WHAT COMES NEXT FOR U.S. POLICY TOWARDS RUSSIA?

HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION
MAY 16, 2023
Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations

Available via http://www.govinfo.gov
U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE
WASHINGTON : 2023
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Menendez, Hon. Robert, U.S. Senator From New Jersey</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risch, Hon. James E., U.S. Senator From Idaho</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sullivan, Hon. John, Former Deputy Secretary of State and Ambassador of the United States to the Russian Federation (2020–2022)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kendall-Taylor, Dr. Andrea, Senior Fellow and Director, Transatlantic Security Program, Center for a New American Security, Washington, DC</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

- Responses of Ambassador John Sullivan to Questions Submitted by Senator Todd Young ........................................... 36
- The Committee Received No Response From Dr. Andrea Kendall-Taylor for the Following Questions by Senator Todd Young ........................................... 38
WHAT COMES NEXT FOR U.S. POLICY TOWARDS RUSSIA?

TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2023

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m., in room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Robert Menendez presiding.

Present: Senators Menendez [presiding], Cardin, Shaheen, Murphy, Kaine, Booker, Van Hollen, Duckworth, Risch, Romney, Ricketts, and Young.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

The last time U.S.-Russia relations were this bad, Kennedy was President and Khrushchev had nuclear missiles pointed at us from Cuba.

Today, our embassy in Moscow only has a skeleton staff that faces restrictions from a Russian Government working to undermine U.S. interests all over the world.

In the wake of Putin's invasion of Ukraine, democratic nations came together to isolate his regime with coordinated condemnation and a punishing set of sanctions. They have reduced revenues from trade and petroleum products, pushed more than a thousand companies to pull out of Russia, and isolated the country's financial industry.

Yet, the Russian economy only shrank by 2 percent in 2022 and Russia has dramatically increased trade with other autocratic nations including China and Iran, not to mention India.

We need to continue our coordinated global efforts to target Putin's war machine because beyond Ukraine and with support of the Wagner Group, Putin continues to be a destructive autocratic force on the world stage.

Inside Russia, Kremlin cronies kidnap Americans, from basketball stars to Wall Street Journal reporters, to use as bargaining chips in their geopolitical gains. They have imprisoned Russian dissidents that threaten Putin's power like Vladimir Kara-Murza or Alexei Navalny, and they have shut down independent media to control the behavior and minds of Russian citizens.

Beyond Russia's borders, far away from the headlines of Western nations, there is a very different picture. Sergey Lavrov is globe-
trotting around the world to shore up support, a so-called limitless partnership with China, which apparently includes working to shape international institutions in their own image, undermining the values of sovereignty, rule of law, and respect for human rights.

The Russian embassy here in DC is throwing cocktail parties attended by diplomats from all over the Global South, who then abstain or even vote against resolutions to support Ukraine.

At the United Nations, Russia uses its seat on the Security Council to make a mockery of any attempt to hold Putin and his regime accountable for the atrocities their forces are committing.

While we can laud the fact that more than 140 U.N. members condemned Russia’s invasion of Ukraine versus 35 who abstained, as the Financial Times recently pointed out, those 35 countries represent more than half of the world’s population.

Underlying these Russian efforts is a sophisticated mis- and disinformation campaign that, quite frankly, I do not believe we are effectively dealing with.

Through Wagner mercenaries exploiting instability across the Sahel and Africa to Russian cyber-attacks that destroy infrastructure to engineering a food crisis that now stretches halfway around the world, the Russian disinformation apparatus continues to find fertile ground for blatant lies that whitewash its own operations and undermine trust in the countries actually working to provide humanitarian assistance, promote peace and security, to say nothing of its targeted campaign against the United States and our electoral systems as well as those of our democratic allies who embrace the same fundamental human rights and freedoms that underpin our own system.

Let me thank our witnesses for appearing today. I hope you will speak to these challenges and how the United States and our partners can overcome them.

How can we better leverage sanctions and punitive tools to further cripple Russia’s leadership? How can we better leverage international institutions to confront Russian influence? What tools can we utilize to hold Russian actors accountable for their crimes against humanity in Ukraine and human rights abuses at home?

I also hope our witnesses will speak to how we can combat Putin’s weaponization of energy from Georgia to Syria to Moldova.

I am pleased that Senator Risch is working with me on a bill to support energy security in Eastern Europe and beyond, which will be critical to cutting off Putin’s assets.

I am also working on efforts to support Russian dissidents who have fled and welcome your thoughts on how we can best support those Russians who want to see a brighter future for their country.

This question of the future of U.S.-Russia relations is, obviously, huge. I have not even touched on nonproliferation or Arctic security or climate change.

At this point, I will turn it over to Ranking Member Risch and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

Senator Risch.
STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH,
U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO

Senator Risch. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to our witnesses for appearing here this morning.

There has been a lot of discussion in Washington about Russia and Ukraine, but very little about what U.S. policy towards Russia should be now and in the future. I am glad we get to have this conversation.

Russia under Putin is an autocratic and imperialistic regime and poses an acute threat to the freedom and stability that the United States and our allies have fought to promote and defend.

This is true in Ukraine, more broadly in Europe, and throughout Africa, Latin America, and the Arctic and in the emerging China-Russia cooperation.

Despite these increasing challenges, it is clear that the United States lacks a coherent policy to confront Russia. It appears the White House never really thinks about Russia until Moscow makes a move and has never acted proactively to force the Kremlin to respond to our initiatives.

Before Russia’s unprovoked invasion last year, it reminded us that weakness invites aggression. This Administration’s approach resembled the failed Obama reset. We all remember the reset. It did not work.

As to this Administration, it started with the unilateral extension of the New START treaty on inauguration day. It continued to the refusal to impose Nord Stream 2 sanctions.

It continued on to the Biden-Putin summit in Geneva, which produced no deliverables, and then on to the suspension of military assistance to Ukraine in May and November 2021 because of concerns it would cause escalation.

The Administration has offered olive branch after olive branch, but as predicted, Putin used every dialogue and concession to lend himself legitimacy and increase Russia’s geopolitical status at our expense. We need to accept that Russia sees this kind of diplomacy as weakness and that it only seriously responds when we project strength.

This discredited approach has allowed for war in Europe, renewed Russian presence in the Middle East, a militarized Arctic, and a growing Russian proxy footprint across Africa and Latin America.

We need to be honest and acknowledge that under Putin, Russia is an adversary, not a willing partner. Our policies must confront Russia as it is now, not as it was 30 years ago.

We must view Russia not only as a serious adversary in its own right, but also recognize its role in U.S.-China competition and other challenges of today’s world.

Domestically, Putin has turned Russia into a feudal kingdom where the whim of an autocrat is the only law. Political repression is at an all-time high. The opposition movement has been crushed with anyone who expresses dissent either jailed, exiled, assassinated, poisoned.

Attacks on press freedom and state control of the media have reduced Russia to a propaganda state. Civil society has been muzzled and anyone who could flee has already done so.
On sanctions, the United States has made a start, but there is so much more to do, particularly in targeting critical sectors like energy and, very importantly, cracking down on third-nation sanctions evasion.

Likewise, we need a U.S. military strategy that accurately accounts for recent changes in Russia’s diminishing conventional capabilities. At the same time, we should expect more nuclear threats. That has become consistent and, indeed, during the Ukraine conflict, commonplace because of its frequency to the point that it is largely ignored.

This is dangerous, but not unexpected, given Russia’s ham-handed statecraft. Russian thinking is clear in this regard. Putin knows he can threaten to use nuclear weapons without any concrete response from the West.

Instead, he seriously believes his threats will deter us from doing what we should to protect our interests. On all fronts, the United States needs to have a clearly defined policy for what we expect from Russia and what we are willing to do to pursue and protect our interests.

We must also form this policy in the context of a more globally assertive China and its increasingly close strategic partnership with Russia.

This Administration consistently and all too often worries about what Putin will do. We need a policy where Putin wakes up every morning worried about what we will do.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Risch.

In the interest of time, I am going to give condensed biographies for our distinguished witnesses.

Ambassador John J. Sullivan is no stranger to the committee and I am sure he is happy there is no confirmation vote after this hearing.

Currently a distinguished fellow at the School of Foreign Service of Georgetown University, his career spans four decades in the public sector for both Democratic and Republican administrations across the Departments of State, Justice, Defense, and Commerce, as well as in private law practice.

Ambassador Sullivan served five presidents in prominent diplomatic and legal positions, including as U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation under Presidents Biden and Trump. Before his posts in Moscow, he served for almost 3 years as the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State.

Dr. Andrea Kendall-Taylor is a senior fellow and director of the Transatlantic Security Program at the Center for a New American Security. Prior to joining CNAS, Dr. Kendall-Taylor served for 8 years as a senior intelligence officer, including as deputy national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the National Intelligence Council.

She is also an adjunct professor at Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service. Her work has been published in numerous political science and policy journals, and since the committee also champions the State Department’s Education and Cultural Exchange Bureau, I will note that she was a Fulbright scholar in
Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan where she conducted dissertation research on oil and autocracy.

We welcome you both to the committee. We thank you for the insights you will provide us.

Ambassador, we are going to start off with you. I would ask you both to limit your presentations here to about 5 minutes. Your full statements will be included in the record without objection.

Ambassador Sullivan, the floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. JOHN SULLIVAN, FORMER DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE AND AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED STATES TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION (2020–2022)

Ambassador Sullivan. Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished members of the committee. It is good to be back. As the chairman said, it is also good to be back without seeking a confirmation vote from this committee.

I am honored to be here today to discuss U.S. policy toward Russia. I hope to bring to the committee my experiences for the 3 years I was in Moscow dealing with the Russians, negotiating with the Russians.

When I arrived at my post in Moscow, I was resolved to do everything I could to stop the downward spiral in relations between our countries. U.S. policy toward Russia at the time was, on the one hand, to confront and push back hard on the Kremlin in the many areas where we were opposed, but on the other hand, to seek progress in those limited areas where the interests of our countries appeared more aligned—arms control, some regional conflicts, North Korea. At a minimum, I hoped that we could stabilize our respective diplomatic platforms.

That policy approach failed. During my first 2 years as ambassador, there was no lasting progress on any issue on which we engaged. Nevertheless, persistent, my priorities remained even after the change in the White House in January 2021 to work to stabilize the U.S.-Russia relationship while defending U.S. interests and advocating for U.S. citizens wrongfully detained in Russia and the many U.S. businesses that operate there.

This was reaffirmed—my approach was reaffirmed in June 2021 when I accompanied President Joe Biden to meet Putin in Geneva. President Biden made clear we would continue to confront and oppose the Russians in the many areas where U.S. interests were threatened or undermined by them, but we would engage with them on, among other things, strategic stability, cybersecurity, and wrongfully detained Americans.

Our engagement following the summit had barely begun when there was a seismic policy shift after U.S. intelligence agencies collected considerable evidence of Russia’s plans for Ukraine.

Beginning in November 2021, U.S. policy focused intensively on dissuading and deterring Russia from a further invasion of Ukraine. Despite these intensive diplomatic efforts, that policy failed when Russia launched on February 24, 2022, its so-called special military operation, a euphemism that would make George Orwell blush.

It had been apparent well before then that the Russians were not negotiating in good faith and were going through a charade of di-
diplomacy for Putin to lay the groundwork for a further invasion of Ukraine. In the 15 months since Russia’s aggressive and brutal war began, U.S. policymaking has rightly focused on supporting Ukraine and sanctioning and isolating Russia.

That must be the immediate and imperative policy focus. No country, let alone a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, can be allowed to succeed in waging an aggressive war of conquest replete with grotesque war crimes to redraw international borders, and make no mistake, Putin does not want to negotiate an end to his aggressive war short of victory on his terms.

He believes that Ukraine is Russia’s, and I quote, “historical lands.” He said that in a recent speech in which he also assured his fellow Russians that, “Step by step, carefully and consistently, we will deal with the tasks we have at hand, which are to de-Nazify and demilitarize Ukraine.” That is President Putin just weeks ago.

As Senator Risch mentioned, I think it is appropriate for us to consider the broader context of U.S. policy toward Russia now even as the war in Ukraine and Putin’s failed special military operation continues.

If I may, I thought I would just offer a few thoughts on context for policymaking and then would be happy to delve into many of the specific issues that the chairman mentioned.

First, most important, Russia under Putin is an implacable adversary of the United States. Putin believes that Russia is at war with us in a clash of “civilizations.” They said this in their recent restatement of their foreign policy, their so-called concept of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation.

Putin and many other Russian nationalists are committed to this concept. For any U.S. policy on Russia to succeed, we need to understand our adversary.

Second, we must work to put in place security architecture through NATO and with intensive bilateral and multilateral diplomacy that protects not just Ukraine, but Europe and the rest of the world from Russian aggression.

Third, there could be no trust of any kind in the Russian Government. After repeated statements from Russian leadership in early 2022 that they would not attack Ukraine—indeed, they said they had no plans to do so—why would anyone trust that government?

The Reagan era mantra of trust, but verify is quaint. It has no application now. There can be no trust, only verification and justice for Ukraine and the victims of Russian war crimes in Ukraine.

Fourth, as difficult as it is to pursue diplomacy in this context, we should not give up entirely on engaging with the Russian Government when our interests so require, but our interests do not require pleading with the Russians for dialogue, whether it is on arms control or the war in Ukraine. That is what they want and it will lead only to more policy failure.

The best advice I received as ambassador in Moscow was to never ask the Russians for anything. We should approach any proposed engagement or negotiation from a position of strength and confidence.
Finally, Chairman Menendez mentioned our embassy in Moscow. To engage with Russia, we rely on a safe and functioning embassy in that capital. The price we pay to maintain that embassy is steep.

The Russians, despite their professed commitment to reciprocity, have maintained an advantage. We have an embassy in Moscow and no consulates. They have an embassy in Washington and two consulates, Houston and New York. Moreover, they have more diplomats assigned to their bilateral mission to the United States than we have in Russia. We should insist on reciprocity.

Thank you for allowing me to address the committee and I welcome the opportunity to discuss the foregoing issues or any other matters in which members are interested.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Sullivan follows:]

Prepared Statement of Ambassador John Sullivan

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you to discuss U.S. policy toward Russia. I bring to the discussion my perspective as the U.S. Ambassador to Russia from December 2019 to October 2022.

When I arrived at my post in Moscow, I was resolved to do everything I could to stop the downward spiral in relations between our countries. U.S. policy toward Russia at the time was, on the one hand, to confront and push back hard on the Kremlin in the many areas where we were opposed, e.g., election interference, cyber-attacks, and the wrongful detention of innocent Americans, to name some prominent topics on a growing list. But, on the other hand, to seek progress in those limited areas where the interests of our countries appeared more aligned, e.g., arms control, counterterrorism, and certain regional issues, including North Korea. At a minimum, I hoped we could stabilize our respective diplomatic platforms.

That policy approach clearly failed. During my first 2 years as ambassador, there was no lasting progress on any issue on which we engaged. Moreover, the pace of deeply disturbing events in Russia was non-stop, notably the poisoning of Alexei Navalny, which was part of a sweeping crackdown on political opposition, on what was left of independent media in Russia, and on civil society generally. The crackdown was intimately related to the constitutional and legal reforms introduced by the Kremlin in early 2020 that allow President Vladimir Putin to avoid the term limits in the Russian constitution and serve as President until 2036.

Despite the lack of progress, my priorities as ambassador remained—even after the change in the White House in January 2021—to work to stabilize the U.S.-Russia relationship while defending U.S. national security and our democratic values; and to advocate for U.S. citizens detained in Russia and for U.S. businesses operating there. This was reaffirmed in June 2021, when I accompanied President Joe Biden to his meeting with Putin in Geneva. President Biden made clear that we would continue to confront and oppose the Russians in the many areas where U.S. interests were threatened or undermined by them, but we would engage with the Russians on, among other things, strategic stability, cyber security, and wrongfully detained Americans.

Our engagement following the summit had barely begun when there was a seismic policy shift after U.S. intelligence agencies collected considerable evidence of Russia’s plans for Ukraine. Until then, the painful and bloody history of Russia’s intervention in and seizure of territory from Ukraine had cast a heavy pall on the relationship between the United States and Russia but had not yet completely broken it. Relations with Russia were terrible, but we were still trying to find some common areas on which to work with the world’s only other nuclear superpower. Beginning in early November 2021, however, U.S. policy shifted to an exclusive focus on dissuading and deterring Russia from a further invasion of Ukraine.

Despite intensive efforts in U.S.-Russia bilateral channels, in the NATO-Russia Council, and at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, that policy failed when Russia’s so-called “Special Military Operation”—a euphemism that would make George Orwell blush—began on February 24, 2022. It had been apparent to me well before then that the Russians were not negotiating in good faith and were going through a charade of diplomacy for Putin to lay the groundwork for a further invasion of Ukraine.

In the 15 months since Russia’s aggressive and brutal war began, U.S. policy-making has focused, quite rightly, on robustly supporting Ukraine in its defense and
on sanctioning and isolating Russia. That must be our immediate and imperative policy focus. No country, let alone a permanent member of the UN Security Council, can be allowed to succeed in waging an aggressive war of conquest, replete with grotesque war crimes, to redraw international borders. And make no mistake, Putin does not want to negotiate an end to his aggressive war short of victory defined on his terms. He believes that Ukraine is Russia’s “historical lands,” as he said in a speech in February of this year in which he also assured his fellow Russians that, “step by step, carefully and consistently we will deal with the tasks we have at hand,” which are to “de-nazify” and “de-militarize” Ukraine. He does not make a statement like that lightly and we should take him at his word.

But it is appropriate to consider the broader context of U.S. policy toward Russia, even as the war in Ukraine and Putin’s failed Special Military Operation continue. I offer a few brief thoughts on this topic based on our recent failures to influence or deter Russian policy choices.

First, it is important to understand as a policymaking threshold that Russia under Putin is an implacable adversary of the United States. He believes that Russia is at war with us. It is not a competition; it is a clash of “civilizations,” as reflected in the recently adopted Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. Putin and many other Russian nationalists are committed to this concept to their core. We repeatedly underestimate the depth of their hostility when we try to influence Russia. For any U.S. policy on Russia to succeed, we must understand our adversary.

Second, we must work to put in place security architecture through NATO and with intensive bilateral and multilateral diplomacy that protects not just Ukraine but Europe and the world from future Russian aggression by this implacable adversary.

Third, there can be no trust of any kind in the Russian Government. After repeated statements from the highest levels in January and February 2022 that Russia would not attack Ukraine and had no plans to do so, who would trust that government? The Reagan-era mantra of trust but verify seems quaint now. There can be no trust, only verification and justice for the victims of Russian war crimes in Ukraine.

Fourth, as difficult as it is to pursue diplomacy with Russia considering the foregoing, we should not give up entirely on engaging with the Russian Government when our interests require, e.g., in advocating for nuclear arms control, including inspections under the New START Treaty, or for the proper treatment and release of wrongfully detained Americans. But our interests do not include pleading with the Russians for dialogue on any topic, whether it is arms control or the war in Ukraine. That is what they want, and it will lead only to more policy failure. The best advice I received as ambassador was never to ask the Russians for anything. We should approach any engagement or negotiation from a position of strength and confidence. The more we signal that we really want something, the less likely it is that we will achieve our policy goals.

Finally, to engage with Russia we rely on a safe and functioning embassy in Moscow. The price we have paid to maintain Embassy Moscow, however, is steep. The Russians, despite their professed commitment to reciprocity in our diplomatic relationship, have maintained an advantage over us. We have an embassy in Moscow and no consulates. They have an embassy in Washington and two consulates, in Houston and New York. Moreover, they have more diplomats assigned to their bilateral mission to the United States than we have in Russia, or at least they did some months ago when I was ambassador. We should take the Russians at their word and insist on reciprocity in our diplomatic relationship.

Thank you for allowing me to address the committee. I welcome the opportunity to discuss the foregoing issues or any other matters in which members are interested.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Dr. Kendall-Taylor.

STATEMENT OF DR. ANDREA KENDALL-TAYLOR, SENIOR FELLOW AND DIRECTOR, TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY PROGRAM, CENTER FOR A NEW AMERICAN SECURITY, WASHINGTON, DC

Dr. Kendall-Taylor. Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of the Foreign Relations Com-
mittee, thank you for inviting me to speak today about U.S. policy towards Russia, a topic that is both critical and fraught.

It is critical because we are clearly locked in a period of intense and probably prolonged confrontation with Russia with the war for Ukraine at its center. Although the United States is not directly engaged in the war with Russia in Ukraine, as the ambassador said, we should be very clear that Russia sees itself as being at war with us.

The future of U.S. policy towards Russia is also fraught because so much is changing. Russia itself is changing as a result of its war in Ukraine in still unknowable ways.

Nothing will improve so long as Putin is in power, but there is uncertainty about the political changes that the war might trigger inside Russia and what Putin’s eventual departure will mean for future relations.

Russia’s war in Ukraine requires us to reexamine long held assumptions about Russia and it is those updated assessments that should guide Washington’s approach.

I will make four brief points, three that should shape our expectations of relations with Russia and a final point on what I see as the most important recommendation for putting U.S.-Russia relations on more solid footing.

First, the nature of U.S.-Russia relations will remain antagonistic so long as the war continues and the war is likely to be protracted. Putin believes that time is on his side and that the West will tire in its support for Ukraine.

Fighting on is also in Putin’s personal interest. Wartime autocrats rarely lose power. Being at war shuts down avenues for the country’s citizens, military, and security forces to challenge their leadership.

In my work, I have found that since the end of World War II only 7 percent of personalist authoritarians, as Putin is, have been unseated while an interstate conflict that began under their watch was ongoing.

The same does not hold true for dictators who lose wars. They become more vulnerable to ouster. Even if Ukraine is wildly successful in its counter offensive, Putin has every incentive to fight through the hardship, meaning that this war will go on for a long time, significantly constraining the scope of U.S.-Russia relations.

Second, not only is Putin poised to maintain power, but the confrontational nature of U.S.-Russia relations will very likely persist past him. The historical track record of these longtime personalist autocrats suggests that once these leaders make it to 20 years in power—and Putin has been there for 23—they tend to make it to about 36 years.

What is more, Putin is orchestrating changes inside Russia that make relations more problematic. He is moving Russia in a more totalitarian direction, and I do not use that word lightly, as he attempts to mobilize Russian society in support of his war not just on Ukraine, but also on the West.

The contours of his policies are likely to endure beyond him. The historical record shows that authoritarianism persists past the departure of longtime autocratic leaders like Putin 92 percent of the
time. Moreover, my research shows that the same group of regime insiders often remains intact after longtime leaders depart.

Such continuity in the Russian regime would bring continuity in Russia’s external relations. Putin has saddled his successor with a long list of vexing problems, including how to end the war and settle the status of Crimea and whether to pay Ukraine wartime reparations and accept accountability for war crimes.

These thorny issues will long complicate Russia’s relations with the United States and Europe.

Third, along with the enduring intent to challenge the United States, Russia will have significant capacity to do so, although we need to be attuned to how the nature of the threat is evolving.

Russia will emerge from its war militarily, economically, and geopolitically weaker and there will therefore be a strong temptation to downgrade Russia as a threat.

That would be a mistake. Russian power and influence may be diminished, but Russia will adapt. In particular, the more vulnerable that Putin feels about the degradation of his conventional forces, the more he will rely on unconventional methods to accomplish his objectives including relying more heavily on his nuclear weapons and other hybrid tactics.

Finally, I have included several recommendations in my written statement, but I want to highlight one and that is the best path to a better relationship with Russia runs through Ukraine.

The United States has very limited ability to shape directly the trajectory of U.S.-Russia relations and so the single most important way to shape that trajectory is by enabling Ukraine to defeat Russia.

A Russia that makes gains in Ukraine is likely to be emboldened. A military defeat of Russia, in contrast, could be the type of seismic event that is required to catalyze bottom-up pressure that will be needed to set Russia down a different path.

A Ukrainian victory raises the prospect, even if just slightly, that Putin could be forced out of office, creating an opening for political change. That future comes with risks, but also opportunities.

In sum, we are likely to remain in a long-term confrontation with Russia and the United States will need an effective and sustainable policy to meet the challenge, starting in Ukraine.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Kendall-Taylor follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Dr. Andrea Kendall-Taylor**

I. INTRODUCTION

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished Members of the Foreign Relations Committee, thank you for inviting me to speak today about the future of U.S. policy towards Russia—a topic that is both critical and fraught. It is critical because we are quite clearly locked in a period of intense and what is likely to be prolonged confrontation with Russia, with the war for Ukraine at the center of that confrontation. Because of the war, the risk of escalation, including direct military conflict between the United States and Russia, is higher than it has been in decades. Although the United States and its allies are not directly engaged in the war with Russia in Ukraine, we should be very clear that Russia sees itself as being at war with us.

The future of U.S. policy towards Russia is also fraught. It is fraught because so much is changing—Russia itself is changing as a result of its war on Ukraine in still unknowable ways. The nature of the Russian threat is evolving. We can be sure
that nothing will improve so long as Putin is in power, but there is uncertainty about the political changes that the war might trigger inside Russia and what Putin’s eventual departure will mean for relations with Moscow. Russia’s war in Ukraine requires us to re-examine long-held assumptions and understandings about Russia, and it is those updated assessments that should guide Washington’s future policy approach to Russia.

II. EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF U.S.-RUSSIA RELATIONS

I want to start by making three points that should inform our expectations and understanding of the future of U.S. relations with Russia.

First, the Nature of U.S.-Russia Relations Will Remain Confrontational so Long as the War Continues, and the Conflict is Likely to Be Protracted

Even as the Russian military struggles to make gains on the battlefield, Putin is confident that the West will eventually tire of its support for Ukraine or that political changes in the United States and Europe will result in less military assistance for Kyiv. But even more, continuing the war is in Putin’s personal interest. Fighting on makes sense for Putin for one fundamental reason: wartime autocrats rarely lose power. Being at war shuts down avenues for a country’s citizens, military, and security forces to challenge their leadership. In research I conducted with my colleague Dr. Erica Frantz, we found that since the end of World War II, only seven percent of personalist authoritarians—as Putin is—have been unseated while an interstate conflict that began under their watch was ongoing.\(^1\) Other data similarly show that leaders who initiate wars are especially unlikely to be ousted amid them.\(^2\)

The same does not hold true for dictators who lose wars; they become more vulnerable to ejection. Although personalist dictators such as Putin tend to be among the most resilient to military defeats, Putin’s expectations of what might happen if he is ousted are likely to shape his calculus.\(^3\) Leaders who worry that they will be jailed, exiled, or killed—a fate most common among personalist autocrats like Putin—suggest he will be especially sensitive to even small increases in risk to his stability. And Putin’s very clear responsibility for the invasion makes him particularly vulnerable. According to one study, leaders who are culpable for wars are especially motivated to continue fighting them—even in the face of hardship—because domestic actors will want to punish them if they fail.\(^4\) Even if Ukraine is wildly successful in its counter-offensive, Putin has every incentive to fight through the hardship, meaning that this war will go on for a long time, significantly constraining the scope of U.S.-Russia relations.

Second, not Only is Putin Poised To Maintain Power, but the Confrontational Nature of U.S.-Russia Relations Will Likely Persist Past his Departure

So long as the war continues, Putin is likely to be able to weather any blowback. Not only does the ongoing war improve his prospects for political survival, but so too does the political system he has built over his long tenure. Putin has created in Russia what political scientist Milan Svolik calls an established autocracy, where-in regime officials and elite are fully dependent on the leader and invested in maintaining the status quo from which they benefit.\(^5\) In research I conducted with Dr. Frantz, we find that the typical post-Cold War autocrat who had governed for 20 years (Putin has been in power for 23 years) ended up ruling for a total of about 36 years. The changes he is orchestrating inside Russia make the future of U.S.-Russia relations more problematic. Putin is already taking Russia in a darker, more authoritarian direction. While authoritarianism in Russia has been hardening since Putin returned to power in 2012, his invasion of Ukraine has intensified this authoritarian turn. Russia’s wrongful detainment of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich in March and sentencing of opposition activist Vladimir Kara-Murza to a 25-year jail term in April, for example, are eerily reminiscent of Soviet times.

If anything, Putin is moving Russia in a more totalitarian direction as he attempts to mobilize Russian society in support of his war not just on Ukraine, but

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also on the West with the United States at its center. As Russian analyst Andrei Kolesnikov has observed, it is no longer possible for Russians to stay disengaged. As he notes, “More and more, Russians who are economically dependent on the state are finding that they have to be active Putinists.”

Society is being militarized, public acts of support are growing, as are incidents of Russians reporting on the “anti-patriotic” activities of their fellow citizens. Putin’s propaganda that frames the United States as the enemy, along with what is likely to be deep Russian resentment over Western sanctions and the role U.S. and European weapons have played in the very high number of Russian casualties, are likely to have long-term effects on the way that Russians view the United States and the relations between the two countries. Amid the Kremlin’s propaganda, many Russians appear to feel besieged and, often, just as embittered as Putin himself; these dynamics are very likely to sustain an aggressive Russia, even after Putin departs.

Given the societal changes taking place inside Russia, the expectation in Washington must be that authoritarianism and the contours of Russian foreign policy will outlast Putin. The historical record shows that for all post-Cold War autocrats (except monarchs) in power 20 years or more, authoritarianism persists past the leader’s departure in 76-percent of cases. When such leaders are also older personalist autocrats, authoritarianism endures—either with the same regime or with the establishment of a new one—92-percent of the time. Moreover, the same authoritarian regime often remains intact after longtime leaders leave office—a prospect that would be made more likely if Putin exits on account of natural death or an elite-led coup.

Such continuity would likely extend to the nature of the Russian regime and its external relations. Successors that deviate from the status quo are likely to provoke fierce resistance from the “old guard” who have considerable control over the levers of power in the system. Beyond sidelining (if they can) individuals who pose a particularly serious threat to them, new leaders who inherit office tend to adhere to the previous program. In countries such as Syria and Uzbekistan, for example, the successors of longtime leaders (Bashar al-Assad and Shavkat Mirziyoyev, respectively) showed early signs of liberalization through actions such as the release of political prisoners, only to revert to traditionally more repressive practices.

In part for these reasons, research by Sarah Croco finds that when successors come from the same regime as leaders involved with the initiation of a war, they are likely to continue the conflicts they inherit. By invading Ukraine, Putin has saddled future Russian leaders with vexing problems—ending the war, resolving questions about the illegal annexation of Crimea and the four Ukrainian territories, wartime reparations, and accountability for war crimes, for example—that will long complicate Russia’s relations with the United States and Europe. Although a new leader could change the tone of Russia’s external relations—just as the transition from Putin to Medvedev created an opening for U.S.-Russia cooperation that did not exist with Putin as President—the broad contours of Russian foreign policy would likely endure.

Third, Along With the Intent, Russia Will Retain Significant Capacity To Challenge the United States, Although the Nature of the Threat is Evolving

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has been a massive strategic blunder, leaving Russia militarily, economically, and geopolitically weaker. Given these facts, there will be a strong temptation to downgrade Russia as a threat. That would be a mistake. Russian power and influence may be diminished, but Russia will adapt. In particular, the more vulnerable Putin feels given the degradation of Russia’s conventional forces in Ukraine, the more likely he is to rely on unconventional methods to accomplish his objectives. With its back against the wall, the Kremlin will also have less compunction about trying to destabilize its enemies through sometimes ex-

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9 Croco, “The Decider’s Dilemma.”
otic and hard-to-track methods in the biological, chemical, cyberspace, or artificial intelligence realms.\(^\text{10}\)

For starters, the Kremlin will almost certainly intensify its disinformation campaigns. Russia has seen just how effective such campaigns can be: disinformation and propaganda have contributed to decisions by leaders in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East to remain neutral or circumspect in the aftermath of Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine. By accusing Ukraine of carrying out atrocities that Russian soldiers have committed in the war, framing Western sanctions instead of Russia’s invasion as responsible for high food and energy prices, and convincing many that it is fighting a defensive war against an expanding NATO, Russia has diluted criticism of its military aggression.

Cyberattacks are likely to be an ever more important and disruptive tool. And, most ominously, the more damage the Russian military incurs in Ukraine, the more likely it is to rely on the prospect of nuclear escalation to offset NATO’s conventional superiority in Europe. The Russian military appears genuinely more comfortable with the notion of limited nuclear use relative to its Western counterparts. To be sure, the use of nuclear weapons is a political decision, but the preponderance of evidence suggests that Russia’s political leadership might well consider limited nuclear use if faced with the kind of defeat that could threaten the regime or the state. A future crisis or conflict with NATO would leave Moscow with few conventional options before it decided to threaten or potentially use nuclear weapons, shortening the pathway to nuclear war.

The growing import of nonstrategic (or tactical) nuclear weapons to Russia’s military means that the country is less likely than ever to agree to negotiated limits on its nuclear arsenal. Russia’s decision to suspend its participation in New START underscores this dynamic. This is particularly problematic given that Russia has a more diversified nuclear arsenal than the United States does, with different types of nonstrategic weapons, and doctrinally appears to be more willing to use those weapons in a conflict. The current hostility in the U.S. Congress toward Russia and Moscow’s record of violating the treaties it signs also lower the odds that the United States and Russia will agree to a replacement for the New START treaty once it expires in 2026. In the absence of an agreement, Russia’s ability to produce strategic nuclear weapons and deploy new systems would be unchecked, and the United States would lose important insights into Russia’s strategic nuclear arsenal. Notably, China is also modernizing its nuclear arsenal. As a result, the United States will find itself dealing with two unconstrained nuclear powers, both focused on the United States as the primary threat.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY TOWARD RUSSIA

The Best Path to a Better Relationship With Russia Runs Through Ukraine

The United States has very limited ability to directly shape the trajectory of U.S.-Russia relations. The single most important way to shape the future trajectory of the relationship is by enabling Ukraine to defeat Russia. A Russia that makes significant territorial gains in Ukraine is likely to be emboldened—a persistent if not growing threat to Europe and the United States. Such a Russia would not only pose direct threats to the United States and its allies, but its sustained aggression would distract the transatlantic partners from tackling other, pressing global challenges.

A military defeat of Russia, in contrast, raises the prospect of more meaningful political change in Russia. Given the hardened environment Putin now operates in, significant political change is unlikely to occur absent a seismic shift. A Ukrainian victory in the war could provide a catalyst for change. Translating a Russian defeat into political change is far from guaranteed; the personalist nature of Putin’s regime creates particularly strong headwinds to change. Research shows that because personalist dictatorships have few institutional mechanisms to facilitate coordination and their elite view their fates as being tied to that of the leader, personalist leaders are the most able to withstand military losses.

Yet even personalist authoritarians are not immune to the aftermath of a poor military performance. Research by Chiozza and Goemans shows that of those leaders who were ousted as a result of a war, all had experienced a military defeat. In fact, approximately half of all leaders who lose a war also lose power.\(^\text{11}\) As with other seismic events—like economic or natural disasters—military defeats can expose leaders as incompetent, making visible cracks in the autocrat’s shield that

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\(^\text{11}\) Chiozza and Goemans.
shatter their aura of invincibility. Such shocks also create a focal point for mobilization, facilitating the collective action that is necessary to dislodge entrenched regimes. A Ukrainian victory, then, raises the prospects for more meaningful political change in Russia, and critically, could provide future Russian elites and the Russian public with a valuable lesson about the limits of military power.

Most immediately, the U.S. Congress must continue to provide the military aid and assistance that Ukraine needs to defeat Russia. In addition to sustaining military and economic assistance, Congress could adopt legislation that lays out a longer-term schedule for delivering weapons to Ukraine. Such a clear, extended plan could make Moscow more pessimistic about the future of its campaign. Money and resources are far more likely than words to shape Putin’s calculus about his wartime prospects.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Congress can contribute to securing a Ukrainian victory by making clear that Kyiv has a guaranteed place in the West. The U.S. Congress should fully endorse Ukraine’s war aims and lead the charge in building support for Ukraine’s NATO membership, including for immediate steps that would deepen Ukraine’s integration into NATO.

Constrict and Constrain the Kremlin

Also critical to enabling Ukraine to defeat Russia is increasing and strengthening the sanctions against Russia. Such efforts are necessary both to alter Putin’s calculus about his ability to sustain the war and to prevent the Kremlin from waging future aggression beyond its borders. Degrading Russian power requires Washington to build on the policies it set in motion following Putin’s invasion of Ukraine. In particular, there are several actions the U.S. Congress could take. First, given the importance of Russia’s energy sector, Congress should advocate for lowering the oil price cap down from its current price of $60/bbl. Second, Congress could continue to expand existing sanctions. For example, Congress could place sanctions on Rosatom, including a ban on Russian uranium, as well as personal sanctions on the management of Rosatom and Rosatom officials active in Ukraine. Third, U.S. Congress must invest in the enforcement of existing sanctions and export controls. Already there is evidence that Russia is working to circumvent them. In particular, Congress should increase resources available to build enforcement capacity in key partner countries. Likewise, the creation of a unified database with all sanctioned entities and institutions, including related parties (such as subsidiaries and family members) could significantly strengthen export controls and their enforcement. Although these may not be short-term fixes, such actions are important in tightening existing measures in the longer-term.12

Strengthen Deterrence in Europe

Russia is not in a position to start another war today, and certainly not with NATO. But this does not mean Western policymakers can be complacent. It may take Russia the better part of a decade to recapitalize its conventional forces in the aftermath of its attack on Ukraine, but NATO has its own recapitalization woes. European arsenals are being depleted. The United States, in cooperation with its NATO allies, must address shortcomings in the defense industrial base to ensure sustained supply to Ukraine over the long-term, and to ensure preparedness for future conflicts. Moreover, this war has demonstrated just how dependent Europe is on the United States for its security. Although it is tempting to argue that the United States should offload responsibility for deterring Russia to Europe given rising tensions with China, that is an unrealistic and dangerous proposition. It will take Europe decades to be ready. The United States, therefore, must remain committed to strengthening NATO, while working with its NATO allies to strengthen the European pillar within NATO over time.

Grow the Coalition of Countries Confronting Russia

The unity and coordination between the United States and its allies in the wake of Putin’s invasion has been extraordinary, but Russia is far from isolated internationally. Putin has doubled down on the information domain, effectively framing NATO and the West as responsible for the war; his narratives continue to resonate with many in the Global South. Only 34 countries have imposed sanctions on Russia since the war started. Russia continues to build ties in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. China, India, and other states in the Global South have abstained on votes in favor of Ukraine at the United Nations. Trade between Russia

and these countries has increased. Eighty-seven countries still offer Russian citizens visa-free entry, including Argentina, Egypt, Israel, Mexico, Thailand, Turkey, and Venezuela.

To build the coalition of countries needed to effectively confront Russia and minimize Russia’s negative influence in the Global South, the U.S. Congress should continue to fund the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM). Importantly, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has also created opportunities that the United States and its allies can exploit. Russia, for example, will struggle to sustain arms sales—a historically important link that the Kremlin uses to tether countries to Moscow—given the degradation and poor showing of its military. The United States should look for opportunities to step in to replace those relationships, undermining needed revenue for the Kremlin and Russian influence more broadly. Likewise, some countries, particularly in Central Asia, that have close historical relationships with Russia have grown more skeptical of the Kremlin in the aftermath of its invasion of Ukraine. The U.S. Congress can send delegations to key countries to signal U.S. commitment. Such visits can help encourage these countries to better enforce sanctions on Russia, and over time, erode Russian influence.

Plan for and Mitigate the Impact of Deepening Russia-China Relations

Russia’s war in Ukraine has been a critical test of the depth of Sino-Russian relations. Since Russia’s invasion, China has remained an essential partner for Moscow. Although there have been limits to what Beijing has been willing to do for Russia, China has served as a vital lifeline for the Kremlin, including by parroting Russian talking points about the war, increasing purchases of Russian oil and gas, and continuing to export microchips and other component parts to Moscow that have been cut off by the West. If anything, the war in Ukraine and growing tensions between the United States and China have amplified the geopolitical factors pushing the two countries together. The impact is significant. Not only is Beijing diluting Western pressure on Russia, but the more dependent Moscow becomes on Beijing, the more likely the Kremlin will be to toe China’s line, amplifying the threat that China poses to the United States. This is especially true in the defense domain, where Russia may provide China with increasingly sophisticated capabilities, including submarine quieting and other technologies that make China a more formidable threat.

The U.S. Congress should think through now potential responses to China’s providing lethal aid to Moscow. Likewise, the United States and its allies should prioritize intelligence collection on Russian and Chinese efforts to circumvent sanctions and export controls. Enhanced intelligence monitoring will also be required as more of their defense cooperation takes place out of the public eye. In addition, Washington should continue to work with Europe to build a common picture of the challenge that greater Russia-China coordination would pose and further encourage European leaders to articulate to China the potential costs of providing direct support for Russia’s war effort.

Weaken Autocracy’s Grip

The United States should continue to pursue steps to improve the prospects of better relations with a future Russia. In particular, the United States can pursue measures now that can weaken autocracy’s grip in the long run. Corruption, in particular, has been the lifeblood of Putin’s regime. Longtime personalist regimes like Russia are the most corrupt type of authoritarian regime. Corrupt and illicit networks entrench regime interests and create high barriers to individuals outside the regime seeking to gain influence within the system. In this way, corruption facilitates the persistence of authoritarianism after a longtime leader’s departure. Doubling down on anti-corruption—including by effectively enforcing sanctions on corrupt oligarchs and tracking down their assets, stepping up efforts to fight money laundering, reforming campaign finance, enhancing transparency of the financial and real estate markets, and increasing funding for investigative journalism—can weaken the structural support for authoritarianism in Russia and thereby create opportunities for political change in a post-Putin era.

In addition to prioritizing anti-corruption efforts, the United States and its allies should step up support for Russian civil society—a key ingredient needed to sustain a more liberal and democratic Russia. Critically, Western actions can help Russian
Civil society actors to sustain their work in the face of the Kremlin’s crackdown. In particular, large numbers of the opposition, journalists, and other Russian civil society actors have been forced to leave the country, creating new opportunities to support their work from outside Russia. Much can be done, for example, to support journalists that now operate outside Russia, including through visa support, fellowships, increased funding, and legal assistance. Such efforts are needed now more than ever and would make for a valuable investment in a better relationship with a future, post-Putin Russia.16

Invading Ukraine was a massive miscalculation that will leave Russia militarily, economically, and geopolitically weaker. But it is up to the United States and its allies to demonstrate that we are up to the task of capitalizing on that mistake. It is these personalist autocrats—Putin and increasingly Xi Jinping—that are the most prone to miscalculation because they surround themselves with yes men. Putin’s invasion of Ukraine has been an especially horrific miscalculation, but it is critical that the United States and its allies make the most of it. Getting Russia policy right—getting the competition with the world’s autocracies right—starts with getting Ukraine right.17

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you both for your testimony. We will start a series of 5-minute rounds of questioning.

Since the beginning of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the Biden administration has corralled the EU, the U.K., Japan, and other allies into a sanction regime that is really unprecedented in scope. While I give them a lot of credit, we have been leveraging sanctions on Russia for years, but it is clear that existing sanctions and export controls are not crushing the Russian economy in a way that will force it to stop waging war in Ukraine.

For both of you, aside from cracking down on sanctions evasion by China, Turkey, Kazakhstan, and other countries, what other pressure can or should we bring against Russia to reinforce and expand upon the impact of existing sanctions?

Dr. KENDALL-TAYLOR. Okay. Well, as you said, I mean, this is an unprecedented sanctions regime that we have put in place and I think the theory behind the case is that the longer that the sanctions remain in place the more effective they will become, and I do think that we have begun to see evidence that that is the case. Certainly in specific industries—the airline industry, the car industry—the impact of sanctions are slowly being felt. The sanctions on export—I am sorry, microchips and other things are slowing down Russia’s defense industrial production.

Over time, the sanctions, hopefully, will have greater effect, but there—as you indicate, there is multiple and additional steps that the United States could take to strengthen that regime.

I think, first and foremost, is in the energy realm and I think that Congress could advocate for lowering the price cap down from

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its current price of $60 per barrel. That would be one area where Congress, I think, could advocate more vocally so that Russia continues to be squeezed particularly in the energy domain, which continues to be a key lifeline for its ability to sustain its war abroad. Advocating to bring that price cap down is one.

I think there is also additional sectors that still have yet to be sanctioned, for example, companies like Rosatom, including a ban on Russian uranium. There are still other key sectors of the Russian economy that have not been targeted by sanctions and where additional sanctions could have a further impact on Russia’s economic viability.

Then, I think the most important thing, which you already referenced, is really about sanctions enforcement. This continues to be a major problem. There is already evidence that Russia is working very hard to evade the sanctions that are in place.

For Congress to be able to build the enforcement capacity, not just in the United States, but also, critically, in the European Union, I think a lot of our allies do not have the same enforcement capacity as we have in the United States.

Having U.S. Congress be able to fund those efforts to enhance the capacity of our allies and partners will help us tighten the screws, and there is other things that the U.S., not necessarily for Congress, could do, but creating a unified database with all sanctions, entities, and institutions.

I think, again, going after energy there is more that we can do there, targeting additional sectors that have not yet been impacted and really thinking very hard about the enforcement piece, I think, is the way forward.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ambassador SULLIVAN. I think Dr. Kendall Taylor has really hit the key points. I would emphasize energy, as well. One thing to keep in mind, and this—I base this statement on a comment that Putin himself made.

He was asked by a Russian nationalist, why did we not do the special military operation earlier? Why did you wait so long? We knew this Nazi regime existed in Kyiv. Why did we wait?

Putin said, we were not ready. It was not that we were not ready militarily. It was we were not ready to protect our economy.

He has been working on this for a long time. He spent more time worrying about how he was going to protect his economy than he did, frankly, planning the military aspects of his special military operation, which have failed miserably.

I thought that was a telling answer by him. They have been working on this for a long time. We had to—we basically started from a standing start. We had sectoral sanctions in place after Crimea, after the Donbas, sure, but nothing like we are doing now.

Putin did not expect this, but he was planning for it and he has had time to work with his friends, his partners, his dear friend in Beijing, the new government in Brazil, the South Africans, the BRICS, in particular, China, India, Brazil have really been a lifeline for him.

The CHAIRMAN. Which I am glad you said that because while we have been focused on Ukraine, the truth is that the United States
and Russia are actively competing for alliances, economic and security partners, all over the world.

Russia has been cultivating relationships with huge countries across Africa like, notably, South Africa and others in the Sahel, as well as with dictators in our own hemisphere.

What tools, engagement, and outreach should we be thinking about to best posture the United States in this existential competition with Russia for partnerships across the globe?

Ambassador SULLIVAN. Senator Kaine and I some months ago had a conversation somewhat related to this and I think I would summarize it as three “Ds”: diplomacy, diplomacy, diplomacy.

We need to be engaged and not badgering countries to say you need to support us on Ukraine. We need to do a better job—I had a conversation with Sir John Scarlett, the former head of MI6—we do need to do a better job of explaining the brutality of Russia’s war in Ukraine and this is a war waged, as I said in my opening statement, by a permanent member of the Security Council.

For a country like Brazil, a country like India, Russia’s presence in the Security Council renders that a null body for purposes of dealing with a problem like this, but it is diplomacy.

The fact that the Security Council is now hamstrung means that it is more important for my former colleagues at the Department and across the U.S. Government and our embassies to be reaching out and establishing better relationships in Pretoria, in Delhi, et cetera, and I think the Biden administration is working on this.

Dr. KENDALL-TAYLOR. I agree the diplomacy piece is key and I think one—the only thing I would add to that is I think a lot of the countries in the so-called Global South do not want to be forced to pick sides.

I think there is many countries who do not buy into this kind of democracy versus authoritarianism. They do not want to be dragged into the U.S. confrontation with China. Working on discrete issues where the interests align is key to, I think, that effective diplomacy.

The paying attention piece is really critical. As Senator Risch was saying, there are opportunities to exploit here in terms of going on the offensive and taking the fight to Russia.

In regions like Central Asia, for example, many of these countries, particularly in Russia’s kind of periphery, are extremely skeptical and wary of relations with Russia for the first time in a very long time. If we pay attention—the U.S. State Department, I believe, sent a delegation—a critically timed delegation to also work with those countries to help the enforcement of sanctions.

Diplomacy and paying attention and picking up on the vacuum that Moscow is leaving behind in many places is key. Arms sales is another key opportunity with the Global South, the Middle East. Russia will have fewer arms to sell, going forward, as they have to choose to send arms into Ukraine or to sell them for export.

Those relationships that Russia has with India, many countries in the Middle East, are relationships that Russia uses to tether those countries to Moscow. This is an opportune time for the United States to consider whether we can step in or have allies step in to break those relationships.
Then, as you mentioned, I think, in the opening statements, the information domain is also critical and so continued funding for the U.S. Agency of Global Media and other efforts that help the United States to continue to engage in these media environments are all critical, I think, for competing with those countries.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

You both hit on a key that we are trying to work through in the China bill, which is how do we beef up our diplomatic abilities across the globe. China has more embassies, more personnel, across the globe than we do.

Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Well, thank you. Let me pick up from where the chairman left off here and that is the diplomatic aspect of this.

I think probably anybody that operates in this lane on diplomacy cannot be more disgusted with the U.N. than it is right now. I mean, what good is this institution where you have a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council violating the basic precept and the reason that the U.N. exists and that was for security for nations, for their sovereignty, and for their borders?

I mean, it is just—I went round and round with the Secretary General on this. We send billions there and what do we get? Speeches, nothing more, and they cannot even—not only can they not stop this, which they should, they cannot even pass a resolution condemning it because of the way the U.N. is set up.

I am disgusted there, but that just means that we have got to pay more attention on a bilateral basis with our diplomacy.

That brings me to an interesting point that you made, Ms. Taylor, and that is I have been visited and I suspect other members of the Senate have been visited by countries that are former countries in the orbit and the Stans, obviously, is primarily what I am talking about, and I was amazed at their lack of support for what Russia is doing. They came to tell me, hey, we got nothing to do with this. I had not seen them. I have not talked to them in years, but they voluntarily showed up and said, look, we want you, the United States, to know we got nothing to do with this. I was amazed that Putin called on them to step up and send people and supplies and weapons and everything else and they have not done it.

I think there is a real opportunity there and I think that we really ought to exploit it, and I think it underscores the disgust that the world has with what Russia is doing there.

One of the other things that always strikes me is how—and I guess I should not because it is an autocracy where people cannot speak out, but it always amazes me how the Russian people come to the defense of this.

I do not know how you can watch what has happened in Ukraine, the atrocities that have been committed there on a par with the kinds of things that happened in World War II and say, well, this is all right because they wanted to join NATO or something like that.

What is your view on—is there any—both of you are experts in the area. What is it like at home in Russia?

You lived there, Ambassador Sullivan. You lived there. What do you hear from the people there when they whisper in your ear?
Ambassador SULLIVAN. Well, thank you, Senator Risch. I think there are several things going on.

First, the media environment in Russia is merely state propaganda. It is what the Russian people hear 24/7. They have to really seek out other sources of information if they do not just want to hear the Kremlin’s propaganda and many of them they have got other things to do with their lives. They are just steeped in it all day long.

Second, this is a country dating back to Soviet days where people just did what they needed to do to survive. They kept their heads down. They shut up. They did not make a scene, and that is what most Russians, I believe many Russians, are doing now.

There are some who have fled. There are some who tried to protest. They have been sent to labor camps, but the vast—but there is a large segment of the population who, as they did in Soviet days, sort of keep their head down and try not to attract attention.

There comes a point, however, where the effects in Russia of the special military operation will become so grave, in my opinion, whether it is because of casualties or the continuing effect on the economy, where there will—as Dr. Kendall-Taylor said, there will be that bubbling up from below.

It is a country that has been, dating back again to Soviet days, they have dealt with this. The Russian people—the Russian Federation, part of the Soviet Union, they have dealt with these types of situations before in ways that Americans cannot imagine.

Senator RISCH. Even the younger generation?

Ambassador SULLIVAN. The younger generation is—born since the Cold War ended, many of them are nationalists. They hear the World War II propaganda that Putin spews that this is what our grandparents did in defeating the Nazis. They want to rally around their country. There are a lot of young Russian nationalists who are buying into this, I am afraid.

Senator RISCH. I guess my time is up. Dr. Taylor, why do you not give us——

Dr. KENDALL-TAYLOR. Yes. Just to echo. I agree that there—I think there is quite a lot of broad support and, certainly, Putin’s public approval ratings have gone up since the invasion. Obviously, it is very difficult to understand engaged citizens’ true preferences for the reasons that the ambassador was talking about.

I think one thing we have to keep an eye on is I talked about Putin mobilizing Russian society. For years the apathy, the passivity, has been Putin’s playbook, but what we are seeing is since he had to mobilize Russians and draw Russians into the war, there is much more active support. No longer can people be as passive as the ambassador is saying. That has been a real change. There is more citizens reporting on other citizens, the heartbreaking story of a father who was arrested because a little girl drew an anti-war picture. There is a lot of kind of citizens reporting on others.

Russia is moving from a demobilized society to a mobilized society and I think we will have to keep an eye on that for what kind of implications that produces for the future.

The one extra point I will very quickly make is there are many, many, hundreds of thousands—something like 300,000 Russians have fled in the aftermath of the war.
That provides an opportunity for the United States and I think that is another area where the U.S. Congress can do more to enable those Russians who have left. Not all—some of them were dodging having to fight in the war, but there is a hearty number of civil society actors who have now left Russia.

Having U.S. Congress take actions and steps and provide resources that enable those Russians to continue their work from outside of Russia is very important. We could fund research on understanding what that community looks like. We can increase funding to support those who are outside, creating a title program for human rights defenders and journalists.

Those are opportunities. Again, trying to find the opportunities that come out of this war in this huge population of Russians that are now outside the country, I do think represents an opportunity that we could tap into.

Senator Risch. Thank you.

Senator Kaine [presiding]. Senator Murphy.

Senator Murphy. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you both for being here.

There is a question of whether Ukraine can ultimately carry the cost of this war for as long as is necessary and then there is this corresponding question of whether Russia can carry the cost of this war for as long as necessary, and it seems to me that we appropriately are engaged in public policy, trying to impact both sides of that coin, getting Ukraine everything it needs and trying to win-now the pathways through which Russia gets what it needs.

You responded to a question from Senator Menendez about our sanctions regime, but there is also a set of bilateral relationships the United States has with countries that are still actively engaged with Russia, helping them either to manage or evade those sanctions regimes, and so there is two things at play here.

One, we can talk about expanding our sanctions, but two, we can just talk about elevating this question of Russia lifelines with our friends. This is one of a myriad of articles you can find on this question.

This is from the Center for European Policy Analysis, an article entitled “UAE throws lifeline to beleaguered Russian tech sector.” You could find similar stories about Turkey, India, countries in Central Asia, and it strikes me that this is a missed opportunity, maybe most particularly in the Gulf, where they are making individual decisions to support Russia sanctions evasion, but they are also helping to prop up the cost of oil in a way that allows Putin to power forward.

Just a word on how you view our bilateral relationships with countries that are still helping Russia fund this war and why it is—I hope you believe it is important to elevate this as a priority in those bilateral relationships.

I put this to you, Ms. Taylor.

Dr. Kendall-Taylor. Yes. I think the sanctions evasion is a big piece, but I think the important thing to think about with all of these different countries is that they all have very disparate interests.

They are continuing to support Russia often for very different reasons—India, because they have this long military sales relation-
ship, some for historical reasons, some because they do not want to be dragged into the U.S.-China confrontation.

As you noted, I think working it through bilateral channels is a critical way to go. India, for example, this is an excellent opportunity to step in—the United States, France, some of our allies—to try to wean India away from its defense sales. It is not going to happen overnight, but it is an important opportunity that we can exploit and take advantage of.

I guess the bottom line is we have been talking about the role of diplomacy, kind of arms sales, working it through the sanctions channels. There is all—a number of different components and opportunities and pathways that the United States could pursue in these bilateral relationships.

I agree, one of the goals of our policy should be to grow the coalition of countries that oppose Russia. That will be needed, especially if we are talking about this as a protracted conflict.

That should be one of the explicit priorities of U.S. policy on Russia is to grow the number of countries and figuring out those issues where our interests overlying their specific relationships with Russia and how we can exploit them, I think, should be a central focus.

Senator Murphy. Anything on this question, Mr. Sullivan?

Ambassador Sullivan. Yes. I agree, first of all, with you, Senator, and with Dr. Kendall-Taylor. It is labor intensive. We need to push the message out to all our posts worldwide.

All of those countries—I am focused on the 141 that voted for the resolution in the General Assembly. More than half of them have done nothing to implement that resolution. In fact, many of them keep trading with Russia.

We have got the almost 40 that abstained. We need to be using all the tools and they—it may vary from country to country—Egypt, for example, making sure the Egyptians do not sell military equipment to the Russians and do sell equipment to the Ukrainians. It is labor intensive. It needs to be tailored to the particular countries.

Senator Murphy. This comes back to Senator Menendez’s original point. It is labor intensive, which means we need resources, which means we cannot continue to ask the State Department to fight Russia with one hand tied behind its back because there are so many things that our allies, our partners, could be doing that they are not today and our under investment in the tools of winning friends, in particular around fighting misinformation and propaganda, makes the job of our diplomats pretty difficult, which is another reason why we should be plussing up those resources so that we can win more of these fights.

Listen, I think the Administration has done a great job of rallying our closest friends, but I do think we have to shed light on the fact that that sort of next set of friends in the next concentric circle is kind of playing China off against Russia, telling us they will work with us on China policy, but they are not with us on Russia policy.

We have to elevate this dialogue on Russian sanctions evasions with some of our important allies not in Europe. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Ricketts. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our guests for being here.

Ambassador Sullivan, I thought it was interesting you said that Vladimir Putin believes he is at war with the United States and, certainly, that is the way he is behaving when you think about what he has done with regard to our nuclear treaties.

For example, the 1987 INF treaty eliminated a range of nuclear weapons and because he was fielding so many illegal weapons, it forced us to withdraw from that treaty—forced the U.S. to withdraw from that treaty in 2019.

You think about Open Skies that allowed us and Russia to overfly countries with reconnaissance planes in 32 other countries. His noncompliance there forced us to withdraw from that in 2020.

Now you have got the New START treaty and this is one where the Biden administration reupped it for 5 years just as it was set to expire in 2021, but Russia has said they are not participating anymore with regard to that and this makes sense. If Putin again believes he is at war with us, why would he maintain any of these agreements?

The Biden administration has made the decision to unconditionally extend the New START treaty. Should we continue to be a part of this? What is your thought with regard to what do we do with the New START treaty?

Ambassador Sullivan. Well, thank you, Senator. I was actually in Moscow and was the person who had to negotiate with the Russians on what should have been a fairly easy extension.

Once President Biden had decided at the start of his term in January of 2021 to extend by 5 years the treaty, which is what the Russians wanted, it was—actually wound up being much more complicated than that and required some pretty intensive diplomacy with the Russians to actually get it done because nothing is easy with the Russians.

We extend the treaty. It has now been extended. It cannot be extended beyond that. What the Russians have done, what Putin has done, is to the extent that the Russian Government already before his speech earlier this year, where he announced the suspension of Russia's compliance or participation in the treaty Putin announced it.

The Administration, as I understand it, and in fact, I think the Administration just released yesterday the numbers for our strategic nuclear weapons as we do under—should do under the New START Treaty, but the Russians will not. I think that is important.

I think maintaining our transparency, our continuing commitment to maintaining control over nuclear weapons when he is playing games, and I say games because I do not think he wants a nuclear war with the United States, but he does want to use nuclear blackmail and use one of the few things he has left, which is his nuclear weapons, to try to leverage that.

Senator Ricketts. Secretary Blinken has said we are going to maintain the restrictions of the New START Treaty. What I hear you saying is that you think we should continue to live to those restrictions in the New START treaty?

Ambassador Sullivan. The Russians have said they will, as well. What they have done, as I understand it, is there are inspections
that are required under the treaty. The Russians will not allow us to inspect their facilities and we are not going to let the Russians in if they will not let us in.

They have suspended inspections. They have suspended meetings of what is called a bilateral consultative commission—U.S. experts, Russian experts—to discuss issues under the treaty, but after Putin made that speech, the foreign ministry clarified and said they would continue to adhere to the numerical limitations under the treaty.

Senator RICKETTS. Given he cheated on the INF treaty and everything else, how can we possibly trust anything that they would say that they are going to live up to, the restrictions in the——

Ambassador SULLIVAN. That was my point in my opening statement. Trust, but verify—there is no trust. What we need are and we do have—and Dr. Kendall-Taylor will know more about this than I—technical means to try to verify Russian compliance.

What we are missing are the inspections that we are entitled to under the treaty. That is what Putin is denying us. I agree with you. It is a risk. We are not letting the Russians in. All that the United States is doing now is stating what—we are complying with the numerical limits under the treaty. Those are the numbers that the Administration released yesterday. It was a one-page document. We are not, because the Russians are, having Russians in to inspect our facilities.

Senator RICKETTS. What should be our strategy when it comes to our nuclear strategic force?

Ambassador SULLIVAN. Well, first, we need to upgrade to make sure that we are not—we are not heading down a path, which I believe we were some years ago, to—in the hopes that there were going to be fewer and fewer nuclear weapons.

Senator RICKETTS. The efforts right now that the military is taking to upgrade is really important——

Ambassador SULLIVAN. I think that is—my opinion—I participated in the last Administration as deputy secretary in the Nuclear Posture Review. I think that is important now more than ever to maintain U.S. deterrence with an aggressive Russia and more so a rising China, including in its nuclear weapons program.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you very much, Ambassador. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KAINÉ. Senator Shaheen has kindly allowed me to swap places with her in the order and then she will take the helm until Senator Menendez returns.

I want to thank you for the testimony. It has been very helpful. Dr. Kendall-Taylor, I just want to underline a point you made. I think that the 300,000 mostly young Russians who have departed the country, some to avoid war, but some out of protest over the war, is a valuable resource for us both in terms of understanding more deeply what the internal dynamic is, but also potentially to help organize pressure because they want to continue to see improvements in their home country. I really appreciate that suggestion.

How big a deal is it that Finland is in NATO, and Sweden it is just a matter of time that they are going to be in NATO, both in terms of the military capacity of NATO, but also just sort of in the
psychology of this, these two nations where polling for NATO accession would have been under 30 percent for decades, even up to 3 or 4 years ago, are now realizing they want to be part of NATO. How big a deal is that?

Dr. Kendall-Taylor. What we have seen so far is, obviously, Putin has very much tried to play down Finland’s entry and Sweden’s eventual entry in large part because the Russian military is so focused and overwhelmed with what is happening in Ukraine and, in fact, what we have seen is many of Russian forces that are stationed in the west of the country have been redeployed to the east. He has very much had to play it down.

I think that we should expect that over time that there will be more of a military response to Finland and Sweden’s entry into NATO. I think most immediately we are looking at hybrid tactics that Russia will try, like incursions into airspace, GPS jamming, all of those types of things just to express its displeasure.

Over time, I think Russia will see a threat. When you think about now the kind of security architecture of the region has been fundamentally altered. The Baltic Sea is now basically ringed by NATO members with the exception of Kaliningrad.

The other key change for Russia as I talked about is as its conventional forces are being degraded, Russia is going to place more importance and rely more heavily on its nuclear weapons. The Kola Peninsula in the Arctic is critical from that perspective.

There are these changes in the security architecture that Russia will see not just around the Black Sea, but more frequent and more sophisticated NATO exercises in the area, closer integration of intelligence, the very capable intelligence collection assets that Finland and Sweden have.

Russia will be looking at an altered threat picture and we should expect that over time they will take increasingly more aggressive steps up into that Arctic region.

The United States and particularly NATO are going to need to be prepared. In the near term, Russia’s military is degraded. We should expect more of the hybrid threats.

I do think over the long term that is a significant change that Russia will react and respond to. They are also likely to view the Arctic as a region where they can remind the world that they are a great power so more kind of provocative actions that they could take in the region.

The last thing I would highlight, too, is the Russia-China dynamic in the Arctic. As Russia is becoming increasingly dependent on China, they are going to have to toe the line on Chinese interests. We know China wants to play a larger role in the Arctic.

What might China or what might Russia be willing to concede to China in the Arctic? That is a question we need to be watching. Already Russia and China have signed a cooperation agreement of their coast guards. That is the first.

It is really an interesting data point because historically Russia has wanted to keep China out of the Arctic because it feels it is its own sphere.

Senator Kaine. Let me segue on that—

Dr. Kendall-Taylor. Yes, please.
Senator Kaine. —Ambassador Sullivan, on the Russia-China relationship. I have been asking about this for years, the increasing closeness of the countries, and multiple administrations of both parties have tended to say you do not need to worry about—the history of enmity between these countries suggests that there will not be too much cooperation between them.

I never really believed that to be the case. It seems like they are growing closer and closer. There is a dominant partner and a lesser partner, but they both seem pretty designed to work closely together to battle the West or however they want to put it.

Is that your sense, Ambassador Sullivan?

Ambassador Sullivan. Oh, absolutely, and I can quote President Xi.

President Xi, when he is leaving Moscow after his meeting with President Putin, as he is walking out the door he looks at Putin and says, “The changes that we are making in the world are unlike any that have seen—the world has seen in a hundred years. We are changing the system, you and I.” Putin looked at him and said, “I agree.”

Absolutely this is a very troubling partnership, and to follow up on Dr. Kendall-Taylor's point, the—China has always tried to characterize itself as a near Arctic power and the Russians have resisted that, quite rightly.

I think it is going to be more difficult for them to resist that. I note, for example, that Russia yesterday threatened to withdraw its—it was for the last 2 years, chair of the Arctic Council—withdraw from the Arctic Council, and as I said, I think the Russians really did not understand what I was saying when I said it, if China is a near Arctic power then that gives me some hope to pitch for the Red Sox. I can just describe myself as a near starting pitcher for the Red Sox. Why not?

[Laughter.]

Ambassador Sullivan. Facts are facts, right? The China partnership is vital for Putin, important, and something that Xi will leverage, but vital for Putin.

Dr. Kendall-Taylor. Can I make one very quick point, Senator, which is I think the—so it is important for Putin, but it also amplifies the China challenge and this is what we will have to watch as—again, as they are increasingly dependent, especially in the military domain, Russia will be sending increasingly sophisticated military systems, submarine quieting, and other things that basically make the Chinese a more capable military.

They are getting data from Ukraine. They do not have combat experience. They are training. They are exercising. They are accessing data to train their AI. Russia amplifies the China challenge and makes it a more formidable adversary in the Indo-Pacific.

The Chairman [presiding]. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Kaine, for presiding.

Senator Romney.

Senator Romney. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador, as a Red Sox fan I can tell you I certainly hope you do not get a pitching slot for the Red Sox.

[Laughter.]
Senator Shaheen. I actually thought they might do a little better.

[Laughter.]


I do not want to oversimplify the—our successful strategy relative to the former Soviet Union, but we out-competed them militarily, economically, and they finally cried uncle.

Whether that was from internal pressure or just a collapse of their competitiveness, I really cannot say, but most successful strategies focus on a couple of things that are the most effective and I do not know what those items might be.

I am just going to ask each of you to help me think about what should we really focus on. There are so many things we need to do as we confront a Russia that we cannot trust, a Russia that is assertive, aggressive, and brutal.

Are there some things that we are really not getting right yet, that we are not focused on sufficiently that really ought to become the focus of our strategy?

I hear a number of us thinking about we need to restrict their economy. It is a challenge when they have oil and gas and coal and uranium in such abundance. They are always going to have enough money and the Russian people put up with awful things, in part, the alternative is going to a gulag.

Where is the pressure point? Where are the places we really ought to be applying more effort if we are going to try and change the course of Russian trajectory?

Ambassador, why do I not begin with you and then turn to Dr. Kendall-Taylor?

Ambassador Sullivan. Well, I think Dr. Kendall-Taylor made the point in her opening statement. The key is Ukraine. It is interesting, Senator, that you mentioned the word competition. Putin does not like competition. He lost the competition in Ukraine. The Russians lost the competition in Eastern Europe. The Eastern Europeans—when I hear the Russians talk about, well, NATO is just moving west, what they do not acknowledge is their own behavior.

The Russian behavior has pushed those Eastern European countries to the West—excuse me, NATO moving east. The Eastern European countries, they lost that competition. What has he resorted to? War, the oldest—one of the oldest forms of competition.

We can compete on ideas, economy, et cetera. He has chosen the venue now to wage a war in Ukraine for his Russkiy mir, his Russian empire. He cannot win that.

We can talk about weapon systems and how much financial support the United States as opposed to our allies can provide.

If we do not defeat his imperial mission in Ukraine, then the system that the United States and our allies and partners and the whole world, including China, have benefited from over the 75-plus years since the end of the Second World War that will drive a final stake through it.

The U.N. Security Council is already—unlike in 1990, when there was aggression by Iraq invading Kuwait, the Security Council authorizes what became Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm.
That was a U.N. Security Council authorized voted by the Soviet Union to expel militarily Iraq from Kuwait. That is not going to happen again.

I think Putin has chosen the place where we are going to compete and he has chosen war because he has lost every other form of competition.

Senator ROMNEY. Thank you.

Dr. KENDALL-TAYLOR. I will just foot stomp the Ukraine piece and it is so important for everything the ambassador said, but it is critical that Russia is defeated, that Ukraine wins, because it will help Russians shed their imperial ambitions and it teaches future Russian leaders important lessons about the limits of military power and I think it is critically important and we should not overstate it.

I think on that front what we are lacking—obviously, there is more we can do in terms of ATACMS and longer-range weapons.

One thing I am also concerned about is I do not think the Biden administration or Washington in general has a story about what happens to our support after the counter offensive and I think that shapes Putin’s calculus.

It is what convinces him that time is on his side and that the United States will tire. If there are things that the U.S. Congress could do to demonstrate that we will have credible deliveries of weapons out into the future, I think that shapes Putin’s calculus about our staying power.

If we could have something like that, I think it would be critically important and having you all, the President, and the Administration make a case to the American people about why this matters. I am concerned that we see some public support for Ukraine waning and that is what Putin is counting on.

Your question was bigger than that and I do not think that there is any magic point of leverage that we have. This really is a long-term confrontation.

It is almost like the kind of containment 2.0 on an updated version and so it is about constricting and constraining through sanctions, through export controls, by tightening those regimes.

It is about strengthening deterrence in Europe. We have to be able to credibly commit to enhance and maintain deterrence in Europe. The Europeans, unfortunately, cannot.

This war has shown that Europe is not ready to defend themselves and that the United States must remain committed for the foreseeable future, although we can encourage them to build the European pillar within NATO.

We have to grow the coalition of countries countering Russia. We have to mitigate the Russia-China partnership and we have to continue to work to weaken autocracy’s grip.

There will be a post-Putin Russia. I am not optimistic necessarily about what it looks like, but there could be an opening that did not exist before. The civil society pieces, supporting investigative journalism, all of those pieces, anti-corruption. I mean, that is what—the lifeblood of Putin’s regime.

The more the U.S. Congress can do on our real estate markets, on all of those types of things where we have seen so much
progress in the aftermath, it is just staying the course and doing it for the long term because it is a long-term confrontation.

Senator Romney. Thank you.

The Chairman. Dr.—I was going to say Dr. Shaheen, but Senator Shaheen.

Senator Shaheen. That works. Thank you both for being here.

Ambassador Sullivan, I want to start with you because I want to go back to the Arctic, and you mentioned the Arctic Council. How important is it for us to get our ambassador to the Arctic Council confirmed?

Ambassador Sullivan. The Arctic Council is important. I went to the Arctic Council countries, the ambassadors of those countries, in Moscow. We used to meet regularly.

Those are the bilateral ambassadors to Russia. We will meet with Ambassador Korchunov, who was the Russian ambassador. The Arctic Council is very important and it is why the Russians are squealing the way they are now because every other member of the Arctic Council is united against them and has excluded them, so extremely important.

Senator Shaheen. Well, thank you. I would just say, Mr. Chairman and Senator Risch, that I hope this committee will move as quickly as we can on confirming that Arctic ambassador or at least having a hearing so it can move forward.

I want to go—follow up a little bit on the—what will Congress do after the war and also in terms of your statements, Dr. Kendall-Taylor, about continuing to make the case about why this war is important.

I could not agree more with both of you on that and it is something that I try and do when I am in New Hampshire whenever I have an opportunity.

One of the things I find particularly frustrating is the continued questions that I get, and I am sure every member of this committee gets, from reporters who keep saying, well, is not support for the war deteriorating in Congress because we have extremists at either end who are talking about why we should stop funding this war.

I have two questions for you both, really. One is what does that mean when we see those extremist voices and how does that affect the public as a whole, and when reporters magnify those voices, what does that do?

Secondly, to what extent are we seeing any Russian disinformation or Chinese or other adversaries’ disinformation to try and promote those divisions within our society to try and undermine the war effort?

I will open to whoever wants to go first.

Dr. Kendall-Taylor. I think your point on the media is also critically important because they do tend to amplify and make quite a lot out of statements and no one remembers then when a statement gets walked back. They just remember the statement.

I do think that the media has done a lot to amplify the divisions and to highlight very minority held views about calling into question whether or not we should sustain support for Ukraine.

I do—obviously—we all know that the American public does take cues from the U.S. Congress and from the political elite and so
when they hear those types of statements, I absolutely think it leads them to call into question.

That is why I think it is critically important for members of Congress and for the President himself to continue to make the case. I think it is unfortunate that the President has—obviously, he has traveled to Ukraine and that is wonderful and he has given important speeches in Warsaw and other places.

He has not addressed the American people. It was not part of the State of the Union and other things. I think when you hear—it is the critical voices that call into question that are being amplified and we do not hear enough about the case for the sustained support and there is an imbalance there.

On your question about disinformation, I am not aware and I have not followed that closely enough to answer that question. I am not certain, but it obviously seems like a ripe issue for targets of Russian and Chinese disinformation.

Senator SHAHEEN. Ambassador Sullivan, do you have any thoughts about—

Ambassador SULLIVAN. Just one quick thought. There is—I think it was Senator Murphy who earlier in the hearing said there is a burden that Ukraine needs to bear in waging this war. It cannot do it on its own financially or militarily. The Russians likewise need help.

What I think needs to be acknowledged is the vital importance of Ukraine prevailing on its terms. Now, that support should not all come from the United States.

We can discuss among us, among Americans and with our allies and partners, burden sharing, whether a particular weapon system is really something that would be used in the context of this conflict.

What we cannot debate is the nature of the adversary and why the fight is being waged in the first place. It has to be waged, it has to be supported, and the world needs to come together. Only part of the world has now. It cannot just be the United States.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, thank you. I have one final question and that has to do with Belarus, and I know that this hearing is about the U.S.-Russian relationship, but one of the—one of the few countries that has stood by Russia during this invasion has been Belarus.

Can you speak to the relationship between Lukashenko and Putin and whether he is going to be able to continue to hold the line when he says no military involvement? Is that what is really going on or is there something else happening?

Ambassador SULLIVAN. Well, I was there—I was in Moscow in August of 2020 when Lukashenko really lost the presidential election and then crushed the demonstrators after the election on August 9, arrested almost 40,000 people. A lot of violence. Putin supported that.

Before then my recollection is that Secretary Pompeo traveled to Minsk earlier in 2020 and met with Lukashenko, but Lukashenko became really dependent on Putin. He might not have survived in August of 2020 without that support. They already have a union state, Belarus and Russia, the union state. He has become—Lukashenko—much more dependent on Putin. I think he is the
world leader who has had more meetings with Putin. I think he has had 14 since the special military operation began all in Moscow. Putin does not go to Minsk. Lukashenko is dependent on him and Putin has used Belarus as a platform to launch the special military operation, particularly the drive south to Kyiv.

Lukashenko had ideas about a slightly more independent Minsk, but his—the reelection fiasco for him in August of 2020 has driven him closer into the arms of his union state partner, Vladimir Putin, and he has resisted using Belarusian military in part because I am not sure there are military experts much—I am not a military expert, but I think the Belarusian security services are more capable than the Belarusian military. I am not sure they add that much to what the Russians have.

Senator Shaheen. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. Senator Young.

Senator Young. Ambassador Sullivan, good to see you again. Dr. Taylor, good to see you, and thank you both for your years of service to our country and your thoughtfulness.

Let me begin with the issue of burden sharing because you just mentioned it, Ambassador. I think we would all agree that there is now more enthusiasm than there was just a couple of years ago among our European partners for the NATO alliance and investment in that alliance in various ways.

I believe it is crucial that the U.S. continue to use levers at its disposal to ensure that Europeans are as invested in their own security as the U.S. is in maintaining stability in Europe.

Ambassador Sullivan, what mechanisms are available to us to ensure that all European members of NATO quickly meet in sustained defense spending at no less than 2 percent and 20 percent thresholds agreed to in Wales nearly 10 years ago?

Ambassador Sullivan. Well, thank you, Senator. Good to see you again.

Well, that has been a vital question for years going back to when I was deputy secretary and then-President Trump was railing about the fact that European allies, big countries, were not meeting the Wales commitment that had been made based on what had happened in Ukraine, recall.

Since then, I think the shift since February 24, 2022, I think we have seen countries like Germany have a pretty dramatic shift. It is going to take a while for their systems to turn.

Imagine our own system, right. Increasing defense—I mean, these are important, difficult questions. We have got to keep the pressure on, make the case for why it is important and the threat that they face from the East.

Senator Young. That all makes sense with me and this is in part about sustaining domestic support for resourcing the Ukrainians, right. That is really what is most on my mind.

Is there a way, in your mind, that we can do a better job of elevating those who are meeting their commitments and ensuring that people understand that they are shining examples of what other countries should aspire to?

Ambassador Sullivan. Well——

Senator Young. The carrot as opposed to the stick.
Ambassador SULLIVAN. Yes, the carrot. We cannot diminish, of course, the guarantees of the treaty so we cannot say, well, we might be slower coming to your rescue if you get invaded by Russia.

Senator YOUNG. Sure. Right.

Ambassador SULLIVAN. Without undermining that, I think for those countries that need to be persuaded of the need to meet the Wales commitment, given what has happened in the 15 months since February 2022, that is a fair approach.

Dr. KENDALL-TAYLOR. Could I add one quick point?

Senator YOUNG. Oh, please, Doctor.

Dr. KENDALL-TAYLOR. I agree about the 2 percent is a critically important benchmark and I do hope at the Vilnius comment that there will be a shift of the 2 percent as the floor and not the ceiling.

Just as important as the how much is the how allies are spending and I think that is another area where the United States can continue to put pressure on allies and partners to make sure that the spending is done appropriately and most effectively.

Certainly, as we are thinking of a potential two-front war conflict—tensions heat up with China—I think many of us are concerned about what that would mean. What would the United States need to take out of Europe if we did have a confrontation with China?

Ensuring that our European allies and partners understand what it is that we would take out—the logistics, the air-to-air refueling, the ISR, those capabilities—that is where allies really need to be investing so that we are prepared for that kind of scenario. It is the how much, but it is also the how.

Senator YOUNG. Okay. I may follow up on that thoughtful point to try and get a better sense of what NATO is actually doing, what contingencies which are—might be publicly available can you or others speak to so that I have a measure of confidence that that conversation is happening.

If I could with some remaining time here just briefly touch on New START.

Senator Van Hollen and I have been pretty outspoken about the value of arms control between the U.S. and Russia over the years, both for its own sake, but also for the message it sends to other nuclear powers.

In February, as we know, we saw Vladimir Putin announce the suspension of Russia's participation in New START, the last arms control treaty between the U.S. and Russia.

Despite Russia's noncompliance, the Administration has continued to indicate that it will continue to uphold its end of the treaty.

Ambassador Sullivan, if you could just briefly indicate how you assess the effects of Russia's suspension of the treaty, especially in the risk of misunderstanding leading to a nuclear exchange.

Ambassador SULLIVAN. Thank you, Senator. My understanding is that what Putin announced the Russian Government had actually already previously announced. The foreign ministry had said no more meetings of the bilateral consultative commission, no inspections.
Putin announces the suspension of Russia under the New START treaty. I understand, though, that the foreign ministry clarified shortly thereafter and said that Russia would continue to comply with the numerical limits in the treaty. It is just that they have eliminated—by eliminating the inspections, they have eliminated one of the means for us to verify that they are complying with the treaty.

It is problematic. We are not allowing the Russians to do inspections here if they are not allowing us to do them there. We have also said we will comply with the numerical limits under the treaty.

Senator Young. Is that the best we can do at this point or do you have additional thoughts, either of you, about how we should evaluate our own nuclear posture and missile defense posture in Europe?

Dr. Kendall-Taylor. The only point I would add is a point that I made earlier, which is the more degraded that Russia’s conventional forces become, the more they will rely on their nuclear weapons, including their nonstrategic nuclear weapons.

The more vulnerable they feel, the more quickly they will go to the nuclear and so it really shortens the pathway to nuclear war.

I do think that we are entering kind of in a new—where the threat of nuclear use is only rising and so not only do we need to continue to think about what role arms control can play in this, but I do think we have to think very hard about our deterrent posture.

At NATO, do we need to bring back more of our nuclear exercises? How do we convince the Russians that we will fight through a nuclear war, for example?

I think that—so in addition to the arms control piece, which I do continue to believe is critically important, I do think that we have to be aware that we are headed towards a future without arms control and we, along with allies and partners, are going to have to think about how we get better at deterrence.

Senator Young. Thank you both. Your presence here is so valuable.

The Chairman. Senator Van Hollen.

Senator Van Hollen. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank all of you for your testimony and your service and I thank Senator Young for his work on the efforts on nuclear arms control.

Let me ask you both about the role of China here because China has, clearly, been a malign actor. You have President Xi saying our—that their friendship with China knows, “no boundaries, all in.” Visiting Moscow, cozying up to Putin.

We have been very clear that if we see any additional signs or signs that China is providing lethal aid to Ukraine, that we will respond strongly, primarily in the form of sanctions and, obviously, that will only be successful with our allies and partners around the world.

I also noticed that Putin has said that he is considering deploying tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus. There have been some reports that President Xi and China have had a restraining influence on Putin when it comes to the possible use or threatening the use of nuclear weapons. Putin—excuse me—and one of—and China’s diplomats as we speak are visiting various European capitals to
sort of test different proposals that they want to advance in terms of a settlement.

We have been very clear that any settlement has to be proposed by Ukrainians and President Zelensky. My question to you is we know all the bad things that China has done here. Is there any positive role, in your view, that they could play if they so chose and what would that be?

If I could start with you, Ambassador Sullivan.

Ambassador SULLIVAN. I think the visit by the Special Representative to Europe is a key indication of how sensitive they are to the EU market.

We have—I have thought for a long time and others have as well that, obviously, Xi did not dissuade or try to dissuade Putin from launching this special military operation when they met before the Olympics in February of 2020 and I think from China’s perspective they get some benefit from the United States focused on a conflict in Eastern Europe and not focused on as much as we could be on East Asia.

The risk for Xi is in the EU and they are—that market is extremely important for him. I believe we have seen a shift in China under Xi from—I went with then-Treasury Secretary Paulson on his last trip to China in December of 2008 and all that our Chinese interlocutors wanted to talk about was the economy and economic growth.

Now, and back then this was the strategic economic dialogue. They were focused on growing their economy, strengthening their economy. What we have seen with President Xi is a shift where geopolitics and security are now taking the lead.

The geopolitical rationale for supporting his dear friend, the President of Russia, is now—but what—that is what he has been pursuing, but what is nagging at him now is that underlying need for economic growth and if they drive the Europeans farther away from China because they are supporting Putin in a war in Europe, that is not going to be popular with the Europeans and that is not going to help them in that really key market for them.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Dr. Taylor.

Dr. KENDALL-TAYLOR. I agree entirely. I think in many—almost certainly the Europeans have more leverage than the United States does in pressuring China to play a constructive role in the conflict.

I think the problem is, as we talked about before, that Xi and Putin have an incredibly deep relationship, that they see themselves united in pushing back on the United States and U.S. influence all across the globe.

In that sense, I do not think that Xi will play a productive role in this conflict. I think Xi’s interest is, A, ensuring that Putin does not lose, and in a scenario where Ukraine makes a very significant—makes significant progress in its counter offensive is the scenario that I could imagine Xi crossing America’s red line and beginning to provide more lethal assistance to prevent his best and closest ally, really, from falling in Ukraine.

I do not see evidence currently and, for example, in China’s peace plan, I think in many ways is almost laughable, calling for a ceasefire without any withdrawal of Russian forces, which we all understand that Putin would just use to rest, refit, retry.
Until we see a very significant change in the rhetoric coming out of Beijing or in the proposals that they put forward, I do not see them playing a constructive role in the peace process.

Senator Van Hollen. It is primarily window dressing and theater for European public to make——

Dr. Kendall-Taylor. They want to have their cake and eat it, too.

Senator Van Hollen. That is my assessment as well. I appreciate you both being here. A lot more questions, but I see my time is out.

The Chairman. Thank you.

One last question for both of you. As we know, Russia is increasingly using wrongful detention of U.S. citizens as a foreign policy tool. As we speak, American citizens Paul Whelan and Evan Gershkovich remain wrongfully detained.

I remain concerned about the welfare of Jimmy Wilgus, whose parents are New Jersey constituents. At the same time, Russia's most prominent opposition leaders, Alexei Navalny, Vladimir Kara-Murza languish in Russian prisons on trumped up charges.

For both of you, if you have any insights, first, what can we do if anything to limit Russia's use of wrongful detention in this way, and second, what different approach could we be taking to the continuing detentions of Navalny and Kara-Murza?

Ambassador Sullivan. Well, I spend a lot of time thinking about these issues, Mr. Chairman. I was there when Brittney Griner was arrested. Visited Paul Whelan many times—Trevor Reed.

It is a policy of the Russian Government, but it is—the Russian Government under Putin uses every—every aspect of Russian society is put to what the goals that President Putin has for Russia—the Russian Orthodox Church, the national airline, the court system, the judicial system.

Their courts look beautiful. Their courtrooms—it is a beautiful building. It is a beautiful courtroom. It is a Potemkin court. It is used by the Russian security services and the Kremlin to achieve their policy ends. There is no justice. There is no independent judiciary.

They are, in my opinion and I think it is pretty widely shared, they are arresting Americans and when they catch an American and they are able to detain them and that American has certain characteristics, whether it is an Olympic gold medalist or a Wall Street Journal reporter that they can get their hooks in, they are going to use that person just as they use every other aspect of Russian society to their advantage against us in their war against us.

I think the best I can come up with, Senator, in response to your question is to discourage Americans from traveling to Russia unless there is an extraordinary need, particularly Americans who have served in the military, have or had a security clearance, have some prominence.

I also think we have to engage in multilateral diplomacy because it should not just be an American problem. When a Wall Street Journal reporter, a 31-year-old man who is doing his job as an international correspondent, is arrested on trumped up espionage charges that should not just be a problem of the United States.
Dr. Kendall-Taylor. Those are all excellent points. The only thing I would add is a little bit tangential which is the detention of the Wall Street Journal reporter is—I think it is an intentional and intended to have a chilling effect on having other American and Western journalists in the country.

It is another way that Vladimir Putin is ensuring that we cannot shine a light on his domestic repression and really have insight into the changes that are taking place in Russia.

That is going to make it ever more difficult for the United States to be able to keep a pulse on these changes in Russian society and understand what is happening inside Russia.

It is not a preventative measure, but it is a mitigation tactic, which is to continue to fund investigative journalists and the journalists who are doing their work outside of Russia. Many of them still have ways to contact their sources back inside Russia.

It is going to leave a big black box that makes this ever harder for us to understand the Russia that we face, and if we cannot prevent it, we should at least try to mitigate the impact by continuing to fund those journalists outside and the other Russians who have left.

The Chairman. I appreciate that.

Well, you said something, Ambassador Sullivan, that I have been contemplating, which is some type of a universal convention sort of like an Article 5 on wrongful detention—if you wrongfully detained a citizen of a country of the convention then all countries spring into action and the consequences because then the ante would be up. The cost would be up for wrongfully detaining of citizens.

I am thinking of Canadians who had a few citizens that were detained elsewhere. This is going to be a continuing problem, so long as the consequences are little and the rewards are big we will continue to lose people.

With the thanks of the committee, this record for this hearing will remain open until the close of business on Wednesday, May 17.

We appreciate your insights, and this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:34 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF AMBASSADOR JOHN SULLIVAN TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

Question. What conditions should the U.S. have for normalizing relations with Russia, and how flexible should we be in them?

Answer. Ending Russia’s aggressive war against Ukraine on terms that are acceptable to the democratically elected Government of Ukraine is the most basic condition. We should also insist on bringing to justice those who committed war crimes in Ukraine. Those should not be flexible. If the Ukrainian Government, on its own terms, wants to cede territory, I would advise against that but would have to defer to their judgment about their national interests. Putin, the leader of one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, cannot be allowed to succeed in waging an aggressive war in violation of the UN Charter and international law. Waging an aggressive war is a crime for which convicted perpetrators have been hanged in the past.

Question. We have seen the Russian playbook for frozen conflicts before in both Georgia and Moldova. Can you speak to some of the dangers to the U.S. and our allies which are likely to emerge if there is a frozen conflict in a country as large and populated as Ukraine?
Answer. The dangers to our NATO allies in the region, as well as NATO aspirants like Georgia and neighbors like Moldova, are very substantial. Those nations’ interests were already subverted by Russia before February 24, 2022. The governments of the Eastern European countries with which I engaged while I was deputy secretary and later ambassador to Russia were clear in describing the hybrid war that Russia was already waging against them, including cyber-attacks and intelligence operations. We have seen the danger caused by Russian troops, and now nuclear weapons, moving into Belarus. The threat from a frozen conflict in Ukraine will be even greater.

Question. What do you see as the path forward in the security architecture of Europe after the current war? The U.S. so far has resisted committing to providing a Membership Action Plan regarding Ukraine’s NATO bid, or even discussing the matter at the upcoming NATO summit in Vilnius. How should we interpret this reluctance? Are there any other bilateral or multilateral agreements which we should be working towards to serve our security interests, either specific to Ukraine or with regard to Russia more broadly?

Answer. No matter the form, Ukraine must have credible security guarantees (including from the United States) after the war ends (whenever that is). Without those guarantees, the country will have great difficulty rebuilding under the threat of renewed war by Russia. Another Budapest Memorandum will not suffice. But the form of the guarantees is also a vital issue. NATO membership is optimal. Guarantees by the U.S. and other major U.S. allies could be adequate.

Question. Under your tenure the Kremlin ordered the United States to take a veritable axe to its staffing—from 1,200 to less than 150. Given your public remarks to POLITICO about the difficulty in keeping the Mission running on minimum staff, how often did you interact with Washington on resource needs and at what level? Do you feel you received the resources you needed?

Answer. Engagement with Washington on these issues was quite frequent during my tenure as ambassador in both administrations. Sometimes it was daily, or even multiple times a day. At other points, it was several times a week. At a minimum, there was not a week that went by that I did not engage with the Department on these issues. I always got what Washington could provide without consulting the Russians. Sometimes it was daily, or even multiple times a day. At other points, it was several times a week. At a minimum, there was not a week that went by that I did not engage with the Department on these issues. I always got what Washington could provide without consulting the Russians. When we had to engage with the Russian MFA, we would inevitably hit delays and obstructions. Washington tried to help us work around those. The underlying problem was that we would not hold to a position of insisting on reciprocity with the Russians. There was a fear that the Russians would close our embassy, which I always thought was extremely unlikely because we would close their embassy (and intelligence platform) in response. Until we insist on reciprocity, we will continue to have the problems I had as ambassador.

Question. If Russia were to permit us to fully staff our Embassy and Consulates, how long do you estimate it would take to return our U.S. and local staffing numbers to an appropriate level? How long would it take to reopen Vladivostok and Yekaterinburg?

Answer. We should have very few third country nationals employed at our mission in Russia. They are too vulnerable to coercion by the Russian security services. To staff our embassy with hundreds of cleared Americans will take a long time—measured in years, not months. It will take even longer to reopen our consulates because we will have to identify new locations in each city. The old locations are now unsafe and insecure. The process of opening new diplomatic facilities with a cooperative host government usually takes years. With a hostile government in Kremlin, it will be challenging at best.

Question. The Kremlin places significant pressure on our operations in Russia via expulsions, visa delays affecting regular staffing rotations, issues with accreditation, etc. Lack of personnel directly impact our ability to keep a complex and sophisticated diplomatic facility in good working order. What can the Administration do to exert corresponding pressure on Russian diplomats in the United States to remind them of their obligations under the Vienna Conventions?

Answer. I have said for years that we must insist on reciprocity, which we never have done in this Administration or the last. Reciprocity means we should have the same number of diplomats and diplomatic facilities as the Russians. We should not have one set of rules for the United States and a different set of rules for the Russians. The “visa overstay” problem (Russian diplomats did not have to leave when their visas expired, but American diplomats did) was a good example of that, which has taken years to address, and still not fully.
THE COMMITTEE RECEIVED NO RESPONSE FROM DR. ANDREA KENDALL-TAYLOR FOR THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY SENATOR TODD YOUNG

*Question.* What conditions should the U.S. have for normalizing relations with Russia, and how flexible should we be in them?
[No Response Received]

*Question.* We have seen the Russian playbook for frozen conflicts before in both Georgia and Moldova. Can you speak to some of the dangers to the U.S. and our allies which are likely to emerge if there is a frozen conflict in a country as large and populated as Ukraine?
[No Response Received]

*Question.* What do you see as the path forward in the security architecture of Europe after the current war? The U.S. so far has resisted committing to providing a Membership Action Plan regarding Ukraine’s NATO bid, or even discussing the matter at the upcoming NATO summit in Vilnius. How should we interpret this reluctance? Are there any other bilateral or multilateral agreements which we should be working towards to serve our security interests, either specific to Ukraine or with regard to Russia more broadly?
[No Response Received]