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House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
“America Forward: Restoring Diplomacy and Development in a Fracturing World”  
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Chairman Meeks, Ranking Member McCaul, Honorable Members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, good afternoon. I bring you greetings from the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. It is an honor for me to testify before you today on the subject, “America Forward: Restoring Diplomacy and Development in a Fracturing World.”

I shall do my best to offer an analysis of America’s position in the world and to propose courses of action to strengthen our international engagement.

To use a football metaphor, it has been observed that since World War II American foreign policy has been played generally “between the forty-yard lines.” In other words, though Republican and Democratic administrations may take more traditionally right- or left-leaning positions with regard to our international engagements, there have been both alliances (such as the commitment to NATO) and imperatives (like support for democracy promotion) which constituted the bedrock of American foreign policy regardless of which political party occupied the White House. That tradition was largely upended by the Trump administration through its so-called “America First” approach to the rest of the world. To be clear, there is absolutely nothing wrong with prioritizing American interests in our international engagements. Indeed, America’s citizens expect their government to protect and promote their well-being in the world, and citizens of other countries expect their governments to do the same. The critical question is whether the conduct of foreign policy invites other partners to see their interests aligned with those of America, or establishes a zero-sum environment where there are only winners and losers.

Creating frameworks where other countries can see their own success tied with America’s is the very definition of international leadership. It is regrettable that the prevailing view amongst many respected foreign policy experts is that over the last four years, America has done just that –

abandoned its traditional role of global leadership. As former Secretary of State James Baker III said in remarks to the American Academy of Diplomacy in 2018, “The United States cannot retreat from the world stage. We have too much at stake.” (I submit a link to Secretary Baker’s remarks for the record.)

In my view, there is no scenario in which America is better served by abdicating its leadership responsibilities rather than fulfilling them. To restore America’s global leadership position, I would suggest focusing on four lines of effort: rebuilding foreign policy institutions, reasserting global commitments, reevaluating foreign policy priorities, and renewing a domestic governing consensus.

Most of America’s foreign policy institutions have suffered to some degree over the last four years, but perhaps none more so than the State Department. It has seen an exodus of professional diplomats at all levels of seniority as well as a dramatic decline in diversity amongst its senior ranks. Ambassadors William J. Burns and Linda Thomas-Greenfield detailed the damage done to the Department in their *November/December 2020 Foreign Affairs* article, “The Transformation of Diplomacy: How to Save the State Department, which I submit for the record. Rebuilding the State Department is vital for the restoration of American diplomatic power.

Reasserting global commitments is essential so that America’s allies and its adversaries know that it will keep its word even as presidential administrations change. From a robust reengagement with NATO to shoring up security partnerships in East Asia, reestablishing confidence that America will keep its word is a necessary step for reestablishing American leadership. I note that senior officials in the Biden administration have already begun this work, yet the reassuring of allies will be an ongoing effort in which both relevant Executive Branch officials and Members of Congress on a bipartisan basis can constructively contribute.

Reevaluating foreign policy priorities in light of global developments is also in order. The world has moved on over the last four years. Countries have hedged their bets as American intentions and commitments previously understood to be sacrosanct were cast into doubt. New challenges have emerged, from increased instability in Ethiopia and the greater Horn of Africa to new players

ving for influence across Latin America. The current administration must evaluate the world anew on the basis of the values that will guide its approach to foreign policy and then prioritize the challenges confronting it.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the United States must recognize the inescapable connection between the quality of its governance at home and the efficacy of its power abroad. The increasingly tribal nature of American politics undercuts the reputation of the United States for sound democratic governance, which is an essential component of its soft power. Further, adversaries such as Russia and China exploit America's tribal divisions to weaken the country internally and to undermine its standing abroad. Rebuilding the basis for a bipartisan consensus both for American foreign policy and for governing at home is vital for America's future position in the world. I wrote about overcoming the challenges of American tribalism in the latest issue of *Foreign Affairs* in an article titled, "The Fractured Power: How to Overcome Tribalism," and I submit my article for the record. In brief, I offer as solutions the importance of national leadership willing to work across tribal (i.e., political) lines, the need for citizens to cross tribal lines locally to work together in civic organizations, and the reform of governing arrangements that incentivize tribal divisions, such as partisan gerrymandering.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee today. I look forward to your questions.