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KEYNOTE:

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MODERATOR: MARA KARLIN

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## KEYNOTE:

GENERAL JOSEPH F. DUNFORD

Former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Former Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps

MODERATOR: MICHAEL E. O'HANLON

Philip H. Knight Chair in Defense and Strategy, Senior Fellow, and Director, Strobe Talbott  
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**O'HANLON:** Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to Brookings, thank you for joining us for the third annual Phil Knight Forum. I'm Mike O'Hanlon with the Strobe Talbott Center on Security Strategy and Technology. We're hosting this event but benefiting from the intellect and the worldview of a lot of other people as well. Just a quick word of introduction, if I could, to frame the afternoon. And I hope you'll stay for as much of it as you can. Although if anybody needs to go to the Orioles game and get up there in time to give our birds a little boost, we understand a 3:30 departure, but please try to stay because that's how we'll wrap up with my interview with General Dunford, who, as you know, had been chairman of the Joint Chiefs prior to General Milley and General Brown.

But we're going to start by thinking about transnational security threats, sort of 21st century threats, threats that know no borders and that affect us all and that can exacerbate traditional nation state threats of the type that the Pentagon usually focuses on. And so, we are honored to have the president's science advisor, Arati Prabhakar, being interviewed by Mara Karlin, one of our distinguished fellows here at Brookings. And that will set the stage for how to think about much of what's going on in science, technology, climate, wherever they go with their conversation. There are, of course, many issues that could fit under this general category of transnational threats. And then our first panel will follow up and try to continue that conversation without any pretense of covering the full range of possibilities. And in fact, with apologies, our food expert has a sick kid at home today, so won't join the panel, but we will have expertise on climate and energy, on cyber and AI, and on sort of demographics and civil conflict and migration that results from that. And with a particular focus, I think, on the conflict in Sudan, but as sort of a case study in broader issues that happen when you have 8 billion people on a planet with limited resources. Then we'll have a coffee break and then we will have panel two, which is more the traditional kind of nation-state threats and a panel that again, we'll introduce later on, but that includes expertise on China, Northeast Asia, Russia with our own great Fiona Hill and a number of other experts. And each time will go fast. But look forward to your questions at the end of the session. And then, as I say, I'll wrap up with a conversation with former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Joe Dunford, who about a decade ago began with others, including Ash Carter at the Pentagon, Mara Karlin, and others to begin to shift the focus of U.S. national security planning from the early post-Cold War nation-state, rogue state, terrorism problem to the return of great power competition. So that's sort of the flow we're looking for pithy ideas and big

ideas. We're encouraging our speakers to get right to it. This is not about a primer or a background session. We're trying to offer some interesting proposals that may even be relevant to an incoming president and Congress. So, without further ado, let me welcome Arati and Mara to the stage, and thank you all for being here.

**KARLIN:** All right. Good afternoon. I am so excited to be here. Before we start this fantastic conversation, can I ask you to join me in a round of applause? My colleague Mike O'Hanlon actually just celebrated 30 years at Brookings. I will note in that 30 years he's published 19 books. He has edited or contributed to 15 more. And he has been on this stage almost 400 times. So, if we could just do a very quick round of applause for my. Thanks so much. All right. So, I'm really delighted to be here with Dr. Arati Prabhakar, who is the president's top adviser on all things science and technology. She directs the White House Office on Science and Tech Policy. She's an assistant to the president on these issues. Her background is tremendous. We could spend hours on it.

I will just note one of the neatest things she's done, which I got to know her when she ran DARPA. And if you're not familiar with DARPA, spend a little time Googling. By the way, the reason you're even able to do a lot of that is because of DARPA. So, she's just got a tremendous background and right now she's dealing with some of the toughest kind of most exciting issues, I think, around. So, Dr. Prabhakar, thank you for being here today. We're delighted.

**PRABHAKAR:** It's great to be with you, Mara. Really a pleasure to get to talk about these important issues here at Brookings.

**KARLIN:** Great. That's terrific. So, if you don't mind, I thought I'd start with a little bit of a nontraditional question, which is kind of the how did you get here? I understand that you like me. Like I'm guessing a lot of folks here. You came to Washington for one year and somehow, you're sitting here many years later as the president's top adviser on some of the most critical issues around. How did that happen?

**PRABHAKAR:** Well, sometimes I ask myself that question. I did come for just one year. I came on a congressional fellowship right out of my Ph.D. program in applied physics. I, I wanted a bigger view than the very deep, narrow work I'd done for my thesis. And it's 40 years ago right now that I showed up in Washington. I actually lived in the apartment building next door. So, it's lovely to be at Brookings. And now, looking back, I've had the great privilege of about half of those four decades has been public service, running dark for many years before that. Leading this, the National Institute of Standards and Technology and the Commerce Department. In between, I spent 15 years in Silicon Valley, couple of companies.

Most of that was early-stage venture capital. And what I have loved about all of those experiences is that it gave me many very different vantage points on research and development and innovation. And what I really came to see was how big those things are that this country does with innovation. It's one of the most American ideas you can imagine, right? The way we're going to chart our own course, we're going to create a new future, a different destiny because of innovation. And I also came to see that all those big things happened because the public and the private sectors played their roles. And we love the lone hero narrative in American culture, but in fact, it took a lot of different components. And all of those are the reasons that when the president asked me a couple of years ago if I would come back and do this role, I was thrilled because OSTP is the one place it's a perch at the White House where, of course, it's partly advising the president on science and technology matters, but also it's the one place where we get to see all of research, development, innovation and do the work to make sure that it fulfills its role in America succeeding.

**KARLIN:** Absolutely. Thank you for that. So, let's move on over a little bit to how you're spending time during the day, which is on US innovation. Can you tell us a little bit about what's working, the sort of state of U.S. innovation and what's not working? What are the things that we should be a little bit worried about?

**PRABHAKAR:** Yeah, the purpose of innovation is to create a better tomorrow for our country and for the world. And today, if you ask what does that mean in this part of the 21st century, it's some things that it has always meant. It means the R&D and the innovation for national security. It means the R&D

and the innovation that creates economic opportunity and built the industries of the future. It means the innovation that leads to better and better health. Those are all old questions that have to be asked and new ways because of the way that the world has changed and the technology has changed. And then we have some new issues. For example, climate change, which has actually it's been around for a while, but apparently took us a while to figure out we're going to have to deal with it. And now that we are going to deal with it, that that becomes one of the new horizons where innovation is going to be absolutely key.

And I would say that in every one of these areas, we have made enormous progress. I've been so proud to be part of an administration that has taken the first ever tangible steps to meet the climate crisis. The largest, most significant investment anyone ever anywhere in the world has made to start decarbonization at a scale that the climate will actually notice. The work that we're able to do on the Cancer Moonshot, which is a major priority for President Biden and the First Lady, as well as a key step towards changing how we think about dealing with American health outcomes, which are unacceptable for the richest country in the world. So, I could go across the list of all of our major areas, our aspirations that we have as a country. And I see enormous progress in every. Area, and I'm daunted by what still lies ahead. So, I take great hope from the fact, like, we've actually now shown that you can make tangible progress on the climate crisis. And that has taken me from feeling hopeless to feeling hopeful. But we need that hope and that that conviction, because the work still ahead is really quite significant.

**KARLIN:** That makes sense. And maybe just pulling off of that a little bit. So, what are the ingredients? Right? Hoping, conviction, prioritization, it sounds like. What's the secret sauce? What's making it work? And I'm guessing sometimes it feels like things are just moving a little more slowly than one would like. What needs to be done to turbocharge?

**PRABHAKAR:** Well, to me, it keeps coming back to understanding. The reason these are the big aspirations of our time is because they're not simple to do. They are the things that really matter. But every one of them requires systematic thinking to understand what the challenges, what the barriers are, and then acting in a systems frame as well. I'll just pick one example because I think it really tells

us a lot about in my mind, that generalizes. It's now a couple of years since the president and the first lady reignited the cancer and gotten shot. Obviously, this is something that's a personal passion for them, but they know how personal cancer is for every family who was untouched by cancer in this in this country or in this world. And they set out to double the rate of progress to cut the suggested cancer death rate in half by 2047.

That's 4 million lives that would be saved. They set out to change the cancer journey and the experience that people have when they their families, their caregivers have to go through this process. Well, when you set those kinds of extremely aggressive goals, they aren't about picking an area of science and saying, well, I'm going to push on this because that might be helpful. They are about saying this is what matters to people. These are the outcomes that matter. And when you set those kinds of aggressive goals, they force you to get serious about all the levers that it will take. And so, what the Cancer Moonshot has done is an unprecedented set of actions on preventing cancer, on early detection, because often we can catch cancers and nip them in the bud and on providing care and treatments.

And when you look across all of that, again, a systems approach, it's everything from new EPA regulations that are going to protect people from the dangers of plastics forever, chemicals all the way to patient navigation services that allow someone who's hearing the doctors say the C-word to just have a measure of calm and be able to navigate what's now going to come, which is great for their peace of mind, just a little bit of peace of mind, but it actually changes outcomes because you can figure out how to get to your appointments and how to stage them and how to make it a priority and get it done and have your family support you in that. So that that's what it looks like to have a very clear, really aggressive. A daunting but a really hopeful goal. And then to translate it into a set of actions that really do start making that kind of progress. I see that in many, many fields that I think that's cancer. And shot to me is one example where we're making progress.

**KARLIN:** Absolutely. And I'm guessing resonates with a lot of folks. So, the 2022 national defense strategy really focused on China. And it said there's no other country with the will and increasingly the capability to fundamentally reshape the global security order. So, I'm curious to hear a little bit about

your thinking. How is that techno technological competition with China going? What sort of your assessment of that as we're thinking over these coming years, what should we be focusing on?

**PRABHAKAR:** This is where you and I met in the Pentagon and a decade ago. And that that shift to understanding this great power competition, I think is continuing. And I think we're making some important progress with that as a shaping reality of our times. So, I think a lot about the fact that so many of our institutions, so many of our behaviors were formed in the post-World War two era when the rest of the world was in rubble. We had all the marbles. And, you know, we had all the technologies. We could proceed at our pace. And that's just not the world that we live in anymore. And I'll talk specifically about R&D spending, because I think it's a great window into this this competition that we're having now with China. If you look at the 25 years leading up to 2021, this is the last year for which we have rigorous data. China grew.

We grew our R&D spending in the United States, total R&D, public plus private. We grew at 2.2 X in real terms. That's not enough. And that's pretty impressive. It grew faster than GDP. China's R&D grew 27-fold in those same 2 to 2 and a half decades. And they went from really spending. Next to nothing in R&D to being the number two spender on R&D globally, second only to the United States. And what, you know, just another sort of sobering benchmark is China's spending on R&D is 40% greater than all of Europe put together. Just think about that. And I think an important warning sign. So, the number of dollars is very significant. The pace at which it's growing continues. A few months ago, the CCP announced that it would increase its public spending on R&D 10%, and the share within that 10% was a 13% increase in basic research.

Tragically, that happened the same week that Republican budget caps and the Congress cut federal R&D after a couple of years of important growth that the president was able to achieve. So that was a sobering moment for me to see that continued acceleration while we're pulling back on federal R&D. And that's something that has to be a priority to get back on track. But again, I think to just to peel one more layer of that onion, it's not that long ago that we used to say, well, China's good at copying and they will steal our stuff, or they will take our open research, and they'll go build. And that's not the story today. Because when a country as focused as PRC, the PRC has been, starts investing in its

own research base in facilities and in funding the brilliant minds that they, as well as everyone else around the world has.

What they are doing now is building a research base that allows them not only to build on top of what we produce in research and technology and using our data, all of which we should be protecting. But we have to realize that as we're protecting our technologies and data and research, that they are being able to generate their own research now. And that really does change the nature of the competition. So, we are still extremely strong and innovation capacity like the world has never seen before. But we are no longer alone, and we have to act accordingly.

**KARLIN:** Yeah, that that makes a lot of sense. And maybe even looking at the international security environment writ large. So really beyond China, how are you thinking about those risks that are happening? Really the intersection of major geopolitical change and science and technological progress? Yeah.

**PRABHAKAR:** Well, we've talked about, I think, the biggest shift in geopolitics, which is the rise of China. And again, I mean, so many good things were done as their economy grew. But with under Xi's leadership, we have seen a shift. We've seen a series of really a boundary crossing behavior, whether it's militarily, whether it's in the on the economic stage. And that's why, very much to your point about China's both the coupling of their intent to change the world order and now this rise in capability, that's what puts them in a very different category. So that, I think is huge on the geopolitical stage and it drives a lot of things. Number one, we have to get serious about running faster here as well as preventing them from taking advantage of our capabilities.

Number two, it really underscores how important our allies are and building our partnerships globally. And again, this is something that President Biden has reinvigorated in his time in office. That's obviously that's true in terms of how NATO's been strengthened rejoining the Paris Accords all down the line. But in and building those global alliances, science and technology is integral to each of those. And the work that we've been able to do and the G7, the G20, the U.N. and in bilateral interactions, I think is really key. So that's geopolitics. And then, of course, the other thing I think of all the time is

how technology itself is reshaping everything that we that we need to be considering. It's key to all of these major aspirations. That's key to the continued functioning of our democracy. And it in itself changes how we do R&D and innovation.

**KARLIN:** Absolutely. And maybe while we're talking a little bit about that kind of geopolitics, we should sit on the notion of our allies and partners for a moment. Right. The U.S. has this unparalleled network of allies and partners. That's tremendous in terms of collaboration. And yet there's this quip that the US innovates and Europe regulates. Right? Sometimes folks will say, hey, we have all the ideas, and then the Europeans kind of figure out what we should be doing about that. Does that resonate with you or are you worried that we're not charting our own path? Or do you think, absolutely. We know what we're doing. We're figuring out we've really made some meaningful progress on what our regulation should look like.

**PRABHAKAR:** I'm laughing because my European colleagues, I think, cringe when you say that.

**KARLIN:** And I suspect a lot of folks do. I know I did. And I said I mean.

**PRABHAKAR:** I find a lot of my European counterparts are working very hard to not be just the regulator in chief. And look, I mean. I think that, you know, maybe the jump to the topic, which is the current huge surge in technological capability that is driving a lot of these conversations. The question I get asked the most frequently is, am I for innovation or am I for regulation? I just think it's the wrong question because any of these major shifts and advances in technological capability, they're raw, they're amoral. And it's our choices about how we manage the risks that come when the advances in capability and then how we put those capabilities to work.

And so, I want to be very aggressive about tamping down the risks and equally aggressive about seizing the benefits. And I think that's the path that we have tried very hard to get on. I think we've made good progress, but like in every other area, there's a lot more still here to do.

**KARLIN:** No doubt. Well, look, you all have made tremendous progress. I mean, we're sitting here just about a year or so since that executive order came out with, I mean, I think it was maybe the

longest executive order. That's and that's what I had heard that's ever come out, which is quite there's a lot there.

**PRABHAKAR:** Yeah. I don't know if that in itself is something to break.

**KARLIN:** The pros and cons, no doubt you made progress in the U.N. You mean progress with about 50 countries or so thinking about military use and responsible use of AI. So maybe telling us a little bit about how you're assessing that, that progress kind of looking out, what are the muscle movements over the coming months in terms of implementation? How are you feeling about that?

**PRABHAKAR:** Yeah, I feel I do feel that we're on a very good track. This journey started for me personally. I started on this job in October of 2022, and Satsuki came out in November of 2022. So, you can imagine how my life got hijacked. But in a very constructive way, because the work on I think to me it is important because it cuts across virtually every area of human enterprise, but also areas of research and development, which we, you know, we're very concerned about nurturing. And I think that, again, and that is that's the reason that that executive order is so bulky, because it did recognize that AI is part of so many different aspects and that there were very different objectives because we have to deal with safety and security issues.

We have to deal with issues of embedded bias and privacy. We have to deal with the concerns about the impact on jobs. A lot of focus on how the government's going to use AI. So, what I would say so now it is almost a year, some a few things that I'm actually very proud of is today's changes have been now implemented that actually affect how AI comes into Americans lives.

So today if you go to a bank and you ask for a credit card or a mortgage and your application almost always today is being evaluated by an AI system, today you are owed an explanation if you got a no. And that's because you know they can do something about it. That is because of our Consumer Financial Protection Bureau today. If you go to a health care provider or to the emergency room yesterday when you went, you could have been diagnosed and treated based on an algorithm, trained on all the decisions that had been made before. That included not very good decisions about people,

perhaps of your color, your neighborhood, your income level. And now that bias has to be dealt with before those kinds of algorithms are used in health care.

Because of the Department of HHS and its guidance, the FTC has said that you cannot use AI to impersonate a business or government agency starting to get at some of the underpinnings of the use of AI tricks to exacerbate fraud. So though each of those is a very specific, narrow example, but those are the kinds of things that start aggregating to now an experience where we can start to get the creativity and the efficiency of this technology while protecting Americans. So, I think that's very important work, the work to start harmonization globally and show leadership in the UN. I think that's been very, very important. What comes next? There's a lot more to do to complete that work legislation. As you all know, there are a huge number of bills that have been drafted and are being considered. Congress, I think, has made great progress in its thinking but still needs to act. And we've been very committed to continuing to work with them on a bipartisan basis.

What's been on my mind is that all this work to build a stable platform to manage these risks. The reason you build a stable platform is so that you can stand on it to reach for the stars. And if we get this right, if we can do this responsibly and wisely, then in addition to all the business productivity hopes that the market will sort out with all the products that companies are developing. They're the work really needs what I can bring. And so, think about what's going to be possible for advancing American health if we can detect outbreaks of infectious disease more rapidly and we can design an approved drugs in months rather than decades.

And think about what it will mean if we can predict the weather more effectively in a time of extreme weather patterns like we're just seeing this the horrors of Helene today, think about what it's going to mean if we can actually use AI empowered EdTech tools, not just to do cool things, but to close educational gaps for our kids that the things that we have hoped for but we have not yet achieved, though I want to make sure that we are doing the work to realize those opportunities because that's how we'll harness AI to build a future that looks like what matters to America.

**KARLIN:** Absolutely. And it's such a healthy reminder that you are just touching every department, every agency, no doubt. I can't imagine the size of the meetings that you have to convene. I'm going to have one more question for Dr. Prabhakar, and then I'd like to turn to the audience, so we'll have folks with microphones. So, if you all want to start thinking of your good questions, just a reminder, a question ends any question mark. So please make sure to offer that. So let me ask you one more question, if you don't mind. You had talked a little bit about public sector and private sector and cooperation, and I'd be curious how you think about making sure that the tremendous public investment in R&D ends up resulting in public benefit and solving public problems, right? So not just, of course, kind of benefiting financially, you know, businesses, some of whom it seems like are pushing against regulation. But how are you thinking about that, about kind of that public benefit piece?

**PRABHAKAR:** Well, let's take a second and talk about the purpose of federal R&D, because when I worked in companies, I was as a venture capitalist on the board of startups. The purpose of R&D was to build a better product and sell it at a higher margin and grow. Right. That was it was pretty it was pretty straightforward. It wasn't easy. The purpose of public R&D, first of all, are many. One is to provide the basic foundation of research for new knowledge. Sometimes it's new knowledge that will have very practical applications that will turn into new industries and products. Sometimes it's about discovering whether or not there was life on Mars 4 billion years ago because of the depth of knowledge that it gives us about the universe and about ourselves as part of what a great nation does. So that that that's a foundation of research.

There's also critical R&D for public missions, the mission of national security, which we own, which the government owns, but also missions like health and energy and space, which the government has a key role to play in, but again, is shared with the private sector in a very different way, I think the national security. So, recognizing that there are these multiple roles, when you look at it in aggregate, I think that what I think is powerful is the combination of those public investments that lay a foundation and go after public missions, but then really provide really the seedbed for what the private sector does. Now, what as recently as when I was a young kid, which is Larry Seymour. But, you know, earlier I'd have to go back and look, I want to say 40 or 50 years ago, public R&D in this country was

about equal. For a long time, it was greater than private sector R&D. And then over decades, what has happened is that private investment in R&D, this is the goodness has grown much faster than GDP. That is the intensification of the innovation economy, which grew out of federally funded R&D.

Think about our information technology industries, starting with semiconductors and computing and networking and moving into the social media and now the AI era. All of that is an enormous driver of private sector R&D, Pharma, manufacturing continue to invest at high rates, but at the huge growth has come from the information technology industries. So that that growth has been so significant that it has kept us ahead of the PRC that we now are spending in total public plus private 3.5% of GDP on R&D. That's amazing. In the Obama years, we hoped to achieve 3%. We're about three and a half purely because of this private investment surge. What has not happened is federal R&D keeping up. And it's not a competition. You need both and you need a degree of balance. And what I what I want to make sure of is that federal R&D keeps up not just with the scale of our economy growing, but with the scale of our ambitions. We are and should always be the most ambitious country on the planet, and part of that is making these public investments and.

**KARLIN:** Lily, thank you for that. Okay. Audience members, we've got a few minutes for your smart questions. We've got someone in back with a microphone, so if you want to come up here. I see we've got someone right. Right in front.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Thank you. Could you talk to continuity or discontinuity of what you do with a change of administration? Every couple of years, we have different ministries coming on board. How do you manage making sure that we don't start all over again or go different direction and waste the resources I've been invested up to that point. Thank you.

**PRABHAKAR:** Because I'm here in my official capacity, of course, I won't be speculating about what happens on Election Day or after. I do think our priorities in this administration have been very, very clear. And they start by respecting scientific knowledge and being very clear that these are the facts that are going to help us solve the hardest problems. And respecting scientific integrity and then moving from that to use to harness what we know from science to tackle the climate crisis and make

real progress on that, to tackle cancer as a first step in tackling America's health issues. So, I think the contrast with the prior administration is very clear. The work that we are doing, I think, really is a continuation of many, many, many decades of what this country has thrived doing and investing in innovation. I think that's what's really important for us.

**KARLIN:** Actually, I think we have a bunch of folks with smart questions, so we're going to turn to them. I know we've got one right up here. The fellow in the Navy suit.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Thank you so much. Thomas Curran from the Czech Embassy. I would like to ask, looking at some of the PR or near-peer adversaries that we have. You talked about Chinese R&D. I'm wondering how some of the not so, not so pure incentive structures behind the research because there is, for example, not the private and to a large extent independent R&D. How that shapes the process of innovation and whether that might possibly hinder the opportunities that some of the U.S. viewers might experience. Thank you.

**PRABHAKAR:** I need to ask more about what you say, a little bit more about what you have in mind. Are you talking about how R&D functions here or what's happening?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Well, I'm thinking about the fact that there is this way of like the market searching for the best possible innovation. Right? Because you have individual incentives, the profit motive. So I'm wondering whether, for example, in China, where there is not really like a genuine economic freedom and where research, I would presume it's more motivated by centralized incentive structure. Right. Whether that shapes the efficiency or the possibilities of that research.

**PRABHAKAR:** Well, with respect to the PRC, I think we have seen a chilling effect on tech innovation because of some of the actions that the CCP has taken. So, I think there is an element of I think there's some very specific examples of that. And I think that I see the great challenge for our country is, of course we want the market driven innovations. As long as that's done responsibly, that's good for the country and we think for the world. What I think we also have to be clear about is that that doesn't solve every problem that our society has.

And that's, again, the purpose of public R&D, which often, for example, if it's about designing new drugs more rapidly, that's something that has to get solved by both the public and private sectors together. I want drug companies to be able to design drugs more rapidly, but for that to really be meaningful, the FDA also has to believe in that design process and integrate these advances into its approval process. So those are cases where they'll ratchet up together. And I think, you know, in this country, we are always navigating how to best manage and allow the market to do what it does so well and make sure we're playing the public role properly. But I think we have a very strong track record, and I think that'll continue.

**KARLIN:** All right. Terrific. Why don't we come over here and take a question?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Thank you for your presentation. So, I noticed that you mentioned several times that the administration is working on actually tackling climate change, which I'm sure that all of humanity is very thankful for. But at the same time, they've also been very hostile, I would say towards the PRC with regards to it actually engaging on climate change, for instance, levying these 100% tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles. And also, Janet Yellen speaking about the so-called overcapacity of Chinese green technology. So how would you say the administration is sort of squaring the circle of trying to tackle climate change while also trying to push back against one of the largest producers of green technologies in the world?

**PRABHAKAR:** Yeah, I think you've really underscored how complex these issues are. And the reason our climate has changed is because of industrial activity. That means that touches virtually every aspect of our lives and industry after industry after industry. So, changing the nature of the economic enterprise so that it does not continue to create global warming requires dealing with these economic issues that come right into these, you know, really quite difficult challenges that we're trying to navigate with the PRC so often aggressive and inappropriate market behavior. So, I think that's exactly what you're seeing us on these two really challenging issues collide with each other. And I can tell you that the deliberations in the administration to manage and to navigate those issues to greatest

effect is they're very challenging and climate and equity and dealing with the economic prospects they have are always very, very central to those decisions. Thank you for highlighting how complex it is.

**KARLIN:** All right. Let's get a question over here in the middle.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Hi. Thanks for being here today. So, in the news, the U.S. is winding down a lot of its research cooperation with Russia. And then now think U.S. Chinese partnerships and scientific research has dwindled over the years. So, is there an effort from this administration to try and find ways that we can do more cooperative research with other countries, regardless of their political stances on issues we disagree with? I think about, you know, the U.S. collaborating with the Soviet Union to stop smallpox. I think that, you know, what are the ways that we can proactively create these like, partnerships that do benefit all of humanity?

**PRABHAKAR:** Yes. But changing geopolitics does drive the degree of cooperation. And there are there have been very specific instances that you talked about where we've we have very deliberately pulled back. But very much to your point, climate and disease are two areas that are inherently global. Infectious disease does not respect borders. Climate change is everyone's problem. And so, as we're doing the work of rethinking and realigning the interactions, for example, with the PRC and our research base, it's very clear that we need to continue to have pathways to be able to work on some of these shared global challenges.

**KARLIN:** And maybe bringing together a topic we were just discussing about and this good question. What about artificial intelligence? Are there ways we can cooperate on AI? I recall that came up when the heads of state met last year. What might that look like?

**PRABHAKAR:** Well, that's in the process of being worked out. But I think a very natural place to start is on issues of safety and trustworthiness, because that's just foundational to being able to use the technology for any purpose. I think you just have to recognize that every country around the world is using AI to build a future that looks like its values. And it will be another place where we will where the

differences in our values and our visions of how people thrive most effectively will play out. And again, I think the reason why getting it right here is essential.

**KARLIN:** Absolutely. The virtual world and the real world at least rhyme, no doubt. Great. We've got time for a few more questions from the audience. We have one right over here.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Thanks. Thank you for your remarkable program. In the context of corporation, a potential corporation in a geopolitically fast changing world, what is your thought in terms of hybrid war? Hybrid threats which very much focuses on the cyber world and other kinds of technological gaps which can be probed and then split apart? How does one evaluate to take your point? Those things where there should be cooperation and what is actually exacerbating vulnerabilities. Thank you.

**PRABHAKAR:** Yeah, Thank you. This is that might be a question for you. Ah, this is. Where were you? I spent some time on it, but this is really where you live and breathe. You want to talk?

**KARLIN:** Sure, sure. No, it's a wonderful topic. So, when. When. When we're thinking about the role of the cyber domain in hybrid war. Right. So, you've got effectively a ceiling on what folks are doing there, trying to not make it terribly obvious. We know where I think about cooperation there is how we might be able to better share information because so much of what's happening in that domain comes down to awareness, right? Who is doing what at what time and for what reason. And so, I think about cooperation, quite obviously, of course, with, say, U.S. allies and partners in Asia or in Europe, for example, to try to understand how actors like, say, Russia or China might be trying to trying to operate and exacerbate and cause problems in that regard.

**PRABHAKAR:** I love this because, first of all, I when I was at DARPA a decade ago, I thought a lot about the fact that in the first Gulf War, we showed the world what modern military capabilities look like, and everyone took note. And a lot of countries, potential adversaries said, okay, I'm not going to try that. That look too painful. I'm going to do something else. And cyber is one example of this, something else. And we use a lot of metaphors of kinetic combat in these domains. But actually, I

think you have to think about it in a very different way. And so, I think that's your answer was very much in that.

**KARLIN:** Thank you. I appreciate it. All right. We have a question right up here, please. Alejandro.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Thank you. And thank you for your talk. How do you think about.

Overregulation versus under regulation. That sweet spot air is an amazing tool. When I went to grad school, it didn't exist. My professors might have wished that it did for my paper sake, but how do you see it helping people? But at the same time, with what you mentioned about decisions on credit cards or decisions from doctors still benefiting people? Transparently?

**PRABHAKAR:** Yeah, the whole issue of how to get regulation just right so that it enables the future we want without forwarding it is that is the art of the whole enterprise for I think I find it very helpful to think about the core technology of AI models separately from applications. And I think it's an open question about what to do about core technology. Today we have some export controls that are trying to slow others, especially the PRC down. But we have not regulated in any meaningful way at all at the core technology level. So, I think that's an open question. I think it's a very challenging question for a technology that is a bunch of weights that are, you know, pretty hard. It's hard to hold those closely in your hand applications, though.

I think there's it's clearer to see what needs to get done. And that's the work that's underway. So, it turns out a lot of the things we don't were worried about with I happen to be illegal already committing fraud is illegal. You know using bioweapons is illegal bias and discrimination and hiring and lending is illegal. The problem there for all of us is how do you keep up with enforcement when AI becomes easier and easier to use? So, I gave you a couple of examples of where I think we're getting after. It's also important to acknowledge that there will be new uses that that for which we don't already have rules of the road, the intellectual property. Questions about how models are trained I think are a classic example. There are lawsuits right now, you know, we're on a track where courts will decide slowly and piecemeal, and eventually we'll have case law. Congress could choose to act. But I think that's an example of probably not the only, but I think the most visible, immediate new domain.

**KARLIN:** All right. So, we are out of time. Thank you all so much for coming today. And most importantly, thank you so much, Dr. Prabhakar. I feel a lot smarter after this conversation. I hope you all do as well. So please join me. And thank you so much.

**NOYES:** Great. Well, thanks so much for coming out on this. Another rainy day. It's great to see a full house and see some new faces that I see here and some old faces as well. And this panel, as Mike, our dear leader outlined, is going to look at nontraditional global security challenges. And we've intentionally thought of that as a very broad categorization. So, our panel here, all fantastic Brookings scholars with a variety of different expertise and topics to discuss. We're going to start off by talking a little bit about where their areas of expertise fit into this overly broad categorization between traditional and nontraditional security challenges.

Myself, I would say that I like to think that my own research sort of is the connective tissue between traditional security threats and nontraditional security threats. I focus a lot on indirect tools of national power, like military assistance and irregular warfare. And so, I think that there's all too often in the nontraditional space, some of these issues fall in the seams between the different agencies and departments of the U.S. government. So hopefully our panel will help us, I think, a little bit more clearly about how to approach these really difficult transnational challenges. So, I won't belabor you all with their really impressive credentials and bios, you can find those online. But Jeff is has held several senior roles in the U.S. government, as well as at the United Nations. Samantha is our climate guru, among other hats, and Valerie is all things AI, maybe she doesn't appreciate that that moniker, but you guys can ask her questions about AI.

So, Jeff, why don't we start with you and why don't you tell us for maybe 2 or 3 minutes about your research interests and where they lie on this broad generalization categorization between these two traditional and nontraditional? And then we'll go to Samantha and then and then Valerie. So, Jeff, over to you.

**FELTMAN:** And thanks, Alex. And good, good to see everybody this afternoon. I've been doing a lot of work over the years on issues like Lebanon. More recently, a lot of thinking on Sudan, places that obviously are in the news these days. And when I think about the topic of nontraditional global security challenges, I'm thinking about the incubator of meaning, the petri dish, where multiple security, nontraditional security challenges emerge. And that's the question of failed or failing or collapsed states. When you think about when you think about weak states, weak states that are that are torn apart by civil war states, the states where the governing structures have collapsed, that's where you see vacuums being filled by terrorism, vacuums being filled by drug smugglers, by producers of synthetic opioids, by human traffickers, all sorts of criminal activities that the first victims are the victims of the countries themselves or this activity taking place.

But it's broader than that. The neighborhood is affected and ultimately the globe is affected by some of these some of these threats. I mean, think about the migration, the unregulated migration and refugee flows that come out of places like Syria in 2015 that changed the politics in Europe as well as well as pose security threats in some instances. So, I see the problem of failed states, of collapsing states as being a significant generator of the type of nontraditional global security challenges that we're talking about today. And of course, the question is, how do you prevent this? Everyone talks about prevention. You know, if you're if you have a house, you want to make sure your house doesn't catch on fire. You don't want to have to worry about putting the fire out or rebuilding the house after it's burned to the ground. You want to prevent the problem to begin with.

And Congress got this a few years ago with the passage of the 2019 Global Fragility Act. And it's been there's legislation to renew that aid and the State Department have focused more on this. Even things like the UN's Sustainable Development Goals are getting at the issue of fragility in some in some aspect. But to be honest, we're not very good at this.

It's not simply the United States that has the responsibility for addressing fragility and state collapse. And trying to, trying to put Humpty Dumpty back together again if the state collapses. This is a global responsibility and we're not very good at it. The, whether it's the U.S., the E.U., the U.N., the World Bank. Once you have state collapse and you have the petri dish for these nontraditional security challenges to emerge, we're pretty slow to respond in an effective and an effective way. And Mike

mentioned Sudan in his opening comments. And you look at Sudan, Sudan now, Iran is making inroads in Sudan because of the civil war. You look at you look at what Iran did in building terrorist militias in Lebanon, in Syria, in Iraq and Yemen.

Those all happened because of the collapse of state control over the entire over the entire territory of the government. So why are we so bad at this? I mean, there's more reasons that I can go into today, but one of the primary reasons is that we're late to the game. We don't act early enough. And why don't we act early enough? Because it's very difficult to talk about state fragility when it when it goes. It's easy to talk about the development needs of a country, a country. Governments welcome partnerships and trying to deal with health and education and employment issues. But when it comes to an ethnic issue that's leading to civil war, countries don't like the outside scrutiny. I mean, no country likes the idea of, say, the U.N. Security Council suddenly shining a spotlight on it. So, there's what happens is instead of talking honestly and candidly about problems that emerge that could lead to state collapse, people avert their eyes and people find ways to avert their eyes.

In the Security Council, for example, in the Security Council. One can one can say this country is having a problem. We need to address this before it becomes a peace and security challenge. There will be the country itself will say, no, no, we're not on your agenda. Do not, do not put us on your agenda. Or they'll be or a powerful friend on the Security Council will say, you can't talk about that issue. Typically, what happens, say, with the African if there's a problem in Africa, is that the three African states on the Security Council will say the African Union's dealing with that. You Security Council members don't need to talk about it. So, what happens is the type of early warning that could lead to early action, that could prevent the type of state collapse that creates. The conditions for these nontraditional global security challenges never happens. I'll stop there.

**NOYES:** Great. Thanks, Jeff. Samantha, over to you.

**GROSS:** Sure. So, I'm not a security person. I'm an energy systems geek. And I came to this position in policy after a career in engineering. But I am up here for a reason, and I'm actually following Jeff for a reason. And that is that we tend to think of climate change as something that is a threat multiplier or

it's something that takes a festering, simmering problem and turns it into an acute problem after a natural disaster. And I want to make the argument up here, and I wish I didn't have such a good example to use, but I do. We've seen Hurricane Helene do some of its worst damage in an area that I've heard described as a climate refuge or a climate haven. And so, I want to make the argument that we may see this not in just areas we expect, but in areas that we don't expect. And we may see the ravages of climate change cause destabilization of the kind that Jeff has concerned about and places where we just don't see it coming.

Weather systems are not going to look in the future the way that they have looked in the past. And so, we are going to find people in our own country and in other countries who are in harm's way and are subject to destabilization in ways that are become security threats in the way that Jeff describes because of climate change. I don't want to dwell on this because we can talk more about this as the panel goes on. But I want to throw out one thing just to tell you how this is working out in this country, which I would consider a generally well-governed, well-resourced place. We didn't see the disaster coming in areas like western North Carolina and in Tennessee. And many of those losses are uninsured. Less than 1% of homeowners in the counties in Tennessee and North Carolina that were just declared disaster areas from Hurricane Helene had flood insurance.

The level of losses is staggering, but the level of uninsured losses is also staggering. And that is here in the United States of America, where we have a lot of government programs, we have flood maps. We consider ourselves pretty good at figuring out where people might be in harm's way and understanding how. To help them now extend this out to other parts of the world in places that don't have the capabilities that we have. And where these events have the event have the potential to be much more destabilizing than they are here. This scares me. And this is why Jeff and I are sort of holding hands figuratively on this panel.

**NOYES:** Great. Thanks, Samantha. Valerie, over to you.

**WIRTSCHAFTER:** So, I'm the high priest in the cyber prison, but I wouldn't dare try and follow Dr. Prabhakar. So, I will talk about an issue that I view as sort of a persistent asymmetric threat that sort

of straddles war. Time and peace times kind of content is involved. Cyber security is involved. That would be foreign influence operations, disinformation, a very politicized word. And I guess I would argue with my big idea is what you maybe will come to after is that it really isn't a politicized issue. And I'll talk about a couple of cases that are really ongoing and active right now to illustrate that point. But when I think about foreign influence operations, you know, it's persistent, it's asymmetric, their capabilities that are based on different norms in different countries.

For example, the norms around offensive cyber capabilities are very different depending on context, the weaknesses, right? We're in a democracy. People vote for elected officials. Voters are an informed public publics can be swayed. Bingo. That's a great opportunity to try and change those hearts and minds. We see this again during war, during peace. We've seen Russia use it in the Ukraine conflict. We've seen it in other times as well. In practice, the goals are things like, you know, maybe it's boosting the reputation of a country. China does this very often to try and tell China's story well, or it's to sow chaos. And kind of that's what we've been seeing more of this sort of effort to exploit existing frustrations, build fractures, to try and achieve political ends. This is not new. This is not just the US and it's not political.

But given recent events, I'll just talk about a couple of examples. So, we've got the Russia case, especially around the US elections. The goal has really been to drive wedges in the US political discourse, building on existing fissures, clearly in service of a preferred candidate which is shaped by preferences over, of course outcomes in Ukraine. The goal is also really to make democracy seem less appealing. And so, in that space we've seen the use of AI enabled bot farms, we've seen spoofed websites that mimic things like The Washington Post, we've seen the co-optation of local, and that's kind of new, is actually locally hired media firms to then farm out to people who maybe unwittingly don't.

You know, maybe they have similar opinions but don't actually know that they're working or being paid by the Russian government. Importantly. And I think this is really critical as well. We've seen a lot of enforcement. We've seen a lot of transparency. We've seen a lot of matter-of-fact shedding light on this phenomenon, using existing laws. And so, I think this gets back to what Dr. Prabhakar was saying around AI as well, is that we have the tools, we have a lot of the tools to be able to enforce some of

this stuff. And we're really starting to see those tools be used in a way that I think is really admirable. Maybe we can talk about that a little bit more as well. And then, you know, on the Iran side, that was a different side of the political spectrum coming into play there.

You know, they've done similar things like we've seen in Russia or Russia do in terms of stoking divisions in the US, especially around conflict in the Middle East. The cyber-attacks, of course, are very well known and able to collect private information from the Trump campaign. Importantly, we've seen media learn a bit as well from the Podesta hacks in terms of what they are able to share. And I think that what they should be sharing, what is worth sharing. And so, I think that that is another area that really comes to light in this space is that not only is this a bipartisan challenge, but there is a delicate balance between what we share and what we don't share. And when sharing actually maybe enables the operations further.

**NOYES:** That's great. Thanks so much, colleagues. Really a lot of food for thought already. So, let's drill down a little bit here. And Jeff, I'll go back to you. As Mike said at the outset, one of the things we're trying to do here is think of a big idea. And I'm going to ask you guys not only to enumerate your big idea but also think about how to actually implement it. I think without that, big ideas are great, but they're really just fantasy at the end of the day. So, if you can speak to that and maybe draw. Or down even on the level of the U.S. inter agency, which department and agencies can are doing this well and where could they perhaps do it better? So, Jeff, why don't you kick us off again on.

**FELTMAN:** Thanks, Alex. You know, as I said, I'm really worried about the state collapsed, you know, state collapse, creating the conditions by which all these all these nontraditional security. Global security challenges emerge. And I also believe strongly that it's not simply a U.S. responsibility. But, yes, the U.S. can show leadership, the U.S. can participate, but it has to be a global responsibility, because often other countries, other leaders will have the right tools with the right relationships to address the problems where maybe we don't. So, it has to be a collective effort, not simply a U.S. effort. Now you're going to all roll your eyes, I think, because I'm going to mention the United Nations and we all know the polarization, the paralysis, the Security Council, etc. But how do you get the type of early warning? How can you illuminate the type of fragility, the problems that

would be seen globally? There really is no other mechanism besides the United Nations. So, what I would like to see is that the U.N. get the US get behind an effort to craft a General Assembly resolution that would change the relationship between the secretary general and the Security Council.

Right now, the secretary general, the United Nations, of course, is currently Antonio Guterres under Article 99 of the charter, has the ability to brief the Security Council on any matter pertaining to peace and security globally. How often has Antonio Guterres cited Article 99, even though his even though during his tenure there's been the war in Ukraine, the civil war in Ethiopia, now the civil war in Sudan is one of those at once. And that was it was with Gaza, and it hadn't been used for years before that. What I, what I would like to see is a General Assembly resolution. That's conflict neutral. It's not linked to any of the current conflicts. It's conflict neutral that says when certain conditions are met, the secretary general will brief the Security Council, so it no longer becomes optional. It no longer becomes possible for the Security Council to say, no, no, no, we don't. That's a friendly country. Talk to us. We don't want to hear about that.

That particular country, for example, if there was I don't know what the you can have conditions such as ethnic violence, political violence that causes X number of fatalities in a certain amount of time, a thousand fatalities in a short amount of time, something that would trigger the secretary general to go to the Security Council and say this is what's happening now. The Security Council may not act on that. As we've seen, the polarization has paralyzed the Security Council, but it would get global attention. It would allow us to say, okay, there is a problem there that we need somehow to work with, and then the United States can work with their partners in a more open way to try to address the problem before their state collapse, before these nontraditional global security challenges emerge. And the General Assembly does have the power, remarkably, to change the way that the U.N. operates from inside, including with the Security Council. I'm thinking about when you think about implementation, Alex, what you asked me to think about after the, after Russia invaded Ukraine two years, two and a half years ago, obviously, Russia vetoed any Security Council resolution dealing with Ukraine. And even procedurally, it was hard to discuss Ukraine sometimes because of the way the procedural rules work with the Security Council, Liechtenstein, mighty Liechtenstein, the great power of Europe sparked a move.

The pact that all three successful to pass a General Assembly resolution that forces one of the permanent members of the Security Council, one of the P5, if it uses the veto to go before the General Assembly and explain itself, basically provide a sense of accountability, it doesn't take away the right to the veto, but it provides a sense of accountability of that member state to the to the membership as a whole. It illuminates the issue. Now, it's not always comfortable for the United States. I'm sure that I'm sure that our colleagues in government didn't like having to explain the vetoes on the Israel-Gaza issues. But it forces a change. So, I think that we need to force a change on when the secretary general illuminates a problem on peace and security that could lead to state collapse and create the conditions for nontraditional global security challenges.

**NOYES:** Thanks, Jeff. That's really interesting. In my previous work on Early Warning, if I recall correctly, there was something that was called the gap between early warning and early action. Right? So even if you have the best information around. Is there actually the political will to push it through? I'm not sure if you could do it to finger on that.

**FELTMAN:** That's a problem. But it's a but it's a problem in the U.N. context in that you have if you have early warning, then you have to then you have to get the consensus around. However, the U.N. is going to respond. If it's going to be it's going to be a political mission, an envoy of peacekeeping operation. Humanitarian issues can usually move more quickly. But if it's if it's trying to deal with political underlying political concerns. But once you have the early warning in the U.N. context, as I'm describing what the secretary general has alerted the world, you don't have to wait for the U.N. You can build an alliance on the side, citing the U.N. We may be very dismissive of you, of some of the U.N. things. The much of the rest of the world looks at that as the green light for action.

**NOYES:** Right. So that could be the catalyst. Fascinating. Okay. Samantha, over to you.

**GROSS:** Sure. So, my idea, it's a bit broader and a bit fuzzier than Jeff's idea, but hopefully that's okay. So, the facts on the ground to go back to the things that I said previously are climate disasters can become national security disasters. And the weather today don't look like the weather looked in

the past. And so, looking at past events is not necessarily a guarantee of future returns, as they say on the on those ads on TV. So, my argument would be that we need to greatly broaden how we think about climate insecurity, and we need to think about entirely different parts of the U.S. government as being part of climate security. And I'm going to throw in a few examples here, Noah. Is Noah a national security agency?

Well, maybe it is now because we need to understand how weather patterns are changing and we need to understand where these might change, most importantly, in fragile areas, the way that they might change drought, rainfall patterns, sea levels, etc., and the ways that those might impact fragile populations because those populations, bad things happen when people are in bad situations. As Jeff described earlier, you know, everything from displacement to radicalization. These are not good circumstances. And we need to have a better understanding and better foresight about where these things might happen. When we think about climate financing, we tend to think about solar panels in Africa. We need to think a lot harder about financing, adaptation and resilience initially among the climate community.

There was a bit of pushback on that, that that was sort of giving up in a way and admitting that we'd lost that point of view as broadly gone now. And the idea is that there is some climate change baked in. It's happening right now. And part of dealing with that, particularly in the developing world, is making investments in infrastructure and systems to help keep people safer, to limit the human suffering that that is going to happen as a result of the climate change that's already baked in. So, we need to think about climate finance more broadly and think about climate finance, particularly adaptation and resilience finance as a national security investment. Even agencies like USAID as USAID and National Security Agency. Well, yeah, it is in this context. And so, and the other thing that I want to add before I pass the mic is I think we need to think about how to frame this in ways that are durable, no matter who way, no matter what administration we have. I will say that I was here during the duration of the Trump administration, and the Department of Defense was one of the places that really kept religion about climate change during the Trump administration, because it had to.

It's in the business of dealing with future threats. And so, we need to think of this as a future threat. The climate is changing. How do we address this? You don't have to get all wrapped up in the ideology of it. Just say this threatens our security and it threatens the safety and security of vulnerable people in other parts of the world. And so, it's difficult to depoliticize it in the atmosphere that we're in. But I think we need to and focus on the security aspects of it because they're real. And it's about human suffering, both here in the United States and in other places.

**NOYES:** That's great. Thanks, Samantha. And as Mara mentioned in the previous panel and the NDIS, the National Defense Strategy, it actually speaks quite a good amount on climate specifically, I actually did a word search yesterday in the document itself, and I think it was like 47 hits. So, I'm wondering if you can you know, it looks like Mara is not here so you can critique her work. But I'm wondering if you could speak a little bit more about that particular part of the national defense strategy and how you would assess progress in since 2022.

**GROSS:** You know, I think we still have lots of a ways to go on this. I think that there's a lot there's a combination in the national defense strategy of thinking about like, how does our military deal with climate change within its own operations? And then also how do we think of it as a developing threats? And I think it's not as robust as it could be in new threats and thinking it's so cliché to say think outside the box but thinking outside the box in places where we haven't seen climate threats before that we're not thinking about now, but the future world doesn't look like the past world.

**NOYES:** Got it. Thanks. Okay, Valerie, back over to you.

**WIRTSCHAFTER:** So, because I was asked to come up with some big ideas by someone who's written 19 books, I tried to come up with two. So, one of them is kind of a note of continuity, I think, and one is a little bit of a note of caution. I think that the changes in how the US government has responded to these types of disinformation campaigns, especially in light of or in the context of the US elections, has been really, really positive. It's been very matter of fact, very interagency. You know, we've seen the intelligence community, the State Department, DOJ, DHS, all of these organizations getting involved and being really united in the statements that they're releasing. And I think that's

extremely important. The language has been very matter of fact. It's been very apolitical. It has been extremely transparent and so thorough.

The September 4th indictment of several party employees and revelations around the Tennessee organization, the media organization had appendices that were like 100 pages or something like that of just like screenshots of these fake websites and just reams and reams of evidence. And I think that that is so important to make this a security challenge and not a partizan issue is that kind of continue transparency, that kind of public disclosure using existing laws I think is also we should use the laws that we have. You know, there's questions around whether platforms should be penalized for this. And I think that going actually after the bad actors publicly is a really important process and a really important step here. So that, I think, is something that needs to continue and should continue and is quite a positive step.

Where I am cautious is that we actually don't know a lot about the impact of these campaigns. We do not know. I mean, the goal, the stated goal is to change hearts, to win hearts and minds, to sway publics. We have no sort of grounding in how effective these campaigns actually are. And so while I think that what and when to reveal is equally critical as how we reveal it, because sometimes, you know, there was a great actually Foreign Affairs article yesterday that looked at some of these leaked documents from the social design agency and found that, you know, thousands of websites were created by this one group, this Russian based group, and some of them got zero engagement. And where the engagement comes from is the revelation. Right?

Is sort of like a little bit of a Streisand effect in some sense where like these things are happening, they're throwing spaghetti at the wall. Nothing is sticking. But what sticks is what comes to light because of whether it's media revelations or fact checkers, fact checking. This this was something that actually happened. There was a video for the Paris Olympics, sort of an idiot fake. Everybody's favorite conversation, which is another challenge in this space. But, you know, it was an air deep fake from Russia about featuring Tom Cruise, I think. And I looked for it in, you know, across ten platforms. And I think I found it posted maybe once or twice. And it was in like dozens of news articles at this point. And so, I think we risk really amplifying some of this stuff and making it seem more effective than it actually is, which then makes it more likely to happen.

And so, we saw the kind of doubling down. And so, I think that those types of consequences are something that need to be weighed really seriously. And then, you know, on the flip side, we need to get better. And I think this is where platforms do really come in at allowing researchers, allowing people to investigate this space so that we can actually understand the scope and reach of this. And some of that boils down to data access, which is really restricted at the moment. And so, we don't really have a sense of how impactful a lot of these campaigns are, but we risk making them more impactful. And the last thing I'll say, it's kind of an example of this actually, is that we've seen actually Russian actors send Russian disinformation and like labeled in the email, like alert, alert Russian disinformation to fact checkers as a way to get fact checkers to then fact check it as Russian disinformation to then get it out to the public because that. It is more impactful in some sense than trying to post it online. And so, I think that there is a really delicate balance there.

**NOYES:** Well, that's innovative. Yeah. If I could just follow up briefly, and it goes to a previous question from the previous panel about, you know, cyber security cooperation. And this is my area, so forgive me if I nerd out a little bit on it, but I'm wondering if you, in your research have come across or think about how the U.S. government can do this better with allies and partners. Or is this something that we just need to focus on the homeland right now?

**WIRTSCHAFTER:** No, I mean, I think that there is a huge benefit because, again, as I said at the very beginning, you know, we are not the only targets of these types of campaigns. And so, I think there is a huge benefit to being able to share resources, to being able to share tactics. And a lot of the intelligence that gets gathered is from these types of communication streams that exist with allies and partners. So, whether it's around cyber security and I think, you know, the Countering Ransomware initiative is one that people point to as like quite effective in getting people on board in terms of best practices and being able to then publicly make disclosures. I think all of those things are related. And the more information that is out there and the more parties involved in these types of disclosures, I think the better because the kind of naming and shaming where appropriate is, I think, quite effective in drawing attention to the actors. And especially when you can pile on the evidence, whether that's

from U.S. intelligence gathering or in partnership with allies and partners. I think that that is hugely impactful.

**NOYES:** Great. Well, thanks so much. I think we're ready to turn to the audience Q&A. So, as Mara said, please keep it short and sweet. 30s Max. We like the debate last night. Your mic will stop working after 30s No kidding. But please do be short and sweet and please say your name and your affiliation right here. Caroline.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Thanks a lot. Caroline Baxter, senior adviser from the Center for Climate and Security. And I know I promise a softball, and I'll try to package a hard ball in softball clothing. I wanted to ask a question that gets from the kind of the. So, what to the now what? Piggybacking off of your question, Alex, about innovative ideas to entrench some of this stuff. Anytime you label something a nontraditional security threat, it tends to notify that. And I'd like to get each of the panelists thoughts on who in the traditional security arena needs to know what in order to make progress on the issues that each of you are talking about. I think there is a little bit of an artificiality to that question that nonetheless also can tend to drive very non artificial things like resources in terms of both time and money. And I'd love to get your thoughts on how to puncture that barrier to really make some progress in both nontraditional and traditional aspects of security. Thanks.

**NOYES:** Great. Thanks so much. Samantha, do you want to jump on that one first? It's not a softball, Caroline.

**GROSS:** No, it's not a softball at all. And it's actually a somewhat difficult question for me to answer because I don't live in national security circles. But the thing that I would say that needs to be better understood is the intense and widespread human suffering is a security risk. It's not just something that liberals care about or humanists care about that it actually causes a risk to the United States. When we have people living in bad conditions, a lot of bad things can happen in those conditions. And so, I think trying to take that from something the soft-hearted people care about to something that security hardhearted people care about is the way to do that. Exactly which names you put on what agencies to make that happen really isn't my bailiwick. But that's the idea I want to sell.

**NOYES:** Jeff, how about you?

**FELTMAN:** Well, I agree with the with the with the with the proposition that sort of an artificial division between nontraditional and traditional. You know, I look at Iran as Iran. It's a tradition as opposed to traditional threat to us. The proposed nontraditional threat because of all of the proxy proxies it has. And I'll just use an example. In Ethiopia a few years ago was in civil war with Tigray. It still has a lot of issues with the Amhara and Oromo issues. I was at the time U.S. special envoy for the Horn of Africa, deeply, deeply worried about the potential for the collapse of Africa's second most populous state in a very strategic area of the world and was trying to raise alarm bells, sound alarm bells inside the US government and elsewhere about the risk to Ethiopia's stability because of this unresolved civil war. And that's metastasizing throughout the rest of Ethiopia. What got people's attention was once Iran started providing drones, was using the Iran card to really draw attention to what it meant. So that I saw a I saw a potential, as I said, an incubator petri dish for all sorts of problems. But the one that focused people's attention was Iran.

**NOYES:** Great. Thanks, Jeff. Valerie.

**WIRTSCHAFTER:** I mean, I think we do see some of the typical actors involved, although one of the challenges has been, again, with the politicization of this space. So, the Department of Homeland Security had an infamous disinformation governance board that was shut down in about two seconds because of the politicized nature of the online information context.

And so, I think that, you know, where we can lower that temperature, especially around issues related to national security, whether it's, you know, disinformation tied to conflict. We've seen that in Ukraine. We've seen that in the Middle East as well. And so, I think that, you know, though, that bringing all of these components in is really important and recognizing, I think that this is part of a broader strategy that may include more traditional types of threats. But is one part of the arsenal and one that is, you know, we're maybe at a disadvantage in this space simply because of the norms and guidelines about how to operate online.

And, of course, we sometimes do violate those, and we definitely should not, especially if we are calling out other governments for these types of activities. But, you know, I think that those actors are in this space. The challenge is, is when the space gets too political. That's when I think it becomes ineffective in some sense. And where the ability to actually think about this as a as a threat, as a security threat, as a challenge that cuts across the political spectrum becomes really difficult. And so, where that's where that temperature can be lowered, I think then these types of actors can all have a role because they do have a role in these types of conversations.

**NOYES:** Great. Thanks so much. Really good question and really great answers. Here in the back, maybe jacket.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Thanks very much. Jonathan Wood from Control Risks. This is mostly for Jeff, I think. Obviously, the U.S. and its partners are competing for influence in many of these failed and fragile states. They now have alternatives for money, security, technology and those things that are not Western based. So, I guess my question is, do they want the U.S. and its partners there? And if not, what can the U.S. do to make itself more attractive to them in order to intervene at an early stage?

**FELTMAN:** It is one of those it's a good question, but it's one that I think that you have to look at each individual case to say, okay, what is our leverage? What are our entry points? How can we how can we work with this country or how can we work with a third partner to address the issues we have? We have in that we have their, you know, current example, Sudan. That's something I've been working on, working on trying to work on in my private capacity. The Iran is there. Iran is providing drones again to one of the belligerents, the Sudanese armed forces. And when one talks, the Sudanese armed forces and say this is really opening a Pandora's box, look at what's happened when the when the when Iran has entered Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Yemen. Look at what's happened to those countries. Do you really want to have Iranian drones? You really want to build that type of relationship with Iran. Then they'll say, well, you sell us weapons, and we'll say, we don't want to sell you weapons because you have, you're in the middle of a civil war.

Let's just exacerbate the civil war. So, it is it is a real dilemma. It's on a case-by-case example where, but it goes back to why I want to see a global early warning system that. All countries in the world are put on notification that this is a problem here. So, it doesn't have to be always the US that's directly involved. It could be the US talking to third parties and saying, you have leverage with these guys, you help us. And it's usually guys who are taking the countries into collapse. You work with them to try to prevent the state collapse because this is what's going to happen. I was for the years I was at the United Nations six years. I was really frustrated by the inability of U.N. officials to speak candidly about the problems we saw.

And I tell a little story if I can, please. I went to I went to Myanmar in August of 2016 as the U.N. official that went out as the Rohingya had been expelled and went to the villages in northern Rakhine and wanted to brief the Security Council on what I saw. China said, No, you can't. So, we ended up having to arrange a meeting, not in the Security Council chamber, but someplace else privately, so that I could so that I could actually brief on what I saw. And that's the problem that you see across the board. That's just one example. But there are many examples where a security Council member has prevented the UN from sounding the alarm bells about a problem, which is why I'm advocating that we come up with a way for universal early warning that could lead to early action.

**NOYES:** Great. Thanks so much. Say it again.

**WIRTSCHAFTER:** Can we use AI?

**NOYES:** It's a great idea. Up here in the front.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Again, for Jeff here. Yes, we are trying to see the inability of the US to prevent from countries falling in the fragile state. But what happens to the cases where we as Western world are responsible for the failed states, Afghanistan, Libya, maybe because of the French, but not Iraq?

**FELTMAN:** It's a great question and it's something and thank you for raising it, because I should have said that one of the problems is that intervention often looks like yet another excuse for the global

north interfering in the internal affairs of the global South. And that's one that's one of the problems that we have. The Afghanistan example, I would add Iraq, even though it was part of the Middle East bureau, the State Department at the time. So, you're right. But it's another reason why I think there needs to be a global early warning system so that in and that the resolution is adopted to create this in a conflict neutral setting.

So, it's not it's not the US saying we don't like that particular country, so we want to pass a resolution on against that particular country. No. Context neutral. What are the triggers that that would force the secretary general to alert the Security Council and to the Security Council, the world that this is a problem? So, it becomes a global early warning. And not just the US saying we want we want to intervene there, but we're not going to we're not going to look over there.

**NOYES:** All right. Thanks. Up here in the front, a white shirt.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I thank you. My name's Terry Hobson. I'm just a writer. For Jeff again. So, you kind of spoke to a little bit about the issues, about why the U.N., for example, not intervening. So is it. Excuse me. Is it just, is it fear of criticism, fear of destabilizing the region? Francophone Africa, for example, which. I guess a small part of a covers of phone Africa. Sudan with Iran. What are some of the biggest barriers do you feel in the security community as far as their hesitation for getting involved?

**FELTMAN:** Well, no country likes Security Council scrutiny. I mean, let's start from that. What government would invite Security Council scrutiny? You know, no government wants Security Council scrutiny. So, you already have you already have a problem in trying to raise an issue about any country because no country wants to be looked at that way. And then you have the problem, as I said, like the Myanmar problem, when you have a great power that will basically force the U.N. to avert its eyes or at least not talk publicly about it. And that happens. All of five of the of the permanent members have done that. But not just those other.

Other powerful regional players have done it. Africa is a special case because the African Union has spent years building the African peace and security architecture through both the African Union and the subregional organizations inside Africa. And it was an impressive bit of work that the African Union did. And they and they in strengthening the peace and security architecture and creating early warning system that Alex was Alex knows very well. But in practice it hasn't worked all that well in practice. What it's done is that it has allowed the African states that don't to again divert attention away because they say the African Union's handling this, when in fact often the African thing doesn't have the capacity or the political will to handle it.

There's you know, there's the mantra, which is a very, very nice mantra about African solutions for African problems. But if the African problem has implications beyond Africa, you know, Sudan's collapse has implications far beyond Africa. I think the rest of us also have a responsibility to try to try to help. But the African solution for African problems becomes a shield against the type of outside help that might in fact, be able be able, in the best-case scenario, not always to prevent the state collapse that I fear.

**NOYES:** All right. Thanks. Let's give Jeff a break. Who's got a question? Not for Jeff Beck. White shirt in the back there.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Thank you very much. Good afternoon, everyone. Actually, this is a question for everyone. I'm Sam [inaudible], a Fulbright scholar here in D.C. Just for a year. One year, unfortunately. And so, you all mentioned the interagency dimension. But then what's your assessment of the Fragility Act? You think it should be applied to other aspects of national security and how should it work?

**NOYES:** Samantha, you want to try that when the Global Fragility Act, is that something that you're tracking?

**GROSS:** No, that is actually not something that I've focused on much in my work.

**NOYES:** Valerie, how about you?

**WIRTSCHAFTER:** Yeah, I think the fact that I also do not have this is a question again for Jeff.

**NOYES:** Jeff, I can take this one. So, when I was in the Pentagon, we worked on the Global Fragility Act, you know, as a policy. And I think it has a lot of really good ideas. The ten-year plans, the mixture of security and governance and democracy and human rights and all that good stuff. I would say as an example, as a template to get it right, I think it has a lot going for it. I think in execution. It's leaving a lot to be desired. And as you said at the outset and as I hinted at, the interagency is just a really difficult place to work. And that's just the nature of it. I worked for an interagency initiative called the Security Governance Initiative, set up by President Obama in 2014 to look at security sector governance in six African countries. And so, I lived it, and it's just tough. But that said, I do think the Global Fragility Act got a lot of it right, especially in the strategic planning, in its implementation execution. I think there's still some progress to be made.

**FELTMAN:** And it's been, and it's been redrafted now because it expires by the end of the year. And so, there's they're drafting the next version.

**NOYES:** I wasn't tracking that. But yeah, yeah, I know those ten-year plans, but maybe there's an annual funding piece to that as well. All right. We got, I think, time for 1 or 2 more questions. So. All right. Right here in the with the glasses.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** My name is Bianca. I'm a consultant. I'm new to this country. I lived most of my lives, you know, abroad. We talked about a common challenge. One of the thing that, you know, it's not bothering me just to, you know, I find very interesting here in this country is why can't people in the United States adapt their lifestyle habit a bit? For example, I want to say United States among the developed countries is one of the worst in terms of garbage classification. You go to Japan, you go to you go to Europe. They have a much tougher garbage classification system there. The I think anything is also about a cars instead of a slap in China, a have a duty on the green and fuel-efficient

cars. Why people here still drive huge, humongous sized cars. You go to Europe, you go to Italy, you go to Switzerland, you go to UK, you go to France. You don't see that. It's so unique to this country.

**NOYES:** Yeah, really.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I have another question.

**NOYES:** Unfortunately, we're going to be out of time here, so we'll just take the first one. But thank you. That that's a tough one and I'm glad that I don't have to take it. So, Samantha, over to you.

**GROSS:** That's okay. I'm happy to take it. Although the answer is difficult and somewhat unsatisfying and it is difficult to change people's behavior for an issue like climate. There are certainly people in the world who are quite willing to change their behavior. And we see them. We see activists doing serious things to change their own behavior and to encourage others to do likewise. However, if you are, let's say, a politician in this election year and sacrifice doesn't do well at the polls, it is very difficult to get people to change their behavior for an issue like this. And so, it is true that behavioral change would help.

Carrots that encourage behavior change are a lot easier to deal with than sticks to prohibit bad behavior. And they certainly are easier to implement from a political point of view. But I also think that we are going to need to figure out how to do this in ways that keep people's lifestyles largely intact. It doesn't mean they can't sort their garbage, or they can't drive a perfectly hard drive, a tiny little car. And I love it, but that's me.

We need to find ways to do things more efficiently and to do them in ways that people will accept or we're not going to get there. So, you're not wrong. And there are cultural differences between the countries you described in the country that we're in now. But we need to find ways to get to solutions to climate change in ways that largely keep people happy or the people who want those policies don't get elected. And we live in a democracy. So, this is a line that you see politicians walking every day.

**NOYES:** Thanks so much. Well, unfortunately, we're at time, but that was a really fantastic panel.

Thanks so much. And we're going to take a 15-minute break. But folks, please be back in your seats at 2:50. And please join me in a round of applause for the panel. Thank you.

**SISSON:** On? Okay. All right. Well, good afternoon. My name is Melanie Sisson. I'm a Fellow here in the Talbot Center for Security Strategy and Technology. Thanks very much for joining us today here in the Falk Auditorium and elsewhere online. Each of the individual scholars that you see here up on stage, Fiona Hill, Lynn Kuok, Suzanne Maloney and Colin Kahl. Each one of them could capture and retain your attention and interest for the duration of the full 50 minutes that we have allotted in this panel discussion. They're under strict instructions not to do so, in part because and in many ways, unfortunately, so the world is a very busy place right now, and we want to take advantage of this opportunity to touch on as much of it as we possibly can. And so, each scholar is going to offer some initial remarks. We will then engage in discussion and that discussion will include receiving clear and concise questions from you here in the audience today. So please be formulating those as we go along. Lynn, I'm going to ask you to go ahead and get us started, if you would, please, by sharing with us some of your thoughts about what you see to be the primary challenges and opportunities in Asia today.

**KUOK:** Thanks so much, Melanie. I'm very pleased to be giving my very first in-person talk at Brookings in my current role. I'm grateful for this opportunity. Thank you, Mike. It's really wonderful to be joined by everyone in this room and those watching at home or in your office. Thank you. My brief today was to discuss actionable steps for the next administration or the world in terms of moving us forward. Grand ideas, I was told. I'd just like to offer up some ideas in terms of three main areas. The first one in terms of reducing the risk of major power conflicts. Second, to increase U.S. influence in Asia, which is seeing a hit in recent in the last couple of years. And finally, on building collaboration to work on global challenges as well as foster peace. Now, these aren't necessarily big ideas, but I think it's important sometimes to think about less grandiose ideas but ensuring that these more modest proposals are implemented well. So let me start off with reducing the risk of major conflict. Now I work on the maritime domain, and I am watching tensions there was some concern. Particularly tensions that might draw in the United States into a conflict with China.

And in this respect, while the skirmishes between the between China and the Philippines around small features in the South China Sea might seem relatively minor in the big scheme of things, they could actually escalate and draw in the United States. And then the U.S. Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty. So, in this respect, I would suggest that the next administration reiterates its commitment to the Philippines under the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty, but also privately communicate some of the boundaries or limits of that treaty. I would also urge the United States to privately communicate with Beijing that any action that Beijing takes around to move, to build on second Thomas Shoals or Scarborough Shoal, which are low tide elevation or rock feature respectively in the South China Sea, would be met with a strong U.S. response.

The US reportedly did do so under the Obama administration. And I think that in respect of Scarborough Shoal and I think that understanding or agreement has helped to date. So, I think it will be good to remind Beijing of some of the no go areas. So, conflict between the United States and smaller coastal areas is one area in the South China Sea where we could see an escalation. But there are also other potential areas in the South China Sea that are worrying, and that is China's objections to lawful assertions of maritime rights and freedoms in the South China Sea. And we've seen it objecting to U.S. assertions, but also more recently, Germany's pass through of the Taiwan Straits as well as Japan. So, we've seen various naval powers seek to assert passage as well as other freedoms in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait and China objecting.

This is worrying because in the past it's led to dangerous encounters at sea and an error. And the most notable of all was in 2001 when the EP3 incident took place and we saw a US surveillance plane collide with a Chinese fighter jet. In that case, the conflict was contained. But today we see a much more fraught US-China relationship. We see rhetoric being heightened and we also see social media and heightening some of these tensions. So, in this respect, I think I would recommend for the next administration, as well as Beijing, to work very hard not just on recommitting to military-to-military communication. That must only be the first step of such efforts. So, I was recently at the Indo-Pacific Chiefs of Defense Conference, and we saw that Chinese Southern theater commander take part in this conference.

And I think that was a commendable attempt at reestablishing mil to mil communications. However, I think we need to go further. The US and China must start negotiations in reaching a common understanding of maritime rights and freedoms, as if we have repeated encounters at sea and air with no common agreement on the rights of user states beyond the territorial sea. And even within that, then we are putting increasing stress on these mil-to-mil communication. So, I think we need to restart negotiations on reaching a common understanding of rights and freedoms at sea and in the air. And one might say that with tensions so high between China and the United States, this will be well-nigh impossible. However, in 1989, negotiations together with U.S. freedom of navigation operations, actually allowed the Soviet Union and the United States to arrive at two agreements one for preventing escalation in regard of military activities at sea, and one in terms of a common understanding of international law, the international law governing innocent passage.

So, I think that's possible for the United States and China as well. Not just possible, but imperative and important. Yeah. And finally, sorry, not finally, but in terms of increasing U.S. influence in Asia, this was the first year in an annual poll of Southeast Asian respondents where in when respondents were asked who they should align with or who Asean should align with, if they had to choose now, if they had to choose between the United States and China. This was the first year in which respondent The majority of respondents said that they would actually choose China over the United States. And the hit that the United States took in respect of majority Muslim countries in Southeast Asia was particularly bad. The respondents weren't asked why they chose China over the United States.

But I think it's notable that in another question when respondents were asked, which was the most concerning geopolitical conflict to them, they selected the majority of respondents selected the Gaza Hamas conflict, and that was about 50% of respondents. And more chose that as the most important geopolitical concern over even the more geographically proximate South China Sea conflict. So, I think the U.S. position or approach towards Israel, Hamas has hurt it not just in the Middle East, but beyond the Middle East as well. And I think the other reason why the U.S. has lost some ground in Southeast Asia, at least, is because of China's very sustained economic outreach. In the region. And I

think if the United States is to regain some of its influence in the region, it must first seek to enhance economic engagement.

This will be difficult given domestic sensitivities around trade and market access. However, I don't think it's impossible if we have strong political leadership in this country. And second of all. Second, I would recommend as well, the United States also, you know, seeking to adopt as far as possible a more moderate approach towards a balanced approach towards the Middle East crisis, because many in the region think that the United States has supported or at least acquiesced in some of Israel's worst excesses in the Middle East. So, I think that has been problematic for the United States. And finally, and very quickly, in terms of building opportunities for collaboration. And are fostering greater long-term peace. I just put forward one recommendation by the World's Economic Forum Council on the Future of Geopolitics, which I'm a member of, as well as a colleague, Bruce Jones, and that is to establish a mechanism, a sounding mechanism that will link the major Western as well as non-Western middle powers, which will then provide a mechanism by which, you know, countries can seek to moderate some of the US-China tensions as well as, you know, a forum for greater cooperation amongst countries.

And I think that will be one means by which we can seek to ensure that, you know, other countries play a role in greater stability and cooperation apart from the United States and China. And I see Jeff Feltman in the room, and I believe he spoke earlier as well, and he's talked about the importance of multilateral efforts in terms of, you know, ensuring that there is an off ramp for conflict spirals and global cooperation. So, I think if we are looking towards the future, we have many challenges ahead of us.

It's not just US-China cooperation, China conflict, but also various global and transnational problems. And I think emphasis on these military multilateral efforts must be placed on them. But also, we need to acknowledge that some of these multilateral efforts are going to be along aligned states. So, you know, we'll have, you know, the burgeoning of groups like BRICs as well as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on the one hand, and, you know, the G7 on the other. And we also need to think about how in addressing these global challenges, we can ensure that there are bridging forums

or bridging mechanisms between the G7 on the one hand and the BRICs and the BRICs and CEOs on the other.

And finally, I close with the thoughts about, as we think about reform of our traditional multilateral organizations like the United Nations, we should not only be thinking about inclusivity, which is very important, but also about how to ensure that new members that join are also adherent to also committed to ensuring that international law is abided by and conformed to not just in their own regions where they have a vested interest but in other regions as well. So, I close with that. Thank you.

**SISSON:** Fiona, over to Europe, please. Some thoughts?

**HILL:** Well, I'm trying to actually, as you can probably see, I'm making all kinds of scribbles here on a piece of paper, trying to see if I can actually link all of this together. Because, you know, the way that we've laid all of this out over the last few panels and the discussion at the very beginning is obviously, well, we've got to know is emphasizing geography of really a kind of larger global perspective. But Len has inevitably, you know, ended up, even though she was given the remit of talking about Asia, talking about variable geographies, because so many countries are out there at the moment looking for alternatives that don't just confine them to the area in which they find themselves and to their immediate neighbors. Because as Jeff and Samantha and Alex and Valerie, you know, have all been making the point on the previous panel, we've got a breakdown of the international system. And, you know, so many other countries are having to step up in our leadership roles.

Jeff talked about Liechtenstein, for example, which isn't mentioned often on this stage. I don't know. Have a representative from Liechtenstein here. They're not paying us. But I'm going to mention it again, which I think, you know, gets to the point here that the leadership that the global system has been looking for and that Europeans have been looking for and actually have gotten used to since the end of World War Two. And the United States is sorely lacking. And I you know, I was struck by what Lynn just said about Asian countries being asked, you know, kind of now, you know what they side with the United States of China. I'd also seen the reports on this in this polling. And, you know, really

what this kind of comes down to is this feeling that the United States is just inconsistent, that we're just not there. And that's the conclusion in Europe as well. And I'm sure Colin is going to talk about this.

And obviously, it's really affecting the area that this is on deals with, obviously in the Middle East. But from the European perspective, just like the perspective of all of us here, everyone's wondering what's going to happen next month. And really, you know, one can make a decision as a result of us asking about the kind of the futures security arrangements. Everyone is asking as well, who's going to be your president and is the United States actually going to stick to the deals it made before? Because China, Russia and even North Korean are on a fairly consistent and just in their behavior. But also, in the way that they conduct themselves. As Lynn was talking about, China's economic investment is looked at, you know, more favorably around the world because the United States at the moment has been more engaging in either disinvestment or sanctions and has seen punitive rather than as an opportunity.

Now, we can disagree with all of that. And, you know, I think many of us would here, but that is really the perception. So that is actually the problem. When I look at things from the perspective of Europe and think about what Russia is doing in that time in terms of trying to bring the war in Ukraine to an end on its terms. All of that is really hinging on how the United States is perceived and how the United States behaves, unfortunately. And that doesn't really leave us with an awful lot of opportunities apart from other countries actually trying to consider whether they're step up or not. And I was really struck by a quote that came today from a press conference that mark to the new secretary general of NATO just met.

He was asked from the audience and the press as to whether he and his new role as secretary general of NATO would agree to Ukraine being able to use a long-range strike capability. And he, you know, did the usual laying out of the fact that Ukraine has a right of self-defense, also has the right to strike against, you know, military targets that are threatening its country. And we've seen this devastating attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure, civilian infrastructure. You know, as well as the constant tipping of the battlefield in eastern Ukraine at the moment. And then he said something interesting, but he said, but it's up to each of the individual countries to make that decision for

themselves about the weapons. And I mean, that, of course, immediately got my attention because the debate here and the debate everywhere else has been about what will NATO do. But it all comes back again to the United States.

Ukraine has been asking for security. Europeans also want to think about the future of European security, but each time it keeps coming back too. Will there be a guarantee from the United States because there's been increasing dependency despite the United States best efforts, in fact, to try to persuade European partners to step up? But increasing dependency not just on U.S. armaments, but also on U.S. leadership. You know, over the last 70 plus years, on far too many occasions, you know, Europeans and others have looked back to the United States to get a guide for what they should be doing next, including if they should be diversifying and taking steps themselves. And again, it comes keeps coming back to, well, where is the United States at this moment, completely preoccupied with its own politics, unlikely to be so no matter what happens in November. There's just an overall feeling that there's going to be less U.S., so more disarray in the international system.

And then, you know, getting just to very quickly to Lynn's point that she was talking about the BRICs, the G-7, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, we're seeing increasingly strange bedfellows of countries getting together in various configurations, all with an absence for some of them with the U.S., the G-7, obviously not with the U.S., but also an intertwining of all of the conflicts of the traditional conflicts that we're talking about here become untraditional in the ways that countries are aligning themselves when with a strange geography.

So, the war in Ukraine involves China, North Korea and also Iran and the efforts to support Russia, South Korea and Japan for reasons you know, more related to events that Lynn was talking about in Asia have tried to be supportive to Ukraine and also very interested in how European security plays out. So, I think this gets back in terms of what is the big idea, the big ideas that we have to get our act together here. And this is, of course, what this the purpose of this forum is. But we want to frankly be able to do that until we find out what happens next month, because so much is unfortunately riding on this election. And there's one thing that I do want to just emphasize so we can turn over to our other colleagues here. I'm sure we'll pick up on this one way or another. The biggest priority for the United

States in this regard is to pay attention to our societal resilience. If you think about what Valery virtue after was saying in the last panel, she talks about the fact the Department of Homeland Security had closed down one of its boards on disinformation.

That's because what we're doing here and our own politics, we've got as much disinformation coming out of this political campaign. We've got Donald Trump on TV, on some presidential and vice-presidential candidates of one of our major political parties admitting openly that they engage in lies and fake stories to get the media's attention. We just had that same admission from the head of Russia today, Margarita Simonyan, just a couple of weeks. Seagal saying that the Russia Today engages in lies and disinformation to also get media attention. And the United States basically for a kind of the manipulation of the same of the same space. So, unless we can get our own domestic politics in order, we will remain incredibly vulnerable to the kinds of interventions that we were hearing about on the last panel by our adversaries in our political space.

So, we are both a challenge on the opportunity. We can do this. It needs to be more than just us sitting here on platforms at Brookings, but also, it's a call out to the media. It's a call out to all of us here, as you know, members of a civil society to try to figure out how we deal with our own societal resilience, because it will then make us a much more reliable and consistent partner for Asean and other, you know, and other partners and allies. It's probably not what anybody was expecting me to talk about, but frankly, it's the only thing one can talk about because it's the questions that we get asked every single day in meetings here at Brookings.

What's going to happen in the election? Where is the United States going to be in? If you are not here to lead, you know, then we're going to have to take matters into our own hands.

**SISSON:** Colin, we've heard from Lynne and Fiona about some regional mixing, loosening tightening of relationships, strange geographies and strange bedfellows. I wonder if you have any thoughts on especially those latter categories of those strange bedfellows and what some of them might mean for the United States and our security interests?

**KAHL:** Sure. And it's great to be with all of you and wonderful to be with such amazing colleagues up here. So maybe I'll just mention one big global trend. It's not the only big global trend, but it's among the more consequential. And then a couple of things that flow from that as it relates to defense policy, which is something I think a little bit about. So, it's obviously it's become basically a cliché to say that geopolitical competition is back. And that is true, except that I think there is something qualitatively different going on right now, which is that the rivals, adversaries and competitors of the United States are increasingly aligned with one another in meaningful qualitative ways. So, by that I mean China, Russia, North Korea and Iran for years, all of those countries have essentially been engaging in classic counterbalancing behavior against what they perceive to be American, you know, polarity or hegemony.

They've all desired ushering in a multipolar world. They all want to have a dominant role in their neighborhoods. None of that is new. But what is new is the effects of the war in Ukraine, which has fundamentally, and Fiona has forgotten more about this than I'll ever know, but it has fundamentally altered the balance among them. And because of the sheer amount of attrition on the Russian side, they have become incredibly reliant on China for technology, especially dual use technology. They're incredibly reliant on North Korea for artillery and increasingly missiles. They're incredibly reliant on Iran for drones and increasingly missiles. And in return, they appear to be willing to level up China, Iran and North Korea technologically, providing China, perhaps with the crown jewels of Russian military technology, helping North Korea and Iran with their space programs, which are also long-range missile capable programs, advanced fighter aircraft and air defenses, perhaps to the Iranians as well.

In other words, they're much more of a team. And I think that that's why you hear people describing them as, you know, the axis of evil. I prefer the Legion of Doom, but whatever you call them, I think there's a qualitative and meaningful difference. And I think it just really drives home that as the underlying structure of world politics changes and we have these two huge crises plus accelerating competition and tensions in the Indo-Pacific, that foreign policy is increasingly a team sport and that it's not really a competition of countries, it's a competition of coalitions. And I think, you know, the next administration needs to recognize that hard reality and lean into our team and building the biggest possible team and maybe different teams around different issues, because not everybody wants to be

on the same team, but has to recognize that foreign policy is a team sport. Okay. What are some implications for defense policy?

The bottom line for me is we need to invest more. We need to invest better, and we need to invest together. And I'll just tick off that. So, the United States spends an extraordinary amount on our on our DOD budget, something in the neighborhood of \$850 billion. That's way more than any other country in the world. It's way more than many of the countries in the world put together. But as a percentage of GDP, it's where we were in like 1996, about 3% of GDP. Raise your hand if you believe the world is more dangerous in 2024 than it was in 1996. Okay. There's an argument to be made, especially since there was no prospect for large scale, high intensity conventional warfare or a global nuclear war in 1996. Then we need to be investing more in our defense.

All right. We can debate about what that means. Is that a top line? Is that a dedicated deterrence fund or some other mechanism? But we probably need to invest more, and we can probably afford to do it even as we increase the overall national security budget, invest in domestic affairs, etc. But it's not just enough to spend more. We have to spend better. And I think, look, the Biden-Harris administration has done a lot to divest from some legacy platforms. It's hard because you go through this bathtub effect where you actually erode your capacity for war fighting in the near-term to build your capacity in the medium to long term. And that has complicated effects on both deterrence and posture and our effects, our relations with our allies, etc.

But I think the administration has made some headway there. They've also made massive investments in a modern space architecture, in cyber, in very innovative integration and scaling of commercial technologies, most notably the Replicator initiative, which is actually going to bring real, affordable and charitable mass to bear on that on the deterrence equation across the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea and other places in the next couple of years, all to the good. The next administration has to double down on that innovation agenda, especially as it relates to artificial intelligence and autonomy. Biotechnology, especially certain aspects of bio manufacturing and also other leading-edge technologies like Quantum.

So that but they all we also just need to continue to make generational investments in our defense industrial base. I think what the Ukraine war demonstrated is that our defense industrial base was not fit for purpose, that we had over invested in platforms and underinvested in munitions. And we need to make significant and continued investments in critical munitions aspects of our shipbuilding, infrastructure, etc., so that we need to invest better. The last thing is we need to invest together. If foreign policy is a team sport. I think one of the other lessons of the Ukraine war is the defense industrial base is increasingly a public good of the free world. It's 50 countries acting together that have assisted Ukraine in its defense against Russian aggression. Increasingly, there's a recognition that countries across the board in Europe, in the Indo-Pacific, among our closest treaty allies, need to spend more on their own defense.

I think 70% of NATO's is now at the 2% margin that needs to be seen as a floor, not a ceiling. We need to get closer to two and a half or 3% in most of those places. Japan is on course to double their defense budget and invest in capabilities that would have been unthinkable even a few years ago. I don't see any reason to believe the new prime minister will go in a different direction. But we also need to make it easier for us to integrate our defense industrial bases by following some of the lessons we've had with orcas, where we've knocked down barriers, our own information sharing and through reform, knocked down barriers to defense trade so that our defense industrial bases can be increasingly integrated so that we're not just interoperable, but over time become interchangeable with our closest allies so that we, Wolf, can we're capable of fighting in the coalitions that we will need and therefore deterring the legion of doom from starting trouble.

**SISSON:** Suzanne, it is it feels like an unfair time to ask you about a big idea for the Middle East. So, I would instead invite you to share thoughts, observations, analyzes, hopes, fears. Any or all of the above as you see fit. Please.

**MALONEY:** Thanks, Melanie. And thank you for your kindness in letting me be the cleanup batter for this phenomenal panel. The only problem with being the clean up batter when you is when you're preceding speakers are so brilliant that it really sets a very high bar that I will not be able to reach in any way, shape or form. So, I just really want to commend my colleagues who have put some

fantastic ideas and really important issues on the table. And I think that they are the recommendations that either administration, whomever is elected in November, could really take up and try to implement and put us all in a better place. So let me just first stop that. But Melanie really kicked us off with the, you know, the sort of sense of big opportunities, big challenges, obviously, in the Middle East. The challenges loom really large today.

We are approaching the first anniversary of the horrific massacres that occurred on October 7th, 2023, committed by Hamas against primarily civilians in Israel. This is the worst loss of life, Jewish life since the Holocaust. I think the reverberations of that of those massacres. Are going to be with us for a very, very long time. They've traumatized Israeli society. They have shifted the political center within Israel and they have put in place a conflict now which has raged for 361 days, I think, if I'm counting correctly, in Gaza, which and in Israel, which is going to, as I said, you know, create a set of consequences that we will be dealing with for generations in terms of both moving back to a world in which we can envision a possible avenue for statehood for the Palestinians living side by side in peace and security with Israelis. And in terms of simply repairing the devastation, both to the economy, to the society, and to any semblance of governance among the Palestinians, and that in and of itself is going to be just an absolutely monumental challenge.

There are still a hundred hostages held in Gaza. We haven't, despite the inordinate efforts of the Biden administration, working with allies and partners in the region, haven't been able to come up with a formula for a ceasefire which ends the war in Gaza and brings those hostages home to their families. It's almost inconceivable that they have been there for a year and we haven't been able to get to this point. And of course, now, over the course of the past few days, we find ourselves in an even more dangerous moment. We're on the precipice of an interstate war, the likes of which I think the Middle East has never really seen, certainly not since the Iran-Iraq war, and because in this case, it would have more of at least one nuclear power and one aspiring nuclear power. A conflict between Iran and Israel would be absolutely catastrophic for the region, and it would inevitably bring in the United States into a direct role supporting our ally in Israel. And that would really reverse the efforts by the Biden-Harris administration.

And frankly, on an issue that is consistent across both parties to try to and staunch the loss of blood and life and treasure in the Middle East, which for 20 years after 911 was the dominant framing for our foreign policy. We don't want to revert to that situation. We don't want to see a world in which what we saw yesterday and 180 ballistic missiles from Iran fired into Israel could ever be repeated again. And yet, of course, we recognize that in part because Israel, Israel's retaliation to a previous ballistic and cruise missile attack also with drones in April was surgical and very clearly telegraphed to their capabilities to the Iranians. It did not create a sufficient impression on the Iranian strategic decision making that has prevented them from repeating that attack.

And I think that we're likely to see some retaliation from Israel, which is more significant and could, in fact, move the war to another level. The Israelis are also operating on the ground now in Lebanon in the aftermath of this incredible set of tactical measures to take out and disrupt Hezbollah's command and control and then to essentially evaporate the entire senior echelon of leadership of Hezbollah. That is a generational change for the good. But given what we know about the weakness of the Lebanese state, what Jeff has experienced as ambassador there and focused on in his own work in the many years since, is that there's really no promise that the elimination of one leader and Hezbollah is going to bring us to a better situation, a more stable situation. And there's still somewhere upwards of 150,000 missiles and rockets that Hezbollah had amassed. How many of them are still extant? We don't know.

But the capabilities are still there to threaten Israel and to bring us to an even more dangerous point in this conflict. So, I will say that, you know, the challenge is large. I don't have a sort of one size fits all or quick fix solution to the problems of the Middle East. But I did want to put out just a couple of broad principles which are simplistic and simple and hopefully to some extent self-evident. But I think given the mistakes that we have made in our own approach to the region in the past, they do bear some thinking about. The first is simply to question our assumptions. You know, everywhere that we have miscalculated ourselves in the Middle East, it's because we thought we knew the answer, and we didn't check our work. I think the same can be said even for our most important allies and partners in the region, in particular, the fact that, you know, in retrospect, all the signs of the attacks of ten seven

appear to have been evident and even in some cases even known to Israel's phenomenal intelligence capabilities.

But they weren't put together in a way that helped people to understand what might be coming. That has happened time and time again in the Middle East from the 1979. Iranian revolution to Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, to so many other issues where we simply failed to appreciate what was happening before our eyes. That's not to say we've missed everything, but it is to say we should be constantly questioning our assumptions, whether for good or for bad. Because I think there are other sets of assumptions that we've had at different points in time where we have missed opportunities. And so, questioning those assumptions, the fact that the Trump administration was in fact able to put together what became the Abraham Accords and create a platform for a different kind of relationship between Israel and its neighbors, even in lieu of a solution to the Palestinian statehood issue.

That is an assumption that I think surprised many people at the time. And we should be constantly questioning our assumptions in the region. The second point, again, totally self-evident. We've got to be planning. We've got to be planning for success, planning for failure, planning for other contingencies. We spent a lot of time focused on the cease fire, thinking about the cease fire in Gaza as the platform for everything else. If we can get the cease fire, we can persuade the Houthis to back off. If we can get the ceasefire, we can persuade Hezbollah to move north of the Litani River and bring Israelis back to their homes in the north.

That was a reasonable set of assumptions. But in fact, we needed to be planning a plan B, And the Israelis obviously did have a plan B, and they've carried it out over the course of the past couple of weeks. But we need to be planning our planning, I think about the planning that was done not always heeded in advance of the US invasion of Iraq, 13 volumes devised by the State Department thinking about what the future of Iraq might look like. Again, they weren't actually used by the Bush administration, but I do. Question Do we have 13 volumes for what the future of Gaza should look like? Do we have 13 volumes? What about what a Palestinian pathway to statehood would look like? I'm not sure that we do.

We have got had a lot of scholarship over many, many years. But again, since ten, seven, the conditions have changed, and the politics have changed. And we really need to be thinking about the very substantive planning about who is going to provide governance and security to begin reconstruction in Gaza on day one. Because if we're not prepared to do it, I promise you our adversaries will be. They did beat us in Lebanon after the 26 war. The Iranian money was in there much more quickly than that of the international community. And we cannot afford to lose this race again. We've got to be planning. Third, again, I won't go into depth because my colleagues have talked an awful lot about this, just the reliance on allies, partners and international institutions. We don't have to do everything alone.

We cannot do everything alone. But we do have to actually listen to our allies who often have different perspectives, especially when it comes to the Middle East. Fourth is, again, obvious when it comes to the region. We've got to be careful about overreach. You know, right now, if you're sitting in Israel, you're thinking things are looking good in Lebanon in the sense that we've been able to take out so much of Hezbollah leadership. We've got boots on the ground. We are able, I think, to respond to what Iran did. You know, there wasn't a single casualty among the Israelis. There was only one Palestinian who was killed by debris from one of the downed missiles. The fact that that that that that, you know, the temptation will be, I think, on the part of some in Israel. And I'm hearing as they're out there publicly let's do it. We can take out the Iranian nuclear program. We can bring down the Islamic Republic. This is the moment.

This is the only moment. I promise you it will be much uglier if we try to accomplish those things. And if we don't think carefully about what is actually achievable and what is achievable at a cost that we are willing to bear, trying to go after the Iranian nuclear program at this point in time militarily will have catastrophic implications for the region. We've got to think about what our options are, think about what's realistic, think about what's achievable in a in a reasonable period of time. And finally, let me just say, you know, and again, echoing my colleagues, there has been a desire, I think, at different points in time, in recent years to kind of pivot away from the Middle East. Right.

You know, to pivot to Asia, that we've got higher priorities, that this is really not the theater in which we can afford to be bogged down. The reality is we're going to have to be able to multitask. We're

going to have to be able to manage a war in Gaza, a war in Ukraine, and the strategic challenge that China poses in every domain. And that is the calling that we have as still the world's greatest superpower. And we have the ability to do it in part because of the allies, partners and institutions that we invest in, that we rely upon, that are fundamental to the way that America sees its role in the world, not as a superpower alone, but really built into this network of partners and allies and institutions. We've got to be prepared to lead, and we've got to be prepared to multitask. Thanks.

**SISSON:** Well, I know where all of your offices are, and so I'm going to refrain from asking. Any questions of my own at this point in favor of inviting at least a few questions from the members of the audience. So, if you would, please raise your hand if you're interested in asking a question. When you do ask that question, please identify yourself ahead of time. We have a person here in a, you know, brownish jacket.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Hi, I'm Jefferson with the Senate Judiciary Committee. Not official capacity. My question is, the United States and its allies, we vastly overspend Russia in the European region. We vastly overspend Iran in the Middle Eastern region. We overspend China in the Asian markets, Asian region. But yet it seems like the response is always we have to send more money in order to get peace. So, I know Colin Powell worked on the Iran nuclear deal. I know that many of you have talked about off ramps or ways to stabilize peace, avoid great power conflict. So instead of just, let's say, spending more money, what are the options to say maybe 30 years from now we actually have good relations or pretty neutral relations with these countries?

**KAHL:** Look, I think we should aspire to a world that is better than the one that we're currently encountering. My, you know, one of my favorite books in international relations is E.H. Carr's *The 20 Year Crisis*. And that book was essentially a realist critique of, you know, what, what we would now call liberal internationalism during the interwar period and how it kind of collapsed as it was mugged by the hard realities of the rise of the Axis powers. But when Carr was thinking about that time, he didn't say that we should therefore give up on idealism in favor of realism. We always need idealism as a North Star, something we push towards, because otherwise we just succumb to the kind of amoral dog eat dog world of realism. So, I share your desire.

I don't see any prospect of moving towards substantially improved relations with any of the countries that I mentioned in the near term. Russia has shown itself to be willing to strike at the heart of the foundational norms and rules of the international system as it relates to sovereignty and territorial integrity and doing what it did in Ukraine. If the world lets that stand by accommodating Russia in the endgame, as some in our political system has suggested, it would reinforce probably the most dangerous precedent that we could have in the in the international system. So, I think Russia is going to be an adversary for the foreseeable future. That doesn't mean we can't carve out and compartmentalize areas of cooperation on issues like arms control and strategic stability. We did that at the height of the Cold War. We should look for a path back to that China. I think the competition is structurally baked in and can't be wished away. That doesn't mean conflict is imminent or inevitable, and nor does it mean that we should welcome it. Nor does it mean that we should succumb to groupthink in Washington that makes conflict with China self-fulfilling prophecy.

But we also shouldn't pretend that if we just stop competing with China, that China's ambitions would go away to not only be the most dominant actor in the Indo-Pacific, but to fundamentally rewire the rules of the world, to make it safe for the for the CCP and a world that's safe for autocracy in general in the CCP and in particular, is not a world that's particularly amiable for U.S. interests or values. Iran and North Korea essentially speak for themselves.

There may be a way down the line to negotiate from a position of strength with the Iranians or others. But I still think those are no, those are not in the near-term. The question the point you made about like we spent a lot of money on our defense now, like, why are you saying spend more money on your defense? Look, the bad guys are benefit from asymmetric strategies, the types of technologies they've invested in, but also their goals, which are much more limited and local, whereas we have global ambitions and a global network, and that requires a different type of resources. And the other is that our allies have not historically spent nearly what it takes.

And I think one of the things that the Ukraine war demonstrates is that none of our defense industrial bases were fit for purpose. And that is that is true of the United States as much as we spend. It is especially true for our European allies and some of our Indo-Pacific allies. And so, some of this is not

spending more, although it is that it's spending better and also spending together. So, we're not all building the same stuff, but actually building complementary stuff. There's more of a division of labor and common purpose.

**SISSON:** Another question, please.

**KUOK:** Could I just add to that?

**SISSON:** Sure.

**KUOK:** Yeah, I thought the question was an incredibly you know, your question about the US spending a lot and its relations with the rest of the world is an incredibly important one. And if we look at the amount that the United States has spent spending on defense, the question then arises, why are its relations with countries apart from some of these adversaries, also declining in some parts of the world? And I think the sort of irony of some of the at least in Asia, some of the spending on deterring China is that so much effort has been focused on the military realm and thinking in that in that dimension, like in the military realm, that, you know, sometimes the bigger picture of how if the U.S. is really successful in deterring China in Asia, then, then the competition then moves into the nonmilitary realm.

And in the nonmilitary realm, how can the United States, given its you know, its vast resources compared to other countries, actually improve relations in the rest of the world? And so, in my part of the world, I suspect that, you know, defense spending force amounts, you know, spending on infrastructure development in Asia as well as in, you know, just broader economic engagement. And so, if we're talking about how the United States can improve relations in Asia at these. Then at least you know these two respects, you know, infrastructure development, border development, as well as broader economic deals. I mean, that that needs to be looked at on top of dealing with double standards and addressing some of that. And, of course, I think, you know, a lot of my recommendations have been focused on the United States, but the onus is also on countries in Asia as well.

They have justified their approach to some of the issues, say, you know, lack of concern over what's happening in Ukraine on the basis that, you know, it's you know, this is a multi-aligned policy. They need to hedge against the vagaries of US-China competition. However, you know, they're not you know, they're not adhering to international law as a favor to the United States. This is in the national interest. International law is in their national interests of a stable and prosperous region. So, I would just also throw that out as well. And so, I think the United States has been a force for peace and stability in Asia. So would be very sad if in this, you know, very highly fraught situation of, you know, alleging double standards, etc., they forget about the United States as a force for good as well in the region. Thank you.

**SISSON:** We are unfortunately out of time. That's the bad news. The good news is that when you stay in your seats for another minute and 30s, you will be joined and have the opportunity to see our wonderful keynote speaker hosted by Mike O'Hanlon. So, if you'll stay where you are. Thanks again for joining and please with me expressed some appreciation for the excellent panelists who we saw today.

**O'HANLON:** Hi, everybody. We're going to launch right in again. I'm Mike O'Hanlon with the Strobe Talbott Center. And I have an amazing honor today and a great privilege to be in conversation with General Joseph Dunford, who is the 19th chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, finishing up just about five years ago. He made the transition from President Obama to President Trump seem almost seamless at the Pentagon, at least from all I could tell. He had four different positions at the four-star level, starting with the assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, then the commander of all coalition forces in Afghanistan, commandant of the Marine Corps, and then chairman. He hails from the great city of Boston and went to college up in Vermont before joining through a sort of Marine Corps variance of an ROTC like program, had an amazing military career and continues to serve his country now on a number of boards for nonprofits, helping veterans, helping civics education in the United States. So, I just wondered if you could please join me in welcoming back to Brookings and to Washington General Joe Dunford.

**DUNFORD:** Thanks, Mike. It's good to be back with you. And I think it was probably six years ago was the last time of here I was here. And fortunately, nothing has changed since the last conversation that we had over those six years.

**O'HANLON:** Well, what happens with the change is that how Boston only dominates in one sport, as we were discussing before? Because the last time you were here, it was the day after the Patriots came from behind and defeated the Falcons. And I'm from Georgia in the Super Bowl, and he was gracious enough to only tease me for a few minutes in two sports.

**DUNFORD:** The Celtics and the Bruins.

**O'HANLON:** Fair enough. Yes. And we have a Brookings connection to the Celtics with one of our chairmen. So I should definitely mention that while we're on the theme of sports, let me thank Phil Knight, whose generosity made this forum possible and created the chair that I now hold and has supported a lot of the work we do with Suzanne Maloney as our vice president in the foreign policy program and all the people starting with Alejandro and Emily and Natalie and others who contributed to today. And for all of you for being here, this is a very natural way to, I think, and the conversation for today, because as I mentioned earlier, briefly when introducing the whole event, General Dunford was chairman at the time.

We began to shift from a preoccupation with so-called rogue states and with terrorism to a broader set of threats, and most specifically, of course, the rise of great powers, return of great power competition. General Dunford, as chairman, along with Secretary of Defense Ash Carter in the last two years of the Obama administration and others, began the shift towards what was then called sometimes the third offset, trying to rely more on technology to regain conventional deterrence. Also, General Dunford, I think, coined the phrase four plus one to say instead of just thinking about Iraq, Iran, North Korea, we should be thinking about Russia, China, Iran, North Korea and transnational extremists. And it's a framework that I still find very useful even today. Of course, as you know, in subsequent national defense strategies, we've now elevated Russia and China and particularly China even higher.

But it was a framework that I think served us well. And since we're not getting out of the Middle East anytime soon, and since we shouldn't be forgetting North Korea, I actually find it even more helpful than the current fixation on just great power rivalry. So, what I wanted to do today was to ask General Dunford to reflect on where we are ten years or so after he and Ash Carter and others began this transition. And I'm really just going to pose sort of the same question, but with 3 or 4 different variants, how have we done with the defense budget? How have we done with military modernization and innovation? How have we done with the readiness of the force and the quality of the force? So, I realize doesn't have the kind of data accessible to him that he once did. And how are we doing with sort of the structure of the Pentagon in terms of how the different civil military relations work, the joint staff, the combatant commands and so forth? So, General, again, I think if I could let me begin with the budget. Colleen was touching on this. Let me sort of maybe in a way the most straightforward question, because it just sort of one number, you probably don't have one number in mind for what the defense budget should be. But what general guidance would you offer and how have we done over the last ten years?

**DUNFORD:** Sure, Mike. You know, I found the previous panel interesting in that regard. And first of all, just maybe a little bit of context. In the DOD budget, we have an all-volunteer force. More than 50% of the budget is for the high-quality people that we have. And I think, if I'm correct, about 20% is into procurement. So, we're of that budget. We're spending 20%. But Mike spoke about when we started to look at four plus one and then it became two plus three. And now almost a singular focus sometimes on China. But I think we all realize that, you know, certainly 2014 and beyond and I referenced 2014 with the original invasion of Ukraine by Russia, we realized that we were now into what has been described as great power competition.

What's interesting is, you know, one of the things you do when you go into a job is you read your job description. And in 2015, I read that I was responsible for the conduct of joint military net assessments. And so, I asked for the most recent joint military net assessment, and it was about ten years old. And that's not a criticism, but I think it's important context to realize that we didn't have a peer competitor in the 1990s. We had an unquestioned competitive advantage over any potential adversary, and they defined that as the ability to project power when and where we wanted to around

the world in the ability to operate freely. And now what we call all domains land, sea, air space in cyberspace. So, we did a military joint military net assessment, and we looked at the current U.S. capabilities at the time. This is 2015. 16 was the first one we did. We looked at what the intelligence community said would be Russian capabilities five years hence and their capabilities at the present time. And we did the same thing for China.

And we looked at 14. This was the top-secret level. We looked at 14 competitive areas, and they wouldn't surprise you. It was everything from maritime capability, electronic warfare, space capability, cyber capability. Get down, get on the list. And what we concluded at that time was to restore our competitive advantage, again, defined as that power projection and operate being able to operate freely across all domains. We said we would need about 3 to 5% growth above inflation in the defense budget. And we testified to that point, and we were able to show. Senators and members of the House of Representatives behind closed doors the top secret work we had done to come up with those numbers. A lot of folks will say, well, could we do it for less? Let me just describe to you a conversation I always pick on General Goldfein, who was the chief of the Air Force, chief of staff of the Air Force when I was in my last assignment. And we would talk about the budget and the challenges.

And I'd say, well, Dave, I don't see what's so hard about what we're asking to do. We're asking you to employ all of the United States Air Force that you have today to meet today's challenges. You know, what an operational tempo that basically exceeds what you think is sustainable from a readiness perspective. And we're asking you to take some of the Air Force offline right now in recapitalizing and build tomorrow's Air Force. So, when people say we have enough money and I'm not in uniform anymore, so I'm giving you my candid assessment of what it's going to take, we have to look at the budget in the context of meeting today's challenges and meeting tomorrow's challenges simultaneously.

And I brought up 1990 a minute ago because in the 1990s. Managing risk with today and tomorrow was relatively easy, relatively easy. Managing risk between today and tomorrow. Today is particularly difficult because we could go to war. We are in a war today. There are wars going on. And in many

cases, the support we're able to provide our partners and allies. Exceeds what we have an inventory. So, when I think about the defense budget and how much we spend and how much all the other countries spend together, I think we have to step back and say, what? What are our national interests? What's the guidance we've been given? What's the context within which we are pursuing our national interests? And again, I don't think we need to tell this audience about how complex it is.

By the way, in 2015, I used to quote Henry Kissinger, something he said in 2014, which was we live in the most complex and volatile period since World War Two. That was a decade ago. I don't think I'd have to argue very hard to say that, you know, we couldn't possibly have envisioned how much more complex and more volatile it would be today. So, I think it's really important we think about the prioritization and allocation of resources for defense. We go back to something Colin Cole said in the in the past, in the previous panel, we're spending at about, I think, 3.4, 3.5% of our GDP on defense. During Vietnam it was north of 6%. I don't think anybody would argue in this room that the stakes in Vietnam were anywhere near as high as the stakes are today in dealing with today's current challenges. So, I just think it's important for us to put that top line figure in some kind of perspective and also appreciate the cost of the all-volunteer force and in how much we're really spending on modernization.

And in that regard, you know, China doesn't have the same challenges that we have with the industrial base. They don't have the same challenges we have with an all-volunteer force and the compensation and so forth associated with that. So those are just a couple of comments on the budget itself.

**O'HANLON:** Thank you. And because I want to make sure there's time for questions, let me combine a couple of the specific issues I was going to address into one question, because it follows naturally, General, from the way you put that, is there one area of defense spending that you think is suffering the worst compared to what you wanted to see done when you made those recommendations for the 3 to 5% annual real growth? Is it on the people side? Is it on the readiness side? In other words, training and maintenance of current equipment? Or is it more on the modernization side of things? Is there any one of those three that you see that's taking the brunt of our relative flat, relatively flat

defense budget? And, you know, related to that, how well are we doing at modernization and getting ready for this great new world of AI and everything else?

**DUNFORD:** Yeah, So the first thing I'd say, because it's important to say is the recapitalization of the nuclear enterprise is taking a significant amount of resources, and that is job one for the Department of Defense to deter nuclear war. And we live in a different much as we lived in a different environment conventionally ten, 15, 20 years ago. We live in a very different world and maybe we'll get into that a little bit in terms of the ability to provide nuclear deterrence. And I think the challenge in the department right now is, again, you have to meet today's requirements. You've got to maintain readiness with today's force. You've got to maintain a high quality of our men and women in uniform that we have today.

And now we have to integrate all the capabilities that we have today, as well as by in a in a very integrated way, tomorrow's capabilities. And I don't think there's any question that the need to balance today's commitments in the current security environment is inhibiting our ability to accelerate the path of capability development, to meet the emerging threats that we see today and certainly what will continue to be more challenging tomorrow.

So again, like every single leader in DOD, no matter when they serve, always has to live in today and tomorrow simultaneously, and sometimes making the tradeoffs or relatively easy in terms of managing risk. My argument, you know, which is in response to both of your questions, is managing risk between today and tomorrow is particularly difficult. And by definition, war is inherently inefficient. So, we ought not to ask today the Department of Defense, to be efficient and effective at the same time as we make what is, in effect, a dramatic transition to emerging capabilities in the force of tomorrow. It's just hard to do. And if we're if we're going to do that with green eyeshades, we're not going to get it right. And that doesn't mean we shouldn't look for efficiencies where we can it doesn't mean we shouldn't be good stewards of the taxpayer dollars. But I again, I think we should look at what we're spending in the context of the security environment we find ourselves in and not go back to historical numbers or go back to what other people around the world may be spending or may not be spending.

**O'HANLON:** I know a particularly touchy subject is the Marine Corps Force Design 2030 because it's an intra marine debate that's been fascinating. I want to ask you about it, though, as to whether the changes the Marines have made, at least without debating all the specifics, because I know that's very controversial within the Marine Corps. But whether the pace at which the Marines have been willing to change is something the other services need to sort of emulate a bit or whether this was something the Marines were able to do, getting rid of tanks, getting rid of unguided artillery, going towards more localized communications networks to developing these littoral combat regiments, to, you know, be more effective in the Indo-Pacific, that the Marines sort of have a natural advantage because they're smaller, nimbler, don't have some of the same bigger, you know, challenges or responsibilities as the big three service.

**DUNFORD:** Okay. Well, I'm going to be somewhat evasive in answering this question. And look, the reason is I think that can only be one comment on the Marine Corps at a time. And, you know, to be quite honest with you, the colonel in the record doesn't need me to be publicly assessing his work. And so, I'm not going to do that. What I what I would say, though, is that for all of the services and I won't judge which ones out in front of in front of the other for all of the services right now, we need to be taking a hard look at where we are today and where we need to be and in particular where we need to be tomorrow. And so, accelerate the pace of change, experimenting, identifying, you know, new ways of fielding capabilities, new ways of accomplishing the missions that we've been given are all the things that we that we should be doing.

And I would also say that when you go through periods of historic change, it's not always clear while you're in the midst of change where you are. Did you get it right? Did you get it wrong? And I think we're still in that page. So, look, I applaud any of the leaders in Department of Defense right now for taking some risk and trying to figure out how to how to accelerate that path of capability development. But the one thing that I said I wouldn't do, you know, I'll just quote Omar Bradley. Maybe you'll laugh about this. I always quote Omar Bradley said, the best thing a retired general can do is retire his tongue a lot along with his suit and mothball his opinions. So, with the with the exception of those areas where I think I can help in terms of educating the public on some of the challenges we face, I'm going to refrain from grading people's homework.

**O'HANLON:** Fair enough. And here's some water since I asked you an unfair question. But I will say that that the General Smith and Charles Berger were both here on this stage in the last two years. And both are great, great Americans doing a lot of important things. And I've actually found the Marine debate this just commentary. You don't have to respond. I found the Marine debate fascinating because it's a legitimate debate about the future international security environment and the future of war and the different points of view that I've heard both within the Marine Corps and in the broader community have all been well thought through and important because, as you say, we have to manage the current environment. At the same time, we're getting ready for the future. One, I feel like the Marines could afford to get rid of tanks because the Army hasn't. And if the Army had had to decide to get rid of tanks, it would have been a bigger, harder decision.

**DUNFORD:** So, what I, what I would say, though, because you just bring up that one issue, I think what's important is that the output is still a combined arms capability and. Well. A particular material solution in this case that the case the tank can be replaced. Then we get to talk about is where does the firepower and the armor and mobility and shock and a ground combat element come from. And I think that's what the Marine Corps is working their way through right now. So, I think what is still, you know, combined arms will look different in the 21st century. But the principles and we've seen this in spades in the Ukraine. The principles of integrating combined arms at the operational level remain valid.

**O'HANLON:** One very specific question on modernization that I wanted to just ask your opinion about, especially it being October 2nd, the day after the big Iranian attack, and only a few months after the April 13th attack. I am extraordinarily impressed at the quality of air and missile defense and the performance which. This is not meant to be just a sop to U.S. defense industry, but I would not have thought it possible that the intercept rates that Israel and the coalition have achieved in these last two horrific bursts or salvos would have been attainable in this time frame. Are you surprised? Did you see it coming?

**DUNFORD:** No, I'm not surprised because I think we had an appreciation for what Israel was able to do. What? We should not lose sight of is. I'm not going back to the April more complicated attack was the integration of coalition intelligence capabilities to assist and in dealing with that with that threat. And so earlier when I spoke about integration, it's that ability to see things from space in cyberspace with our radar systems and then. Q all of the available. You know, now they call them effectors. I call them shooters that are on a battlefield. Being able to do that requires a degree of integration that we are working towards.

We shouldn't be complacent with where we are. But I think what those attacks do is highlight the power of being able to integrate. And I think. Call and talked about the. Together peace integrate across our partners that's what can be done when we when we have that degree of integration and capability. And again, the Israelis have identified this threat many years ago and have been working very closely with the defense industry here in the United States, as well as within Israel to develop and field systems that allow them to protect themselves against that threat.

**O'HANLON:** So just two more questions from me then. Please have yours ready. We've got maybe 10 or 15 minutes for questions from the audience. I wanted to ask you about the changing U.S. military footprint around the world and the posture in the Indo-Pacific, some of the recent initiatives to try to expand basing options, for example, in the Philippines or Papua New Guinea. Certainly, the expansion of our basing in Guam and just how you see this trend going, is it I'm pretty sure you're going to say it's going in the right direction. You were part of starting it yourself, but how much further does it need to go? What are the next big steps that a future president is going to have to think about along with his security? Yes.

**DUNFORD:** So, posture is part of it. But, you know, maybe I'd be reluctant to talk about posture without talking about. About capability, capacity and then the defense industrial base. So, the fact that we're creating more resilient force posture is obviously something we want to do. We all we all knew that that was the way to make ourselves more operationally effective. But a couple of things are required. Number one, we are now, you know, when we started talking about four plus one, we said something that I think now is particularly relevant. We should look. Any potential conflict in the future

is going to be global. Have global implications in any future conflict is going to have implications across all domains sea, air, land, space and cyberspace.

And so, as we as we think about U.S. capability and capacity and we look at global responsibilities and global response, this is where the integration of our partners is so important. This is where the development of capability in conjunction with our partners is so important. And this is why interoperability is no longer sufficient. It has to be integrated. And then the second piece, which was touched upon in this in the in the panel beforehand, is now enhancing our capabilities to take advantage of that posture. I would just say this for those of you who are interested in this topic, if you look at what's going on in Intel Paycom with the defense of Guam, which is which is an initiative and an experiment all at the same time. Or you look at what they're doing with the Joint Fires Network and trying to take advantage of commercial technology trying to accelerate the pace of capability development, trying to solve this problem of integrating capabilities across all domains, trying to trying to roll our allies and partners in this.

That's the model for what has to be done. So, I guess what I'd say might directly to your question is yes, the posture initiatives, I think we're moving in the right direction and we're further ahead than we were well further ahead than we were in 2012 when we started to talk about rebalancing to the Pacific. Right. So, we're now a decade or more into this rebalance in forces. And two thirds of the U.S. military is in the Pacific. And traditionally, we have deployed all of our most modern capabilities the F-22, the F-35, the EGIS systems. All of those things are deployed to the Pacific. But it's the posture, it's the capabilities, it's the capacities, it's the integration of our allies and partners. And it's the defense industrial base to support the requirements.

And there's particular attention we can see it today. And I think it's a great indication and warning for the challenge we're going to have in the future. We are challenged today to meet the requirements that it for Ukraine and Russia simultaneously to support an Israeli simultaneously to help and Taiwan build its defenses and at the same time maintain an acceptable level of readiness with U.S. forces. So as was highlighted in the previous panel, you know, making the investments in our defense industrial

base are important. And by the way, that's not a defense industrial base problem. It's not a DOD problem. It's not a hill problem. It's an all of the above problem.

We have to make a concerted effort across the legislative branch of our government, the executive branch of our government and industry to make the kind of investments that are necessary to improve the defense industrial base. And that's going to require us to get out beyond the one year at a time cycle that we budget and actually say, look, here's where we are and we're going to be in this era of great power competition for the foreseeable future. Are we satisfied with where we are today? I think all of discussions today would indicate, no, we're not satisfied with where we are. So, what are the investments necessary to get ourselves back to this competitive advantage? And by the way, what I probably should have highlighted when I mentioned competitive advantages, that is the cornerstone of deterrence. Right? So correctly pointed out earlier, there are other elements of national power besides the military dimension.

But in the military dimension, the perception of the US ability to have a competitive advantage over any potential adversary or aggregation of adversaries and be able to project power anywhere that we need to around the world and operate as we need to when we get there is an important part of deterrence and making those investments make it all the more likely that we won't have to go to war, which would be much more costly than the investments that we're suggesting that we make in order to restore deterrence to an acceptable level.

**O'HANLON:** Thank you. My very last question has to do with how the Pentagon functions and the way the chairman functions within the broad structure. And this may be a little bit of a green eyeshades question for those of you who aren't full time defense scholars. But it's important because it gets to questions of how we prepare for global challenges. And you were associated, I think it's fair to say, with trying to strengthen the role of the joint Chief joint staff in the Pentagon and the chairman in trying to think about the likelihood of a global conflict, because if we fought that way, we couldn't just give a specific war to a combatant commander in theater X, Y, or Z. Could you reflect on where we stand today? Do we need another Goldwater-Nichols? Do we need any big changes in how these command structure is now or.

**DUNFORD:** Yeah, it's actually, you know, maybe I can make it not a green eyeshade issue because it's really pretty fundamental to what the Department of Defense does. When I talked earlier about Chevron appreciation that any potential conflict would have global implications, you know, we thought that there was implications in several areas. Number one, we needed to our decision making specifically to secretary of defense to be supported with the information intelligence that he would need to give direction and prioritize and allocate resources across the globe in any in any crisis or conflict. We would also need to make sure that we had mechanisms in place to manage risk across all combatant commands simultaneously, and thus to prioritize and allocate force elements across the globe. And then we also said, look, our plans the way we have typically done our plans, which were regional plans, we had a plan on the shelf for North Korea.

We had a plan on the shelf for Russia. We have a plan on the shelf for Iran. But we you know, we said, look, if the value of plans is in the planning and thinking about what really is going to happen, of what use is it for us to say this is what we would do if a war breaks out in Iran, if we aren't simultaneously thinking about the opportunism that may take place, the challenges we may confront outside of the Middle East. And so, we said all of our plans need to be global plans, every single combatant command. There is going to be test inside of every single plan.

If there's a primarily a war in Europe, then obviously Intel, Paycom is going to be managing risk in the Pacific and being prepared to respond there. And I could say the same for all of the other combatant commanders. So, we said, okay, who is the logical one? On behalf of the secretary of defense to do that and in partnership with OSD, what we said was, look, the chairman ought to be the global integrator. He ought to be the one that when it comes to the prioritization allocation of military forces, once the policy guidance is given, he ought to be the primary one to come back with recommendations to the secretary defense on how to do that. He ought to also oversee plans to make sure that all of our regional plans were integrated into global plans, which is what the National Military Strategy classified version did in 2016 for the first time. And we're still evolving those never complacent about where we need to be.

And then this other piece, which I say last but is not the least important, was someone has to be responsible in conflict for framing the problem for the secretary and feeding him the intelligence and the information that he needs. Obviously, that's in close partnership with the with the staff that the secretaries it always d but the one who has access to the apparatus and the military staff to be able to form all that form all those products for the for the secretary of Defense was the Joint Staff. I did not personally believe that the secretary or that the chairman needed more authority. So, I didn't argue for a Goldwater-Nichols and I didn't argue for a general staff because of all of the authority that I needed. I had it emanated from the secretary of defense. It was the relationship the chairman has with the secretary of defense that that gives me the authority that I needed to do that. All I needed was not authority. I needed responsibility.

And so, legislation in 2017 gave the chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Joint Staff the responsibilities to do those tasks that I just spoke about with the obvious oversight of the Secretary of Defense and in the secretary-to-secretary defense and in his staff. And so, you know, in many forums, I was accused of military guys gone wild here with global integration. And I can tell you; I worked for six different secretaries of defense and not one of them thought that what we were doing was anything other than what they would have expected us to do on their behalf.

**O'HANLON:** Fascinating. Thank you for that. Let's have a few questions, if we could. Please identify yourself. We'll start all the way in the back with the gentleman. Yes, right there, please.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Hi. Hello. General Dunford. I'm a journalist from Taiwan's TV piece for Taiwan. I have a question about Taiwan, is that we've seen the Biden administration have collaboration on semiconductor Mac or between like Taiwan's TSMC and in, you know, they are sitting on the factory in Arizona. And also, the collaboration you know Biden administration just approved the latest PDA to support Taiwan. Do you see any risk under a possible Trump administration? Because we've heard from talking about time to go our jobs and, you know, we don't have to pay that much for Taiwan. Do you see any risk or that change is going to be under the possible? You know, yeah.

**DUNFORD:** I mean, on that particular issue, I personally don't because what you're describing is our effort to address resiliency in the supply chain for high end chips. Right. And I don't think anybody is comfortable. I'm sure there's an engineer or two in the crowd here. I don't think anybody is comfortable with single points of failure. And when you identify single points of failure in the business that we're and you quickly remediate that. And so, I in my view, whatever administration would come in when confronted with the need to have resiliency in our department in the in the in the supply chain, that is critical to our capability development. I think I think either administration is going to be supportive of efforts to make that more resilient.

I don't know that there might not be other ways to get after it. Maybe there are. But right now, what makes the most sense is to take that technology, take that intellectual property and make sure that we don't have a gap in growing what already exists and taking advantage of that and creating additional facilities as the one you described in Arizona, simply so we have a more resilient and robust supply chain for those critical components that we need to go to.

**O'HANLON:** The woman in the back row, please.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Thanks for a great event. This is a case issue. I'm a reporter with VOA Mandarin. So, my question is recently that DOD has surged additional a few thousand troops in the Middle East and also ordered the Abraham Lincoln to stay there, which were on a planned deployment to the Pacific. So recently, the U.S. was in a situation in which. It didn't have a carrier in the Pacific for at least three weeks. And at the same time, the air has three carrier aircraft carriers operating in the Pacific for the first time. He is 97-year history. So, to build the defense industrial base may take decades of effort. In the short term, what are the risks of pulling out of pulling our military assets out of the Indo-Pacific to the middle? Is does it cause an erosion of U.S. deterrence against the CCP? And secondly, if there is a fall out war in the Middle East in upcoming weeks, militarily, what should the U.S. do and not do next? Should there be any limits of the military or military engagement or resources sent to Israel considering you may take this chance to take Taiwan?

**DUNFORD:** Yeah. Listen, I don't want to at all be appear to be dismissive of your question. So, take my comments in context. What you're describing is what the secretary of defense and the president have to do every single day. Right? Every single day. They have to manage risk and risk. You know, in the Middle East has obviously increased significantly in the need to have forces immediately available in the Middle East has increased significantly in recent days. And so, you know, I'm not in the conversation. I'm outside of government, but I have some idea of how this conversation went down. And I'm sure when the secretary the chairman, the president sat down, they said, okay, listen, here's what here's what we think we might need in the Middle East in the coming days. Here's where these forces might be drawn from.

Here's the risk that will be created either in readiness and regeneration of forces or elsewhere, geographically around the world. We believe that this is what our force posture in the Middle East ought to be. And, by the way, will mitigate the force element gaps that it created in other combatant commands in different ways. And I'm quite confident that there's a mitigation plan in place and a communications plan in support of that mitigation plan that's ongoing in the Pacific right now to mitigate the risk of opportunism. So, you know, this is your question was a great setup for the earlier conversation about having context for what capabilities and capacities the United States has on any given day.

Because this week, like virtually every other week over the last several years, highlights the difficult decisions our national command authority needs to make on a day-to-day basis when they prioritize and allocate resources, and they manage risk, and they take advantage of opportunities. So what I would say is that, you know, the implications are that, okay, we have fewer forces that are there in the Indo-Pacific, but I'm quite certain that at the highest levels of our government messages have been delivered, you know, to mitigate the risk of opportunism and is probably other capabilities that we have highlighted that would mitigate the risk associated with increased forces in the Middle East. Okay. And I hope you don't think that was evasive, but that's I mean, that's what you are describing is the real world. We could have had this conversation no less than eight, 10 or 12 times over the past 5 or 6 years.

**O'HANLON:** Let's go to the second row here, please. Thank you.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Richard Walker, also a journalist with Deutsche Villa. You touched General Dunford, on nuclear weapons earlier and the resources going into that. Could you expand on that? What's your view? Do you think the U.S. needs to not just modernize, but also substantially extend its nuclear arsenal to deal with China and Russia simultaneously? And there are some calls out there for a resumption of nuclear testing. Do you think that would be necessary and what would be the consequences if that were resumed?

**DUNFORD:** So maybe let's just start with if I were to describe the 3 or 4 characteristics of current security environment that are most concerning. One of them would be the lack of arms control in place and the risk of proliferation of nuclear weapons. Right. There's not currently really that I'm aware of any viable arms control processes ongoing. We're certainly not having conversation with the Russians today right now And the Chinese, to include them, in my own experience, have been reluctant to talk about it. And at the very time that this is ongoing, remember now the reason why we were able to have a nonproliferation regime was because those states that had nuclear powers committed to not allowing proliferation and over time reducing their nuclear arsenals. Right. That was the that was the deal.

And that deal doesn't exist anymore. So, step one, I think, from a U.S. perspective is we have to modernize the nuclear enterprise We have block obsolescence from. Our command-and-control capability. Obviously, we're in the process of our nuclear deterrent undersea as well as our missile capability as well as our bomber. So, we're all elements of the triad and our nuclear command and control are all in the process of being modernized. And we need it to the extent of do we need more? I think I think it would be it would not be appropriate for me to flippantly give an answer to do we need more? What I would say is that the framework that we had in place for deterrence in the past with primarily one nuclear threat, Russia, when we go from a couple of hundred nuclear weapons to the projections, are as many as a thousand.

With China, we have a fundamentally different problem set now for nuclear deterrence. And I and I know because I've had conversations with them, that the United States Strategic Command and

within the Department of Defense is kind of taking a lead on the military side of thinking the way through that problem and coming up with an effective way to think about nuclear deterrence in the context of the current security environment. So, I won't say it necessarily equates to more. I will say it equates to different and that we actually need a new intellectual framework and a new physical framework of new physical capabilities to ensure that we have nuclear deterrence in the context of a fundamentally different strategic landscape as it pertains to nuclear weapons.

**O'HANLON:** Last question. I'll try to sneak one quick one here. The gentleman in the tan suit, please. Right there. Yes.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Hello, my name is Mary and I'm a private citizen attending this event. But my question for you is, U.S. Customs and Border Protection is doing a lot at the border, like the Border Patrol officers are trying to keep the nation resilient and safe. And as you know, unless we are domestically protected and strong, it's difficult to project power overseas. What opportunities of avenues you think collaboration can exist between the Department of Defense, for example, and US Customs and Border Protection to provide more support on the ground to the hard work that our officers do?

**DUNFORD:** Sure. I look, I think it's a great question. And my response to that would be what I said when I was in uniform. And we were asked to provide support, you know, along the border. I said, look, if the if it's what we're being asked to do is legal, if the people that we've been asked to do something are trained and they have the proper capabilities, then we ought to do whatever the president does. This gets back to the prioritization and allocation of resources. So, we actually are U.S. military on the border today. We actually are providing, you know, reinforcements for Customs and Border Patrol and so forth in the degree to which we do that at any given time, as is a decision that the secretary of defense and the president have to work their way through.

But there's nothing inherently wrong with that as long, you know, again, my simple model was legal, trained, equipped. The president wants us to do it, then that's what we'll do. And I and I think there are some policy issues that you have. You know, my argument was always, look, if you're talking about

law enforcement function, that's not us. If you're talking about helping with intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, logistics, transportation, communications, there's a lot there's a lot of intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance. I did mention that. If you're talking about that, there's all kinds of capabilities in the Department of Defense that could be and frequently are allocated to that very, very important mission.

**O'HANLON:** Thanks to all of you for being here. Thanks again, Ali and Natalie and others. Thanks so much, General Dunford. Please join me in giving him a round of applause.

**DUNFORD:** Thanks.