed (Guzda 1983). The aim of the USES is to match prospective employers with prospective employees (Balducchi et al. 1997).

The federal government's tax credit system aims to encourage labor market mobility (Liebman 1998). The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) offers

increased benefits alongside earned income up to a certain level, rather than immediately diminishing (Hotz and Scholz 2001). The idea behind the EITC is to encourage unemployed individuals to seek employment, even in low-wage jobs, rather than rely on unemployment benefits (Meyer 2010). The child tax credit (CTC) is a federal benefit designed to alleviate some of the pressures of raising children and potentially encourage parents to remain in or enter the workforce (Goldin and Michelmore 2022). The CTC has been shown to reduce injuries and behavioral problems, especially for children of low-income parents (Rostad et al. 2020).

However, most employment law originates from state governments, and there is wide variation in these protections from state to state. Each state administers its own unemployment insurance program, although the federal government provides substantial funding to state governments for baseline provision (Chang 2019). Nonetheless, there is significant variation. In states like Massachusetts, Washington and Minnesota, an unemployed person could receive over $1,000 per week in unemployment insurance. In Mississippi, Arizona and Louisiana, support could be less than $300 per week (Hammermesh 2019). States have differing eligibility requirements in addition to the federal government's baseline eligibility requirements (Isaacs 2018).

Policies
Targeting Labor
Market Risks
Score: 3

The social safety net in the United States is relatively sparse, especially when relying solely on the federal baseline (Hacker 2002). Programs such as the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP, otherwise known as food stamps), Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF, a form of means-tested child benefit), and Medicaid (public health insurance for the poor) assist to some extent with managing labor market risks like unemployment. However, there are many gaps in the federal social safety net (Soss and Schram 2007). There is no federal comprehensive paid leave, which negatively affects those facing health issues or parenthood.

For the first four decades of the Social Security Act of 1935, agricultural and domestic service workers were excluded from most of its protections, including unemployment insurance and the state pension (Lieberman and Lapinski 2001). It wasn't until 1972 that Congress amended the legislation to include these groups, who were disproportionately workers of color (Ward 2005). Two-thirds of Black women worked in excluded occupations at the passage of the Social Security Act (Skrenty 1996).

The reliance of the U.S. healthcare system on employer-provided healthcare is a significant barrier to labor market flexibility (Maioni and Marmor 2019). About half of Americans receive their healthcare from their employer or their

partner's or parent's employer (Lockhart 2012). Similarly, paid leave policies are not universally mandated by law but depend on individual contracts with employers (Ramanathan 2021). Given the weakness of unions, these contracts are typically crafted to reflect the interests of employers rather than the best interests of employees (Milkman 2019).

Sustainable Taxation

Policies
Targeting
Adequate Tax
Revenue
Score: 5

The United States enjoys a diverse tax base, with federal revenues coming from income tax, payroll tax, corporate tax, and consumption tax (Kwak 2013). However, the U.S. tax system is famously complicated, with a bewildering array of deductions, tax expenditures, and loopholes (Parlow 2013). This complexity enables those with the means to hire professionals to help them legally reduce their tax contributions (Graetz 2003). The U.S. tax system does not produce enough revenue to eliminate the deficit and provide sufficient resources to fulfill major obligations in the long run.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is the primary federal agency responsible for tax administration in the United States. It collects taxes and enforces tax laws at the federal level. In recent years, it has modernized its systems, allowing for online tax filing and the use of data analytics.

There are reasonable tax enforcement and compliance efforts, including audits and penalties for noncompliance (Alstadsæter et al. 2019). In addition to the IRS, the U.S. Treasury has the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), which analyzes financial data to identify potential financial crimes, such as money laundering or financing terrorism. Tax evasion cases are then prosecuted by the Department of Justice, which works closely with these agencies (Slemrod 2007).

Biden's Inflation Reduction Act addressed long-standing IRS funding deficiencies by providing $79.4 billion in stable, long-term funding through 2031. This funding aims to improve tax compliance by cracking down on high-income individuals and corporations who often avoided paying their lawfully owed taxes and to enhance service for millions of Americans who do pay their taxes. The funding will enable the IRS to modernize its IT infrastructure, administer new energy tax credits, and rebuild the agency's administrative capacity.

As Picketty and Saez (2007) have argued, federal income tax in the United States is "progressively designed, but its progressive nature is often undermined. Marginal rates increase as income rises. For example, the federal tax brackets range from 10% to 37%."

Tax deductions, credits, and exemptions are used to promote horizontal equity by providing targeted relief to specific groups based on their circumstances (Roberts and Hite 1994). The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), for example, is phased out at higher income levels. The American Opportunity Credit and the Lifetime Learning Credit allow individuals to deduct some educational expenses from their tax bills, but these are only available to lower-income Americans (Crandall-Hollick 2014).

The Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) also provides tax credits to low- and middle-income families to subsidize the costs of healthcare (Saltzman et al. 2015). The legislation also imposes a 3.8% net investment income tax on high-income individuals with investment income (Hinde 2017).

Capital gains are taxed at a lower rate than income, which can lead to perverse situations where quite wealthy individuals pay a lower amount of tax than a middle-class family (Mehotra and Ott 2016). However, long-term capital gains are taxed at rates that are supposed to reflect income. Capital gains taxes range from 0% to 20% (Robbins 2018).

The alternative minimum tax (AMT) is designed to ensure wealthy individuals pay a minimum amount of tax, regardless of their ability to take advantage of deductions (Feenberg and Poterba 2004). The Trump administration lowered the maximum AMT from 39.6% to 28%. The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 imposes a corporate alternative minimum tax of 15% on the adjusted financial statement income of large corporations.

"Inheritance tax (known in the United States as the estate tax) does not apply at the federal level for the vast majority of properties (Brunson 2019). Since the Trump presidency, estates under $11 million pay no inheritance tax (Smith 2021). Altogether, the redistributive capacity of the tax system in the United States is low, leading to massive income and wealth inequality."

The U.S. federal government has promoted electronic filing, which reduces paperwork and speeds up processing time. This minimizes both compliance and collection costs (Chang and Limato 2017).

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) provides extensive online resources to help taxpayers find information about their tax liabilities, reducing the need for human interaction and thereby lowering compliance costs. Simultaneously, the IRS engages actively with taxpayers through various assistance programs designed to educate Americans about their tax responsibilities (Krause 2000). These programs are aimed at both individuals and businesses (Engel and Hines 1999).

The IRS uses a risk calculation to determine where to allocate resources for compliance. It employs data analytics to efficiently identify patterns of noncompliance (Hoopes et al. 2012).

On the other hand, the U.S. tax system is known for its complexity. This does not promote transparency or comprehensibility. The sheer volume of laws and exemptions is very difficult for individuals to navigate without professional assistance (Mock and Shurtz 2014). Americans have become highly reliant on tax preparation software to file accurate returns (Zelenak 2010). As a result, the IRS has sometimes demonstrated leniency with misfiled taxes due to confusion. For example, the IRS has a voluntary disclosure scheme that invites individuals to disclose unpaid taxes from previous years without penalty. Biden's Inflation Reduction Act added another layer of complexity to the federal tax code. The new provisions will increase the administrative burden on the IRS and the tax compliance burden on taxpayers.

Policies Aimed at Internalizing Negative and Positive Externalities
Score: 5

The complex U.S. tax system contains a variety of incentives for activities associated with positive externalities. For example, the federal government provides tax credits for renewable energy projects (Newell et al. 2019). The Investment Tax Credit (ITC) and the Production Tax Credit (PTC) support investment and production in wind, solar, and other renewables (Sherlock 2020).

Another example of a tax institution that internalizes positive externality is the Low-Income Housing Credit. It encourages the construction and refurbishment of affordable housing by providing tax credits to developers working on projects in this area. Negative externalities are more often addressed at the state level through the tax system (Hines 2007). For example, many states impose various "sin taxes" on alcohol, tobacco, recreational drugs, gambling, fast food, and sugar (Perkins 2014). The federal government briefly had a luxury tax, introduced in 1990, which applied to high-end cars, planes, yachts, and fur coats (Green 2010). However, the tax proved so unpopular with the wealthy that it was repealed by the Bill Clinton administration in 1993 (Conlon et al. 2022).

Sustainable Budgeting

The U.S. federal government has several institutions designed to assist with the budgeting process. Chief among these are the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). They play key roles in projecting the fiscal impact of policies, facilitating better-informed decision-making (Schick 2008). The White House and Congress publish documents intended to provide accountability, clarity, and justification for budgeting decisions.

Some federal programs are subject to performance-based budgeting rules. Under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, federal agencies must set performance targets and report on their progress toward those targets (Kravchuk and Schack 1996). Failure to meet these targets can have budgetary implications. The federal government also plans for contingencies and emergencies (Radin 2000). For example, the Disaster Relief Fund provides resources to respond to natural emergencies.

The budgeting process itself is reasonably transparent. The president is required by statute to present a budget to Congress. This budget outlines the president's key spending priorities, but the budget document is more of a bargaining chip than a fully accepted fiscal plan (Joyce 1996). Following the president's proposal are weeks of negotiations between the White House, congressional leaders and ordinary members of Congress. The Congressional Budget and Impoundment Act of 1974 sets out a formalized process for budgeting in Congress, but Congress usually misses its own internal deadlines (Hogan 1985).

Members often complain that the final results of negotiations are presented to them at the last minute, requiring them to vote on complex and important budget documents without nearly enough time for proper scrutiny (Schick 1975).

The existence of fiscal rules has a limited effect on curtailing debt and, in many ways, generates more harm than good (Wray and Nersisyan 2022). The Unite States has a statutory debt ceiling, a limit set by Congress on how high the national debt can reach (Kowalcky and LeLoup 1993). If the national debt approaches this limit, Congress must either raise the ceiling, increase public revenues, cut spending, or default. This leads to regular conflicts over the debt ceiling, which become entangled in other policy and partisan debates

(Buchanan and Dorf 2013). Thus, the effectiveness of fiscal rules ultimately depends on the norms and political culture surrounding them, as well as the prevailing economic conditions. Because of massive partisan polarization, budget negotiations have become much more problematic in Congress, leading to a 23-day government shutdown during the Trump administration.

Sustainability-oriented Research and Innovation

Research and
Innovation Policy
Score: 9

The federal government's commitment to using research and innovation as drivers for transitioning to a sustainable economy and society largely depends on the partisan affiliation of the administration in the White House (Karol 2019). Broadly speaking, Democrats support a transition to sustainability, whereas Republicans often question the need for or importance of such a transition (Gustafson et al. 2019).

Nonetheless, some core institutional features drive this transition through R&D (Brown and Hess 2016). The Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) funds clean energy research, including projects that might appear somewhat speculative or high risk and, therefore, less likely to attract private capital (Wurzelmann 2012). The Department of Energy (DOE), the National Institutes for Health (NIH), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the National Science Foundation (NSF) are agencies that play a significant role in funding research and development projects.

The federal government has a National Innovation and Entrepreneurship Strategy and a variety of programs to support innovation. The Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and the Small Business Technology Transfer (SBTT) programs provide funding to small businesses, including startups, to conduct research and development with potential for future commercialization (Qian and Hayes 2014).

The frequency of monitoring research and innovation outcomes depends on the nature of the research, the agency involved, and the specific objectives of the program. Typically, grant recipients are required to monitor progress and report on outcomes. The agency usually conducts its own evaluations and analyses, producing reports on how goals were or were not met and where improvements can be made for the future. Most of these reports are publicly available.

Stable Global Financial System

Global Financial
Policies
Score: 8

The United States plays a vital role in regulating and supervising the international financial architecture. As the major funder of international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, the United States has significant influence. The United States also plays an active role in international forums such as the G7, G20, the Financial Stability Board (FSB), and the Basel Committee on Bank Supervision. Through the Basel Committee, the United States participated in developing Basel III, an international regulatory framework that aims to strengthen bank capital requirements and enhance the resilience of the global banking system.

Domestic legislation, such as the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2009, following the 2007 – 2008 financial crisis, aims to regulate the financial sector, with the United States being the central global player. Dodd-Frank created the Financial Stability Oversight Council (FSOC), which monitors and addresses systemic risks in global finance. It brings together key regulatory agencies to identify and respond to emerging threats to financial stability.

Domestic agencies play a vital role in fostering the stabilization, regulation, and supervision of the international financial architecture. The Federal Reserve, the world's most important central bank, conducts stress tests on major banks to assess their ability to withstand adverse economic conditions.

Dodd-Frank also established the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which has worked to mitigate some of the most problematic aspects of the casino banking sector, aiming to prevent abusive financial practices.

President Joe Biden has taken active steps on the world stage to coordinate responses to unregulated finance and create a more humane financial architecture. He has supported a global minimum corporate tax rate and attempted to crack down on international tax havens. However, Biden's home state, Delaware, has historically acted as a tax refuge within the United States, so his senatorial career was not particularly proactive in this regard.

II. Social Sustainability

Sustainable Education System

Policies
Targeting Quality
Education
Score: 6

The United States has a complex education system. It is not entirely accurate to speak of "the education system" of the United States, given that education has historically been a policy competence of each of the 50 state governments. The national government only became significantly involved in non-higher education in the 1960s, and it is still far less involved in education than many other central governments. The Department of Education is one of the smallest departments in the U.S. federal government. Most education funding comes from state and local taxation. Teachers are employed by local and state governments, with over 10,000 different school districts managing education administration and policy.

It is almost impossible to speak definitively about the integration of sustainable development in the U.S. school curriculum because no single curriculum exists. However, some states have integrated sustainable development into their curricula. For example, California has the Education and Environment Initiative (EEI), which incorporates environmental literacy into the curriculum from elementary to secondary school. Many states have adopted the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), which teach students about the interconnectedness of humans and the environment, as well as other areas of sustainability. Additionally, some schools include global citizenship education, which aims to encourage students to consider themselves connected to the well-being of others worldwide.

Despite significant state-level variation, we can make some general statements about the U.S. education system. The system faces a chronic teacher shortage, one of the reasons being low pay. Teachers' wages, never high, have stagnated or even declined.

Teachers, however, have a reputation for professionalism. Over 90% of U.S. teachers participate in some form of professional development, which is often mandated by their employers.

The federal government has made limited efforts to raise overall standards. The Common Core program aims to ensure that all states meet a basic level of numeracy and literacy for all their pupils.

There is a substantial higher and further education sector in the United States. Community colleges and universities offer a wide range of traditional and online courses, degree programs, non-degree programs, and continuing education programs. Additionally, various community organizations and public sector bodies, such as local governments, provide free or subsidized lifelong learning opportunities, including skills training, language development, and personal intellectual enrichment.

Policies
Targeting
Equitable Access
to Education
Score: 4

The U.S. education system exhibits high levels of inequality, largely due to its highly fragmented nature in both standard-setting and financing. Generally, poorer localities have fewer resources to allocate to their schools compared to wealthier ones, which only entrenches inequality further.

The federal government makes some efforts to correct these inequities, but they are insufficient. The Head Start program, a product of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society in the 1960s, provides preschool education to low-income children, as well as family support services and basic nutrition. Child Care and Development Block Grants (CCDBG) are funds the federal government disburses to state governments, which are then expected to develop programs to help fund quality childcare and early years learning, especially for low-income children.

Title I is a federal program that allocates additional resources to schools with high concentrations of children from low-income backgrounds. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA) builds on previous legislation and was designed to provide funding for resources that enable disabled children to integrate into mainstream schools rather than be educated separately. Millions of U.S. children receive educational support through this fund.

Community colleges offer individuals the opportunity to pursue further and higher education at a relatively low cost, thanks to public funding. However, access to these colleges, as well as the generosity and prevalence of their programs, is often tied to state or local funding issues. Many community colleges are also connected to adult education and literacy programs, such as Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. The General Educational Development (GED) program enables people who did not obtain their high school diploma to receive an equivalent through study and training.

Sustainable Institutions Supporting Basic Human Needs

Policies
Targeting Equal
Access to
Essential Services
and Basic Income
Support
Score: 4

The U.S. federal government provides a limited basic social safety net, implemented or supplemented to varying degrees by state governments, resulting in a fragmented and uneven welfare state. Several federal programs support low-income individuals and families.

SNAP is a federally funded program that is administered at the state level. The program provides cash for a pre-approved set of food and basic items. It is more limited than a direct cash transfer because it cannot be spent on goods like alcohol and tobacco, which have not received federal or state approval. Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) is essentially a means-tested child benefit. Medicaid offers public health insurance to low-income Americans. Both TANF and Medicaid are run by the states, and eligibility criteria and benefit levels vary from state to state within a broad federal framework. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) serves as a federal disability benefit for low-income older people and individuals with disabilities.

The federal government also funds support for housing and education. Section 8 is a federal housing program that provides rent subsidies to private landlords who participate in the scheme. Head Start supports low-income families who wish to enroll their children in nursery school or childcare. Pell Grants are federal grants for low-income Americans pursuing higher education.

The federal government also allocates grants to low-income localities, known as Community Development Block Grants, which can be used for anti-poverty programs. State and local governments can apply for grants to support public transport schemes and other forms of local infrastructure, such as sewers and energy.

On their own, these programs provide only minimal support for individuals, offering almost no disposable income and a constrained quality of life. U.S. social policy is based on the idea of poverty as a temporary misfortune. Consequently, these programs are designed to be used only in the most dire economic circumstances. A $1.9 trillion pandemic relief bill signed by President Biden in 2021 offers a variety of benefits intended to address economic hardship caused by the pandemic, including an expanded, fully refundable child tax credit worth $3,600 for each child under six and $3,000 for those aged six to seventeen. The credit resembles much-debated proposals around basic universal income, which would send cash to families every month.

Policies
Targeting Quality
of Essential
Services and
Basic Income
Support
Score: 3

In general, the United States has an underdeveloped welfare state, and the quality of its public services does not have a good reputation. Public transport, for example, is generally quite cheap, but it is underfunded, often inconvenient, and in some places, almost nonexistent.

The adequacy of public services varies significantly based on geography and subnational policies. Gaps in coverage exist throughout the country. Local governments differ widely in their ability to fund high-quality services. Some localities benefit from a wealthy tax base, small populations, or low need. These areas often enjoy excellent public services, including top-notch state schools, public libraries, and community infrastructure. Other parts of the country, however, may have a lower tax base and/or higher-need populations, resulting in abysmal quality of public services.

The Biden administration invested heavily in infrastructure, particularly in renewable energy, highway, and digital infrastructure, in an effort to modernize public infrastructure.

Sustainable Health System

Policies
Targeting Health
System
Resilience
Score: 5

The U.S. healthcare system is highly fragmented. About half of Americans receive healthcare through their employer or a family member's employer. Approximately 20% obtain healthcare from Medicare, which is public health insurance for those over 65 years old. Another 20% receive their healthcare through Medicaid, which is public health insurance for those who are impoverished. A small proportion get their healthcare through other public health insurance programs such as the Indian Health Service, which serves Native Americans, and the Veterans Administration, which covers current and former soldiers and their dependents. The remaining U.S. population must purchase health insurance on the private market, though some are eligible for a tax credit subsidy thanks to the Affordable Care Act (ACA, often referred to as "Obamacare").

This patchwork healthcare system has various negative implications. For one, it limits labor mobility. Workers are reluctant to change jobs if it risks depriving them and their families of health insurance. Although Medicaid is federally funded, state governments administer it, setting different qualification thresholds and inconsistently covering treatments and health services depending on the state.

The federal government funds certain programs to help improve health system resilience, such as the Public Health Emergency Preparedness program administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The program focuses on six main areas of preparedness for local public health systems: community resilience, incident management, information management, countermeasures and mitigation, surge management, and bio-surveillance.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the massive inequalities at the center of the U.S. healthcare system. Immediately after becoming president, Biden signed several executive orders to reverse some of the Trump-era policies on healthcare that aimed to weaken the ACA. In March 2021, the American Rescue Plan was signed, incorporating temporary increases in premium tax credits and other measures to improve access to healthcare coverage. The administration aims to make these policies, which are only in effect until the end of 2022, permanent, a move that would positively impact healthcare provision in the United States.

In general, the fragmented character of the healthcare system and the influence of special interest groups makes it hard to achieve the goal of a resilient health system for all people.

Policies Targeting High-Quality Healthcare

Score: 5

The United States. boasts some of the best healthcare in the world, characterized by highly trained and experienced doctors, cutting-edge medical technology and facilities, and significant spending and investment in health research and practices. However, access to this system is extremely uneven and largely depends on the personal economic resources of individual Americans and their families.

American health outcomes are not as impressive as they should be given the medical resources available in the country. Much of this stems from inequality in the American healthcare system, with poor Americans struggling to access preventive healthcare, lead a healthy lifestyle, and reach health services in a timely fashion.

In addition, the "fee for service" model of American healthcare rewards the volume of interaction with the health service, not the quality of interaction. It is in the economic interest of medical providers for patients to return frequently rather than be kept healthy and away from their practices.

There are some federal policies designed to increase and protect the quality of care for the unwell. The Affordable Care Act of 2010 (Obamacare) created

Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs), entities that promote collaboration among healthcare providers with the intention of improving care coordination, increasing quality, and reducing costs.

Policies Targeting Equitable Access To Healthcare
Score: 3

The United States does a poor job ensuring equitable access to high-quality healthcare. Although the Affordable Care Act of 2009 (Obamacare) improved the situation somewhat by requiring minimum coverage for insurers and eliminating discrimination based on a "pre-existing condition," the legislation did not guarantee an equitable standard of healthcare to all Americans, regardless of economic resources. Americans still experience different quality of healthcare based on their ability to pay.

State policies contribute to these inequities. For example, under Obamacare, states have been encouraged to expand the Medicaid health insurance program to cover all citizens living at or below 137% of the federal poverty line. The federal government would pay for nearly all of the coverage for these additional Medicaid recipients. However, for largely ideological or partisan reasons, a handful of states have refused to expand Medicaid or have only done so with conditions like work requirements, depriving millions of Americans of access to public health insurance to which they would otherwise be entitled.

Gender Equality

Policy Efforts and Commitment to Achieving Gender Equality
Score: 6

The federal government's commitment to gender equality depends to some extent on the particular presidential administration in office at any given moment. For example, the current administration has a White House Gender Policy Council. Under Barack Obama, there was the White House Council on Women and Girls. However, during the Trump administration, there was no such policy.

There are more durable elements of gender equality promoted by the federal government in both law and practice. For example, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 requires substantial support for equal higher educational opportunities for women, including extracurricular activities and, crucially, sports. The Violence Against Women Act of 1994 provides funding to support women who experience domestic violence, including housing support, crisis hotlines, and legal aid. It also funds community prevention programs designed to educate, inform, and prevent violence against women.

Efforts to incorporate gender equality into the U.S. Constitution have failed. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was a significant national initiative aimed at enshrining women's rights into the Constitution. Although it garnered two-thirds support from both houses of Congress, it did not secure the necessary approval from three-quarters of state legislatures in the 1980s.

Strong Families

Family Policies
Score: 5

There are some federal policies designed to facilitate or offset the costs of family care work.

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 allows for up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for family care, including childcare (after the birth or adoption of a child) or care for a spouse or parent with a serious medical condition. Although the leave is unpaid, legal protection is provided to prevent the employee from being dismissed. However, there are few paid family leave options, which depend on the beneficence of the employer or, in rare cases, on state law. Many states operate their own programs to subsidize childcare and early childhood education after means testing.

The child tax credit was created in 1997 (Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997). Under President Donald Trump, the amount was increased to $2,000 per child (Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017). The credit was temporarily expanded further in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, increasing the credit to $3,000 – $3,600 per child. Families earning (jointly) $150,000 or less were eligible, covering 88% of children in the United States. Since 2022, the amount has reverted to $2,000 per year. Millions of children are lifted out of poverty thanks to this program.

The Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit allows taxpayers to reduce their childcare costs from their tax bill, with the maximum deductible amount ranging from $3,000 to $6,000 depending on the number of children in a household.

In 2023, the Biden administration issued an executive order on increasing access to high-quality care and supporting caregivers. This order aims to provide high-quality care for older Americans and support family caregivers, long-term care workers, early educators, and veterans.

Sustainable Pension System

Policies Aimed at Old-Age Poverty Prevention
Score: 6

The Social Security Act of 1935 established a federal public pension scheme for American workers. Before this legislation, many states had their own pension schemes, and workplace pension schemes were becoming more common. The original act had many gaps, particularly its exclusion of workers in agriculture and domestic service, which disproportionately affected African Americans.

Today, the U.S. public pension, known by Americans as "Social Security," is a bedrock welfare benefit that enjoys widespread public support. When President George W. Bush attempted to privatize the scheme following his reelection in 2004, he faced significant backlash and had to abandon his plans.

Social Security is a protected part of the federal government's spending regime. It is a non-discretionary program, meaning it is not subject to annual budget wrangling. The benefit is automatically adjusted for cost-of-living to account for inflation. However, there are criticisms that these adjustments are not always sufficient to meet the rising needs of American pensioners.

The federal Social Security pension is insufficient for a comfortable retirement in most parts of the United States, especially for those with low earnings during their working years. As a result, many Americans rely on private pension schemes, typically provided by their employers, which offer more generous benefits. However, not all workers or Americans have access to such schemes, leading to significant variability in retirement economics. Consequently, many elderly Americans continue working to supplement their income. Additionally, old-age poverty is comparatively high in the United States.

In 2022, the Biden administration awarded $36 billion to prevent cuts to the pensions of union workers and retirees. The funding comes from the American Rescue Plan.

Policies Targeting Intergenerational Equity
Score: 5

Social Security, the U.S. federal pension program, acts as a basic social safety net for American retirees. Although many Americans believe Social Security is a personal benefit accrued through workplace contributions during their working lives, this is a misconception. Instead, current workers pay for the current generation of retirees. Demographic shifts, therefore, could pose challenges to the system. The U.S. retiree population is growing, as is the overall U.S. population. However, the ratio of workers to retirees has shrunk.

If this trend continues, there are concerns about the continued viability of Social Security in its current form.

Changes to the Social Security system impact intergenerational inequality because they deny younger generations the benefits they have paid for the current generation of retirees. Consequently, maintaining Social Security in its current form is seen as politically important. Since George W. Bush's politically disastrous attempt to change the system, few major politicians have sought to alter it. This reluctance spans both the left and the right. Indeed, one of Donald Trump's major social policy pledges was to protect Social Security from cuts.

Sustainable Inclusion of Migrants

Integration Policy
Score: 6

Several agencies manage immigration policy in the United States. The Department of Homeland Security has overarching responsibility for immigration administration, including U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). USCIS handles visa petitions and naturalization applications. CBP manages the Border Patrol force and seeks to enforce U.S. immigration law at borders and ports of entry. ICE investigates breaches of immigration law and initiates deportation proceedings. ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) carries out deportations.

Other federal agencies play an important role in the U.S. immigration legal infrastructure. The Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration certifies conditions for employment-based visas. The Department of State's Executive Office for Immigration Review conducts immigration court proceedings and hears cases involving asylum claims and violations.

The United States admits more than a million legal immigrants each year. The Census Bureau's Current Population Survey records that nearly 50 million U.S. residents were not born in the United States, making up 15% of the total U.S. population. The Census Bureau had previously estimated that this proportion of foreign-born residents would not be reached until 2033, ten years later than has actually happened.

There are various schemes to attract migrant laborers to the United States. These include employment-based visa categories, which often allow the

inclusion of dependents and other family members (sometimes known as chain migration). IR visas are for "immediate relatives," including spouses, children (including married children), adopted children, and parents.

Several types of employment visas exist. These include "priority workers" (which actually targets high-end business professionals), skilled workers, and special workers (for example, individuals who have worked for the U.S. government in conflict zones like Afghanistan and Iraq). The United States also issues visas for refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as visas for victims of human trafficking. High-level investors in the U.S. economy might be eligible for a special visa.

The Diversity Visa Lottery, established in 1990, allocates a modest 55,000 visas to the United States on a random basis.

The United States has a substantial undocumented migrant population participating in a large shadow economy. Certain sectors, such as agriculture, are highly dependent on illegal migrant labor. Some reports suggest that over half of U.S. farm workers are in the country illegally. The federal government typically does not deport individuals who have entered and settled in the country with a clean criminal record. Most deportations occur against undocumented arrivals apprehended at the border, with 2.5 million attempted border crossings in 2023 (homeland.house.gov) and 2.2 million in 2022 (nytimes.com).

The federal government has created programs to provide illegal immigrants with routes to the U.S. education system and labor markets. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) scheme allows individuals who were brought into the U.S. illegally as minors to apply for a renewable 2-year deferral from deportation and access to a work permit.

To become a U.S. citizen, an immigrant typically must first qualify for Lawful Permanent Residency (a green card). This can be obtained through employment, family sponsorship, refugee status, or other qualifying categories. The green card holder must then live in the U.S. for three to five years, demonstrate good moral character (avoid committing crimes), undertake language and citizenship tests, submit a naturalization form, provide biometric data, pass an interview with a U.S. Customs and Immigration Service officer, and swear an oath of allegiance to the United States.

Effective Capacity-Building for Global Poverty Reduction

Management of
Development
Cooperation by
Partner Country
Score: 6

The United States is the largest aid provider (in raw terms) in the world. The main agency for foreign assistance is the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID provides aid to support low- and middle-income countries' economic development, public health, education, governance, climate resilience, gender equality, and more.

In addition to specific aid to countries, USAID supports many ongoing, wider projects and initiatives. These provide a certain degree of predictability and stability for foreign partners. For example, Feed the Future was founded in 2010 during the Obama administration to address global hunger and food insecurity. Feed the Future works in 20 target countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Feed the Future assists farmers in boosting their sales, providing them access to new markets and the infrastructure to expand their operations. Its investments total $2 billion per year.

There are also cross-agency initiatives that aim to fight poverty and ill health in the developing world. One prominent example is the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), launched by President George W. Bush in 2003. The initiative, which coordinates agencies across the federal government and works with international partners, is credited with saving over 25 million lives, mainly in Africa.

The U.S. government supports multinational aid initiatives and aligns its operations with the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, the United States is a strong supporter of global vaccine initiatives. The United States supports Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which works to increase immunization coverage and strengthen health systems. The United States also participates in the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) to improve health security worldwide.

III. Environmental Sustainability

Effective Climate Action

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to Achieving
Climate
Neutrality by
2050
Score: 8

The commitment of the U.S. federal government to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 is greatly influenced by the administration in office. The current administration, under President Joe Biden, has explicitly committed to working toward zero emissions by 2050 in Executive Order 14008, "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad." In his first days in office, President Biden re-entered the United States in the Paris Climate Agreement. He hosted the Leaders Summit on Climate and reiterated the commitment to net zero by 2050, as well as the pledge to halve emissions from 2005 levels by 2030.

Biden's executive action is not binding, and its durability partly depends on the commitment of future presidential administrations to these goals. However, Biden has also signed substantial climate spending investments into law, which will have a long-term impact regardless of the ideological leanings of his successor. The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 is the biggest climate infrastructure bill in U.S. history. Experts believe this legislation will bring the United States to lower its carbon footprint by at least 40% of 2005 levels by 2030.

The Biden administration has made various sector-specific climate pledges. It has committed to 100% clean energy by 2035 through substantial investments in solar and wind power. Additionally, the administration has allocated considerable resources to improve the energy efficiency of buildings, modes of transport, and industrial processes. It has also supported investments in electric vehicles by providing subsidies for Americans to purchase electric vehicles and funding to build electric charging infrastructure.

The Biden administration has used federal procurement to promote climate action. The Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) contains provisions relating to sustainable purchasing. Government departments are required to consider energy efficiency and sustainability when making procurement decisions. The General Services Administration (GSA), which manages the federal government's vehicle fleet, has been instructed to transition the federal fleet to electric and zero-emissions options. Federal buildings are expected to be constructed sustainably, minimizing energy consumption and environmental impact. Various government departments, such as the Department of Energy

and the Department of Defense, have power purchase agreements for solar and wind energy to power federal operations and facilities.

Effective Environmental Health Protection

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to Minimizing
Environmental
Health Risks
Score: 6

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the primary federal agency responsible for protecting the public from environmental health risks. It sets and enforces environmental regulations and standards, and takes action against pollutants and other hazardous substances that contaminate the air, water, and soil.

The EPA enforces a variety of federal statutes related to the environment. Under the Clean Air Act of 1970, the EPA has established the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), which it uses to reduce air pollution in collaboration with partners in state and local government. Under the Clean Water Act of 1972 and the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974, the EPA monitors water quality and enforces drinking water standards for local public and private utilities. The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA) created a "superfund" from which the EPA can draw to fund cleanup efforts and mitigation at hazardous waste sites.

Other agencies enforce and monitor environmental health. The National Institutes of Health includes the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, which conducts research on environmental health issues. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) all have responsibilities for monitoring potential environmental health risks, especially in the areas of public health, the workplace, and consumer products, respectively.

The federal government places obligations on private sector industries to disclose information about potential hazardous substances they may be using. The Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act of 1986 requires industries that work with toxic chemicals to report this information.

On his first day in office, President Biden announced a series of actions to promote and protect public health and the environment. Most of those actions depend on the EPA's regulatory authority. The executive order also required a review of several Trump-era regulations that weakened pollution standards or

sought to permanently restrict the agency's authority to impose health-based pollution standards.

Effective Ecosystem and Biodiversity Preservation

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to Preserving
Ecosystems and
Protecting
Biodiversity
Score: 7

Preserving ecosystems and protecting diversity are duties shared by federal, state, and local entities. The level of commitment varies between federal administrations, as well as among different state and local administrations.

Nonetheless, broad legal structural forces influence the operations of these agencies. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 requires federal agencies to assess the environmental impacts of their actions and decisions, taking into account ecosystems, biodiversity, and environmental health. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 protects endangered species and aids in their recovery, including the protection and nurturing of their natural habitats. The act is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Both the USFWS and NMFS carry out a variety of conservation activities. For instance, the USFWS manages the National Wildlife Refuge System, a network of public lands dedicated to wildlife conservation.

The National Park Service, under the Department of the Interior, is a major federal agency managing over 85 million acres (350,000 square kilometers – roughly the equivalent of Germany's entire territory) of federal lands dedicated to protected parks supporting the natural environment, ecosystems, and biodiversity. Within the Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Forest Service, a separate agency, manages over 150 national forests covering nearly 200 million acres (800,000 square kilometers – equivalent to the combined territory of the United Kingdom and Ukraine).

The federal government also sponsors conservationists in state and local government and in the private sector through initiatives like the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a nationally competitive grant program that provides funding to support natural ecosystems benefiting wider communities.

The Biden administration invested $44 million to address critical ecosystem resilience, restoration, and environmental planning needs for the National Parks Service in 2023.

Effective Contributions to Global Environmental Protection

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to a Global
Environmental
Policy
Score: 7

The present U.S. administration plays a reasonably prominent role in shaping global environmental protection regimes and policies. It does so through various channels.

Historically, the United States has actively engaged in negotiating and participating in international climate agreements, such as the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes. However, the full extent of U.S. participation has sometimes been limited by a recalcitrant Senate, as with the ratification of the Kyoto Agreement, or by hostile administrations, as with President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.

Nonetheless, on balance, the United States. has played and continues to play a key role in environmental diplomacy. The State Department's Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, for instance, leads diplomatic negotiations and fosters collaboration on a range of environmental commitments.

In addition, the United States significantly contributes to global environmental funds. For example, the U.S. government supports the Global Environment Facility, which funds biodiversity and conservation projects while focusing on climate change mitigation and sustainable development. The U.S. government also funds the Global Innovation Lab for Climate Finance, which develops financial instruments to help advance investment in clean energy, energy efficiency, and climate-related projects. USAID runs a "Clean Energy Investment Accelerator," which seeks to mobilize private investment in renewable energy projects.

The U.S. government also helps transfer and disseminate environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favorable terms. Power Africa, an initiative led by USAID, is tasked with providing clean and reliable energy throughout sub-Saharan Africa and is focused primarily on harnessing solar energy.

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