

OPENING STATEMENT
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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Reed:

Thank you for the honor of appearing before this Committee. You have asked me to comment on the international challenges facing the United States and “what from the standpoint of national strategy” we can do to best position ourselves “to succeed” in this “competitive global environment.” I shall do so in three parts: the urgent, exemplified by the North Korean nuclear challenge; the intermediate, exemplified by the Middle East, especially Iran; and the long term, exemplified by great power relationships.

The international situation facing the United States is unprecedented. What is occurring is more than a coincidence of individual crises across various geographies. Rather, it is a systemic failure of world order which, after gathering momentum for nearly two decades, is trending towards the international system’s erosion rather than its consolidation, whether in terms of respect for sovereignty, rejection of territorial acquisition by force, expansion of mutually beneficial trade without geoeconomic coercion, or encouragement of human rights. In the absence of a shared concept among the major powers expansive enough to accommodate divergent perspectives of our national interests, partially derived from our diverse historical experiences, traditional patterns of great power rivalry are returning. Complicating this dynamic is the pace of technological development, whose extraordinary progress threatens to outstrip our strategic and moral imaginations—and in the field of artificial intelligence, may redefine our consciousness altogether. This creates new potential for truly catastrophic confrontations between nations.

North Korea

The most immediate challenge to international peace and security is posed by North Korea. Paradoxically, it is only *after* Pyongyang has achieved nuclear and intercontinental missile breakthroughs, accompanied by threatening assertions and demonstrations, that measures to thwart these activities have begun to be applied. This has raised the possibility that—as

in the case of Iran—an international effort intended to prevent a radical regime from developing a destabilizing capability will coincide diplomatically with the regime perfecting that very capacity. For the second time in a decade, an outcome that was widely considered unacceptable is now on the verge of becoming irreversible.

While the pressure campaign against North Korea appears to have achieved gains in the last year, no breakthrough has taken place on the essence of the matter: North Korea acquired nuclear weapons to assure its regime's survival; in its view, to give them up would be tantamount to suicide. North Korea's nuclear arsenal is often presented as a threat to the territorial United States. But its most profound impact will be on its neighbors in Asia. South Korea will reject an outcome that leaves North Korea the only nuclear power on the Peninsula. For its part, Japan will not live with either version of Korean nuclear military power.

Successive American administrations have appealed to China to "solve" the problem by cutting off Pyongyang's supplies. China has not done so because it could lead to the collapse of North Korea. In a comparable situation in 1950, the proximity of Korea to major Chinese population and industrial centers was sufficiently ominous to cause China to intervene in the conflict. An agreement on the future of Korea, perhaps by the revival of the established Six-Party Forum—or failing that, energized by the United States and China—is the best road to the denuclearization of the Peninsula and also, vis-à-vis Iran, to the stability of the Middle East.

The widely discussed "freeze for freeze" scheme—halting North Korean missile tests in return for abandoning defined Allied military exercises—will not, however, fulfill this purpose or even advance it. That would equate legitimate security operations with activities which have been condemned by the UN Security Council for decades. And it would encourage demands for additional restraints on, and perhaps the dismantling of, America's alliances in the region. In its ultimate sense, a freeze would legitimize North Korea's nuclear establishment as well as the results of its previous tests.

Interim steps towards full denuclearization may well be part of an eventual negotiation. But they need to be steps towards this ultimate goal: the dismantlement of Pyongyang's existing arsenal. They must not repeat the experience of the Vietnamese and Korean negotiations, which were used as means to buy time to further pursue their adversarial objectives.

The Middle East

While North Korea poses the most immediate danger, the interacting conflicts across the Middle East pose the most entrenched and expanding. Almost every country is either a combatant or a battlefield in one or more wars. The challenge in Asia is to maintain a generally stable equilibrium; in the Middle East, it is to restore a legitimate structure to a wide swath of territory where state authority has deteriorated or dissolved.

Across the Middle East, the system of order that emerged from the First World War is now in shambles. Conflicts are occurring on ideological grounds, as between Shia and Sunni; between ethnic groups; and against the state system. Four states have ceased to function as sovereign: Syria, where a civil war, now in its seventh year, rages; Iraq, where ISIS, though beaten back, continues to attempt to challenge efforts to reconsolidate the state; Libya; and Yemen have all become battlegrounds for factions and outside influences seeking to impose their rule.

The multiplicity of contestants roils the region with ever-evolving challenges. The world's war against ISIS is an illustration. Most non-ISIS powers—including Shia Iran and leading Sunni states—agree that ISIS must be destroyed. But the disposition of the territory regained from ISIS presents a new challenge. If ISIS' former strongholds come to be occupied by Iran's Revolutionary Guard or Shia militia subject to it, the result will be a belt of Iranian influence stretching from Tehran through Baghdad and Damascus all the way to Beirut. Tehran's version of jihadism would replace the Islamic State's, and a restored Iranian empire would emerge.

In this regard, Iran has become the key contemporary challenge in the Middle East. Historically and politically, it has been the most consistently cohesive power of the region, the only one which preserved its language and historic culture during the Islamic conquest. Its present impact results from its emergence, in the eyes of many of the region's leaders, as a nuclear threshold state in the aftermath of the JCPOA, a status seemingly conferred by that deal on Iran in 2015. Its reach is further enhanced by the subtle and aggressive strategy of its leadership: on one hand, defining Iran as a sovereign state within the UN system subject to its restraints and obligations; but on the other, identifying Iran as a revolutionary power attacking the existing world order. In that capacity, Iran's proxies in Yemen, Lebanon, and Iraq undermine or subsume existing governments.

Two measures should be taken by the United States and its allies: to oppose Iranian hegemonic expansion; and to commit to preventing an Iranian nuclear weapon. The first task has some similarities to America's

role in conducting and ending the Cold War. In the aftermath of the Second World War, a group of historic countries confronted a Soviet Union enhanced by the war and imbued with a revolutionary ideology. Under American leadership, a coalition was formed that drew a line defining the limit of Soviet expansion that would be tolerated, eventually achieving containment and a negotiated end of the Cold War.

The enforcement of the JCPOA is the prerequisite to arresting nuclear proliferation which, if spread across the Middle East and Asia, will require recasting the system of deterrence that now exists. That United States needs to make clear that beyond the enforcement of the JCPOA, it will oppose the emergence of any Iranian nuclear military capability. These steps are essential to shoring up and reshaping world order.

Great Power Relations

Beyond the issues of the moment looms the fundamental question of world order. How does the conduct of the major countries affect the prospects for peace? Is their strength comparable enough to induce restraint? Are their values compatible enough to encourage an agreed legitimacy?

Administration pronouncements—both in the National Security Strategy statement and in comments by the Secretary of Defense—about America's strategic future have identified China and Russia as potential threats to the world's equilibrium and have defined America's national security objectives as thwarting their designs.

The practical requirements of our stated defense policy, which I endorse, do not exhaust the range of necessary security policies. If history teaches any lesson, it is that calculations of balance of power are not always unambiguous, especially in a period of rapid technological change which characterizes our period. The outbreak of World War I is a good example. The nations of Europe, in a crisis not significantly different from several previously overcome, challenged the existing equilibrium with consequences from which Europe has not fully recovered in the century since.

In a world of admitted rivalry and competition, a balance of power is necessary but not sufficient. The underlying question is whether a renewed rivalry between major powers can be kept from culminating in conflict. This presupposes an agreed concept of legitimacy or, at a minimum, a quest for it.

For most of the past quarter-century, Americans assumed that post-Cold War China and Russia would join the United States as pillars of the liberal international order and that our shared challenges, such as preventing nuclear proliferation and managing the global economy, would facilitate our ever-closer cooperation. But we have been reminded that our national interests, based on our diverse histories, do not automatically converge, creating a need to manage our differences. A new strategic concept of major power relations, which seeks both to stabilize the military equation and shield the world from catastrophe, is imperative. Two principles must guide this effort. I will say a few words about each.

First, the balance of power must be maintained. This requires an acute understanding of the principal elements of power, especially in this era of accelerating change. It also requires answers to these challenges: What threats are so central to American security that we will resist them alone, if necessary? What threats will we deal with only with allies? What challenges do not rise to the level of military confrontation?

Second, balancing world power, while essential, must not constitute the entirety of our policy. Today, the complexity, ambiguity, and volatility of highly advanced weapons, combined with emerging cyber and space-based technologies and artificial intelligence, would render a conflict between major powers a catastrophe unique in human history. The requirements of a balance which avoids such a conflict can be sustained only by governments whose publics believe in their peaceful purposes.

Our concept of major power relations must therefore include a diplomacy of world order side by side with a military element. Such an outcome presupposes that all parties' core interests are compatible, or seek to be so, through continual dialogue as these interests evolve. This policy also assumes strict reciprocity.

Never before has such a project been carried out in comparable circumstances dealing with such vast potential consequences. But it is our historic task. In this, China and Russia, though each possesses a profound capacity to impact world order, pose different challenges.

China is a rising power, as a matter of both policy and historical inevitability. Both it and the United States, an established power, are obliged by necessity to undertake a reexamining of their historic thinking. Not since it became a global power after World War II has America had to contend with a geopolitical equal. And never in China's centuries-long history has it conceived of a foreign nation as more than a tributary to the centrality of its power and culture. Each thinks of itself as exceptional, but differently: the

United States believes its values ultimately will be universally adopted. China believes less in emulation than in the impact of a majestic example that will motivate other societies to turn towards Beijing on the basis of respect. The Belt and Road Initiative, by seeking to connect China to Central Asia and eventually Europe, is an expression of this thinking: it is a quest to shift the world's center of gravity.

With China, the challenge of world order involves the possibility of enabling two different concepts of nationhood to exist at least peacefully—and ideally cooperatively—side by side. American presidents of both parties and Chinese leaders have, for the past decades, sought cooperation at various summits. They have made some progress but have been inhibited by differences in culture: America seeking practical solutions to relatively short-term issues; China in quest of longer perspectives. If the goal of developing a concept of peaceful coevolution is not achieved, the risks of conflict may become unmanageable.

Russia

Russia exhibits occasionally a quest of naked dominion as vis-à-vis Ukraine. Historically impelled by its geography—eleven time zones, few natural defensive demarcations—Russia developed a definition of absolute security that has driven it to seek to dominate its neighbors. In recent decades, the collapse of the Soviet Union has led almost all peoples at Russia's borderlands to reassert their independence. Many sought to preserve their sovereignty by aligning with the West and joining NATO.

I strongly supported NATO's expansion to countries that traditionally were part of Europe's system of statehood. A special issue has arisen, however, with respect to countries with historic, cultural, and religious ties to both East and West, principally Georgia and Ukraine.

The challenge of Russia is whether it is possible to develop a concept of coexistence that addresses both the requirements of Europe's defense and a stable security architecture for the lands adjacent to it. Surely, the wisest course is to couple firm resistance of transgressions against international order with prospects for Russian participation in dialogues on international order. Rather than comprise a permanent zone of confrontation, criteria should be sought for Russia's geographic tangents to involve a zone of potential cooperation.

Few countries in history have started more wars or caused more turmoil than Russia in its quest for absolute security. But paradoxically, it is also

true that at several key points in the last millennium, the balance of power in Europe has been preserved by Russian effort and sacrifice—against the Mongols, then against the Swedes, then Napoleon, then Hitler. While Russia's strength is our current preoccupation, history suggests that Russian weakness, in the final calculus, could produce its own dangers to world order by unleashing an orgy of violence in the contest over control of the territory east of the Urals.

The Future of NATO

The traditional patterns of the Atlantic Alliance, which was established in a concerted effort to balance against a singular threat, will not be easily applied to the world I just described. NATO was formed in 1949 to protect its members from Soviet assault. It has since evolved into a network of nations attempting to coalesce and react jointly to destabilizing international crises outside the original treaty area.

In the world I have just described, there will be a temptation for Europe to maneuver between Asia and America, exploiting the fluctuations which surround it. But the realities of demographics, resources, technology, and capital continue to assure a decisive role in the world for an engaged America and a Europe committed to Atlantic principles. It will not, however, come about automatically. NATO's contribution to world order requires it to be clear about its strategic purposes. What outcomes, other than violations of its members' sovereignty, does it seek to prevent, and by what means? What are its strategic goals? By what means will it achieve them? To determine whether a unified Atlantic outlook can be renewed and applied to this new world is a key to long-range strategy.

Conclusion

The United States must address all these questions at a moment when many in the wider world believe Americans have voluntarily stepped back from strong leadership, so no longer can be expected to shoulder the burdens that come with an integrative, large-minded policy of support for the international state system.

This is ironic. The reality is that America is in a strong position. China has important domestic agenda considerations and does not want attention to these disrupted by external conflict. Russian actions in Eastern Europe and the Middle East have evoked reactions in the direction of retrenchment.

Iran's pursuit of empire is creating countervailing forces that make possible its containment.

The stakes are high. The liberal world order, now some 300 to 400 years in development, has been the only truly international, indeed global, structure open to all peoples everywhere. Uniquely, it is procedural, not ideological. That means it is flexible, open, cooperative, and able to make mid-course corrections as needed. But it is not self-executing. America's initiatives and its integrative approach will spell the difference between stability and calamity.