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Panel 1: The Biden Administration's National Security Agenda

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Panel 2: Future National Security Challenges

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Greetings, everyone, and good morning from Brookings. I'm Michael O'Hanlon with the Foreign Policy program. And today, I have the privilege of moderating two panels on the general topic of American grand strategy during the Biden administration and beyond. Thinking about where our country is in the world, how to protect itself and its citizens and its allies. How it tries to maintain international order.

And also, how it defines the topic of national security broadly enough to encompass all the new kinds of challenges that we see in today's world from climate change to pandemics to digital threats to our own internal cohesion or lack thereof as a society and what that means for the state of the world in our foreign policy.

So the way we'll begin is that I will first talk with a panel of experts on defense and national security issues that will include my colleagues at Brookings, Melanie Sisson and Robert Einhorn, who are like me full time scholars there. As well as our good friend and colleague, Caitlin Talmadge who is also a professor at Georgetown University. And her main job that is affiliated with us and we're very lucky to have her as well.

These three experts, you will know if you're familiar with their work and I'll be quick here. But they cover a wide range of topics in U.S. defense and national security policy ranging from how we should think about Russia and China, North Korea, and Iran. Nuclear proliferation, the dangers of potential nuclear escalation whether in a crisis like the Ukraine war right now or in a future scenario in Asia. And also, how we try to prevent or slow the spread of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. An issue that Bob Einhorn has worked on long and hard throughout his government and Brookings careers.

So after we talk about this in the context of the Biden administration nearly completing its various reviews on these subjects, we will then turn to a second panel which will broaden our scope even further to think about how we should perhaps redefine the

conception and priorities of U.S. national security policy in an era of all these new global dangers as well as, again domestic challenges from within.

And that's when I'll be pleased to welcome Harlan Ullman who has just written this remarkable book, "The Fifth Horseman of the Apocalypse," if you will, and a new MAD.

Also, Leslie Fenwick who is an emeritus dean at Howard University. Still professor there and an author of a book that I just received. It has just come out called, "Jim Crow's Pink Slip" which is a bit of a disconcerting history of how even after American schools were desegregated by Brown versus the U.S. Governor Brown education ruling in 1954. That even after that we continue, of course, to see many problems with racial immigration in the United States' schools. Not least that many schoolteachers who had previously taught in primarily African American schools and were themselves African American were often not welcomed into the ranks of the teaching professions in the now desegregated schools across the country. And how many thousands and tens of thousands of lives were affected in this way.

It's a discouraging book in some ways because of this troubled history that it reports, but it also coming out of a scholar whose got a lot of encouraging and inspiring ideas about how we can try to deal with our current challenges in American education and across our society.

So with that introduction let me now please also thank you, the audience, for tuning in and begin with our first panel. And the way I would like to frame this first question as you all know is in the context of the Biden administration's national security strategy which then logically leads to its national defense strategy which then logically leads to a more specific part of its overall thinking, the nuclear posture review.

All three of these documents have become in a sense, you know, obligatory documents for any new administration to write and create. It has not always followed the

same exact way, but the Biden team is trying very hard to follow the pattern they consider proper and get these documents done within roughly a year of coming into office. And they've been delayed in their official release by the war in Ukraine, which obviously has changed U.S. national security thinking at least a bit.

We have unclassified summaries of these documents that we now can proceed to discuss, but we still are waiting to see the final versions. The final unclassified summaries of these three documents that perhaps are now being finalized still or tweaked in their form. Even though, some drafts have been sent to Congress in classified form.

So in this very confusing context where we have imperfect information, Melanie, let me begin with you. And ask me to start or ask you to start with the national security strategy, the national defense strategy, the broader documents. And what do you expect to see in these?

And how much change do you expect from the Trump administration where we know certainly President Biden is a much different kind of president than Donald Trump, but we also know that there is probably going to be some continuity from the national defense strategy of Jim Mattis released in 2018. And then implemented under Secretary Mark Esper into this team which we know still likes a lot of the ideas from that Trump national defense strategy even if they may not fully support the presidency of Donald Trump himself.

So in that context with that long wind up, the floor is yours. I'd like to hear your thoughts and overall impressions please.

MS. SISSON: Well thanks, Mike, very much. I'm delighted to be here with this really sharp and interesting group of people and thanks for laying the groundwork. In particular for noting the uncertainty that will be embedded in this conversation because we don't have those complete summaries yet.

So I'm going to go ahead and get started with just putting a few thoughts

and observations about both of those documents out for us to start working with. So as you've described, Mike, we have sort of a constellation of strategy documents. Which is to say documents that provide conceptual organization for the way in which the United States behaves in the world.

And these documents largely are vision statements. The most visionary of the vision statements is the national security strategy. And its purpose is to answer two important questions. So what do we mean when we say national security? What is it that makes the people of the United States secure? And how is the federal government going to do its utmost to deliver that security?

The national defense strategy as you noted is one element of that larger apparatus. And its job is more specific. Its job is to explain how the Department of Defense understands its role in providing security to the people of the United States. And in general terms to describe what activities it's going to undertake in order to do so.

So on that basis, I think that we should expect two important things about the relationship between the national defense strategy and the national security strategy. So the first is that the world views should generally match. So the NDS should be consistent with the NSS and its understanding of what the world is like. What the United States wants to achieve in the world and also why?

And the NDS, in particular, should be clear about the role of the military in achieving those goals. So as the strategic environment changes so do the answers to both of those questions. And over time, we've seen this. We've seen a movement from defense strategies oriented around Cold War confrontation. Through periods of some sort of post-Cold War dislocation and even accumulation as we started to sort of pull more under the NDS umbrella through the focus on violent extremism.

And then in the 2012 defense strategic guidance, we started to see that although we continued to do lots of things everywhere. We also would start to give more of

our attention to Asia. Now, when the 2018 NDS arrived, it was, I think, finished with the sort of guess and nature of the 2012 strategic guidance. And it instead gave very firm "this" and "not that" answers. And the answers that the 2018 NDS gave to the two sort of orienting questions between the NSS and the NDS are very clear. Both viewed and continue to view, I think, China as the primary threat to U.S. security.

And the NDS in particular defines the role of the military in providing American security today and in this new period of competition by being prepared to fight and to win a war with China. I think the language in the NSS is certainly different than that what we see in the 2018 NDS, but I think that orientation is very consistent.

My view is that that's too narrow, and I'm just going to highlight two points about that. The first is that I think that it really reflects a mistake in understanding of deterrence and what do I mean by that? Well, so the 2018 NDS approach is essentially, you know, the Moebius strip argument. Where it goes that demonstrating the ability to win a war with China will deter China from fighting the war in the first place.

But I think we have to acknowledge that having capabilities is not deterrent. We are trying very mightily I think to buy deterrence, but you actually can't just buy it. And we can't suppose that just because we believe that we could win a war with China that China also will believe it will lose that war and it will therefore be deterred. I worry. I think that's a very tenuous chain of assumptions.

And the other element I want to highlight about it is that we can't assume that being able to win a war with China will create general deterrence. That it will deter China not just from starting a war, but also from behaving badly in other ways. And I think that's because deterrence isn't a thing that one has. It's an effect that we can produce. It's the outcome of a strategy. We need specific strategies to shape particular behaviors of specific actors at particular times and particular places within particular contexts.

I sort of think of it as though, you know, I think I worry that we think of

strategy, you know, we think of deterrence sort of like an evasive species like dandelions, right? That it starts in one place but then it can spread organically across everyone's lawns. But deterrence I think is much different than that. It's much more like a bonsai tree and it stays where it is. For it to flourish, it requires intentional design and cultivation and discipline over time.

So even if we were to accept that implementing the 2018 NDS or a subsequent NDS, which I think you're right, Mike. There is likely to be a lot of continuity. Even if we accept that that would enable the United States to win a war with China and that China therefore wouldn't start that war, it's still leaves an awful lot left undone. A lot of those things that are actually in the NSS as important interests of the United States.

And for the NDS not to acknowledge that space that implies either that we're willing to concede on any number of interests and issues below the threshold of war. Or that those issues are some other agency's problem and that the military isn't really useful to defending or promoting those interests. I disagree with that both because I think those issues and interests rightly as they're indicated, albeit, in different language in the NSS. But those issues and interests are the stuff of international order.

The rules and norms that we want to continue to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. And I also think that the military is an enormously flexible tool and it's useful not just for guarding against what might happen in the form of a major power war but also for creating and shaping what does happen in the real world. Promoting those day-to-day interests that are sometimes called daily competition. I think those are very important. The military is a real asset as the United States, you know, pursues those interests.

So I'll finish here with this sort of look ahead based on what I see in the fact sheet for the fourth coming NDS. And I actually have to say that I'm heartened by what I see there because it seems to bring in those other competitive activities into the mission set

of the Department of Defense in the form of what it's calling campaigning. So I'll be looking for much more on that when a more robust summary becomes publicly available. But for now, I'm going take that teaser as reason to be cautiously optimistic that the Department is really broadening. And the administration is broadening its understanding of the role of the military and competition.

MR. O'HANLON: Yeah, that's great. Very thorough and very useful framing. Let me do a really quick follow up with you which is also going to be my first question to Caitlin because I'm going to ask Caitlin to really just speak to the same set of issues and bring in the nuclear piece.

But the specific one that I want you both to please give me a thought on is do you think that the national defense strategy is correct to still emphasize the China threat over the Russia threat? And some of this is implicit in what you said. But I really want to put a point on it and sharpen it and have you both respond that from what we know that national defense strategy talks about Russia as the acute threat, but China as the pacing challenge.

That's sort of the language they like to use, which implies that over time, over the longer term, the Russia threat will somehow recede and the China threat will continue to grow. And therefore, we need to focus primarily on the latter. You've already taken some issue with an overly narrow focus on China. But I wanted to ask the question specifically in comparing the Russia threat with the China threat. Do you agree with this administration that the China threat is greater?

MS. SISSON: Yeah. Thanks, Mike. I do still think that the China threat is greater. And so, I think my objection in terms in terms of the narrowness of the NDS isn't the orientation around China per se, but rather in how we're approaching that competition and how we're addressing that threat.

I think there is no question that we're going to have to manage Russia. Certainly, in the near term and over into the medium term. And that's going to require great

care, but I think it's going to require great care in the same ways that dealing with China will. Which is thinking very carefully about how we are using the military as a tool to shape their behavior. And being very intentional in designing those strategies and very disciplined in implementing them.

MR. O'HANLON: Great. Thank you. So, Caitlin, that same question to you please, but also your broader thoughts on the national defense strategy to the extent we understand it. Its continuity or lack thereof with Trump. Its appropriateness for the world we're in today and your thoughts on the nuclear posture review as well please. And feel free to, you know, unpack that as you wish or take one part more than another. And I can follow up after your initial thoughts.

MS. TALMADGE: Sure. Thank you so much and let me just thank you and everyone else here this morning for what I know is going to be a great discussion. I'm excited to be a part of it and to have discussion that I think is a bit more wholistic in thinking about the full range of issues that the United States is confronting both in the national security domain directly but also other areas that ultimately affect our national security and our national competitiveness. I really am excited to be a part of that.

I agree with a lot of what Melanie said. I mean I agree with her, and I think Bob might as well that there are aspects of this emerging national defense strategy. Of course, we don't have the full document out yet. But there are aspects of it that actually seem quite consistent with what we saw in 2018 from the Trump administration. And in some ways, we're similar to that document than to what we saw in the Obama administration.

In particular, I think the overall orientation for the strategic environment and thinking about just what is the world that the United States is living in? I think the way that the Trump administration answered that question is actually not the different from a lot of what appears to be in the national security strategy and especially the NDS based on what

we know. We are back in an era where we are concerned about the problem of long-term strategic competition with a great power adversary that have nuclear weapons.

There's a prioritization of China in both of those strategies that the language is a bit different. The Biden administration has chosen to talk about China as the facing threat as you mentioned, but there's clearly an elevation of China over Russia exactly as you mentioned. And this emerging NDS from the Biden administration does describe Russia as a distinctly secondary, although acute threat as we're seeing currently given the horrific war that's been going on in Ukraine.

And just to take a little, you know, side tangent on your question specifically about, you know, do I agree with that prioritization? Yeah, I do. I think that China is the greatest long-term strategic threat that the United States potentially faces in the global arena and across a variety of domains. And has, you know, the potential to really cause some problems for the United States.

And I think unless the United States wants to get into the world trillion-dollar annual defense budget, which some people do, and we can talk about that, you know, there has to be prioritization of where the United States is going to expend resources. I do think that, you know, I worry a little bit in the threat with Ukraine, although, I think it's important to defend Ukraine's sovereignty and, you know, ensure that Ukraine can survive intact as a nation. The United States has to be careful not to get overambitious in Ukraine. And we can talk about that a little bit if anyone wants to.

But we're hearing already some expansion of U.S. goals towards things like permanently disabling or crippling, you know, destroying the Russian military. And that's a bigger project. And, you know, the question is do we want to do that in a world where we're releasing a national defense strategy that actually identifies China as our facing threat despite the fact that Russia is a big linking threat right now in Ukraine.

And I'll just add one more point on that which is although what Russia is

doing is really, you know, just awful and terrible in Ukraine. This war has actually already destroyed a lot of their military capability and they are unlikely to rebound from it especially given what their economic situation is. And so, it's not clear to me that the Russian threat necessarily in terms of like a major ground offense is -- and NATO, of course, NATO countries is growing. If anything, that threat has actually decreased, which I think reinforces the prioritization we see in the strategy.

Just to off a couple of more thoughts on the general question you asked. Going back to, you know, what's in the NDS? And how does this relate to a nuclear posture? As I said, I think the NDS in many ways agrees that the problem is long-term strategic competition as we saw in 2018, but is more focused on the question as Melanie also alluded to of how you do that?

Like if that's the problem what is it that the United States needs to get better at in order to deal with it? And I think we're starting to see the answer to that in part because it's no coincidence that this administration is actually waiting to release these documents together, the NSS, the NDS and the NPR. You know, because they are seeking more integration, I think, across building a competition that includes nuclear and convention which as we're seeing already in this, you know, this situation with Russia and Ukraine.

You know, we're back to the world where nuclear weapons actually do cast a shadow over conventional and sub-conventional conflict. And so, you know, I think the strategy is firmly focused on deterrent but -- and, you know, there's nothing new I think there. You know, deterrence is still convincing an adversary whether that's Russia or China or North Korea that's it is not in its interest to take certain actions.

But I think the United States in the strategy is trying to do that in a more coherent way. And think about how do we use deterrence across the spectrum of conflict? You know, beginning with things that are non-kinetic, cyber, electronic warfare. Through the stuff conventionally and unconventionally and even up to the nuclear domain.

And along with that how do we get our allies to do things that integrate with our own defense efforts? And, you know, contribute to that deterrent mission? And again, we're seeing in the case of, you know, Russia in Ukraine how important it is the role of other countries in their defense preparations are. We've seen that in Ukraine, and we've also seen that in response of European countries to improving their defenses and increasing their defenses and making a response to a heightened sense of threat from Russia.

You know, and this in turn I think goes directly into the nuclear posture with the U.S. as well. And I'll just offer a couple of quick remarks on that. I know we want to get to Bob and open up the discussion, but, you know, I think there's a recognition in this administration that, yeah. The United States has a nuclear umbrella. And it's important for that nuclear umbrella to be robust which is why the United States is pursuing modernization.

But nuclear weapons in the world we're living in may not actually deter all provocations or aggression. Not only against the United States but especially against allies. And especially against countries that are not U.S. allies, you know, they're not actually under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, but the U.S. may still care about them, which I think is the, you know, situation of Ukraine. And also, the situation of Taiwan.

And so, yeah, the United States needs that nuclear backbone and NPR talks about that but as the NDS points out, it also needs to be able to deter at the conventional level. And allies need to be able to defend themselves conventionally too. And so, you want all of those components working together. I think it's really interesting that this NPR talks very exclusively as, you know, Biden himself often has about reducing the role of nuclear weapons. That was something that we heard about, you know, from the very first days of the administration and their guidance.

You know, and some of the most important work, I think on reducing the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. deterrent strategy is actually to be found in what the NDS is talking about, not just what the NPR is talking about. Because if you strengthen your own

forces and allied forces conventionally, you reduce the likelihood of getting into a crisis or where nuclear weapons could ever come into play.

And so, I think there is a real linkage between the NPR and the NDS. And, you know, these are different chapters in the same book. And that is an important change. So I'll just stop there. And I'm sure there's a lot more discuss, I think.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you, Caitlin. And now, Bob, if I can go to you. I would like very much your thoughts on the nuclear posture review.

And I guess the best way I can frame an initial question is how much really has changing? We know that President Biden wanted to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in American national defense policy. Caitlin has pointed out some subtle ways in which you could argue that's happening. But the overall message as reported by Michael Gordon and others is that, in fact, President Biden pulled back from any big in what nuclear weapons would be for in a matter of a national security policy.

But he did make a couple of tweaks and maybe is eliminating a couple of new nuclear weapons design programs that would have given us new types of bombs that Secretary Mattis had proposed back a few years ago. So is there much change here or not? Over to you, my friend.

MR. EINHORN: Right, Mike. You know, clearly President Biden when he was Vice President and in the years since then has wanted to reduce the role of nuclear weapons at our national security strategy, but he finds that the international security environment has deteriorated in such a way with the new emerging threats, increasing threats that that's become more difficult.

One of the themes of our discussion with Melanie and Caitlin has been continuity including continuity between, you know, 2018 and today. But I think when the nuclear cost review, the NPR, the declassified version comes out, we'll find a lot of continuity in U.S. nuclear weapons policy that goes back at least to the Obama years. And this is just

by pretty radical changes in the international security environment.

Yet the key elements of our nuclear policy we've made pretty consistent, and I'll give you some examples. You know, President Obama called modernizing each leg of the U.S. nuclear triad. Now, President Trump essentially adopted the Obama nuclear modernization plan. And now, Biden has essentially followed suit. President Obama rejected a policy of no first use. And he insisted on retaining the option to use nuclear weapons in response to nonnuclear aggression.

Now, Trump did the same and Biden will do the same in his NPR. You know, despite his personal and explicit view as a vice president in 2017, at the sole purpose of U.S. nuclear weapons should be to deter or respond to nuclear attack.

Another example of continuity, all three administrations, Obama, Trump, Biden are comfortable with the limits of the New START Treaty. They believe that this capability was sufficient. They supported the modernization of the U.S. nuclear weapons production complex. They supported continued deployment and upgrading of U.S. nuclear weapons and delivery systems in Europe. All of that is continuity. But clearly, there were some differences.

Obama favored further reductions in New START levels. He talked about reductions from 1,550 deployed strategic warheads to a 1,000. He was the president who, you know, famously called for a movement towards a world without nuclear weapons. Trump was different, different in tone, different in content. He wanted to prioritize deterrence over nuclear arms control.

Biden clearly favors further arms control efforts. But he sees the opportunities in the current and national security environment are very few. You know, the strategic stability talks with Russia are in early casualty of the war in Ukraine. There were some differences in nonstrategic weapon systems. Obama called for canceling the nuclear sea launch cruise missile. President Trump believing that the U.S. needed some theater

nuclear capability to deter possible limited first use of nuclear weapons by Russia. He called for acquiring low-yield nuclear warheads for sea-launched ballistic missiles. He called for reinstating the nuclear sea launch cruise missile. President Biden looked at the situation, decided that we ought to retain the low-yield warhead for the sea-launch ballistic missile, but he's again cancel the nuclear sea-launch cruise missile, and also retired the B83 megaton-yield gravity bomb.

Now all three administrations said they would only consider the use of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances when vital interests of the United States were at stake. But the Trump administration went on to elaborate with a number of illustrations. And those illustrations conveyed the impression that the Trump administration was preparing to broaden the range of contingencies in which the U.S. might consider the use of nuclear weapons.

The Biden administration's NPR is not going to be very specific on that, but I think it will convey the impression that his administration is moving back closer to the Obama approach. He'll say explicitly that the fundamental role of U.S. nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack. Not necessarily, the sole role, the only role, but the fundamental role is nuclear deterrence.

And, you know, fail to include the specific contingencies of the Trump NPR in 2018 that conveyed the impression that we were considering deploy range of contingencies. The Biden NPR when it comes out in declassified form, I think we'll really being seen as a mainstream document, a traditional, U.S. nuclear weapon policy.

It will avoid any major departures from that policy. It will be a centrist stop to make and the centrist nature of the document I think will displease advocates on both the left and the right. We've already seen progressive attack some elements at what they assume to be the Biden NPR. They'll attack him for failing to endorse a policy of sole purpose or no first use.

For not scaling back on U.S. very ambitious nuclear modernization plans. Remember former Secretary of Defense Bill Perry called for abandoning the ICBM leg of the triad, not replacing the Minuteman with what the administration now calls the Sentinel ICBM. The progressives will attack the NPR for not calling for additional nuclear reductions. You know, paying lip service to arms control but really not be in a position to lower U.S. nuclear capabilities.

On the other hand, the nuclear hawks will say that now we have two peer or near-peer nuclear competitors and, you know, given that, the United States is going to have to deter both of them. And to do that we may well need nuclear capabilities more extensive than provided for in the New START Treaty.

Frank Miller, many of you know, you know, one of America's, you know, principal nuclear gurus recently wrote that the U.S. should abandon the New START Treaty and pursue a nuclear capability greater than 1,550 deployed strategic warheads. And so, we can discuss that later. But interesting.

Also, they'll be support in Congress for reinstating funds in the budget for the nuclear sea launch cruise missile as well as for not retiring the B83 megaton yield gravity bomb. But I think in the end, the centrist, Biden NPR will have sufficient support in the Congress and in the American public, you know, given today's very threatening strategic environment with growing threats from Russia, China, and North Korea. I don't think there's going to be much support for limiting U.S. nuclear capabilities and options.

But on the other side, and, you know, give concerns about triggering an expensive nuclear arms race and, you know, leading to greater tensions and potential escalation. I don't think there's going to be much stomach for expanding existing nuclear weapon capabilities much easier. And so, you know, the middle ground, you know, the Goldilocks option, I think in the end is going to prevail.

But with all the, you know, current domestic and international pressures on

the administration and attention focused on all kinds of other problems, I think this nuclear posture review is not going to get much attention at all. And I'll leave it at that.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent framing. Thank you. Very thorough, very crisp and compelling. Here's what I would like to do with the rest of panel one's time if I could.

First to have a lightning round. I'm going to ask the same question to each of you about future policy. And I'll pose that in just a second. Then to bring in audience questions. We've received some already and anybody who wants to email an additional question either for this panel or for panel two could do so at events@brookings.edu. Again, events@brookings.edu. We'll try to get to some of those. And then in about 20 minutes, we will make our transition to panel two.

So here's my lightning round question and if each of you could give a short answer to a very hard question. In addition to what you've already said, is there any policy recommendation that you would want to offer this administration either as a way to make its big ideas in these documents more concrete and more specific? You know, and you've already talked about a number of specific cases, but there could be others.

Or to disagree with something that you see looming in administration thinking? Or just to flush out a new concept like this idea of integrated deterrence which includes, as Caitlin said, some new dimensions like cyber and space and allied responses to various kinds of aggression and trying to get those thought through in advance so they can deter. But also, the economic side of integrated deterrence. Whether we need to get more aggressive at telling China how we would sanction them and decouple from them in effect if they were to attack Taiwan. So that's the kind of idea you might want to speak to.

I'm curious. Should we be telling China right now that whatever nuclear posture review says, we will commit not to be the first to use nuclear weapons in a Taiwan scenario? That would be an idea that would be politically hard to articulate, but we know right now China is launching on a big nuclear build up probably because they're afraid we

will make that kind of threat in a future war especially if the conventional situation seems to be roughly stalemated.

And, you know, going back to our own history of making nuclear threats in the Cold War, we might be willing. So should we disabuse the Chinese of that concern, at least as much as we could by a rhetorical shift or a doctrinal shift.

Or one last example, should we be moving or already now planning to move permanent U.S. combat capability into the Baltic states in Europe to make sure that whatever happens to Russia's military right now in this fight in Ukraine that Putin doesn't get some ideas about somehow enlarging the war to parts of NATO territory where there are a lot of Russian speakers. And just to make sure that we double down on our forward defense capabilities.

I'm not asking each of you to speak to each of those. I'm just giving examples of the kinds of policy recommendations that at least I might consider making, but also, I'd like to hear each of you put one more on the table or just reinforce and further expand upon what you've already alluded to so far. So we'll go in the same order please, starting with you, Melanie.

MS. SISSON: Okay. Well, Mike, all of those examples that you raised are really thought-provoking, but I will constrain myself to only responding very quickly to a few of them.

So first, it won't surprise you that what I really want to know more about what the administration means by integrated deterrence? And I don't want just this sort of bumper sticker slogan about we're going to work across all of the, you know, domains. And we're going to bring in all these other tools of influence and all those things.

I really want to sort of hear more concretely about how is that going to be organized? Is there going to be a centralized entity that is responsible for corrosive strategies, you know, across all of these domains? And sort of understand that look under

the hood a little bit more.

And similarly, with campaigning. You know, campaigning is a word in military parlance that has a long history of use, and it means particular sorts of things. It seems to me that they're using it in a slightly different way here, and so I want some clarity. I think they need to be more clear if this is their way of sort of smuggling in daily competition in ways that might be more palatable to some audiences. That's okay. I just want to sort of really sort of dig into how they're thinking about what that requires of the military? And how that might shift investments, for example? And where the Department is spending its money?

Two other quick notes. In the nuclear realm of policy recommendation for me is that I increasingly feel like I have my hair on fire about the need for risk reduction talks between the United States and China on, in particular, controlling cyber activities and attacks on NC3, the nuclear command control in communication networks.

You know, I think just the act of starting of those conversations is supremely important. I think that's an area of really heightened risk that I actually am quite concerned about. So I would like to see that.

And then I can't resist responding to your question about the basing in the Baltics. And I will tell you that, Mike, this is a place for -- you've been a very articulate sort of proponent of some of these changes in response to Russia's really horrific decision and everything that's followed. I actually am not persuaded that we should be making those sort of enhancements in terms of permanent presence on the eastern flank of NATO. So I actually would not pursue that. And as I said, I'd constrain myself to just a few items and so I will stop there.

MR. O'HANLON: Awesome. Thank you very much. Caitlin, same question to you please.

MS. TALMADGE: Thanks, Mike. As usual, you crammed like 12 amazing

questions into three minutes. So I won't be able to cover everything either. I just want to say very quickly before I address your question. How strongly I agree with everything Bob said. I think I agree with literally every single word he said so I think was a great analysis and really hit the nail on the head of what we should do with looking for what's in the NPR and he gives good context.

So on your question, Mike. I would just point out a couple of things. I mean one is to go back to this point about prioritization, which you actually raised at the very beginning. You know, how should we be thinking about Russia versus China? Is one more important than the other?

And as I mentioned, I do think the elevation of China as the more strategic concern with Russia as an acute, but secondary concern is the right one. What I want to hear more about is how are we actually going to implement that? What tradeoffs are we actually willing to make in the way we resource and execute our policies in order to do what this document apparently says we are going to do?

Which is to again elevate China and treat Russia as a bit of a secondary priority because as I said earlier, you know, I do think we are getting into conversation, as you mentioned, about having a longer term, larger permanent presence in Europe, in the Baltics. We're getting into conversations about, you know, expanding our aims in the Ukraine war to ensure that Russia's military is, you know, permanently disabled. And giving aid to the Ukrainians with that goal.

I worry that that may just form a war and distracting us not only to human resources but in terms of policymaker attention from the -- again, the threat that the strategies status really should be focused, you know, focusing our attention which is, you know, happening in Asia and not happening in Europe.

If that's what you believe and, you know, we have a defense budget that is the size that this administration has put forward then, you know, we want to see policy that

are consistent with that prioritization and reflect that we have real interests in what goes on I think in Ukraine. But they are limited interests. And they are more limited than our interest in Asia. And we can talk more about that if people want to, but I want to see that implemented.

The other thing I'll just mention or that I wanted to mention is exactly this point Melanie made about risk reduction. That's something that I want to hear more about because I do think that this administration is actually very committed to, you know, trying to reduce the number of nuclear weapons, avoiding certainly new player use.

And part of that I think, you know, is not just through arms control the way we've traditionally thought about it. Which is you have, you know, mutual weekly binding treaties that cap large arsenals on both sides in a symmetric way. But, you know, it can also include these other measures, risk reduction, confidence pulling measures and so forth that reduce the likelihood of nuclear use in the event that you've got a crisis or war between nuclear armed states.

And, you know, to your point about should the United States make a declaration that it will never be the first to use nuclear weapons in a timeline scenario? To be perfectly frank, I don't think we should do that because I don't think there's any way China would believe us when we said that. Just like we don't believe that China would never use nuclear weapons in a Taiwan contingency.

So I'm less concerned with rhetoric than I am with implementing actually measures. Like what I would like to see is better military to military, you know, political to political communications with China. I know that's something the administration has worked on. But I think there are other unilateral measures the U.S. might be able to take to jump start movement on the Chinese issues. Like the United States might consider acknowledging mutual vulnerabilities with China. And in their contacts, they might consider offering an opportunity for China to come in and to observe parts of the U.S./Russian New

START inspection process. And then China can see what that's like.

You know, the recent crisis with Ukraine and war, I think has underlined again how important it is to actually have risk reduction measures even with your adversaries when they have nuclear weapons.

And we've seen that in the context of this Russian ICBM test, you know, a couple of weeks ago where, yeah, they're testing an ICBM, a more nuclear saber rattling during a war. But we knew about that missile launch in advanced and we didn't overreact to it. Why? Because we have risk reduction measures that allow us to do that through these risk measures. So I would like to hear a lot more about that and I think we will.

MR. O'HANLON: That's a great example to bring in as well. Thank you. And, Bob, same question to you with the added tweak that of course you've written a lot about Iran and North Korea and how we should think about nuclear nonproliferation strategies towards them specifically. So if you want to touch on those topics or anything else and your recommendations. Over to you.

MR. EINHORN: Sure. First on no first use, U.S. no first use pledge with the respect to a Taiwan scenario. I agree completely with Caitlin. The Chinese wouldn't believe it. The problem is the Japanese and the Taiwanese would believe it. It would undermine their confidence in the reliability of U.S. assurances.

Look, with the Chinese -- and we need to talk about supporting Taiwan's conventional defense. That's what we should be talking about. We shouldn't be brandishing, you know, the nuclear option the way Putin has. But we shouldn't take the nuclear option off the table completely. We just don't have to talk about it at all.

And I completely agree with Melanie and Caitlin on the importance of risk reduction measures. By the way, everyone talks about risk reduction measures, but we don't really, you know, we don't have many specifics in mind. And part of it, you know, those specifics need to come out of engagement with these countries and with the Chinese, we

haven't unfortunately been prepared to engage.

You know, Caitlin talked earlier about, you know, the integration of nuclear and nonnuclear means in deterrence. And that's going to be a big theme I think of the Biden administration including the NPR. I really do think we need to -- I mean, you know, the Biden administration is not going to be advertising a lot of big-ticket items to reduce reliance on nuclear weapons the kind that they traditional, you know, arms control community would like to see.

But what I think it can do is talk about the integration of nonnuclear means into our overall deterrent to show that the relative importance of nukes is decreasing. And we ought to do that. And not just in talking about reducing the reliance of nukes in our deterrent posture, but also reducing that reliance in responding to nuclear use.

People have asked me what happens if Putin actually does what he said he might do? Is to use nuclear weapons in a limited way to try to, you know, get NATO to back off, and to be able to succeed in his conventional aggression? Would we use nuclear weapon in response to a limited Russian use?

You know, I doubt that would make any sense because, you know, it would depend on the nature of the use. Is it, you know, a terribly lethal attack? Or is it some demonstration in some uninhabited area?

But why would the U.S. want to imitate that? Aren't there more relevant means of responding and so on? But I think that's an issue that we really need to think about rather than the knee jerk reaction. If they use nukes, we've got to use nukes. I think we need to think more deeply about that.

MR. O'HANLON: Right. Thank you very much. So we'll keep this final round as a lightning round too so we can get to panel two. And there are a few questions that have come in from the audience. One or two I'm going save for panel two because they're more about the juxtaposition of foreign and domestic policy.

But let me just pose these to you and maybe each of you could take one of them if that's okay? And just a brief answer. One question from the audience, has the American emphasis on China emboldened Russia in its current aggressiveness? Or there is any other way in which American policy, while not morally at fault, has contributed to the backdrop that increased the risk of war in Ukraine?

And then a second question. Do you think that a weakening Russia may, in fact, become a more dangerous Russia? More reliant on nuclear forces and perhaps more embittered as well about its lot in life or state either during or after the war against Ukraine is over? So how does the United States along with NATO strike a balance between a Russia that doesn't have the capability to threaten neighbors but at the same time isn't forced into a situation where it is solely reliant on its nukes and with a chip on its shoulder to boot.

So, Melanie, if either of those questions appeals, please take a shot at one and then we'll just move down the line with Caitlin and Bob.

MS. SISSON: Sure. Both very interesting questions and, you know, I lay no claim to being an expert on Russia itself and the national and political dynamics internal.

But I will say from a historical perspective on the second question. You know, we have seen historically that intentionally rendering another state weak and feeling isolated and feeling, you know, as though it's them against everybody else has not ended well. It has, in fact, precipitated large catastrophic wars.

And so, yes, I think there is a danger in sort of a fully weakened, isolated Russia. The danger is not just in its own behavior and that it might rely on these other tools as the questioner asked, you know, nuclear weapons primary among them. But also, because it might create conditions that would tighten the relationship between Russia and China, which I don't think is to the good of U.S. interests in the long term.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Caitlin, same question to you please.

MS. TALMADGE: Sure. I concur with Melanie. I also, you know, I would

rather answer the second question rather than the first. I do worry about the problem weakening Russia to the point where it actually becomes more threatening.

And, you know, we should realize we should not fall prey to the fallacy of the last move and think that, you know, attempting to finish off the Russian military via the Ukrainians in this war won't cause a Russian counterreaction because it will. We've talked about one type of counterreaction which is the potential that they escalate to the use of using nuclear weapons. But I think Bob covered that very well and how problematic that would be. But I hate to say it, there's some other really bad things they could do too. You know, they have chemical weapons. They could easily use those to go after concentrated masses of the Ukrainian forces in an area like eastern Ukraine.

They can escalate their conventional strategy in ways that we haven't seen yet. And that includes Putin's attentionally moving this from being a special military operation to one in which he actually conscripts Russia's large population of military HN, large relative to Ukraine. You know, Russia has three times the population of Ukraine.

So getting him into a corner where he decides to actually make this a full fledge war and bring, you know, the Russian population to bear in terms of military mobilization against the Ukrainians that's not good. That's not something the Ukrainians should want. It's not something that the United States should want. It will prolong this war and all the human suffering that goes along with it.

And so, I think, you know, we need to remember that, you know, it's never good to be approaching a (inaudible). And you've got to have some pathway back for Russia to reintegrate. You know, to get some sanctions relieved. And again, I'm not here saying that we want to rehabilitation Vladimir Putin, but I think Melanie's point about, you know, there are real dangers in the long-term weakening of Russia in terms of how it will respond to that, you know, in the long term as well as in the short term, which is my point.

You know, I think those are very real. And something we need to watch out

for.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent. And, Bob, to you please.

MR. EINHORN: Melanie and Caitlin have both answered your question very well. So I won't answer your current question. I'll answer an earlier one about North Korea and what the lessons might be.

A lesson and many people have noted was that Kim Jong-un will be more determined to hold onto its nuclear weapons because look what happens when you give them up. But that's not a new lesson. Kim Jong-un or Kim Jong-il before him had learned that lesson from Libya, from Iraq and so forth. And they're, you know, bound and determined to keep their nuclear weapons forever, I believe. I think nuclearization should remain the ultimate goal. We should declare it, but I don't believe it's going to happen.

But a new lesson that Kim Jong-un learned was from Putin's, you know, desire to use the threat of nuclear weapons to deter NATO from involving itself in the Ukraine conflict. And Kim Jong-un may decide that this was a very effective strategy. You can commit aggression and use nuclear weapons to prevent your adversaries from getting involved especially the United States. And we've seen that just recently. If you follow Kim Jong-un's statements, he's talking about nuclear weapons not just being weapons of deterrence but for having another role as well.

And I think what he's talking about is, you know, basically preventing U.S. intervention in any conflict on the Korean peninsula. And I think that's a very worrisome lesson especially for the South Koreans.

MR. O'HANLON: That's a fascinating point. With that I'm going to thank panel one. Brilliant analysis. Very concise and crisp too. And I'll also mention in saying farewell to my colleagues.

For the moment if you want to read more about what they think about some of these questions. Melanie is the coauthor of an excellent book on U.S. foreign

deployments called, “Military Coercion.” Caitlin wrote a great book about dictators and their militaries which has some resonance for me, at least, in regard to Russia right now. And Bob is just prolific in many papers at brookings.edu where you can find all of our writings especially on issues of nuclear strategy, nonproliferation, Iran and North Korea.

So my friends, with many thanks, I will wish you well. And now we will make our move to panel two, but again, Melanie, Caitlin and Bob, thanks very much.

MS. SISSON: Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: And so, now greetings as we do this seamless transition with apologizes to you at home. We aren’t even going to have time to get a cup of coffee. Although, I’ll try to take 30 seconds here to reintroduce the panelists. You don't want to miss their highlights, but you can always read about them on the web as well. So if you need your cup of coffee, now is your 30 second break before we hear from them directly.

But Harlan Ullman is a Vietnam veteran, an author of 10 books, a very close friend and colleague of many of ours at Brookings and just a lively and fresh voice on U.S. national security policy who keeps coming up with big new ideas. And his latest book as his publisher points out maybe his single most important.

So we're going to start by asking Harlan to speak about what he just heard on panel one because he’s also got his roots in traditional U.S. national security policy. But then he’ll be talking about his book.

And Professor Leslie Fenwick of Howard University. I want to welcome you again and really thank you for joining us. Congratulate you again on your book, “Jim Crow’s Pink Slip” talking about the historical legacy of Brown vs the Board of Education at Topeka and the implications of what happened for the nation’s schools and for many African American teachers. But I know you’ve got a lot of other thoughts in your research and work over the years at Howard about current and future policy to strengthen our society from within, which clearly is relevant to our national security as well.

So if I could, what we will do now in our somewhat short panel too is to begin with Harlan's thoughts on the previous discussion and the national defense and nuclear strategies coming out of the Biden team. And then go to Leslie to ask her to frame how she sees our country's domestic underpinnings of national security and any thoughts she may want to offer there. Come back to Harlan to hear about his book. And then we'll have some follow up discussion. And again, your questions are welcomed at events@brookings.edu. With that, Harlan, over to you, my friend. And thanks for joining today. And congratulations on your book.

MR. ULLMAN: Mike, thank you. You are a great ringmaster. I congratulate you on putting this together.

Let me make harsher criticisms. First, I don't think the strategies have worked and I don't think they will going back to Obama. I'll go back to that in a sec. I also think that the priorities on China are misplaced. And third, and perhaps the most important issue is we can't afford them. $800 billion a year for defense is not going to be enough to sustain the force in the direction.

Let me expand on that first point. The strategy under Donald Trump was contain, deter and if war comes defeat. Well, we haven't done a very good job about containing China. We haven't contained Russia. And I'm not sure how we've deterred them. China has gone on its military buildup. It militarized the islands in the south and the east China seas and Belt Road has made it far more influential.

What's happening in Ukraine certainly was not deterred. And defeat Robert Gates, Former Secretary of Defense had it right. Any Secretary of Defense who envisages a land war in Asia need to have his or her head examined.

We're talking about nuclear war. We're talking about taking on a population of one and a half billion people. We're talking about a country like Russia with tens of thousands of potential nuclear weapons. And so, I think that for those reasons, the strategy

-- and I'll go into this because it's one of the centerpieces of my book, *The Fifth Horseman*, are not working and will not work. And I don't like the idea of designating somebody as an enemy in advance. How would you react to that?

About affordability, we cannot afford the nuclear buildup and modernization without making fundamental changes. We're modernizing all three legs of the triad. In the past, we spent three or four percent roughly of the defense budget on nuclear modernization. That's going to double. Who's going to pay for it? The army? Navy? Air force? Marines?

Look, a Columbia class nuclear submarine, the first one is going to cost $15 billion. How much is the B21 going to cost? Three, four, five six billion dollars a copy? And the new (inaudible) land base system. So I think that one of the things we have to look at is affordability.

And given the fact that we've already got a 30 plus trillion-dollar deficit debt, we need to really examine these options very closely. And I don't really believe that all the policy reviews or as good intentions have really got to the way of taking a harsher look.

For example, how are you going to contain Russia and China? The policy statements don't tell you. They're aspirational. How are you going to deter Russia and China? And from what? I think that nuclear deterrence has been expanded far beyond its usefulness. It's going prevent a major world war, but let's not believe it can do lots of other things.

And so, I think what we really need is a much more serious look going back perhaps to the Eisenhower years, 1953 when Eisenhower was elected with Project Solarium, which really took a harsh look. And at this stage, in many ways that seems to me that the reviews however well intended are reminiscent of somebody who has just jumped off the Empire State Building and passing through floor 50 was asked, how's it going? And the response was so far so good. I think you can say, so far so good, but I would worry.

MR. O'HANLON: Very provocative and very helpful. Thank you, my friend. And now, Professor Fenwick as we fully transition into the topic of panel two. Leslie, I want to thank you for joining today.

And I really look forward to hearing how someone who has had a primary emphasis in her research and career on the domestic cohesion and strength of our society would react to the national security conversation we're having so far today. And then more specifically any points you would like to frame in terms of how we can begin to strengthen the domestic underpinnings of society?

Because we all know if this entity called the United States of America suffers from a centrifugal force that tears us apart, it's hard to imagine how we play a strong role on the world stage either. So certainly, domestic and foreign policy have to be linked at some level. So thanks for joining and over to you.

MS. FENWICK: Thank you. You know, the last widely circulated report about national security and public education as we discussed, Mike, was released in 2012 by the Council on Foreign Relations.

And this report like many others links public schools to our national security in the traditional sense. Specifically, the need to have public schools produce globally competitive workers. In quality, public education is also seen as this cornerstone of a healthy democracy and U.S. economic growth and competitiveness.

However, I really believe that we need to consider a shift. I think that the righteous racial unrest expressed after the murder of George Floyd and the January 6th insurrection have both shown us that we have a unity and cohesion problem. And so, one of the things I think a lot about is the shift from the notion of schools producing globally competitive workers to the role of schools in producing an American value system that expresses some unity in cohesion.

And one question that I keep asking knowledgeable and diverse individuals

and audiences with whom I speak is what story is holding us together? My book, “Jim Crow’s Pink Slip,” tells an untold story but what story is holding us together? Is it the story of a solid shot at the middle class with an intended economic stability? Is it the 1950s story or myth history of American virtue at home and abroad? Will the story of America at war with a foreign power hold us together?

I really think that we need an analysis of messaging here about what that story is relative to this problem of unity and cohesion. I think in Harlan’s work speaks to this that this U.S. unity and cohesion problem is a large measure a product of citizens who are susceptible more now than ever to propaganda and exposure and susceptibility to propaganda have been accelerated by social media. And it’s not just individual citizens, but certainly we’ve seen this propaganda wholly leach into national discourse and politics.

And all of this has implications for the teaching of critical thinking skills, civics education and media responsibility more broadly. I do wonder not as a national security expert, but I do wonder about how China has different levers that it can exercise on the unity and cohesion front that we don't as a democracy. And how China also has thousands more people they can devote to problem solving, particularly those problems related to technology.

The kind of other two things that I bring into this conversation is that schools are the one institution that democracies designate to produce citizens, not workers, but citizens. And our state constitutions define the right to a public education. And all of this beautiful compelling even revolutionary language of public education being a democratic imperative. A primary obligation of the state. A fundamental value, a paramount duty inherent -- there’s an inherent value.

You know, I think about the language of my state here in Maryland. And it says that the funding for public education should be kept in (inaudible). It’s a strong word. Arkansas, California, North Carolina, all these states have such beautiful language about a

public education, you know, being a safeguard of liberty and a bull work of a free and good government. And that we as citizens of this country and our states should be committed to the diffusion of intelligence and virtue through public education.

And yet, we know that despite these powerful statements, phrases, and constitutional obligations that we have nearly 50 years of research that shows that students who are in schools that serve students of color where 50 percent or more are from families that are living in poverty. That these students are 70 percent more likely to have a teacher who's not certified or doesn't have a college major or minor in the subject area that they're teaching.

And this finding holds true not just in one subject area. It holds true across four subject areas: math, English, social studies, and the science. And this reality is ill matched to another circumstance. Approximately 84 percent of black students who are disproportionately poor live in states that require high stakes high school graduation tests while 66 percent of white students are in such states.

And so, this question about how we can continue to educationally malnourish students, raise the bar on what they're expected to know and demonstrate on standardized tests, and then lower the standards for the adults who teach them, is a hanging chad related not only to our democracy and the role of public education in public schools in maintaining this unity and cohesion.

The last thing I would say is that, you know, a few years ago, I interviewed 13, I think engaged and knowledgeable thought leaders. Influential grant making and public policy organizations as well as a cross section of deans of education at diverse U.S. institutions. And these individuals are board members and presidents at Carnegie Foundation of New York, Spencer Foundation, Kellogg Foundation. Education deans at HBCUs like Clark Atlanta University, Harvard University, land grant institutions like Kansas City University. I also interviewed executive directors at Valencia and education, the

Washington Lawyer's Committee on Civil Rights, and the Center for American Progress among others.

And I began the interviews asking these leaders two questions. Is revolution the most appropriate term to describe what's needed in our PK12 education system? And if a revolution is needed, what do you think it will take to revolutionize education so that all PK12 learners have an equal educational opportunity?

Well, to tell you the truth, I was really expecting these leaders to bulk at that question or those questions. And to take exception, reluctantly propose that maybe restructuring or transformation might be needed. But not to say that an all-out revolution was called for. You know, these are distinguished leaders of nationally prominent organizations. We don't typically view these individuals or their organizations as advocating for revolution.

So you can imagine my surprise when each of these leaders that I interviewed agreed that revolution is the correct term to describe what's needed to better serve the nation's PK12 public school population. And they viewed the word revolution as bold, definitive and I'm quoting them here, the right idea and action for this time.

You know, many of these leaders describe the public school system in ways that we know is especially those serving the needs of students of color and students from families experiencing poverty. And those two groups of students comprise the majority of today's public-school students.

And I have to pause here for a moment to say that I'm a former public-school teacher and principal. And so, I am in no way chastising teachers and principals and superintendents who have diligently and above and beyond the call of duty kept our public education system moving and growing and educating citizens.

But each of these leaders recommended a reordering of fundamental assumptions. A fundamental redesign of the system to achieve education equity and

increase education attainment and improve life outcomes for all groups of students.

And so, in short, these leaders said, yes, revolution is needed. They believe that in order for revolution to be productive, we had to answer I think, you know, as a collective, as a nation, you know, whom do we believe is worthy of our investment? From whom have we ideologically, financially divested. And where is our sense of urgency to correct this divestment?

My book looks at our continued attempt to make progress toward Brown. And I believe in many ways, we are still fighting as a nation to fulfill the promise of Brown. And when I read and watch contemporary music counts of mainly white parents objecting to the teaching of black history, a more truthful accounting of American history. Threatening to burn books and physically intimating school board members. I think about the resistance to the Brown legal decision.

The tactics being used now come from the exact same script. And “Jim Crow’s Pink Slip” examines the consequence of our believing in perpetuating these myth-histories. The nation’s racial equality and educational equity and educational opportunity goals are conjoined twins. And so, we really have to address both if we're intending for our democracy to vibrantly survive.

MR. O'HANLON: That’s really, really helpful and provocative. I’m going to come back to you on a couple of the specifics of how to make this revolution happen after we hear from Harlan. So thank you, Leslie Fenwick, for a very eloquent and impassioned statement of a big problem. And I like the way you distinguish between the importance of education for sort of high-end stem and keeping our technological prowess and military capabilities. But also, for keeping our society cohesive or making it more cohesive. And making citizens out of students. So thank you for that framing.

Harlan, I’d like to hear you give us a couple of the big themes out of your book. And how we really need to expand further our definition of grand strategy and

national security. You alluded to some of this in your earlier comments, but I'd like to ask you now to hone in directly on what you write about in the book and develop a couple of those themes please. It looks like you're still on mute.

MR. ULLMAN: I've been critical in my initial comments, but the last three chapters of my book lay out what we need to do for a national renaissance, for our national security defense and foreign policies.

The title of my book as you know, is "The Fifth Horseman and the New MAD: How Massive Attacks of Disruption Became the Looming Existential Danger to a Divided Nation and the World at Large." That's a long title.

But I believe that the new MAD, "massive attacks of disruption," are now probably the most important framework for which we can respond and which China and Russia are subsets.

About a million Americans have been killed or died from COVID. That's more than every American who was killed on the battlefields in 1775. And we don't understand that, or we don't accept that and react to it. This is what I mean by massive attacks of disruption. And in the book, I list seven principal ones. And the main target to me is the constitution because the constitution is based on checks and balances and in today's environment, I'm not sure that checks and balances work.

The major disruption, I argue, is failed in failing government. All you need to do is to look at Congress and see how both parties are not capable of governing. Second is climate change and whether people agree or disagree. Whether it's climate change or weather, there are three critical facts. One, ocean levels are rising. Temperatures are rising and polar icecaps are melting.

Third, cyber and social media, the combination. What's happened ironically in society as we become more advanced, we become far more vulnerable. Supposing, Mike, you didn't have the internet, or you didn't have your cell phone, or your bank account

disappeared, or your electrical power access disappeared, or your bills weren't being paid. And so, ironically the more advanced societies have become, the more they are vulnerable and social media and cyber deal with that.

Debt. Thirty trillion dollars but that has just raised the interest rate by 50 paces, a half a point. Fifty paces points. Is that going to be enough or is debt going to eat our lunch? If interest rates go up to five percent that's basically a quarter of the federal budget for interest payments.

Terror. Terror has now shifted from abroad to home. There has been only one act of terror in many, many years that was committed by a non-U.S. citizen and that was a Saudi naval officer undergoing pilot training. So terror has taken a different perspective. And drones. Supposing January 6th, the insurrectionist had been armed with drones? They could have easily destroyed the Capitol.

So my argument is that not only do we have traditional problems with China and Russia. We have to have a strategy that deals with massive attacks of disruption. And how we shape the United States to deal with these things because, quite frankly, I don't think we're prepared for COVID-20 or 21 or 22.

I won't go into great detail, but the centerpiece of the book is for a national infrastructure investment fund that would be public, private about three or four trillion dollars. Because unfortunately the current $1.2 trillion that has been allocated is not sufficient in my judgment nor has it had proper oversight to make sure we're getting at the most for the money.

In terms are our defense strategy and our national strategy. I think that instead of dealing with contained, deter and defeat, we need to be able to prevent, constrain and defend. And then, of course, engage, which is a fundamentally different outlook.

In terms of the specifics, I've argued for a porcupine defense. What we've seen in Ukraine is the manifestation of this. Now, supposing the Ukrainians had started or at

least when the war started, Ukraine had 10,000 Stingers, 10,000 Javelin on these Marcus drones and weapon systems. Supposing they had far more in the area of electronic warfare and deception. Supposing they had more antiship cruise missiles that were able to sink the Russian Black Sea fleet.

We need to transition our defense in which about half of it deals with a porcupine defense and the other half is what we call the joint force that's traditional offensive reminded. We can probably do that at a budget of $650 billion a year and a slightly smaller force of a million people. Because if we don't the horrible, hallow force that followed Vietnam is going to be recreated simply because the cost of doing business in defense are rising by five to seven percent a year, and we have to keep pace with those.

I also think that we have to take a look at how we reorganize our government in many ways. For example, there's no national security council in the Congress. You've got all these committees, dozens of them. And so, I think there needs to be a national security council equivalent to meet much more closely with the White House so that Congress is there for the takeoff as well as the landing.

Now, I think this is all achievable. And I go onto specifics in the book about how to do that. Now, if we don't what are the consequences? And rather like the Soviet Union that imploded, the consequences in my mind are first, the national standard of living is going to decline for most people. And the American dream is going to be more elusive.

We have to understand that it's not Russia or China or North Korea or Iran that are our principle and most dangerous enemies. It's massive attacks of disruption. What's happening in the West? The Colorado River is becoming a stream. We have far more intensive storms changing weather patterns. Cyber renders us more vulnerable and how well are we doing in that regard?

And I would suggest, Mike, that one of the interesting issues in the next decade is going to be whether drones and people have -- two million Americans own drones

become the subject of the constitution and the Second Amendment because you would have the right to have an armed drone.

Now, people would say that kind of foolish, but these are the issues that we're not examining right now at a time when we are racked by inflation, horrible political divisions that probably have not been in place since the civil war and the inability of government to govern.

Now, we can get a hold of this, ahead of this because we still have, in many ways, the greatest economy in the world. The greatest technology and entrepreneurship. But unless or until the nation has got to come together and understand that it has a new threat and coalesce on this new threat. Unfortunately, I got back to the image of the poor person who just jumped off the Empire State Building. So far, so good and that's not good enough for me.

And I lay out all these issues and more in *The Fifth Horseman and the New MAD: How Massive Attacks of Disruption Became the Looming Existential Danger to a Divided Nation and the World at Large*.

MR. O'HANLON: Harlan, thank you. Brilliant as always. By the way, I like your point about how it's possible we are now more divided than any time since the civil war.

People used to say that like during the George W. Busy presidency and my reaction was always, no. The 1960s were worse. But I've come to thinking you might be right at this point. You know, that the amount of dissent and what we saw on January 6th and just the fissures in our politics might be starting to exceed the 1960s and even revival in some ways the kind of fundamental disagreement that led to the civil war. I hope and pray that's wrong, but I'm starting to fear that as well.

MR. ULLMAN: The tragedy, Mike, about this whole leakage from the Supreme Court, unfortunately, now may make the Supreme Court overly political as one of the last institutions that was seen as sacrosanct.

So I'm really concerned that the image of this is going to have far greater consequences than whether or not *Roe v. Wade* has changed or kept. And this is just another sign of these divisions that are present in America and we have to deal with them.

MR. O'HANLON: So let me now in the remaining 10 or so minutes sort of ask each of you to offer a few thoughts on -- I'm going to give you each a couple of questions. What I'm going to do is combine the audience question that's most suited to you with my own follow up and then just ask you to say what you would like to.

So, Leslie, the question we've received from the audience that you've already really spoken to but I'm just going to give you a chance to hit it again. You know, and drive home the point is, you know, should we think that there is a fundamental linkage between our foreign and national security policies? Our domestic and our policies on the one hand and our foreign policies on the other? So is that a false dichotomy domestic policy versus foreign policy? Are they really in some sense one and the same or part of an integrated whole? Or should we think of them that way?

And then the question I had for you was to explain a little further what you mean by a revolution in education. And the way I'll put a point on it is to say that, you know, I'm not a specialist in this area, but I try to read.

And as you say, I should because if I'm calling myself a defense in national security person, I have to think about how we are preparing future technologists to make our weapons, to keep our country advanced technologically and also to keep our politics cohesive enough that we can act with some strength and consensus on the international stage.

So how do we have that revolution? We've already tried charter schools. We've already tried higher funding for education over the years. You point out there's some problems with the preparation of a lot of teachers around the country. So that's one specific you've already put on the table. But if we need to improve the overall level of education and

certification of teachers what's the way you accomplish that?

So if you could just spell out a little bit of what it means to have this revolution, I think that would be of great benefit to the generalists in the crowd who don't follow this literature as extensively. And with that let me give you back the floor please.

MS. FENWICK: Thanks, Mike. So that's a lot. Let me see if I can summarize in just a minute or so.

Yes, I think that our conversations about, you know, domestic security should be linked to any kind of international strategy. Certainly, I think recent events have shown us that there's no doubt about that.

My answer to the second question about a revolution in education relates to something I'm going to say is more foundational. Meaning, I think that if we go about these problems that we are seeing in this country and have seen in this country. Remember our progress towards Brown. In many ways has been muted and forwarded still even 2022.

That if we don't consider these foundational assumptions that are guiding all of our strategies across sectors. And when I say foundational assumptions, if we're only operating from the perspective that let's see how much more malleability this existing system has in it. And just push to the edges of that malleability, we're going to fail.

We are really, I believe at a flashpoint where we need to take stock of the fundamental assumptions that are guiding how we think about our humanity and the systems that support our humanity. Because many of these challenges and conflicts underlying them are certain definitions of humanity and certain structures that we've created to advance a specific notion about how we'll proceed as humans.

So I think we need conversations not to sound esoteric and philosophical about who we are. What our destiny is as humans and what our destiny is on this earth? I think that this is the time to ask those questions and answer them in new and provocative ways that will reshape all of our institutions.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And let me -- one quick small follow up before I go to Harlan for his final thoughts and a couple of questions for him.

On the issue of improving the standards of the teacher corps at large across the country which is something you talked about in your opening comments. Can you give us just one or two specific ways we achieve that? What is the fundamental constraint on that? Is it the salaries that teachers are offered and therefore who you attract into this profession? Is it the professional education that we get? Or that we provide at the master's level and the undergraduate level for pedagogy? Can you give a couple of examples?

MS. FENWICK: So I authored earlier this year a publication for the National Academy of Education that looks at how state policies can be kind of implicated in the preparation of two classes of teachers.

You know, state policies dictate the requirements that institutions of higher education follow in the preparation of teachers who are licensed professionals. And the document, the policy monograph, titled the Tale of Two Cities as state evaluation systems of teacher preparation programs and providers shows that we're producing two classes of teachers. Those who are professionally prepared in four-year programs and those who are microwaved.

And the microwaved teachers are primarily sent into low income and minority communities or communities of color. And so, the production of two calibers of educators is hurting the delivery of a solid public education and equal -- and our goal to have equal educational opportunity in this country.

And so, I can't summarize all of that in just 15 seconds, but I do encourage our listening audience to pull up that document, *The National Academy of Education* document written by me, a *Tale of Two Cities*.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent. Thank you very much.

Harlan, last couple of questions to you please as we move towards the

11:00 hour and wrap up this great set of panels.

The question from the audience is do you think Russia's support for ransomware attacks against U.S. institutions and infrastructure. Has the strategic goal of disruption along the lines of what you write in your book or is there some other way to think of it? Are they trying to undermine American's confidence in their society? Or is there some other effect? Or do you think of it really as a classic example of disruption that you're writing about?

And then my final question for you is going to tie back to the earlier panel and to your and my longstanding interest in defense policy. And you talked about this smaller military focused more on prevention as well as porcupine defense. I'm wondering what your thoughts are about how we maintain or reduce our commitments to allies as we make that transition?

Do you feel the American alliance network has become more of an incumbrance or a danger? Or do you think that there are ways to sustain it and help protect our allies even as we shift to this alternative defense posture that you recommend?

MR. ULLMAN: Certainly. And I'm going to come up with two specific recommendations that I think your audience will find of interest.

The answer to your first question is yes. Chinese strategy, Russian strategy is largely disruptive. Go back to that 1999 book by two PLA air force colonels, "Unrestricted War." The Russians and the Chinese want to break the coherence of NATO. They want to break the influence of the United States and disruption is what they are doing.

Second, I argue very strongly that the principles for my national security strategy are, first of all, to protect, prevent, defend, and engage. And we obviously need to strengthen alliances. I know that that's a bromide. We're not doing enough.

My two suggestions that if implemented can revolutionize everything so you can smile at that, Mike. First, the administration has to challenge ruthlessly every

assumption it makes and sets out. For example, why is China a facing threat? Tell me what the threat from China is. We haven't done that. We've assumed it. We said all these things about the economy and that their military is getting bigger.

Quite frankly, by the same definitions that we say that the Chinese have the largest navy in the world. In fact, the U.S. army has the largest navy in the world when you count all their boats. So we need to challenge these things. We want to deter and contain. How do we do that? How does that translate into policy? We do a very bad job.

Second, and your audience is going to spark when they hear this. With one action, I can change Congress. Before any member of Congress votes on a bill, he or she has to swear or affirm that they have read and understood it because that's not happening. Now, people will say it's impossible. The defense bill as you know is three or four thousand pages long.

When Donald Rumsfeld was Secretary of Defense the first time in 1973, how long was the defense authorization bill? Ninety-three pages, and we were fighting a war in Vietnam. And I say this somewhat in jest. But Congress has got to do its duty and, quite frankly, it cannot allow members to vote on a bill which they don't read and they don't understand. And as you know, in the private sector and you are a CEO of a public company, Sarbanes–Oxley could have very, very serious implications for you.

So my final conclusion is, look, we need to take a much more hard ahead look at where we are. Identify what the problems are and in terms of Russia and China, what their weaknesses are. We exaggerate their strengths, and we underestimate their weaknesses. The Russia army is one huge example. China has got a huge social problem with half a billion people who simply are under the poverty line. They've got debt and so forth. We only look in terms of strengths. We need to take a look at weaknesses and let common sense just like having members of the Congress read a bill before they vote on. Common sense is our best weapon. And implementing commons sense is obviously a lot

easier and said than done.

MR. O'HANLON: Listen. Thank you both for a very, very provocative and smart discussion. Thank you for your new books: “The Fifth Horseman and the New MAD” by Harlan Ullman, and “Jim Crow’s Pink Slip” by Leslie Fenwick. These are both new books that I recommend to anyone and everyone out there. And I do think they do fit very naturally in this flow of discussing about where American national security as well as other specific challenges arise today and what we need to prioritize as a nation.

So along with my colleagues from Brookings on panel one, Caitlin Talmadge, Melanie Sisson and Bob Einhorn. I want to thank everyone for joining us today and thank Leslie and Harlan so much as well.

Also, a beginning of farewell to my outgoing research assistant, Adam Twardowski who is done a lot for these kinds of events over the last four years and is headed onto bigger things. Although, he’s been doing big enough things for us for a long time. And wish everyone the best of the rest of springtime, a nice weekend, and again with thanks and appreciation for joining us today in this discussion. So signing off now from Brookings. Farewell everybody.

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