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Hearing on Global Security Challenges and Strategy
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

March 1, 2022

Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, thank you for this opportunity to speak to what U.S. national security strategy should be at a moment when a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council has invaded, once again, a neighboring country without provocation and, on February 27th, has moved its nuclear forces to heightened alert status. While I recognize this hearing was designed initially to assess the Biden administration's National Security and National Defense Strategies, incorporating the Nuclear Posture and Missile Defense Reviews, I am honored to be invited to share my thoughts with the Committee at this defining strategic moment.

“We Failed Historically”

There are critical dates that we will remember from a U.S. national security perspective with regards to the transatlantic relationship: April 4th, 1917 when the United States entered the First World War, a war that began on July 28th, 1914; December 7th, 1941 when the United States entered the Second World War, a war that began on September 1st, 1939; March 12th, 1947, arguably the formal beginning of the Cold War, when President Truman announced U.S. support for Greece and Turkey, closely followed by the Soviet blockade of West Berlin, and founding of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on April 4th, 1949; and of course, September 11th, 2001 which re-oriented U.S. strategy for over two decades. With the exception of the 1947-1949 period, these historic dates were marked by an attack on the United States following a prolonged deterioration in the geostrategic environment.

Tragically today we must add a new date to this list: February 24th, 2022; the day when Russia initiated a war in Europe which the whole world watches unfold on our television screens and our phones. We have family, friends, and colleagues who are the innocent victims of this conflict. We are inspired by the exceptional courage and heroic patriotism of the Ukrainian people which has also served to underscore the historic hollowness of the West's policies and its rhetoric toward the post-Soviet space.

What do these dates and U.S. initial inaction and reaction have in common? U.S. preferred posture is to watch national security challenges unfold rather than actively respond. We tell ourselves that we have other priorities; that we “know” how the problem will resolve; or that it does not truly affect U.S. interests ... of course until it does. Despite having perhaps the largest national security bureaucracy in the world, why do we always find ourselves surprised, unprepared, slow to respond, and scrambling to defend our interests? As former German Defense Minister Kramp-Karrenbauer recently noted about German policy, “I am so angry with us because we failed historically. We haven't prepared anything after Georgia, Crimea and Donbas.”

At this critical moment, we do not have the luxury of a full policy post-mortem regarding U.S. policy toward Russia and Europe. But what this major European war and the courage of the Ukrainian government has exposed are our transatlantic strategic weaknesses. For the United States, our bitter and brittle partisanship, successive presidential arrogance that Putin could be managed or ignored, diminished U.S. influence and presence in Europe for the past two decades, deep unease about the use and purpose of American power, and our geostrategic tunnel vision

related to one adversary alone, China, all have been exposed. For Europe, its lack of defense preparedness and readiness, its dogged belief that trade and regulation alone were fit for an era of strategic competition, its desire to be autonomous from the U.S., its political fragmentation and lack of unity have also been fully exposed.

And while transatlantic policies have been found wanting, and we arrived nearly too late in realizing the magnitude of the crisis, this moment has equally exposed the great strengths of our transatlantic and transpacific alliances and the ability of democratic societies to rapidly course correct strategically. Here are just a few examples:

- Over the past 72 hours, German economic and security policy toward Russia has been completely transformed. Known as *die Zeitenwende* or “turning point,” the German government has now committed to spending 2% of its GDP on defense spending; it is allowing lethal defensive aid to flow to Ukraine; it has initiated a €100 billion special defense fund; it has halted certification of Nord Stream 2 and declared eventual energy independence from Russia. Berlin has just freed itself from the shackles of its seventy-year-old Russia policy.
- Over the past several days, the United Kingdom has finally become serious about the copious amounts of Russian malign economic influence that course through London’s veins and has begun to take steps to eradicate it and the “golden passports” for Russian oligarchs across Europe is ending. Neutral Switzerland will freeze Russian financial assets of over 367 individuals, all sanctioned by the EU last week, setting aside a deeply rooted tradition of neutrality.
- The Italian government has suspended all institutional relations with Moscow, such as the Italian-Russian business committee.
- The EU agreed to select SWIFT sanctions and is purchasing €500 million in military equipment for Ukraine.
- The government of Turkey will likely block Russian warships from entering the Turkish straits and Bosphorus.
- NATO has activated the NATO Rapid Response Forces.
- Officially “non-aligned” and NATO partner Sweden, breaking with its norm held since 1939 of not sending weapons to countries in armed conflict, will now send military aid to Ukraine including anti-tank weapons. Finland has also agreed to send weapons to Ukraine.
- But there is still work to do ... while Hungary has not prevented EU sanctions and NATO actions from going forward, it will not send weapons to Ukraine or prevent lethal weapons from transiting Hungary.

In other words, as we have done in the past, with very late arrival to all of these conclusions, we can and will successfully respond to authoritarians who violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their neighbors, whether that is in Europe, the Middle East, or the Indo-Pacific.

U.S. Adversaries: Only China or Both China and Russia?

So, what does this geostrategic moment mean for the future NSS and NDS? While the 2018 NSS initiated the pivot away from counter-terrorism and toward strategic competition with China and Russia, there was always an implicit understanding that China was really the only strategic competitor and Russia was a secondary concern. America's European allies certainly heard that message loud and clear. Yes, the Kremlin's propensity to occupy and annex its neighbors' territory was deeply problematic, its electoral interference, malign influence, and use of mercenaries and repeated violations of arms control treaties highly concerning, but it was China's desire for global economic dominance accompanied by its military presence, its hegemonic desires across the Indo-Pacific, and its human rights violations that made China the singular threat to the U.S.

America's Cold War muscle memory and its siloed bureaucratic structures continue to channel Washington's desire for a single adversary. While previous U.S. defense strategies required it to fight and win a two-theatre war, America's stretched military capabilities, its readiness challenges, and its two decades focusing on counter-terrorism efforts supported the "one adversary at a time" approach. Unfortunately, the world we want is not the world that we have. The United States has two equally destabilizing and dangerous adversaries. China, described as a pacing challenge, is the long-term strategic challenge which confronts U.S. global economic status. But Russia, a grievance-filled revisionist power which has repeatedly deployed its military to restore its traditional sphere of influence in Europe, now seeks to re-write the post-Cold War European security order, possibly with nuclear weapons, is by far the most dangerous today. U.S. security policy must adjust to this reality as well as the fact that on February 4th, Russia and China joined together in dynamic alignment against the United States and its allies. Our adversaries have ended our tunnel vision for us: we must strategically look at both China and Russia, together.

But as we do, we cannot lose sight of Western strengths and advantages. The strategic hallmark of the past 30 years has been that the U.S. has not had a peer strategic competitor. Now spurred by such competition, the national security analytical community spends an enormous amount of time detailing the attributes of the adversaries to spur action but little time enhancing the attributes and strengths of the United States and its allies in this competition. In other words, the West tends to debate its weaknesses and the strengths of its adversaries; it needs to be the other way around. In constant reactive mode to its adversaries, the policy analytical community never manages to develop a pro-active or affirmative plan about what it wants. We know what Russia and China seek regionally and globally, but what does the U.S. and its allies want? And while it is America's DNA to remain safely tucked within its three oceans, counting the Arctic Ocean, and to focus on the home front, this strategic moment requires clarity of principles and an articulation of our endgame both in the near and long-term.

Everything has Changed So Lean In: Time to Develop the West's Endgame

There has been a plethora of written analysis and speculation devoted to Russia's endgame in Ukraine and possibly beyond, understandably so. There is a rising risk that Russia will "escalate

to de-escalate” and attempt to sue for peace with the threat of use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, this is a time for clarity of our endgame and our operating principles for the future. To be clear, the war in Ukraine is **not** about NATO, the European Union, or the United States. It is about Russia and its leader’s greatest fear – the arrival of freedom of choice for Russian citizens which will jeopardize Putin’s and is his inner circle’s corrupt hold on power. This regime loathes the dignity of the individual and his or her ability to freely express individual preferences (it was not accidental that the 2013-2014 EuroMaidan was named the Revolution of Dignity). The same can be said of China where no Chinese citizen, the most economically successful and powerful to average citizen, is permitted to jeopardize the power and preferences of Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Because democratic governments must respond to their citizens, Moscow and Beijing long-ago recognized that it was far easier (and cheaper) to alter Western policies by purchasing or malignly influencing Western democratic institutions, businesses, and citizens with lucrative offers and vast markets to gain their support. Who needs an aircraft carrier when political figures and media space are purchased, as Australian authorities tragically discovered? And Beijing and Moscow’s calculations were largely correct until both regimes crossed important lines, but the damage to democracy had already been done.

The Inside Game

The Biden administration’s interim NSS rightly focused on the state and health of American democracy as a key bulwark against Russian and Chinese aggression. We know the mantra: strong at home; strong overseas. The administration has also announced that fighting corruption is now a core national security interest, but rather than view the fight against kleptocracy in national security terms, the administration has placed this body of work largely under its Summit for Democracy year of action. I strongly recommend that a key pillar of the next NSS and NDS detail how the U.S. will rid itself of adversarial malign economic, disinformation, and foreign agent influence **and** assist its allies in this task. Russia’s war of aggression on Ukraine has given this critical task a massive new impetus which must be seized and advanced. We cannot effectively address Russian and Chinese military and policy actions if we do not cleanse their negative influence from our own country. The 2020 NDAA conceptually led in requiring federal contractors with that necessary transparency, but we require a whole-of-government embrace of this concept.

Lean in with Principles and Strength

From a position of renewed internal strength and reduced malign influence, we must think boldly to substantially strengthen both transatlantic and Indo-Pacific democracies economically, militarily, and societally while pro-actively supporting European and Asian civil societies who seek a path that underscores dignity, hope, democracy, safeguarding freedom, building prosperous economies, as well as ensuring transparency and accountability of government. Does this sound familiar? It should: these were the tenets of the Marshall Plan, NATO’s founding document, and the Helsinki Final Act. We must bring these principles forward for a new era

where global networks and connections will matter more than hierarchical, top-down power structures.

In Europe, we begin by providing Ukraine, Georgia, and if desired Moldova, with the means to defend themselves against Russian aggression and Chinese influence. Along with our European allies, the FY23 defense budget should support substantial military assistance and societal resilience for these countries in addition to the generous U.S. support over the past year. We must do this in partnership with NATO and our European allies.

The German government's "turning point" must immediately be seized with a major U.S. effort to support Germany's defense modernization within a larger NATO context. The U.S. should also continue to make significant investments in the defense capabilities and interoperability of the Bucharest Nine. NATO should coordinate closely with the EU's decision to provide military equipment to Ukraine to avoid duplication. While the U.S. should strongly engage with Europe on rapidly enhancing European defense capabilities, it must do so within a NATO and NATO partnership framework. In the early 1950s, a French-inspired European Defense Community construct (the Pleven Plan) was ultimately rejected by France. We should think anew about how to construct a European defense pillar inside of NATO. NATO's mission also must now shift toward allied defense rather than solely on deterrence and reassurance. Russia will remain highly unstable for the next decade plus.

In the Indo-Pacific, NATO's partnership engagement and its forthcoming Strategic Concept should clearly spell out prioritization of NATO's partnerships with Japan, Australia, India, and South Korea which should be supported by the United States. NATO members should continue to routinely participate in military exercises and freedom of navigation exercises.

U.S. Presence = U.S. Influence

I do not believe it was accidental that when the United States removed its last combat brigade team from Europe in 2014, Russia first invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea. Or when the U.S. removed its forces from Iceland and eliminated the 2nd fleet, we saw an increase in Russian submarine activity and air incursions necessitating our return. Our global presence sends a powerful signal of our commitment to international peace and security, and it is one of the key pillars in which we engage internationally, although it must never be the only pillar (which it has unfortunately become). When we completely remove ourselves militarily, it is more likely than not that we will be required to return at a higher cost. There are costs to this presence, but there are also great opportunities to advance the cause of freedom and increase prosperity.

Russia and China share the aspiration of removing the United States from their self-declared spheres of regional influence and shape the international system toward their policy preferences. Russia has just launched a war to accomplish this objective; China is using a combination of economic warfare and military muscularity to achieve its goals. America's global security architecture – alongside robust diplomatic, economic, and civil society engagement – with the increased security and economic presence of our European and Indo-Pacific allies combined – are foundational for the development of a new U.S., positive and pro-active global engagement strategy.

We know what our strategy for the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific is. As President George H.W. Bush¹ said on November 23rd, 1989, but I change for today's purposes:

“I want ~~President Gorbachev~~ *President Putin* to know exactly where the United States stands. And let me be clear: America stands with freedom and democracy.

For so many of these ~~40~~ 70 years, the test of Western resolve, the contest between the free and the unfree, has been symbolized by an island of hope ~~behind the Iron Curtain: Berlin~~ : *Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Taiwan.*

In the 1940's West Berlin remained free because Harry Truman said, 'Hands off.' In the 1950's Ike backed America's words with muscle. In the 1960's West Berliners took heart when John F. Kennedy said, 'I am a Berliner.' In the 1970's Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter stood with Berlin by standing with NATO. And in the 1980's Ronald Reagan went to Berlin to say, 'Tear down this wall.' “

We somehow lost our strategic and bipartisan way the past 30 years. The Ukrainian people are reminding us that we are all Ukrainian right now. We must only have courage, like Ukraine.

¹ Transcript of President's Speech on Relations Between The East and West. (1989, November 23). *The New York Times*, p. 12. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/11/23/us/transcript-of-president-s-speech-on-relations-between-the-east-and-west.html>.