

And let's get this straight. No Republican is going to vote for this. So if, in fact, our Democratic colleagues can pass it—and they can if all 50 Senators on the Democratic side and the Vice President vote for it—it will be they who own it and who will be accountable to the American people in the upcoming midterm elections. But it is fair to ask where have these policies gotten us so far.

While the administration has kept its foot on the neck of domestic energy policy while the President is making, apparently, a trip to Saudi Arabia to talk to Muhammad bin Salman about increasing Saudi production of oil—not here in America, which would create jobs, which would create more supply, arguably bring down price at the pump—he is going hat in hand to a foreign leader in a nondemocratic country and saying: Will you please open the spigot just a little bit more?

I think it is embarrassing.

We have also seen our Democratic colleagues spend nearly \$2 trillion on a party-line vote earlier this year that helped ignite inflation to its current 40-year high levels. This new tax-and-spending spree—or, I should say, the old tax-and-spending spree bill which is now being repackaged and presumably resold—won't be any different from the earlier one.

So it isn't time to hand out tax breaks to the well-off or push our country toward unrealistic energy goals at a time of more demand and not enough supply. We need more domestic energy supplies. That would provide relief for working families and a shot at waking up from the economic nightmare that we find ourselves in.

So this reconciliation bill—this “Build Back Broke” bill that is apparently being contemplated by our Democratic colleagues—is not the solution. It is making the problem worse.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). The Senator from New Hampshire.

#### NATO SUMMIT

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am really pleased to be able to come to the floor this morning to join my colleagues Senator TILLIS, from North Carolina; Senator ERNST, from Iowa; Senator BLUNT, from Missouri—and we are hoping to be joined by Senator COONS, from Delaware—to talk about the very successful congressional delegation we took in the first week of the 2-week break to Finland, Sweden, and the NATO summit in Madrid.

I want to especially acknowledge my coleader for that delegation, Senator TILLIS. He and I cochaired the Senate NATO Observer Group. And we have both been fervent supporters of NATO and efforts to ensure that the United States continues to be a leader on the world stage and a champion for freedom.

We were also joined on that trip by Senator DURBIN, from Illinois, and Senator FISCHER, from Nebraska.

A couple of months ago, Majority Leader SCHUMER and Minority Leader

McCONNELL asked Senator TILLIS and I to lead that bipartisan delegation to the NATO summit in Madrid to convey the Senate's strong bipartisan support for the alliance, especially amid Putin's unprovoked war in Ukraine.

I was very honored to represent the Senate amid what has been one of the most consequential moments in the history of the transatlantic alliance. And I think probably Senator TILLIS and everyone who was part of that delegation felt the same way.

Our visit to Sweden, Finland, and Spain affirmed three important points: first, the NATO alliance is stronger than ever before—and this year's historic summit reaffirmed that; second, the Strategic Concept that was approved at this year's summit will ensure that NATO is prepared to address immediate threats on all fronts, from Putin's attempts to threaten the sovereignty of our allies to China's challenges to our alliance.

And, finally, as Putin attempts to rewrite history, working with our allies and partners is critical to ensuring that Putin or any leader that attempts to follow in his path is met with the might of NATO's democratic resolve.

One of the other things that I was very impressed with as we met not just with some of our NATO allies but with NATO aspirant country delegations and talked to leaders from the Indo-Pacific who were in Madrid is how everybody we talked to reaffirmed the importance of America's leadership in the world. So I think as we think about the future of NATO, about what we need to do in the United States, it is important to remember just how important our role is.

Now, our trip coincided with Turkey's announcement to support Finland and Sweden's ambitions to join NATO, which will significantly strengthen the alliance. In fact, as we landed in Madrid, we got the news that Turkey had dropped its hold on those applications. So we were able to celebrate.

Sweden and Finland's accession into NATO sends an unmistakable message to Putin: The alliance is stronger than ever and Russia does not have veto power over who joins NATO.

Our delegation was pleased to meet with the leadership from both Sweden and Finland to reaffirm the bipartisan support in the Senate for the swift approval of their NATO applications.

Our delegation's bipartisan message of support for Ukraine and NATO was reciprocated by our allies, which was evident during the meetings that we had with Japan and Germany. We met with Ukrainian officials and underscored our strong support to not only help Ukraine defend itself but to help Ukraine win. And that is what we heard from all of the allies we met with.

It is critical that, as Members of the Senate, we continue to do all we can to coordinate with our allies and support Ukraine's heroic efforts to defend itself

against Putin's aggression because that war is not just against the people of Ukraine; it is an attack on democracies around the world, an attack on our shared transatlantic values—values that have maintained peace for over 70 years.

Our bipartisan delegation made clear that the United States will continue to support peace and stability in Europe and around the world. We will defend every inch of NATO territory and continue to look for ways to bolster Ukraine's defense.

We were pleased to share this commitment with members of the Biden administration who also traveled to the NATO summit. Our delegation met with President Biden, with Secretary Austin, and Secretary Blinken and reaffirmed that the Senate will continue to look for ways to help defend Ukraine and respond to emerging threats from the Balkans to the Indo-Pacific.

Again, I want to thank all of those who went on this very important trip, especially the staff who did such a great job putting it together. I was proud to colead that delegation, which was centered on our bipartisan resolve to support a strong and unified NATO and stand by our Ukrainian partners.

As Putin's war threatens democracies around the world, I think it is important that we send a clear message to our constituents at home and our allies abroad that the United States remains resolute in our commitment to the stability and freedom of all democratic nations because if Putin succeeds in Ukraine, there is no telling where his belligerence will end.

Last night, Senator DURBIN secured unanimous consent for the protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty on the accession of Sweden and Finland to be referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. This is an important development as we look at ratifying those protocols. I hope we can get this done as quickly as possible. I hope the Foreign Relations Committee will move on that process and we can act here in the Senate Chamber because swift ratification is in our national security interest.

Again, I am pleased to join my colleagues here on the floor and would like to turn it over to Senator TILLIS to get his impressions from the trip.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I want to thank Senator SHAHEEN and my colleagues on the floor here—Senators COONS, ERNST, BLUNT, and the others who joined the bipartisan delegation at the NATO summit. It was an extraordinary opportunity to see firsthand how the democratic world looks at the United States for leadership.

It was an extraordinary opportunity to talk about Russia's aspirations. It was an extraordinary opportunity to talk about what I think may go down as the greatest miscalculation in this century on the part of Vladimir Putin.

Months ago, when he was massing troops at the Ukrainian border, he

called it a special military operation, a training exercise, for a little while. What he was thinking in the back of his head was that now was the time to test NATO's resolve; now was the time to see if the differences that we have was enough to break an alliance.

What he found out was quite the opposite. Shortly after February 24, the NATO countries came together, the EU came together. We implemented sanctions. We provided troops on the ground to assist with the evacuation of Ukrainian refugees.

And now we are in a position of providing support for the very courageous members of the Ukrainian military.

What else did he get for his miscalculation? Two nations that, for decades, have been nonaligned, Sweden and Finland. Eight hundred and thirty miles of Russian border is now about to be the back door or the front yard of NATO. And when Finland and Sweden ultimately get membership in NATO, which I expect to be in weeks or months, then Vladimir Putin needs to understand his reward for invading a sovereign nation is 830 miles of NATO borders right next door.

Now I want to talk a little bit about Finland and Sweden. They are extraordinary countries—advanced democracies, the rule of law, a great defense industrial base in Sweden, home to Saab. They manufacture jet fighters that are NATO interoperable.

Finland is already spending in the 2-percent threshold for NATO and wanting to go further. Finland has 64 joint strike fighters on order. If the United States was going to have as many—they are a nation of about 5½ million people—if the United States was going to have as many F-35s as Finland on a per capita basis, we would need thousands of them. We have less than 200. They are committed to defense. They are a strong army, a strong ground force. Russia knows that; just look back to 1939.

And then in Sweden, we have a defense industrial base and a Navy that covers the Arctic. It covers the Baltics. They are going to be net distributors of security the day that they get NATO membership.

I had somebody a couple of weeks ago—from time to time, I go to the front office, and I take calls from constituents. I had someone call up and say, Why are you supporting—why are you focused on Ukraine? Why are you focused on Finland and Sweden when we have so many things we need to do back here at home?

I said, We have to do both because the future of our safety and our freedom at home is intrinsically linked to the safety and security of Europe.

This weekend, I was moving some furniture around. I came across a globe I have had for 40 years. It has a picture of the Soviet Empire on it. Vladimir Putin wants to recreate that and expand it. This doesn't end. And I told the caller this: It doesn't end in Ukraine. It is one step of several chess

moves that Vladimir Putin would like to play out and, ultimately, dominate the free world. We can't let that happen.

When we were at the NATO summit, I think it was very clear—at least to me—that those whom we met with, the heads of state, feel like now more than ever is the time America has to lead, that America has to understand the threats that exist: a rising China, a threatening Russia, a malign group of leaders in Iran. Now is the time for us to look outward and preserve the free world.

How do we do that? We make NATO stronger. We admit Sweden. We admit Finland. And we continue to work together to recognize emerging threats in the Pacific Rim.

I think at the end of the day, to the American citizen who is wondering why do we worry about NATO, why do we worry about Ukraine? Because it is directly linked to the future of our sovereignty and our safety here at home.

I want to thank the President for his contribution at NATO, as well. We met with him for about an hour last week. We had a press conference a little later in the day, and people wanted to ask us about domestic policies. I said, We are a bipartisan group here to talk about our commitment to NATO and our commitment to having Putin fail in Ukraine. We can have our differences back home, but there is no daylight between the Republicans and the Democrats who were on that codel with respect to the future of our commitment to NATO and a future to our commitment to the free world.

I hope that we will move swiftly to pass the treaty, to be one of the first to recognize that we want and welcome Sweden and Finland into the NATO alliance. And then we need to continue to remind people at home why it is important. Although it is not in our backyard, it is in a part of the world that if we let this stand, if we don't act with unity, then we will live to regret it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. I rise to join the leaders of the codel that I just had the honor and blessing of joining, Senators SHAHEEN and TILLIS, and a number of the other members of that codel, Senators ERNST and BLUNT. And I was grateful for the chance to travel with Senators DURBIN and FISCHER. I want to just join in my colleagues' statements today.

I think this was a tremendous opportunity for us in Sweden and in Finland to meet with nations that are advanced economies, that are closely aligned with our values, that have sophisticated militaries, and that now, for the very first time, are seeking admission to NATO. NATO is the most successful security alliance in world history, and it is rooted in shared values and shared concerns and interests.

One of the most vulnerable pieces of NATO, if you looked at the map just a few months ago, were three little Baltic States—Latvia, Lithuania, and Es-

tonia—that, for decades, were under the heel of the Soviet Union. They were relatively newly independent in recent decades, admitted to NATO, but very difficult to defend.

One of the reasons I joined with my colleagues to say here, as we did in Madrid, that we should swiftly ratify the joining to NATO of both Sweden and Finland is that they will provide security. They will be security contributors to this alliance. The odds that a young man or a woman from Iowa or North Carolina, from Missouri, New Hampshire, or Delaware will have to go defend Estonia, will have to go risk or give their life to defending Latvia or Lithuania will go down dramatically if we have on that border, at the very northern end of the NATO alliance, a new 830-mile border between Finland and Russia. The Russians know they will have to defend and pay attention to it given the unique history of 1939–1940 war. And where countries aligned with our values and priorities are going to continue to contribute to the importance of this alliance.

It was valuable that in our meetings with heads of state from Europe, like Chancellor Scholz from the Indo-Pacific, like Prime Minister Kishida from Japan, in conversations with foreign Secretaries like Liz Truss of the United Kingdom, or meetings with foreign Ministers of Italy and of Germany and of France and of Spain, that this delegation was able to speak with one voice and to articulate why we join the Biden administration in supporting NATO accession for these two critical new partners.

The last point I want to make is that I am hopeful—I am optimistic—that we will continue to provide unified bipartisan robust support for Ukraine's brave and fierce defense of its Nation and its sovereignty in the face of Russia's war crimes, Russia's continued aggression. We are calling on all of our NATO allies to step up and to contribute and to participate. And they are. This has brought greater unity, greater purpose, greater focus to the NATO alliance than anything in decades.

I will remind you, the one time that the article 5 sacred obligation to come to each other's defense has been triggered before was in Afghanistan. Thousands and thousands of NATO soldiers served alongside ours in Afghanistan when it was the United States that was attacked on 9/11. This NATO alliance is stronger than it has ever been and needs to be the strongest it has ever been, because, as my colleagues both laid out clearly and concisely, this is a pivotal moment in the future of the United States and our role in the world, the future of NATO and Western freedom.

We must make sure we succeed. I am so grateful for the bipartisan commitment that was at the core of this delegation.

I yield to my colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleagues, especially Senators SHAHEEN and TILLIS, for leading an incredibly successful congressional delegation to the NATO summit. I want to thank them, as well, for organizing the colloquy today.

I join them in enthusiastically endorsing Finland and Sweden's accession into NATO. Both nations have representative governments accountable to their people. They conduct extensive commerce and trade with our great United States, and, broadly, they share many of our values.

Historically, perhaps these were conditions sufficient to readily welcome two European nations into one of our multinational security frameworks, but today, given the increasingly complex threats our adversaries are imposing on the homeland, protecting American security and prosperity demands partners who are capable of sharing NATO's manpower and resource burdens.

NATO isn't a club of democracies or a playground for exploring climate change or progressive cultural interests. It is a military alliance that is assembled to deter our adversaries from wreaking havoc on our partners and against our own homeland.

Today, the United States is the unquestioned and undisputed leader of not just NATO, but continues to lead the global coalition containing and destroying terrorist operations in the Middle East and in Africa. Beyond Europe and the Middle East, the United States must—and I will repeat that—must lead a coalition to deter China's looming imperial expansion around the world and potential takeover of Taiwan and our other partners in the Indo-Pacific.

The United States has the greatest military on the face of the planet, and the American people's support of our Armed Forces is unwavering.

Still, our Commander in Chief, our diplomatic and military leadership, and Members of the Senate must hold our partners accountable to their own defense and not lean on the reach and lethality of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and guardians alone.

Going forward, NATO member countries must invest in their own defense. Two percent must be a minimum standard. Longstanding members of the alliance remain far too lax and sometimes neglectful of their obligations to the alliance and to their people. America is not the world's policemen, but we are the leader of the free world and this alliance. And Finland and Sweden are on target regarding their 2-percent commitment.

I am confident that Finland and Sweden are ready to stand up and help shoulder the resource burden on NATO's military obligations in Europe, particularly following Russia's bloody, lawless invasion of Ukraine.

The accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO is a great success, but regarding the war raging in Ukraine today,

on day 140 of this conflict, the U.S. cannot grow weary. Our resolve to support our partner must carry on. China is watching. The Gulf States, South America, and Africa are weighing their commitment to the free world against the economic and security guarantees on the table from our adversaries.

Our national defense capacity diminishes the more our adversaries, from the Taliban to Iran's cluster of violent extremist organizations, to Vladimir Putin, to the Chinese Communist Party, can call our bluff and see if we cannot bear the cost of achieving our goals.

We must remain steady and strong. This administration and our partners in NATO must change their strategy to deliver Ukraine victory over Putin's Russia, and that is why Sweden and Finland will be a much welcomed addition to NATO.

Again, I thank my colleagues for organizing this colloquy, and I urge this body to move very quickly to confirm the U.S. support of Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO.

I yield the floor to my colleague from Missouri.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I know we have a vote coming up. I have brief remarks, and I ask unanimous consent to complete them before the vote starts.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to join with my five colleagues who have been here today and the two people who were with us, Senator DURBIN and Senator FISCHER.

I would say one of the great things about this effort was the unanimous feeling that all seven of us had about both what is happening in NATO and our commitment to win in Ukraine. We were able to demonstrate that to every group we met with from every country we met with. I think with the strong leadership of Chairmen SHAHEEN and TILLIS that it made an impression on where we were and the unity we have on this.

It would be interesting to know if Putin was more surprised by the Ukrainian resistance, the poor performance of his own military, or my guess would be he may have been most surprised by what has happened at NATO—the great turnaround of the NATO—the current NATO countries and their commitment to NATO, their commitment to what they have been willing to do and pledged to do with NATO and then to see these two incredibly important security contributors join NATO after 73 years of being neutral and an important part of the world and saw that as part of their long-term commitment.

But both Finland and Sweden, which, by the way, have been NATO contributors for some time now in terms of being willing to be part of NATO missions, training with their future NATO

allies—all that is incredibly important, but these countries not only bring incredible security contributions to NATO, they also bring significant geographic contributions to NATO. When you look at a map, suddenly not just Norway, which has been in NATO, but Sweden and Finland in NATO has an incredible impact on the ability of what happens in the Baltic. That is important to us as we look to the future.

Now, with the exception of Russia, every country that borders and has part of a claim on the Arctic will be a NATO country. This is a part of the world we have been talking about much more the last 5 years than we did the previous 25 years. To have this NATO unity as we look at the Arctic is an important thing.

The 800-mile border that Finland has shared for years and defended for years against Russia doubles the NATO border in Europe.

The intimate understanding that both Sweden and Finland have of Russia brings a different point of view and a helpful point of view to NATO.

For the current members, particularly the new members of NATO, when you look at these Baltic countries of Estonia and Latvia and Lithuania and then look at Poland and Romania, seeing what happens when the unity is created and the force multiplier is there—I have heard my colleagues already talk about the jet planes, the submarines, the navy, the air force that both of these people bring, the cyber ability that both of them bring to the fight is real.

You know, in a meeting that I was in before this meeting occurred with the Latvian Defense Minister, the Latvian Defense Minister, one of the newest members of NATO, one of the most vulnerable members of NATO as we have looked at NATO for some time, said: We don't want to be rescued by NATO; we want to be defended by NATO.

I think today, as we see the growth of NATO, we see a NATO that is willing to do its job defending its members in this most successful alliance of all time. There has never been anything like it. President Truman was the leader in putting this together in 1949. Here we are 73 years later. In my view, NATO not only has its largest group of members but also its most powerful and committed group of members in the history of this alliance.

I look forward to being on the Senate floor when the Senate does its job to welcome Sweden and Finland to NATO, and I am pleased that process has started.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON VAZIRANI NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time is expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Vazirani nomination?

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?