

I have attempted to bring light to these issues through my membership on the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, as well as part of the rapid response team that our leadership has set up.

For example, I have sent letters to the law firms that acquiesced to the Trump administration and the Florida bar for the apparently unscrupulous ethical behavior of Attorney General Bondi.

We have seen them go after higher education. We need to stand up and fight back right now. Donald Trump has weaponized the Federal Government to go after Columbia, for example, based on what appears to be a personal vendetta over a real estate deal that didn't happen like 30 years ago.

As my colleague from Long Beach mentioned earlier, another outrageous example we have seen is the Trump crypto meme coin, which President Trump is using to profit personally from the Presidency. We just saw a couple of weeks ago that an Abu Dhabi firm had invested \$2 billion into the coin, directly enriching the President. He is going to celebrate this by holding a meme coin gala dinner this month for the top holders of his coin.

The level of corruption right now is breathtaking. It is unprecedented. Unfortunately, he is not going to stop because Congress is not stepping up to enforce our rights. We are not stepping up to do the oversight that is required of us.

As the Romans used to say, who watches the watchmen? When there are no guardrails in place, who watches the watchmen? Unfortunately, right now, Congress, which is supposed to act as a coequal branch of government, is failing to uphold its duties.

Mr. Speaker, I note that this is unprecedented in its corruption. We will continue to see violations of the Hatch Act. We will continue to see a failure of enforcement of the rule of law, but I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARRETT). Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

HONORING COMMITMENTS

(Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, Mr. HOYER of Maryland was recognized for 30 minutes.)

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, May 8, marks 80 years since Nazi Germany surrendered to America and its Allies. Victory in Europe, known as VE Day, came at a tremendous price: hundreds of thousands of Americans and millions of others dead, many more physically maimed and mentally scarred, an indeterminate amount of treasure exhausted, and a continent reduced to ruin.

On that day, Mr. Speaker, President Truman said that the only way to repay that debt was through "ceaseless devotion . . . to build an abiding peace, a peace rooted in justice and in law."

He said, "We can build such a peace only by hard, toilsome, painstaking work—by understanding and working with our allies in peace as we have in war."

Mr. Speaker, I was born just a few months before that war began. I was only 5 years old when Truman said those words. I have lived my entire life virtually amid the abiding peace he envisioned all those years ago. I have lived my entire life knowing that America was the world's most consequential nation. I have lived my entire life believing that America was also the nation most committed to freedom, democracy, free markets, and self-determination, even if our deeds sometimes fell short of those goals.

The Pax Americana that began in 1945 was not inevitable. As Truman said, it took hard, toilsome, painstaking work not only by the Greatest Generation that saw the horrors of World War II but also the generations that have followed.

President Kennedy said, in his inaugural address, "The torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans—born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage—and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this Nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world."

Kennedy spoke of universal brotherhood and sisterhood of all mankind and the recognition that we are inextricably connected. It reflected the pledge we make to our flag, the symbol of our value and our unity, recognizing that, under God, we are indivisible.

United around that principle, we did not repeat the mistake we made after 1918. We came together. We made an alliance. We did not disarm. We did not turn our backs on our Allies and the world. We did not try to appease dictators and authoritarians. We continued to express to the world our willingness to partner with democratic and free nations to defend liberty, as Kennedy said, here and around the world.

That is, Mr. Speaker, until 2016. Sadly and dangerously, candidate Donald Trump announced that America might not honor that pledge. He made it conditional, transactional, if you will. He was right, of course, to demand our NATO allies pay their proportionate share for NATO's expenses, but he sent shock waves of doubt to our allies, to our friends, and, yes, to our enemies and our adversaries.

He expressed uncertainty about whether the United States would honor its commitment under Article 5 of the NATO charter to defend a NATO ally in the event that they were attacked, as our NATO allies have done for the United States after the September 11 attacks.

Mr. Speaker, in 2017, I worked across the aisle with Speaker Paul Ryan, Leader Kevin McCarthy, and others to

pass an overwhelmingly bipartisan resolution that reassured NATO nations, and potential adversaries, as well, that the United States would always honor Article 5. It passed, Mr. Speaker, 419-3.

For over three quarters of a century, the credibility of our commitment to ensuring we would never see world war III, which, of course, was the assurance of deterrence and resolve against warmongers, was unassailable.

President Trump, however, as a candidate, put the premise of peace through strength and unity in doubt, which brings me, Mr. Speaker, to Ukraine.

I wear the Ukrainian flag and the flag of the United States every day. Every morning, I pin this pin on the suit that I am wearing.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, largely because of a failed economic system and the resolve of America, NATO, and the free world, the USSR's captive nations regained their independence and sovereignty. While their histories were unique, their status as independent nations was recognized by the United Nations and most of the world.

In 1994, a few years later, the Russians signed an agreement recognizing Ukraine's sovereignty and pledged to respect the integrity of the then-existing borders in exchange for Ukraine turning over all of its nuclear weapons to Russia.

Predictably and sadly, the Russians did not honor their agreement. On February 20, 2014, they invaded a part of Ukraine, Crimea, in an act of international criminal behavior.

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Two agreements that Russia and Ukraine signed in Minsk—the first in September of 2014 and the second in February of 2015—outlined a Russian commitment to withdraw from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine and to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity. Instead, Russia continued waging a proxy war in eastern Ukraine for years.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the West's failure to respond to the 2014 invasion and the illegal annexation of Crimea led to Russia's second criminal and horrific invasion of Ukraine without provocation in 2022, some 3 years ago.

Our failure to act sent a message not only to Putin, but to the rest of the world that the United States and the free world may not respond to illegal war invasion.

Although President Trump may not bear the blame for how the war began, he may determine how it ends: in victory or defeat for freedom, democracy, and international law.

Mr. Speaker, I fear that this administration is pursuing a strategy of defeat in Ukraine. The Trump administration is trying to appease Vladimir Putin, just as Neville Chamberlain tried and failed to appease Adolf Hitler.

Trump and many of his loyalists parrot the Russian propaganda lie that

somehow Ukraine, the victim of Putin's unprovoked invasion, started the war. The President has now said he did not mean that, but that is what he said.

The Trump administration has halted American efforts to investigate and prosecute Russian war crimes. He pressures Ukraine to forfeit Crimea, a part of Ukraine agreed to by Russia in 1994. He pressures Ukraine to forfeit Crimea and large swaths of its eastern lands.

Crucially, President Trump and other members of the administration have dismissed Ukraine's ambitions and desire to become members of NATO. I believe NATO membership is the best and perhaps only way to assure Ukraine's security.

Mr. Speaker, we didn't ask Russia's permission to have Sweden join NATO. We didn't ask Russia's permission to have Finland join NATO. They joined because they correctly feared additional Russian invasions, including on the long borders that Finland has with Russia.

Why would we ask Russia's permission, therefore, to let Ukraine join NATO? That decision belongs to us, our NATO allies, and Ukraine. No one else.

Not once has NATO threatened to invade Russia. That is not Putin's fear. No, he is afraid that NATO will stand in the way of Russia invading others.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, even with all of Trump's concessions, Vladimir Putin continues to drag his feet in negotiations. He wanted this war when he launched his invasion 3 years ago and, frankly, he still wants it today. He wants conquest, not simply concessions. He is laser-focused on restoring and expanding the old autocratic dictatorship known as the Soviet empire.

Even if Putin were to agree to a peace deal, we could never trust him to keep it. Eventually, he would toss it into the ashbin with the U.N. Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the Budapest Memorandum, the Minsk agreements of which I spoke, and all the other international laws and agreements he has violated over the years.

Mr. Speaker, Trump risks falling for the same grand illusion that Chamberlain fell for, that feeding the Russian bear will make Putin less hungry for expansion, less dangerous, less dismissive of international law. That did not happen with Hitler, and it will not happen with Putin.

Supporting Ukraine, Mr. Speaker, is the moral thing to do, but importantly and centrally, it is also in America's interests, and in the interests of international security and global stability.

Vladimir Putin is part of a new axis of aggression, one made up of Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea. A Russian victory in Ukraine would embolden not only Putin, but also expansionist authoritarians everywhere to prey on the free world.

When our adversaries doubt our resolve, they become more willing to test our strength. Mr. Speaker, if Putin wins, Xi Jinping wins, Khomeini wins,

Kim Jong-Un wins, they are authoritarians, aggressive, acquisitive, and dangerous.

If Ukraine loses, America loses, Europe loses, the free world loses, democracy loses, and international law loses. Freedom is at risk.

That is, I tell you, Mr. Speaker, the consensus of our allies. This year, I visited five of our European allies on congressional delegations, one led by MIKE TURNER, the former chair of the Intelligence Committee, and the other led by MICHAEL ROGERS, chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

I spoke to leaders and many others at the Munich Security Conference. They all agree, Russia must not win its war of aggression. They are committed not only to Russia's strategic defeat, but also to securing a lasting peace like the one that began in 1945, a peace through strength and resolve.

Our allies, Mr. Speaker, also recognize that we all need to do more. Experts predict Russia will field a 2 million-strong army by 2030. Right now, Russia produces more ammunition in 3 months than NATO does in an entire year. That includes America, of course. That has to change, and it is.

Of NATO's 28 nations, 23 reached and exceeded the alliance's requirement for a minimum 2 percent of GDP for defense spending. Poland, Estonia, and Latvia are now over 3 percent. Lithuania and Finland will be over 3 percent in 2025. For context, the U.S. spent 3.38 percent of GDP in 2024. Poland and Estonia are already higher. Most of our NATO allies, Mr. Speaker, already have plans to increase spending further in the years ahead.

The only action that will deter Putin's expansionist vision and break through his KGB psychology is one strong enough, resolved enough, and credible enough to dispel any doubt that waging war against the West would come at an untenable cost.

However, if we shrink from the concept of victory in Ukraine against a despotic, illegal invasion, Russia and other authoritarian regimes may not believe that the West will act. We can only secure peace through strength if we help Ukraine deal Putin a definitive, strategic defeat.

Mr. Speaker, most Members of this Congress agree. The Congress has had at least 12 votes on the issue of supporting Ukraine since Russia's savage invasion on February 24. Less than 2 weeks later, Republicans and Democrats overwhelmingly voted to support Ukraine's defense. Mr. Speaker, 84 percent of the Members voted "yes."

Two months later, there was a second vote, and 87 percent of the Members of this body voted "yes." Over the next 2 years, there were 10 more votes on support for Ukraine. They received an average of 80 percent of the votes of the U.S. House of Representatives.

We provided Ukraine with the military aid it needed to stay in the fight. With incredible resolve, extraordinary courage, and a commitment to their

freedom and to their land, with our help, with the help of our NATO allies, and other free-loving nations around the world, they have hung in there for longer than anybody thought was possible.

Now, however, we need to give Ukraine the resources it needs to win the war. This Republican majority will do, I think, what Trump asks. All he has to do, Mr. Speaker, is pick up the phone and tell them to put a Ukraine supplemental on the floor with his support. He has made an economic deal. I don't know fully the details, but that gives us a further stake from an economic standpoint, a business standpoint, and a transactional standpoint, which of course our President focuses on so often. If we put that bill on the floor, it will pass overwhelmingly.

Concessions, Mr. Speaker, will never get Putin to the negotiating table. Only strength will do that.

Truman told Stalin to lift the blockade of Berlin, and he did. Kennedy told Khrushchev to stay out of Cuba, and he did. Reagan told Gorbachev: "Tear down this wall." He did.

Why? Certainly not because America made endless concessions and kowtowed to our adversaries. No, those Presidents succeeded because America stood strong, stood up for its values, and stood up for its allies, for freedom.

He clearly cares about his image, and I refer to "he" as President Trump. The image that he likes to portray is winning.

Mr. President, make history. Make Putin get out of Ukraine. You said this war would never have started if you were President. Now that you are President, make Ukraine whole and make the aggressor leave. Tell him to go home, to stop taking lives and start making the lives of his people better.

President Trump must do this, if we are to maintain the peace secured 80 years ago, if our children are to have a world we want for them, a world of peace and decency and respect for one another, a world where transgressors are held accountable.

Mr. Speaker, the work to build a more secure world remains just as hard, just as toilsome, just as painstaking as it did eight decades ago, as Truman pointed out, but it remains just as important today as it was then and has been for 80 years.

Mr. President, let us stand up for freedom. Let us stand up for law and justice and stand with the courageous Ukrainians who, like us, want to protect their land, protect their families, protect their economic well-being, protect freedom. Mr. President, I think you can do it. Please do.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

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ADJOURNMENT

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.