

EMERGING GLOBAL THREATS: PUTTING AMERICA'S NATIONAL SECURITY FIRST

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY
AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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EMERGING GLOBAL THREATS: PUTTING AMERICA'S NATIONAL SECURITY FIRST

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m., in room 2247, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. William Timmons [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Timmons, Cloud, Biggs, Crane, McGuire, Subramanyam, Lynch, and Mfume.

Mr. TIMMONS. Good morning. This hearing of the Subcommittee on Military and Foreign Affairs will come to order. I want to welcome everyone here today.

Without objection, the Chair may declare a recess at any time.

I recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Good morning and welcome to the first hearing of the Subcommittee on Military and Foreign Affairs. I look forward to working with Ranking Member Subramanyam and all the Members of the Subcommittee throughout this Congress.

Today, we are here to get a better understanding of the challenges facing our national security and the urgent need to restore America's strength on the world stage.

Over the past 4 years, we have seen a series of policy failures that weakened our global standing, undermined national security, and emboldened our adversaries.

While the previous Administration spoke of prioritizing Americans' safety and leadership, its actions certainly told a different story—one of strategic drift, reactive policymaking, and diminished deterrence.

We see this in the Indo-Pacific where U.S. allies question our resolve and adversaries probe our vulnerabilities.

The previous Administration's failure to respond decisively to challenges, whether in the South China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, or securing critical supply chains, has dissolved confidence in America's leadership.

Similar, in Europe, President Biden's relentless demand that Ukraine become a part of NATO only exacerbated Russia's aggression.

The Biden Administration failed to communicate a clear end game after Russia further invaded Ukraine, allowing the war to drag on at great cost to global stability and the American taxpayer.

In nearly 3 years, the U.S. allocated \$124.9 billion in security assistance to Ukraine. To put this in perspective, the U.S. spent nearly \$89 billion in security assistance in Afghanistan over 20 years.

I cannot help but be concerned about the speed at which funds are being allocated and whether they are being used effectively.

Even though we support Ukraine against invasion by Russian forces, it is critical that we ensure accountability and strategic oversight of our financial support to reach objectives that benefit the U.S. national interest.

Unconventional threats in the digital domain continue to reveal our vulnerabilities. Nation-states and criminal organizations engage in cyber espionage and attacks against critical infrastructure.

The GAO has consistently named cybersecurity as a threat year after year on its High-Risk List. Despite decades of warnings, the failure to prioritize this vulnerability continues to jeopardize our national security.

The lack of urgency with which the prior Administration approached these vulnerabilities put American businesses and citizens at risk. We must act to defend our cyber frontiers, invest in resilient infrastructure, and strengthen public-private cooperation to remain a global leader.

Finally, while the Biden Administration was preoccupied with other priorities, the global terrorist threat grew. The botched withdrawal from Afghanistan was more than just a failure to execute. It signaled to the world that the United States was willing to abandon allies and leave security vacuums that enemies could exploit.

Iran-backed terrorist organizations, such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis, have escalated their attacks with alarming frequency. The October 7, 2023, terrorist attack on Israel was a direct consequence of failing to maintain strong deterrence in the Middle East. The ongoing hostage crisis, in which several Americans remain captive, underscores the price of the Biden Administration's inaction.

The Trump Administration has already demonstrated decisive action in securing the release of American hostages, leveraging strong diplomatic pressure and strategic negotiations.

In contrast, the Biden Administration's approach was slow and reactive, leaving U.S. citizens in Gaza and elsewhere in prolonged danger, with little tangible progress.

At home, we cannot ignore the security risks posed by an unsecured southern border. Since 2021, nearly 400 known or suspected terrorists have been apprehended crossing into the country illegally—and those are only the ones who we caught.

Luckily, President Trump has made a priority to restore border security. After rapid action on day one, we are already seeing results. In just the first 20 days of the Trump Administration, illegal border crossings decreased by over 90 percent, according to the U.S. Border Patrol.

President Trump's strong leadership—reinstating the "Remain in Mexico" policy, canceling unlawful parole programs, resuming bor-

der wall construction, and deploying 10,000 U.S. troops to enhance border security—have all helped to reduce the threat at the border.

President Trump is undoing the crippling policies of the Biden Administration and returning the globe to peace through American strength.

Congress must support President Trump's efforts to restore deterrence, modernize defenses, and reaffirm our commitment to an America First national security posture.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today.

I now recognize Ranking Member Subramanyam for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you, Chairman Timmons, and thank you for holding this hearing. I look forward to working together on the Subcommittee and doing everything we can to ensure the safety and security of all Americans.

I also want to make sure that this Committee will support our military and foreign affairs personnel here and around the globe, and from our conversations it sounds like that will be a priority for this Subcommittee. So, I am grateful for that.

They and their families make so many sacrifices for our country and we thank them for their service.

I want to thank today's witnesses for appearing before the Subcommittee to share their expertise as well.

Protecting the American people against emerging global threats, ensuring America's national security, these are bipartisan issues.

We can agree that there are global threats to the safety and security of the United States and its allies.

We can agree that we need a foreign policy that strengthens America's standing in the world, combats our adversaries, and counters extremism.

And we agree that we need to be prepared for those threats, and preparation means having the tools, having the technology, and most importantly, having the very best and most qualified personnel to keep us safe and represent us on the world stage.

But what I, and I think many others across the political spectrum, really are concerned about is this: Does this Administration know who our adversaries really are or who our allies really are?

Two, does it understand what it takes and all the things we need to do to protect us from emerging threats and strengthen our standing in the world?

And three, does it know who it takes to be prepared for these threats, the personnel, the seasoned diplomats, the military experts, the technology experts.

I have some doubts, honestly, even these first few weeks of the Administration, and so do many others.

Let us start with really defining who our allies and adversaries really are, because I think there is some confusion. I cannot believe we have to do this, but here we go.

Russia is not our friend. Vladimir Putin is not a trustworthy partner. They do not want integration and cooperation with us. They want an independent sphere and influence that destabilizes Europe.

China is not our friend. The CCP is also not a trusted partner, not to mention their abhorrent record on human rights.

Europe is not our enemy. We have similar goals, shared values, and most importantly, many decades of mutual trust and cooperation with the goal of global peace and stability.

Mexico is not our enemy. They are not only a trusted ally, but their cooperation is integral when it comes to border security and fighting cartels.

Canada is not our enemy, at least not outside the hockey rink. They are a trusted ally. So, why are we threatening to annex them right now?

So, let us ask the question of what it takes to be prepared for emerging global threats and how the U.S. can be a reliable partner in the world.

The answer is not erratic and unpredictable foreign policy. The answer is not making and breaking promises to our allies. The answer is not betraying our allies, signaling to them that we are an unreliable partner.

If our allies believe that they cannot rely on us, they will stop sharing critical intelligence. That is a threat to our country. Intelligence sharing with our allies is a critical part of protecting America's national security.

And how do we expect to strengthen our ties and build trust if we are actively declaring trade wars on our allies or if we are supporting fringe extremist groups in their elections or if we are baselessly calling our democratically elected allies dictators?

And finally, is this Administration ensuring that we have the personnel, the institutional knowledge, and the expertise to quickly and effectively respond to emerging threats? What is happening right now is a brain drain in the Federal Government. The shuttering of agencies and the disdain for our civil servants is a huge threat to our national security and actively goes against the goal of preparing the country for emerging threats.

How do we respond to emerging global threats when our President does not even seem to understand who our threats are or how we stop them? Instead of protecting our national security, he is mimicking the propaganda of our authoritarian adversaries in some cases, sending mixed signals to the world of what we stand for, and firing the best people who are positioning us to keep us safe.

So, I hope that Members of this Committee share my desire to conduct true oversight to further our shared goals of keeping our country safe and prosperous, because this Administration's foreign policy, even to date, is essentially a surrendering to our emerging threats, not addressing them head on. It is making us weaker, less prepared, and it threatens our future and makes Americans less safe.

So, I yield back.

Mr. TIMMONS. I am pleased to welcome a distinguished panel of witnesses who bring both experience and expertise that will be valuable to today's discussion.

I would first like to welcome Brent Sadler, who is a retired captain of the U.S. Navy and led many initiatives in the Indo-Pacific during his tenure. Mr. Sadler is currently serving as a Senior Research Fellow of Naval Warfare and Advanced Technology at the Heritage Foundation.

Next, we have Meaghan Mobbs, who is a former Army officer, paratrooper, and combat veteran with an extensive background on defense, national security, and public safety, and currently serves as Director of the Center for American Safety and Security at the Independent Women's Forum.

Next, we have Jacob Olidort, who is a preeminent scholar on issues related to the Middle East and is currently the Director of the Center for American Security at the America First Policy Institute.

Last, we have Charles Kupchan, who is a Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and Professor of International Affairs in the Walsh School of Foreign Service and Department of Government at Georgetown University.

I thank each of the witnesses for being here today and I look forward to your testimony.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 9(g), the witnesses will please stand and raise their right hand.

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman TIMMONS. Thank you.

Let the record show that the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

You may take your seat.

We appreciate you being here today and look forward to your testimony. Let me remind the witnesses that we have read your written statement, and it will appear in full in the hearing record. Please limit your oral statements to 5 minutes.

As a reminder, please press the button on the microphone in front of you so that it is on, and the Members can hear you. When you begin to speak, the light in front of you will turn green. After 4 minutes, the light will turn yellow. When the red light comes on, your 5 minutes has expired and we would ask for you to please wrap it up.

I now recognize Mr. Sadler for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF BRENT SADLER
SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW
THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION**

Mr. SADLER. Good morning, Chairman Timmons and Ranking Member Subramanyam, and thank you for the opportunity to share my insights with the distinguished Members of this Committee and the American public.

It has been nearly 4 years since Admiral Philip Davidson, the then-Commander of the Indo-Pacific Command, warned that China was preparing for a war over the fate of Taiwan by 2027.

In the time since, American statecraft has not risen to the times as recent world events make clear.

Russia has invaded Ukraine and waged the largest war of aggression in Europe since World War II—an avoidable war.

But missed opportunities to posture military forces, confusing diplomatic messages, like the President's "minor incursion" remark in late January '22, together with the persistent reluctance to arm

Ukraine with the weapons and with authorities to use them as needed, signaled a green light for invasion and a predictable years-long war of attrition.

With Western allies providing munitions and weapons to Ukraine in a prolific and unsustainable rate, Iran, through its proxies, attacked.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a barbaric assault on erstwhile ally Israel, which grew to include proxies in Iraq, Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Houthis in Yemen.

The attacks in the Red Sea against our warships have further depleted American munitions critical in a war against China—120 SM-2, 80 SM-6, 20 Standard Missile-3, and Advanced Sea Sparrows—that will take many months to replenish.

This followed the former Administration's sanctions relief releasing more than \$16 billion to Iran and nonresponse to Iran proxy attacks, 83 of which against U.S. forces occurred between January 2021 and March 2023, only four of which of those occasions were responded to.

This made clear to the mullahs in Tehran the time to attack was then.

China has also been very active, testing a fractional orbital bombardment system that greatly complicates our strategic attack detection and defenses, quadrupled its ICBM forces from 100 to 400 missiles, while rapidly expanding its modern navy to over 370 warships, far in excess of our 295 warships this morning.

This has fueled a confidence and increased aggressiveness by its military. Violent and dangerous confrontations like that at Second Thomas Shoal last summer that saw several Filipino sailors injured, one of which losing a thumb, are, unfortunately, becoming the norm.

In each of these cases, it is important to note that our allies play a role. America First does not mean America alone. And a key lesson of the Ukraine war, many of our Asian allies have noted, is that an ally unable to defend itself or delay adequately an aggressor is a liability to our collective defense and very likely to suffer defeat.

America must heed this lesson as well and tend to its defenses, better to include securing our economy, while our allies work with us to bolster our common defense that has been neglected for too long.

Case in point, Taiwan. Over \$20 billion in arm sales critical to deterring a Chinese invasion has languished for far too long. This backlog must be cleared.

The reason for this is diversion of munitions like Stingers and Javelins to the war in Ukraine, of course, but also a lackluster and inadequate defense industry here at home.

This was made unavoidably evident as our domestic artillery and munition production, only 14,000 rounds a month at the beginning of that war, could not keep up with the rate of expenditure on the battlefield. Ukraine was needing to use and expend 20,000 rounds a day.

Taiwan is stepping up, too, with increased defense spending, over 2 percent of GDP they have spent since 2022. And the island's new

President, elected last year, is moving forward to reach a 3 percent of GDP goal.

Finally, if we cannot secure our own supply chains and sustain a wartime economy, we are vulnerable to coercion by a China that effectively controls the terms of trade via its network of ports and maritime dominance.

To be a good ally, the U.S. must strengthen its defenses and harden its economy by restoring a vibrant competitive maritime industry. The lessons of the last 4 years make clear: Sustained peace is only possible with a strengthening of our defenses.

Thank you.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you.

I now recognize Dr. Mobbs for her opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MEAGHAN MOBBS
DIRECTOR
CENTER FOR AMERICAN SAFETY AND SECURITY
INDEPENDENT WOMEN'S FORUM**

Dr. MOBBS. Chairman Timmons, Ranking Member Subramaniam, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on emerging global threats. For me, this means having a timely discussion on the future of U.S. foreign aid and the indispensable role of soft power in securing American interests.

The world is rapidly changing and authoritarian regimes are waging a relentless campaign to expand their influence, undermine Western institutions, and reshape the global order. They understand that power is not only measured in tanks, ships, and missiles, but also in influence and perception.

If we are to prevail in this competition, the United States must effectively deploy both hard power and soft power.

Hard power, our military capabilities, requires political will and material strength.

But soft power, the power of our ideals, our culture, and our global partnerships, requires equal critical will and a disciplined strategic approach to the exportation of American values.

Yet, the American people have lost faith in soft power or foreign aid by another name. And who can blame them? For decades they were told their hard-earned tax dollars are being used to advance U.S. interests, build alliances, and project American leadership abroad.

Instead, the last few weeks have demonstrated that millions vanished into a bloated bureaucracy, enriching contractors and NGOs with deep pockets and deeper ties to Washington, while the world grew more dangerous.

The American people do not forget when their generosity is exploited, their security is put at risk, and their trust is betrayed. This is what the managed decline of American soft power looks like.

Let us be clear, USAID became a racket. The real money was not in results, but in relationships. Accountability was an afterthought; success was measured by dollars obligated and not outcomes achieved.

Worse, USAID drifted from its original mission. It became a platform for social experiments disconnected from strategic interests and the needs of the local populations it purported to serve.

For example, in regions vulnerable to Russian disinformation, USAID directed resources toward advancing controversial social agendas in societies where such efforts were culturally alienating and counterproductive. This not only undermined our credibility, but provided Russia with powerful propaganda tools against us.

In the Middle East, as Iran extended its reach, USAID poured money into projects that have ties to terrorist groups and espouse anti-Israeli commentary.

Human rights matter. Freedom of expression matters. Freedom of religion matters. But what we got instead was arrogance, waste, and failure. And the American people saw that. They saw their money squandered while their own communities crumbled.

Similarly, the United Nations now stands exposed as a relic of a bygone era. Far from effective at multilateral cooperation, the U.N. has become a stage upon which authoritarian regimes flaunt their power and democratic nations flounder in procedural paralysis.

The time has come for the United States to fundamentally reassess its support and potentially defund the U.N. altogether.

Defenders of the U.N. argue that its existence, however flawed, is better than nothing. This is a dangerous delusion. A system that legitimizes aggression and rewards hypocrisy breeds more conflict, not less.

Diplomacy devoid of enforcement is an invitation to lawlessness, and we see the consequences of that today: war in Europe, genocide threats in the Middle East, and an increasingly aggressive China in the Pacific.

The United States must lead in forging a new path. Clinging to a dysfunctional institution out of fear of the unknown is not leadership. It is surrender.

Multilateralism is not inherently virtuous, especially when it shackles America to an institution that emboldens its enemies.

This is why the American people now view foreign aid as a dirty word, not because we are isolationists, not because they lack compassion, but because they know a scam when they see one.

But here is the danger. Their anger, though justified, is leading us toward retreat, and retreat is exactly what China and Russia want.

Soft power is not charity. It is a weapon, one that when wielded correctly can shape the battlefield before a single shot is fired. Beijing understands this. Moscow understands this. The question is, do we understand this?

China's Belt and Road Initiative is not simply about building roads and ports. It is about entrenching influence, creating dependencies, and expanding Beijing's geopolitical reach.

Russia's disinformation and destabilization campaigns are not just about spreading lies. They are about weakening Western alliances and exploiting societal fractures.

Soft power, when properly executed, is a force multiplier. When we build critical infrastructure in a developing country, we deny

China. When we support independent media in Eastern Europe, we blunt Russia.

These outcomes are not nice to have. They are core national security imperatives. We must rebuild the credibility of American soft power not as a vanity project for Washington elites but as a weapon in defense of our Nation and the free world. But it must be reformed, refocused, and reinvigorated.

Peace through strength requires both the resolve to defend freedom and the wisdom to inspire it.

Thank you.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you.

I now recognize Dr. Olidort for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF JACOB OLIDORT
DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR AMERICAN SECURITY
AMERICA FIRST POLICY INSTITUTE**

Dr. OLIDORT. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, esteemed Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

Last week we learned about an Israeli mother, Shiri Bibas, and her two boys, Ariel and Kfir, who today would be age 5 and 2. They were murdered in cold blood by Hamas monsters. An autopsy of the bodies of the boys, the youngest of whom at the time was just shy of 10 months old, revealed indications of torture with bare hands.

In a further twist of the knife, when the caskets were returned and the expectation, reasonable one, that under these circumstances, perhaps, these unthinkable circumstances, a mother could be together with her children, well, Shiri's body was not there.

This is the true face and expression of what Hamas and its acolytes around the world truly seek. It is a wake-up call to us about the true face of evil and our responsibility to never, ever allow it to succeed.

The Middle East is the part of the world that I know best, and it is there that I will focus my remarks.

Today our close partners in the region, Israel and the Arab states, are eagerly looking to the United States to lead. I believe that what will happen in this region will shape world events for years to come with implications for how we deal with the People's Republic of China and with Russia.

President Trump and his team bring the exact right focus, innovation, and boldness to deal with this anti-American axis. Their approach worked in 2017, yielding historic achievements, and they will work today.

It is thanks to President Trump and to his team that we are finally seeing American hostages returning home from around the world, including those who have suffered unthinkable conditions in Hamas' terror tunnels.

The world in 2025 could not be more different from the one President Trump inherited in 2017. The Middle East has transformed overnight in unimaginable ways due solely to the bravery and sacrifice of the men and women of the Israeli Defense Forces and the Israeli Air Force through the invaluable support of the

United States, making Iran its weakest in decades. And yet, paradoxically, Iran is also its most aggressive, all as it inches closer toward acquiring a nuclear weapon.

Those parts of the region that were once formerly part of its empire of terror, parts of Syria and Lebanon, thanks to the effectiveness of Israel's military pressure, today are entering new chapters of transition and uncertainty, presenting challenges for us.

In the Middle East today, I believe there are three key priorities for the United States that require urgent attention. The first: How to deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran. The second: How to effectively eliminate the threats facing Israel. And the third: How to restart the Abraham Accords.

Earlier this month, President Trump reintroduced an expanded version of his maximum pressure campaign scaled to address the full gamut of threats that the Iranian regime poses to the American people both abroad and at home.

On that very same day, President Trump unveiled a bold new vision for the future of Gaza, one that explicitly promises and guarantees the prosperity and security of the Gazan people just as it does to their neighbors to the north.

This is a subject that nobody had wanted to talk about, much less for which anybody had previously offered a plan.

By making this announcement, President Trump immediately catapulted this issue to the top of his priorities in the region, compelling our regional partners to cooperate on a plan, as they are doing today.

It is in America's interest to see the Palestinians are free of Hamas, of Islamic Jihad, and of the Iranian regime influence.

So, what can Congress do? There are two general things I think Congress can do.

The first and easiest is to go visit. There is no better education you can give yourselves and your staff than to be on the ground, visit key sites, and hear directly from our friends on the front lines.

There is also no greater symbol of support than for our elected officials to appear shoulder to shoulder with our friends in their time of need.

Second, I encourage you to look and follow the administration's policy on Iran, augmenting it as events develop on the ground, while looking pragmatically at places like Syria and Lebanon and where our regional partners can help lead and shape events on the ground to enforce our deterrent against our adversaries.

This is not a job for the United States to do alone, and yet it is only the United States that can point the way.

America First foreign policy is not America alone. It is the projection of American strength abroad on behalf of the American people, marshalling our allies and partners to build a better world of peace and security. I encourage you to build that world for the sake of our people and for our children.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you.

I now recognize Dr. Kupchan for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF CHARLES A. KUPCHAN
PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
SCHOOL OF FOREIGN SERVICE AND GOVERNMENT
DEPARTMENT
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
SENIOR FELLOW, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS**

Dr. KUPCHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to have the opportunity to share a few thoughts with you this morning.

I think we are at a historical inflection point in the United States and globally and that President Trump has the potential to be the agent of change that would adapt the United States and U.S. grand strategy to a changing world and it would adapt a world to a changing United States.

We have been through an era that we call Pax Americana which opened at the close of World War II. And it was based upon U.S. primacy, it was based upon a thriving political center in the United States, the rise of the middle class, fired by the industrial era. And this gave rise to a certain kind of American foreign policy and a certain kind of international order anchored by the United States.

And I think we are now at the end of that era, and the end of that era has been driven by the onset of the digital age and by the erosion of the American middle class and with it the hollowing out of the political center.

And we are also in an era in which power is shifting in the international system from West to East and from North to South.

As a consequence, we need to go from the old to the new, and Trump, if nothing else, is a disrupter who recognizes that it is time to go from the old to the new.

The question that I have in my mind that I pose for the Committee: Is President Trump going to be only a demolition man who brings down the old order and leaves us standing in the rubble or is he actually going to be someone who brings us from the old to the new and builds an American grand strategy and an international system that is better, that is more stable, and that works better for average Americans as well as for global peace?

There are aspects of Trump's foreign policy that give me hope. He is more transactional and he is therefore talking to Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. That in my mind is a good thing. We need to talk to bad guys and not just to our friends.

No. 2, he is pushing fair trade rather than free trade. We have lived through several decades of hyper globalization that did not work to the benefit of many Americans. It is time to fix that.

No. 3, less democracy promotion, less time spent solving problems far afield, more time spent solving problems at home.

No. 4, immigration. I do not think there is any American in this country who does not understand we have a broken immigration system.

And No. 5, a leaner, more effective, and more efficient American Government. Who can object to that goal?

That having been said, I see four risks, and they are very serious risks, of where America First could run off the rails.

No. 1, that this transactionalism turn into a unilateralism that leaves the United States isolated on the world stage, bereft of the alliances that it has built since World War II, and imposing tariffs

on all of our partners in way that not just disturb our geopolitical relationships but fragment the global economy.

This looks a lot to me like the 1930's and Smoot-Hawley if we do 25 percent on Mexico, 25 percent on Canada, and 60 percent on China.

No. 2, underreach. What is happening today with Ukraine is on the one hand a good idea. We need to talk to the Russians. But it has been handled very poorly. There is no strategy.

Why is Trump insulting Zelenskyy? Why is he saying that Ukraine is to blame? Why did he just yesterday order his diplomats to vote no on a resolution at the U.N. that said this is Russian aggression? If this is not Russian aggression, I do not know what aggression is.

And so, we need a government that understands who is right and who is wrong and to stand up for a democracy that is struggling for its survival.

No. 3, yes, let us not waste a lot of time trying to turn Afghanistan and other countries into Ohio, but let us make sure we protect democracy here at home.

And I have studied what happened in Hungary and in Turkey and other countries that became illiberal democracies after long runs of democracy. We are not far from that outcome.

And I would ask this House, this institution, to make sure that it jealously protects its powers and that we make sure that the rule of law and that the norms and practices of liberal democracy are preserved.

Final point, I think the United States needs a better and more efficient government. What I see happening is the United States is breaking its government. President Trump is taking a wrecking ball to the U.S. Government and the world that America made, and it is time——

Chairman TIMMONS. Doctor? Doctor, your time is up.

Dr. KUPCHAN [continuing]. To speak up.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes of questions.

Mr. Sadler, the U.S. is engaged in an era of great power competition, yet our actions have not always reflected the urgency of this challenge.

How would you assess the United States' current strategic posture in relation to China and Russia? And are we sufficiently prioritizing military readiness and deterrence?

Mr. SADLER. Yes. The short answer is that we are shooting behind the duck, to use a southerner's term here. We have admired this problem as a Nation, bipartisan, multi-branch, executive, Congress, for far too long.

In the early 2000s, China acknowledged, recognized as the smoke was still rising over the September 11 attacks in 2001, it was their strategic window of opportunity, and they have not failed to deliver on that. They have rapidly grown across the board their military while we have shrunk.

And we need to do better. It requires reorganizing the way that we are doing business in government. We do need to take a fresh perspective, like we did in 1947 with the National Security Act, and get ready and retool for this new cold war that we are in.

But the focus on just readiness is a failure. Focus just on capacity is a failure. And focus just on some new capabilities and modern weapon systems is also a failure. We are in an “and” world. We have to do all three of those things if we hope to keep the peace.

Mr. TIMMONS. All while realizing we have \$36 trillion in debt. Sounds easy.

A critical element to this problem is that the Biden State Department prioritized certain foreign military sales while ignoring others, despite all being authorized by Congress.

It seems that the future—well, at least in retrospect with Ukraine, it would have been better to arm them prior to Russia invading. The term that I think is used most is the porcupine method.

As of September 2024, U.S. foreign military sales backlogged to Taiwan included 20.5 billion weapons that had yet to be delivered.

What specific reforms are needed to ensure critical defense equipment reaches our allies in a timely manner?

Mr. SADLER. Yes, this one is troubling, because the place where we could see the biggest war is with China and the United States. And so, it is imperative that we get these weapons to Taiwan. Beijing does count bullets. They count missile tubes. They do count all of these things in their military-to-military balance. It is the easiest, most cost-effective way to avoid what could be the most destructive war that we have seen since we became a Nation.

Of course, looking back at Ukraine, thanks to President Trump in his first time, he started moving in lethal assistance. It was a little too little, a little too late, unfortunately, as we know, in February 2022. But we cannot allow that mistake to be repeated in Taiwan. The odds are too high.

So, we need to get that moving. It is process as much as it is money, but it is also industrial capacity. And that means you have to sustain the demand with orders and with resources and budget, and it is really a question of prioritization.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you for that.

Dr. Olidort, can you outline the key differences between the Trump and Biden Administrations’ approach to securing the release of American hostages?

Dr. OLIDORT. Absolutely. Thank you for the question.

In my view, President Trump inherited a bad negotiating hand with this process. It is part of why it has taken so long; not the only reason.

But for one thing we should never have been a neutral broker. We are a party to these negotiations. We have American hostages there. We should have never taken this passive approach. That is just on the framing of it.

And then also, about a dozen nations have been represented among the hostages. In other words, there are a lot of opportunities to reframe and reshape how those negotiations take place.

But I think the more important issue is the withholding of assistance to Israel, the operational and tactical direction and management of Israeli military engagements in Gaza, which are far and beyond any modern military in terms of preserving human life. That all had a corrosive effect by showing a big gap between the United States and our close partner.

So, I think those two, hand-in-hand, were problematic.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you.

I want to thank each of the witnesses again for testifying.

What I am hearing consistently from each of you is that we need to support President Trump's work to leverage the power of the U.S. economy, improve diplomatic relations, and modernize our defenses.

And I realize that some of my colleagues across the aisle are going to take issue with the manner in which the Administration is attempting to end the war in Ukraine. But I will point out that they were able to get Mexico and Canada to the table in just hours to secure their side of the border before anybody could even throw stones at the proposal.

So, yes, we are in a unique era of international relations, but I do believe that these new approaches have potential, and I do believe that Secretary Rubio is very incredibly talented and has the potential to resolve a lot of these challenges ahead of us.

Thank you. That is all my time.

I now want to recognize the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Subramanyam, for 5 minutes.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I heard a couple interesting things, and I will get to them.

But first I wanted to talk about military personnel and foreign affairs personnel, because that is in the news a lot right now and there is many of them in my district.

I, in particular, have talked to many defense contractors, people who work for those contractors, people who work at places like USAID and the Defense Department.

And one of the things I keep hearing is that they will go find a job in the private sector. Certainly, this is hard on their families to have this unpredictability or be laid off altogether.

But what they are concerned about is the work, really. A lot of their work sustains our importance and our influence in countries they work in or regions they work in. A lot of our work and the work that they do is critical to our safety.

And sometimes it is not easy to explain. It is not easy to explain a nuclear scientist is making sure that our nuclear arsenal is safe. But when you fire all the nuclear scientists, one, how are you supposed to get them back? They are having trouble getting them back and walking back that mistake, for instance.

And two, do other future nuclear scientists want to join our government and help be a part of the solution, help the safety and security of the American people, and take a lesser salary in many cases to do that?

Are we a good employer? That is going to be really critical in attracting the best and brightest talent in our government.

And so, this is something I keep hearing over and over again. And especially when you cutoff—when you cancel a contract, many times the company will have spent many years investing millions of dollars or more into trying to develop that technology or that asset. And that research and development ends up really going to the wayside and we go years behind on military technology and assets as a result. And so, I want to start there.

But I ask for unanimous consent to enter into the record this February 24, 2025, article from *The Washington Post* titled “U.S. votes against U.N. resolution condemning Russia for Ukraine war.”

Mr. TIMMONS. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. And the first line says, “The United States voted with Russia, North Korea, Iran, and 14 other Moscow-friendly countries Monday against a U.N. resolution condemning Russian aggression in Ukraine and calling for the return of Ukraine territory.”

And I would just ask our witnesses today—Mr. Sadler, I will start with you—do you believe Ukraine and Zelenskyy were responsible for this war that is happening now?

Mr. SADLER. Thanks again for the chance to be here.

I would say the first thing is the metric in which you evaluate success.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. It is a yes-or-no question. Do you think that Ukraine was responsible for the—do you blame Ukraine for the war that is happening right now?

Mr. SADLER. No, I do not.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Dr. Mobbs, do you blame Ukraine for the war that is happening?

Dr. MOBBS. No.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Dr. Olidort, do you blame Ukraine for the war that is happening?

Dr. OLIDORT. No, I do not.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Dr. Kupchan, do you blame Ukraine for—OK. It is interesting.

And then what about this U.N. resolution here? Do you feel like it was appropriate for the United States to vote against this resolution, Mr. Sadler?

Mr. SADLER. I think it is the wrong metric to evaluate. Getting a lasting peace is the real thing, not a meaningless U.N. vote.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. So, you believe that we should have voted with Russia, North Korea, and Iran on this U.N. resolution?

Mr. SADLER. No. The end is what I am focusing in on. Do we get a lasting meaningful peace between Russia and Ukraine that serves American interests? This vote will be forgotten.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Does this vote give us a lasting peace?

Mr. SADLER. I think the jury is still out on that.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. OK.

Dr. Kupchan, do you believe this vote on the U.N. resolution gives us a lasting peace? Do you think this was the right move for the United States?

Dr. KUPCHAN. No, I do not. I think the only way we are going to get a lasting peace is making it very clear to Vladimir Putin that he cannot keep taking territory from Ukraine. That is the way to get peace. It is to stop him.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. I think I would agree with that.

And something else, Mr. Sadler, you said was that if our allies cannot defend themselves, then they are almost—they are not our ally. Is that what you said? I would love for you to clarify that.

Mr. SADLER. Yes. Absolutely. I would love to clarify that.

What I saw firsthand in the summer of 1922 in Tokyo was for someone that grew up in Japan a very stark change because of what they saw in Ukraine.

The lesson they took from that—and I have heard it in other countries throughout Asia—is that if you do not take care of your defense adequately and you cannot sustain yourself long enough for your allies to come in, you are a liability to that—

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. I would say what I took from that, what I am taking from this Administration's foreign policy is that we are not going to be there for our allies, and so why would our allies want to trust us?

I yield.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you.

I now recognize the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Biggs, for 5 minutes.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Mobbs, in your written testimony you open a section on multilateral institutions by stating the U.N. is a failed institution.

I used to represent NGOs at many multilateral institutions, including the United Nations. And if you want to see illiberal democracy at work, you need to just go up to the U.N. If you want to see corruption at work, you just need to go to the U.N.

So can you elaborate on your statement that it is a failed institution.

Dr. MOBBS. Absolutely. I mean, clearly, it is paralytic, it is bureaucratic. There is evidence of corruption, as you said. If you read my written statement, just a few examples of that is the Rwanda genocide that we saw occur, Bosnia, Syria, its inability to deter aggression in Ukraine.

Not only that, there was the oil-for-food scandal in 2004. Oftentimes they spend more money on conferences and the administration than they do actually on the programs.

There has been U.N. peacekeeping abuses. There has been allegations of sexual exploitation in Haiti, Congo, all over the place.

I am not against alliances, but I think it is clear that this institution no longer serves American interests and is oftentimes, in fact, contrary to American interests.

Mr. BIGGS. Well, thank you for that. I will leave that.

And I will just point out that in the discussion on soft power, economic relationships, the trade relationships, those are also indicative of soft power as well.

And the U.S. is actually, I believe, now using this kind of soft power. I mean, you see it in the response with Mexico and Canada just like lickety-split to actually close the border. So, now you have record lows. You have not seen this low number of daily encounters in probably 30 years. More. I do not know when. I grew up on the border. I do not know when we have seen fewer than these.

I want to go to Dr. Sadler.

[Speaking foreign language.] Glad to have you here with us today.

The weakness on the world stage emboldened our geopolitical rivals. China and Russia continue to attack U.S. critical infrastructure with few consequences. What can the Trump Administration do to hold China and Russia accountable for these attacks?

Mr. SADLER. Well, thanks.

This is the challenge of this new cold war that we are in.

First, we have to be willing to use all tools that are available to us for an end state, a strategic end. And too often we have operated in cylinders of excellence, the economics kind of on their own, the military off on their own, and the diplomatic kind of on their own. We need to bring that together and bring all those forces to bear, specifically.

Just this morning, actually in the last—not this morning, but the last 24 hours—there was a Chinese vessel yet again caught severing undersea cables to Taiwan. That vessel is being boarded right now.

This is the type of—I would say we are moving out of gray zone, a comfortable gray zone that we have gotten too comfortable in the last 20 years, into a more real and more conventional kind of confrontation.

So, we have to be ready for these types of incidents. We have to be able to hold those shipping companies—

Mr. BIGGS. I just want to interrupt you just for a sec. When you talk about that, that is not the first time that has happened even in the last 6 weeks. It has happened multiple times.

Mr. SADLER. Yes.

Mr. BIGGS. I want to ask you this question.

It has been reported that Chinese-backed hacking groups Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon have gained access to U.S. energy and telecommunications infrastructure. These groups targeted existing law enforcement and national security intercepts for wiretap access points.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit for the record an article called “Chinese telecom espionage began with ‘much broader’ aims,” and another one, “U.S. officials urge Americans to use encrypted apps amidst unprecedented cyber attack.”

Mr. TIMMONS. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you.

The same report suggests that these attacks were successful in accessing communications of 150 select high-value targets, including people affiliated with President-elect Donald Trump.

The cyber-attacks were so thoroughly embedded in telecom infrastructure that Federal law enforcement agencies urged Americans to use communication methods with end-to-end encryption despite years of efforts by these same agencies to mandate similar back doors and end-to-end encrypted communication apps.

Mr. Sadler, what do you believe the Trump Administration could do to fight against these cyber-attacks?

Mr. SADLER. There, of course, is the question of offensive where you have to put more cost and accountability on those that are launching these attacks. That is always going to remain behind the veil of secrecy.

But continuing to resource and to continue to sharpen those tools, which in many cases may take months if not years to get the placement necessary so that when an actor like the Chinese Communist Party does do another attack against us, the United States and its citizens, that we are able to levy a cost on them.

Mr. BIGGS. Internationally you are seeing that the U.K. has secretly demanded that Apple create a similar back door to allow for government to spy on users' encrypted accounts. Senator Ron Wyden and I wrote a letter to the Director of National Intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard, on this issue earlier this month, and I ask that it be received into the record.

Mr. TIMMONS. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. BIGGS. Oh, how I wish I had more time. Thanks.

Mr. TIMMONS. I now recognize the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Lynch, for 5 minutes.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I just want to say thank you, to Mr. Chairman and the Ranking Member, for putting together a great hearing, very, very timely and important.

And I want to thank some excellent witnesses for your testimony. It varied in some cases, but very thoughtful, nonetheless.

As the Ranking Member pointed out earlier in his questioning, in recent days President Trump has falsely claimed that Ukraine started the war against Russia. This is despite the fact that we all know that in 2022 President Putin actually took credit for this, and I quote him. He said, "I decided to launch a special military operation against Ukraine." That is the mere fact.

Also, many of us on this Committee and across Congress, we sat in classified briefings for months—for months—as Russia slowly moved mechanized armored divisions from as far away as Vladivostok, like 4,000 miles away, to the Ukrainian border, and then finally, as all the witnesses have pointed out, launched the invasion.

He has also—President Trump has also accused freely elected Ukrainian President Zelenskyy of being a dictator and someone who just wants to keep the gravy train going in terms of funding. And as the Ranking Member again pointed out, just yesterday the United States had its U.N. representative join Russia to vote against a United Nations General Assembly resolution which condemned Russia's war against Ukraine, which many saw as a stab in the back to NATO and a shameful reversal of long-time U.S. foreign policy in support of Western democracy.

The President's dangerous lies in support of Putin, who is nothing better than a gangster, are shameful and make us look weak and strong [sic]. We have strayed from the enduring purpose of U.S. foreign assistance to defend human rights and basic freedoms abroad in the interest of U.S. national security.

That has been a policy that has been shared by Ronald Reagan and Jack Kennedy. Ronald Reagan said our national interests are inextricably tied to the security and development of our friends and allies. And President Kennedy similarly said—he said foreign aid is a very powerful source of strength for us, for our U.S. long-standing support for global democracy and security as defined by American exceptionalism.

Dr. Kupchan, what advantage does the U.S. get from its support? We have supported Ukraine to the tune of over \$150 billion over the past 5 years, military support. Ninety percent of that support was spent in the United States through military contractors pro-

viding that aid to Ukraine. What is the advantage that we get from that?

Dr. KUPCHAN. The main advantage that we get from helping Ukraine survive as an independent country is investing in the security of Europe and Eurasia.

Going back to the early days of America's involvement globally, we decided that we did not want to let that strategic heartland be dominated by a hostile power. And as a consequence, we have taken steps to block Russia from doing that.

We are not putting boots on the ground. This is a good investment. We are spending a rounding error in the defense budget. And we are blocking Russia.

One other point, if I may.

Our strong suit in standing up to Putin is our solid front with Ukraine and our allies. And it is penny wise and pound foolish to distance ourselves from Ukraine and to end up in a situation where the new German Chancellor, on the eve of his election victory, says: I do not think I can count on our alliance with the United States anymore. Something is wrong when that is the first statement of the new German Chancellor.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I am going to yield the balance of my time to the Ranking Member.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you.

I want to kind of finish along those lines.

You may have seen the cutting of USAID and firing of many of its workers. And we heard a little bit about the China Belt and Road Initiative. How do you think this is going to influence our sort of standing in the world?

Dr. KUPCHAN. Meaghan is right that there is waste, there is corruption, but you do not throw out the baby with the bathwater. You fix the problem.

And right now, as we speak, all around the world, people are starving. They are being denied medicine. Fundamental humanitarian assistance is being withheld.

Who is benefiting? Our adversaries—the Chinese, the Russians, and others who are filling the gap.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you. I yield.

Mr. TIMMONS. I now recognize the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Crane, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing today on America's national security.

I want to start by asking the panel—I am going to start with you, Mr. Sadler—if you are aware of how our Founding Fathers felt about imperialism and empires?

Mr. SADLER. Well, we fought a revolution to go against it.

Mr. CRANE. Right.

Mr. SADLER. I think that is still true to this day.

Mr. CRANE. What about you, Dr. Mobbs?

Dr. MOBBS. I would argue there is no kings, just patriots.

Mr. CRANE. I want to read some statements and see if you guys know who said this.

"The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connections as possible."

Does anybody know who said that?

Dr. KUPCHAN. George Washington.

Mr. CRANE. Yep. George Washington.

How about this one?

"Peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none."

Dr. KUPCHAN. Thomas Jefferson.

Mr. CRANE. Thomas Jefferson.

How about this one?

"The United States have no business in making conquests nor in aspiring to any kind of empire. The principal object of government is to secure the happiness of society, not to extend the boundaries of an empire."

Anybody know who said that? Come on.

Dr. KUPCHAN. Can I guess?

Mr. CRANE. Yep.

Dr. KUPCHAN. John Quincy Adams.

Mr. CRANE. Yes, sir. Exactly.

Why do you guys think that our Founding Fathers were so concerned with imperialism and empire building? Anybody know? Anybody?

Mr. SADLER. Well, I think the lesson of American citizens under the British empire was a very personal one where you had soldiers in your house. It is a lot of why we have our Bill of Rights.

The other is, I think they were probably also students of history that those type of entanglements would basically bankrupt us and get us away from our core principles of democracy.

Mr. CRANE. Bingo.

Mr. SADLER. And free society.

Mr. CRANE. Bingo.

Does it concern you guys that we are \$36 trillion in debt, annual deficit of \$2 trillion as we sit here and we talk about the United States' global involvement?

Any of you guys—because I know this really—economics probably is not your core study, but any of you guys wonder when that tipping point is going to be, whether it is \$40 trillion in debt, \$50 trillion? Anybody ever wonder about that?

Dr. KUPCHAN. I wonder about it and worry about it, because we ran deficits around 55, 60 percent of GDP when we were a global power. We are now at 120 percent-plus and headed higher. We are going to go bankrupt.

Mr. CRANE. I completely agree with you, which is why I believe that the United States should be very cautious in extending itself too far, and I believe in many ways that we have.

And I say this, please understand, as somebody who dropped out of college my senior year to join the Navy in the week after 9/11 and do multiple deployments. So, I do consider myself a patriot and somebody who loves this country, but I do believe we have extended ourselves way too far and I think we should harken back to some of the wisdom of our Founding Fathers.

I want to now go into NATO.

Mr. Sadler, what percentage of GDP is the United States paying right now for national defense?

Mr. SADLER. Around about 3.5 percent.

Mr. CRANE. What about the other countries in NATO?

Mr. SADLER. You got U.K. and several others come in around 2.5 percent on a good day.

Mr. CRANE. France 1.9 percent, Italy 1.5, Canada about 1.4, Germany 1.6, Spain around 1.2.

Do you think it is fair to the United States and our citizens that these other countries that we have an alliance with are not spending even 2 percent or 3 percent of their GDP?

Mr. SADLER. I would say it is actually even worse than being fair. It is extremely dangerous and reckless on their part.

Mr. CRANE. Absolutely.

What about you, Dr. Mobbs?

Dr. MOBBS. I completely agree.

Mr. CRANE. I want to read you guys a list of some things that we have recently uncovered about USAID, which I actually tried to defund by 50 percent last year.

One-point-five million dollars to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in Serbia's workplaces and business communities. Seventy thousand dollars for production of a DEI musical in Ireland. Two-point-five million dollars for electric vehicles in Vietnam. Forty-seven thousand dollars for a transgender opera in Colombia. Thirty-two thousand dollars for a transgender comic book in Peru. Two million dollars for sex changes and LGBT activism in Guatemala. Six million dollars to fund tourism in Egypt. And I could go on and on and on.

Do you think, Dr. Mobbs, that that helps with the security of the United States, that type of spending?

Dr. MOBBS. Absolutely not, and, actually, it erodes our security.

Mr. CRANE. Absolutely.

Next, I want to talk about, real quick, because I have heard some of my Democrat colleagues rail against the Trump Administration foreign policy.

Who was the President when Russia invaded Georgia? Anybody know?

Dr. MOBBS. Obama.

Mr. CRANE. Bush.

Who was the President when Russia invaded Crimea?

Mr. SADLER. That was Obama.

Mr. CRANE. That was Obama. Yes.

Who was the President when Russia invaded Ukraine?

Dr. MOBBS. First time or second time?

Mr. CRANE. Second time.

Dr. MOBBS. Biden.

Mr. CRANE. Yep.

I seem to be missing President Trump's name from that list. So, I do think that peace through strength works.

Why do you think that Russia did not make any moves while President Trump—

Mr. TIMMONS. Mr. Crane, your time has expired.

Mr. CRANE. Can they finish answering my question?

Mr. TIMMONS. No. Sorry. We have got to keep the clock.

I now recognize the gentleman from Maryland, Mr. Mfume, for 5 minutes.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. My thanks to you and the Ranking Member for the hearing. Obviously, my thanks also to the witnesses who have been witnessing this morning on a number of different things.

I just want to try to bring a little perspective, and there is several things that I think, well, I know that I have to kind of point out here that are interesting, if not confusing.

In 1986, I sat at the White House with President Reagan. I was a young freshman Member of Congress. He called us all down to talk about what it was going to be like going forward. We laughed, joked, talked baseball.

But when he got to foreign affairs someone in our class asked, "Mr. President, what are we going to do about containing the Soviets?"

And he, in his own way, said, "I am going to tell you what I have learned from my predecessor, that he learned from his predecessor, and that he learned from his. And that is that all politics stop at the water's edge. We may be Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, but all politics stop at the water's edge."

And so that is how I came into this Congress believing that that was just the rule of law. It is the way we operated. So, I was particularly confused as a member of the Ukrainian Caucus long before the war started when President Trump just recently said that Russia did not invade Ukraine and that the Ukrainians somehow or another were at fault here.

I just want to make sure we are on the record. Is it the testimony of each of you that Russia did invade Ukraine, yes or no?

Mr. SADLER. Yes.

Dr. MOBBS. Yes.

Dr. OLIDORT. Yes.

Mr. MFUME. OK. Do any of you know why the President said otherwise?

OK. Let the record reflect we have got unanimous consent that Russia invaded Ukraine and none of us really know why.

Somebody was asking do you remember statements or slogans. I am going to ask all of you this.

Do you remember who said, "Are you going to believe me or your lying eyes?" Well, I will tell you. It was George Jefferson on "The Jeffersons" show when he could not believe that Weezy had told him something that did not exist.

So, as we get older in life, some things change; some remain the same.

I am concerned also about our global readiness. And I am particularly concerned when I have seen in recent weeks now the effort to severely tamper down the Black and Latino and Asian efforts within the military to bring young men and women in and to give them an opportunity and to call it DEI.

Well, you cannot diversify the military. The military is already diversified. Thirty-five percent of the military are racial minorities. And so, I would think that since we do not have people beating down the door to join the military, that when we have got bright young men and women, we ought to be encouraging them.

So I was, again, taken aback 2 weeks ago when the President ordered that there would be no participation in the annual and the largest recruitment effort, that takes place over a 3-day period, where every secretary of every armed service participated, as did rank-and-file members and others, where recruitment was being done for young men and young women who were engineers, who had big backgrounds in STEM, who were coming into our armed services and helping to deal with this readiness issue.

Deployment is real serious. We have got troops, as all of you know, stationed all over the globe. We do not need to find ways to reduce our capability in that regard.

And so, I would severely—well, I would seriously, I should say, hope that that sort of thinking does not pervade. It is not good.

I am concerned also as the Ranking Member of the Government Operations Committee that the Pentagon has failed seven straight audits—seven. And I have been working with them as the Ranking Member for the last couple of years, along with the Chair of that committee. That is embarrassing.

So, if we are going to talk about, as we have been, USAID, which is less than 1 percent of the budget, let us also find a way to talk about how we are going to make sure that the billions of dollars that are being wasted each year at the Pentagon does not continue to happen, which affects every aspect of our ability not only to deploy but to be ready to fight and to do everything else, and I do not see any urgency there.

So, I want to make sure I am on the record saying we have got to find a way, again, to point out the fact that the Pentagon has failed seven straight audits. There is a lot of waste, fraud, and abuse there.

And I yield the balance of my time to the Ranking Member.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. I yield back to the Chair. Thank you.

Mr. MFUME. I have no more time.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you.

I now recognize the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. McGuire, for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We live in a great country, but it seems like in government and in politics we forget about “We the People.” I am a very staunch supporter of limited Federal Government, but if we do anything, we should keep our people safe.

And I have got to tell you, I think our biggest threat is our national debt. If it was \$1 trillion, we should be sounding alarms everywhere.

And over the discussion today, so far, I have heard people saying, “We need more money for Taiwan. We need more money for the Middle East.” Well, if we go to war, we better win that war quick or we will not have the money for the spare parts.

And so, No. 1, we have got to get our spending under control. And I have a heart, but there is so much waste, fraud, and abuse. We have only been in this new Administration 5 or 6 weeks, and I think we have just seen the tip of the iceberg.

We have competitors, China, Iran, North Korea, Russia, and we have, of course, the proxies. And I think China’s philosophy is ev-

everything can be used as a weapon and it should be used as a weapon.

Dr. Mobbs, you talked about hard and soft power, and I would like to ask you, the first question is, how would you define—how would you describe the Biden Administration’s foreign policy? Did that help or hurt our hard and soft power over the last 4 years?

Dr. MOBBS. So, I would argue that they relied overly on soft power, but I would actually argue that it was a perversion of soft power. It was a focus on these progressive projects that actually did not necessarily promote the necessary influence where we needed to. And as a result, you had ineffective foreign policy because there was an overreliance on soft power.

Smart power is a successful integration of both hard power and soft power to get an effective outcome.

Mr. MCGUIRE. So, you believe that these policies weakened the American people?

Dr. MOBBS. I do believe that, yes.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Thank you.

Mr. Sadler, how should China’s gray-zone tactics in the Indo-Pacific and other strategic regions concern the U.S. leadership? Now, you talked about the convention where they were cutting cables.

Mr. SADLER. Yes. So, this is a topic I have spent a lot of time on, and I will try and do it justice by saying very succinctly, in one geographic area that really is a decisive theater that will get and keep China’s attention where we can have an advantage, and that is South China Sea in Southeast Asia.

So, we have to wage a maritime counterinsurgency against what they have been doing for the last several decades; that is, bullying and coercing our partners and our allies in the region. Top of the list that we have to do better by is the Philippines where I was just a few weeks ago.

Mr. MCGUIRE. I think it has become very clear, it should always be clear that American leadership matters at home and abroad. And by the grace of God, we got President Trump back in the White House. And I do not think we can remind everyone enough that he had a mandate from the American people. He got the popular vote and he got the electoral college.

I would like to ask everybody real quick, why do you think Russia did not invade Ukraine when he was in his first Administration?

And hold on. I will say this. On the campaign trail, when people asked me about Ukraine, what I said all the time is, of all the world leaders, there is one world leader that said, “I just want people to stop dying,” and that was President Trump.

And I think I will start with Dr. Kupchan.

Dr. KUPCHAN. Why Vladimir Putin chose to double down on his invasion of Ukraine when he did is difficult to say. Even Russians themselves cannot say why February 2022, he pushed the button.

Mr. MCGUIRE. But you notice he did not do that when Trump was in power.

Dr. KUPCHAN. No, but he has not stopped when Trump is in power. Trump is trying to negotiate a peace deal, and Putin is bombing the hell out of Ukraine.

Mr. MCGUIRE. I think we are making progress.

Dr. Olidort?

Dr. OLIDORT. Sure. In my view, there are three reasons.

The first is President Trump ordered the killing of several hundred Russian green men in the Syrian desert.

The second, he made it clear to Putin that he would be disinvented from the G20 meeting if he had done that.

And he gave Ukraine the Javelins it needed. And he did not say also that they could invade.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Dr. Mobbs?

Dr. MOBBS. I mean, I would argue you saw exactly what I said earlier, which was smart power, the integration of hard power and soft power in the first Trump Administration.

And then I would just further say the reason why it happened under Biden's watch is I do think the Afghanistan withdrawal was the first domino that then projected to the world our inherent weakness.

Mr. SADLER. Yes. Trump does not have a "say dude" deficit or deference.

The other thing is that he also understood when Putin was doing kind of a test, and so, an intelligence pool, so to speak. And he responded aggressively when he needed to, and appropriately. The incident in Syria is one, but it is not the only one.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Smart power, peace through strength.

Dr. Mobbs, how would you define Trump's foreign policy agenda? And we have only been started for—we have only been here 6 weeks or so. And if you have any advice for the Trump Administration or Congress.

Dr. MOBBS. So, I would define it as unprecedented. I think it is important, as other witnesses have said, that he is speaking to Vladimir Putin. That was a critical misstep by the Biden Administration.

And I would say that we have to establish what we saw in the first Administration, which is that soft power—or hard—sorry—smart power, peace through strength, in order to have an effective outcome.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. TIMMONS. I now recognize the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Cloud, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLOUD. Hey, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate you all being here. There could not be a more important topic than the security of our Nation and what the security of our Nation really means to the world.

Over the last—certainly, our lifetimes here, over the last couple of generations, we have been able to enjoy a world where the United States is the premier influence in the world.

And what that has meant for the world has been scientific breakthroughs. It has meant human flourishing going through the roof. It has meant a lot of wonderful things for the world, by and large.

And you compare what the America First agenda is, which President Trump is bringing to the scene, compared to the previous Administration under President Biden. Under Biden, he, ironically, said in a speech during—while he was in the Ukraine in 2008, he said, "We are trying to create a multipolar world."

In other words, the policy of the Biden Administration, the Obama Administration at the time when he said that, but once he became President in the Biden Administration, was to create a world where the United States was not the supreme influence in the world.

I was interested, Dr. Mobbs, you spoke of the—you said the perversion of soft power. And I would just ask you this. Who is making those decisions?

We could talk about the DEI programs. We could talk about all the crazy spending, the transgender operas in other seas, and all these different kind of things. Because when I talked to Ambassadors overseas, they would say, “We want to align ourselves with the United States because we appreciate the freedom that you all stood for, we appreciate what you meant for the world. But we talk to China, and they talk roads and bridges. We talk to you all, and it is social engineering against values that our country disagrees with.”

Could you speak to that?

Dr. MOBBS. I think some of it is bureaucracy unchecked. And if you do not mind, I will tell you a quick story.

So, I have been to Ukraine many times, 22 times since the full-scale invasion. I have spent a lot of time there. And this is a perfect example of where USAID has failed.

One of the things they were asking for—and by “they,” I mean Ukrainians—was tourniquets, and not for the military; for civilians. Civilians were dying, and they needed tourniquets.

Our USAID, who was responsible for aid, was incapable of delivering tourniquets because the most rapid agency within USAID is OTI, and that was how they could get potentially tourniquets to the people of Ukraine, but they could not do medical equipment.

So, we were unable to meet the needs of the people we were purporting to serve. And as a result, do you know who provided the tourniquets? China. And they broke. They failed.

So, it is bureaucracy, bureaucracy unchecked, with zero oversight and no accountability.

Mr. CLOUD. I think it was you, Mr. Sadler, who mentioned Afghanistan or—I forget who said it; it was one of you.

Dr. MOBBS. I did.

Mr. CLOUD. Oh, it was you again.

Being the tipping point, the beginning of kind of the domino effect that led to Ukraine.

It was interesting, during the—it was actually tragic—during the Afghanistan withdrawal, we had a number of people on airplanes, ready to go. We had the manifest. We had their IDs. People who should have been evacuated. And we were calling the State Department. Literally—I have this on my phone—I am calling the State Department.

The Taliban was willing to let them leave. We had countries willing to accept them. And our own State Department was calling ahead to other countries to tell them, “Do not let that plane land.” And, therefore, they would not.

And, of course, we know the tragedy of what happened in Afghanistan overnight, you had a semi-free—not in the context of the

United States, but overnight they went to you have the Bible app on your phone, you are being executed.

And so, we speak about the internal threats, but a lot of these policies are being driven by our own State Department, I guess is what my concern is.

Dr. MOBBS. I think that is absolutely right. I think that the Afghanistan situation is actually quite more complicated than that because I think what you saw was an overt politicalization of things that should not be politicized—the intelligence community, the Pentagon, the entire national security apparatus.

And as a result, you saw everything fail. I think that you saw, unfortunately, hard power fail in some ways, but truly soft power. And that is what projected to the world that we were unprepared and unwilling to do what was necessary.

And as a result, I do think that that was a green light for many of the worst actors in the world to do whatever, because they felt they could do it unchecked.

Mr. CLOUD. Mr. Sadler, I wanted to ask you, there was some concern about military recruiting under President Trump's Administration.

Could you speak to, has that gone up or down since he has been elected?

Mr. SADLER. Oh, it has going through the roof, in a good way.

Mr. CLOUD. Yes. Record numbers of recruiting. OK. Just wanted to make sure.

Could you also speak to the effects that DEI had when it came to it? There was a comment that in the military we are already diversified. I would say that is great. Therefore, maybe we do not have to have needs for classes on critical race theory and the like.

Mr. SADLER. Yes. DEI at its roots is a Marxist idea driven by Marxist ideology, critical race theory. But the manner in which the last Administration tried to implement it had an alienating and divisive effect when we could have actually taken a far better approach, sending out recruiters to communities that have not seen a military recruiter, high schools that have not allowed them in the past, but to try to get them in there.

That is the type of diversity in geographic but also communities that we should have done, but, instead, they pursued an identity line that fit right in with a Marxist approach, which was about division.

Mr. CLOUD. Thank you.

Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. TIMMONS. In closing, I want to thank our witnesses once again for their testimony today.

I now yield to Ranking Member Subramanyam for closing remarks.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the witnesses coming today. I appreciate everyone on the Committee and the Chairman.

I just want to reiterate—I am going to be a broken record this Congress—how important it is to have really good people in our military, in our civil service, and at the State Department, all our agencies that serve us.

And, if we are prioritizing loyalty over competency, we are not going to have the best people. If we are firing people who do really cutting-edge, important research and technological innovation in our military and in our civil service, we are not going to have the best people. We are going to be less safe. We are going to have more emerging threats.

We did not talk a lot about Iran, but I want to make sure, I think there is bipartisan consensus that Iran is a real threat and has destabilized the Middle East through its actions, funding groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. And we have to make sure that we work together to address that threat as well.

And I heard something about empire building. Last year during the campaigns certainly there was this sort of rhetoric about let us be a little more isolationist perhaps, let us put America first and not be entangled in foreign affairs.

But then I was confused that the President's first press conference he is talking about taking over Greenland and taking over Panama and annexing Canada, and even more recently turning Gaza into the French Riviera.

That does not sound isolationist to me. That does not sound like minding our own business. And that does not sound like avoiding wars. That sounds like perpetuating wars, especially when the President actually went out of his way to say he would not rule out ground troops into those areas and those regions.

I think there are a lot of contradictions with this Administration's foreign policy, and I think that it is confusing our allies. It is confusing me, in Congress, confusing a lot of us. And it is not helpful.

Words matter, and the words coming out of this Administration are not helpful when it comes to addressing our emerging threats.

We need to have more consensus around making sure that we are with our allies, that we know who our adversaries are, and that we work together to resolve these issues instead of confusing and instead of the chaos.

Thank you. I yield, Mr. Chair.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you for that.

I now recognize myself for closing remarks.

I want to thank you all for being here today. It is very helpful. You presented a lot of good ideas and things for us to think about and work on for this Congress.

I am going to highlight just some thoughts on Ukraine and then spending in general.

So, I just got back from the Munich Security Conference. There were hundreds, if not thousands, of diplomats from all over the world, and Ukraine was obviously top of mind.

And I think it is important—and I kept going back to the history of how we got here, because I think you really have to start there.

In 1991, few people know this, the third-largest nuclear power in the world was Ukraine. They had 2,300 nuclear weapons. And Bill Clinton and the Russians agreed, a trilateral agreement, to give up all of Ukraine's nukes, give them all back to Russia, in exchange for Russia agreeing to recognize the sovereignty of their borders. And the U.S.—this is fun—agreed to defend Ukraine. And that was in 1994.

So, fast forward, 2014, President Obama did nothing—or not enough—when Russia invaded Crimea. And then fast forward to 2022, and President Biden, after his horrific withdrawal from Afghanistan, again did nothing.

So, as we talk about—the word “confusing” was used—approach that this Administration is taking to Ukraine in an attempt to end this war, I think that President Trump deserves the benefit of the doubt, deserves some leeway to engage in this process to try to end this war.

And the most frustrating thing for me was that one of the confusing things coming out of this is Zelenskyy’s flip-flop on mineral rights. Because when the Vice President and the Secretary of Defense were there for the first day or two in Munich, there was widespread agreement about a plan on mineral rights. And then they left, and within 24 hours, Zelenskyy is now criticizing the U.S., criticizing Trump, criticizing Secretary Rubio. It actually did not make any sense to me.

And I think that President Trump’s language is because of that. And I think that Zelenskyy needs to appreciate that we are running out of grace as it relates to this conflict. And President Trump has the ability to, and Secretary Rubio has the willingness to, end this conflict.

And we are going to have some whiplash over the next couple of weeks as they do that. But let me tell you a little spoiler alert: It is going to end, because that is what President Trump said was going to happen.

And I believe that Zelenskyy needs to appreciate that he is not going to become a member of NATO. That is just not going to happen. It is a red line for Putin. And I do not know why we keep talking about it.

It does not mean that President Trump is not going to create a scenario in which the United States defends Ukraine in the future. That is the purpose of the mineral rights deal.

So, we have got to give a little leeway to President Trump and to his team. They have earned it.

As to the U.N. resolution, there were competing resolutions. The U.S. resolution was focusing more on ending the war, and the European resolution was focusing more on how it started.

And I do believe that everyone agrees that Russia is entirely and unilaterally responsible for invading Ukraine, and I think that the most important thing is ending this.

So, those are just general thoughts on Ukraine.

I guess last is spending. So, we get a lot of—there is a lot of consternation about President Trump’s desire to cut waste, fraud, and abuse and to get our fiscal situation under control.

I also serve on the DOGE Subcommittee. And while he has tasked Elon Musk with addressing this massive, huge challenge, it is President Trump’s direction that Elon Musk is taking.

So, Elon Musk is only doing whatever President Trump tells him to do, and President Trump is the one that is responsible. That is our democratic system of government, and that is what 77 million people voted for.

And while he has started in certain government agencies because they were the easiest, I want to point out that Pentagon spending is on the chopping block.

I mean, I could not be more pro-military, and I am one of the four Members of Congress that still serves in the military. I am still a captain in the South Carolina Air National Guard.

But Secretary Hegseth has said—and this is kind of shocking, this is actually really shocking—that his goal is to cut 8 percent of the Pentagon's budget each year—each year. I have not talked to Mike Rogers about this, but he is probably having fits.

I just want to point something out. That takes us, in year 5, down from \$890 billion in annual defense spending to—again, 8 percent each year, that is compounding—\$580 billion would be our defense budget in 5 years.

So, the spending is not going to be only on Democrat priorities, it is not only going to be on the role of foreign aid, it is going to be across the board, because we have \$36 trillion in debt and we have a \$2 trillion annual deficit.

So, we are going to systematically find waste, fraud, and abuse. We are going to systematically try to find cost savings across the government. And that is something that we actually just have to do. We are playing musical chairs, and we are running out of time, and we have got to save our social safety net programs.

And in order to do that, we have to fix them, and we have to continue our leadership role in the world. But in order to do that, we have to reassess every dollar we spend and make sure that it is done wisely.

So, I look forward to this Congress and to engaging in oversight over the military and foreign affairs and our national security.

And with that, I will yield back.

And, without objection, all Members have 5 legislative days within which to submit materials and additional written questions for the witnesses, which will be forwarded to the witnesses.

If there is no further business, without objection, the Subcommittee stands adjourned.

Thank you all.

[Whereupon, at 11:25 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

