

Taliban hung in, knowing they could outwait us, whatever the costs in time, lives and human misery. I'm actually proud that the U.S. and NATO stuck it out for 20 years. Let me explain why I came to that conclusion.

My primary role at ISAF HQ was to serve as the governance or political "guru" for all the multi-national diplomats assigned to each of the 36 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) across Afghanistan who were focused on building up and supporting good governance at the provincial and district levels across the country. Each PRT also had a development officer or two from their national AID agencies who worked on building schools or clinics or roads, together with the local governments and the PRT military officers, whose main job was providing security and supporting security training for the ANA and ANP.

In order to gain first-hand PRT experience so that I would have some legitimacy in providing guidance to others out in the field, I spent my first seven weeks in-country working as the political officer on the Lithuanian-led PRT in Chagcharan, Ghor Province. There were also Danish and Croatian soldiers assigned to this PRT, along with two Icelandic females who were the Development Advisors. That was its own multi-cultural experience before I even met any Afghans! Ghor, located almost in the center of the country, claimed the dubious prize for being the most remote and inaccessible, due to its lack of roads and infrastructure. Most of the province's geography was high, dusty, barren mountains and hills with little more than donkey tracks. Even the Taliban seldom bothered to push north from their major hangout in Helmand Province.

I want to provide some cultural context. I was studying for my Master's Degree at the National War College in Washington, D.C., the year before I was assigned to Kabul. So, I took several electives about terrorism and Afghanistan so I would be better prepared. I learned that, because of the Taliban's previous rule and the sheer lack of schools and teachers, 78% of the Afghan population was estimated to be illiterate at that time: over 80% of the women, and over 60% of the men. There were also no national newspapers, often no radio or TV either, because, frankly, for most of the population, there was no electricity in their homes.

This meant that the Afghan population was largely ignorant, in the truest, least pejorative sense of that word. There were also few roads and even fewer cars. If people in the hinterlands like Ghor were lucky, they owned a donkey or a moped for family transport. (I once saw a family of five aboard a small moped.) Afghanistan is incredibly mountainous (and absolutely beautiful to fly over). So,

without real roads or transportation, most Afghans living in one mountain valley might never meet the people in the next valley over. What this means is that these folks have been by and large isolated from the outside world – and from each other.

So, for context, this isolation and lack of roads, electricity, knowledge, etc., meant to me that much of the country was stuck in about the 13th Century. To this day, my favorite photo of the 21st Century remains a “Time” Magazine cover from about November, 2001, of Northern Alliance fighters riding down a hillside on horseback to attack the Taliban. There were two CIA officers on horseback with them, mobile phones in hand, calling down USAF airstrikes on the Taliban. The 13th Century meets the 21st.

In my travels around the globe, from Trinidad to Russia to Iraq to Australia, I have learned there is one thing nearly all humans have in common. We all want a better life for our children than what we have had for ourselves. I know of two exceptions: the Iranian Ayatollahs who just want to bring on the apocalyptic end of the world through the return of their Shi’ite “Hidden Imam”; and the Sunni Taliban, which wants to keep all of Afghanistan, and the Muslim world writ large as much as possible, trapped in the 13th Century at the latest.

Bear in mind with such a high illiteracy rate, and the fact that the Koran was written in Arabic, and not Dari or Pashto, the most common languages in Afghanistan, few Afghans actually know the written words of the Koran. Their religion is based on centuries of oral tradition, and in their case, it’s an old, primitive, and frankly, pretty barbaric version of Islam, well represented by the Taliban. And please remember that those Taliban fighters were heavily present throughout the country during the fighting season from spring until late fall, year after year, either threatening or killing, or both, local villagers in the process, if those villagers cooperated with the foreign infidels, or even with the Afghan government. Then the Taliban insurgents would fade across the mountains into Pakistan for the winter.

My experience was that the vast majority of Afghans were in fact deeply grateful that we were keeping the Taliban at bay, at least to some extent, so they could better educate their children, both boys and girls, and seek better vocations, and even send them to university, and obtain some level of family healthcare, and find legitimate employment opportunities for themselves. In other words, we gave them **hope** that, for as long as we stayed and provided a rudimentary level of

security, they could live better, more normal lives than what the Taliban could provide them. Sadly, the Afghan government never really got its act together in terms of competence and fairness and breaking the chains of corruption. It just never succeeded in building a cadre of trained, competent, dedicated, honest officials. Its bench was not deep.

I'd like to explain now why I think the Afghan military and government folded like cheap tents once the U.S. forces were gone. Frankly, I don't blame them.

The Taliban has been waiting since 2001 for an unwise politician to come along who would set a hard deadline date for the withdrawal of U.S. forces, versus a conditions-based withdrawal, as all three previous Presidents had done. After nearly 20 years, they finally got their not-so-wise-man.

President Biden was determined to achieve a full military withdrawal by August 31st in order to declare some twisted sort of "victory" on the 20th anniversary of 9/11, eleven days later. In furtherance of that objective, he has repeatedly lied to us about being "bound" by President Trump's withdrawal plan that had a notional departure date of May 2021. If that were the case, he would also have been bound by the fact that Trump's departure plan was completely conditions-based, and the most important conditions were that the Taliban had to complete a peace deal and power-sharing agreement with the Government of Afghanistan, as well as disavow al-Qaeda and ISIS. These were requirements the Taliban had no intention of meeting and never did. Therefore, not having met those conditions, I believe a reelected Trump Administration would **not** have had its troops depart Afghanistan, and it would have instead increased the pressure on the Taliban to comply with those conditions.

"Leaving or escalating" being the only two choices, as President Biden asserted on August 31, is absolutely false. He could have simply maintained the status-quo of 2,500 troops at Bagram Air Base. The status quo had sufficed since about 2014, with the U.S. providing a minimal backbone of support to the Afghan forces who were doing nearly all the fighting and dying since that time. Indeed, no U.S. troops had died in battle since February 2020, while around 60,000 Afghan troops and police have died defending their country in the past seven years alone.

What we **were** getting all this time was security on the cheap. For a minimal cost of keeping 2,500 U.S. soldiers and airmen at Bagram, we were able to maintain our only strategic military foothold in Central Asia while enabling the Afghan forces to

at least fight the Taliban to a stalemate year after year, as the Afghan government was trying to consolidate and gain traction.

I had predicted to a friend back in June that whenever U.S. troops left Afghanistan, it would take 6 weeks for the Afghan troops to surrender to the Taliban. It took 11 days. When the U.S. forces literally snuck out of Bagram in the dead of night and turned out the lights on July 5, and only informed their Afghan counterparts 24 hours later, I think that deep level of abandonment and betrayal by the U.S. military literally broke their spirits.

The U.S. had been providing intelligence and additional air support from Bagram Air Base when needed, as well as an operations and maintenance cocoon for the tanks, planes, helicopters, etc., that we had given them and trained them to operate. But just as important, those 2,500 U.S. troops were their backbone, their spine, their accountability; their babysitters, if you like, but the Afghan forces also knew, to complete the analogy, that we had their backs when they got into real trouble in battle. And oh, by the way, we were also their paymasters. So, when we literally fled Bagram without telling them and then they were face-to-face with the Taliban, in the height of the fighting season, who had never really left, and were never going to leave, and they knew would not only continue to kill them, but their families as well, they calculated it was more beneficial to surrender. So when they did, the government also immediately collapsed and disappeared.

None of this had to happen. We can argue all day and night about how long U.S. forces should have remained in Afghanistan. My position is that the status quo was just fine. But even if leaving was in fact the right thing to do, never mind that the Taliban had met none of the conditions, President Biden could not have sat down and intentionally scripted a worse way to accomplish it. The “how” matters, and I predict he will end up with copious amounts of blood on his hands, perhaps of tens of thousands of dead Afghans in the coming months. Not to mention, abandoning American citizens and tens of thousands of Special Immigrant Visa applicants – Afghans who had loyally worked with us for years and to whom we had made promises of protection and then betrayed.

What saddens me most immediately is that Biden has given Afghanistan over on a silver platter to become the global jihadist Mecca -- a permanent base from which Islamist terrorists can plot attacks on the United States and the West writ large from now on. And, they are now armed to the teeth with some \$85 billion worth of our own weapons to use against the people of Afghanistan first, and to sell to our



enemies to raise cash as needed. Although I'm not sure they will need to raise cash anytime soon. Let me show you two quick videos to explain why.

If, God forbid, we should have to go back in there, we will have to fight against an implacable enemy, armed to the teeth with our same weaponry. Thus, Biden has achieved the exact opposite of what we went into Afghanistan in the first place to prevent. He has in fact created a well-armed and funded terrorist-led



state and global haven for Islamist jihadi terrorists.

By leaving American citizens and Afghans who had worked with us behind, Biden has further empowered the Taliban because there are numerous ways they can exploit these poor individuals who are either already hostages, or hostages-in-waiting. Even if our folks are not already in the clutches of the Taliban, just the fact that they could be taken hostage limits the United States' future freedom of action against the Taliban. In addition, holding them hostage or setting them free incentivizes the Taliban to seek ransoms in a variety of ways: cash; international recognition; setting their comrades free who are currently in prison around the globe; etc.

As far as accountability within our own government, I have a few recommendations for removal of senior officials alongside President Biden. The manner in which we **FIRST** withdrew our military from Afghanistan and closed our only military airbase that WE controlled, and then realized, oh yeah, we need to extract a couple hundred thousand people out of Kabul was so poorly conceived that I cannot grasp how SecDef Lloyd Austin, a retired four-star general himself, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley did not throw their collective stars on the President's desk and resign when they first got wind of this White House-planned operation. One thing the U.S. military knows how to do exceedingly well is to plan military operations. What we just witnessed in Afghanistan in July and August was NOT how DOD would have run that railroad. I don't understand how Austin and Milley could have tolerated this abomination of

an operation and not fallen on their swords to stop it. The same goes for General McKenzie at CENTCOM, right here in Tampa.

As for the State Department, I was gob-smacked when I learned in September that 23 political and economic officers in our Embassy in Kabul had sent a dissent channel message to Secretary of State Blinken on July 13, saying roughly, “No, do not do this; not this way; if you continue down this path of withdrawing by August 31, Afghanistan will fall rapidly to the Taliban. We need to start evacuating people now.”

A few days after that cable was leaked to the press in September, I saw the media ask President Biden if he had seen that dissent channel cable. He said no. Secretary of State Blinken reportedly simply said, “I’ve seen it.” Let me explain. The dissent channel is only used by diplomats either when they believe they’ve seen malfeasance, or more often, when they strongly disagree with Administration policy and get no satisfaction from their supervisors. These cables go directly from the sender to the Secretary with no clearances from superiors, so there can be blowback to people’s careers for sending dissent channel cables. For Blinken NOT to report to the Commander in Chief what 23 of his own officers were reporting from the field was malfeasance on the part of the Secretary of State. And it’s further evidence of the President’s lack of truth in claiming that there was “consensus” on his plan.

Several Republican politicians have laid the blame for this dumpster fire of a U.S. military operation on the State Department. I think not. Foreign Service Officers know nothing about planning military operations and would not pretend to do so; they would immediately defer to the funny five-sided building in Arlington, VA. The White House itself, however, would have the hubris to plan such an operation. I suspect that National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Advisor for “Domestic” Policy Susan Rice, Obama’s former NSA, were heavily involved in Biden’s operation. I have nothing good to say about any of the three of them, so I will stop there, except to make three more points.

First, I believe the only way the United States can find any redemption in the eyes of our allies, and regain the respect of our adversaries, would be to hold the highest officials responsible for this disgraceful behavior in Afghanistan. If Biden, Blinken, Austin and Milley had any honor, they all would resign. Failing that, impeachment trials and court martials should be convened. If not, I fear for our standing in this world, and I fear a lot of chaos could ensue.

Second, for all of us who have served in Afghanistan and have shed our own blood, sweat and tears, and now are wondering “What was it all for?” my advice to you is to take comfort that we did in fact keep the Taliban largely at bay for 20 years, allowing the Afghan people some semblance of a normal life while preventing attacks on our homeland and elsewhere to emanate from there. Your service to your country, your alliance, and to the innocent civilians in Afghanistan was honorable and noble, so hold your heads high. The shame lies solely with the current Administration.

IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES

According to one of my conservative email blogs, on October 28, a Pentagon official told Congress that ISIS from Afghanistan could attack the U.S. within the next six months, as reported in the latest intelligence update. All the ISIS terrorists have to do is cross over our wide-open southern border. That open wound of a border is as big a betrayal to the American people by President Biden as the abandonment of Afghanistan was to its people and to the Americans living there. Biden swore an oath of office that he “will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the **Constitution** of the United States.” It seems self-evident to me that upholding that oath means upholding the rule of law, and all the laws of the United States of America. The first duty of the federal government is to secure our borders; not to open them to millions of illegal aliens, including terrorists, human and drug smugglers, and other criminals. Since when do Presidents get to pick and choose which parts of the Constitution, such as that only U.S. citizens can vote, or which federal laws, such as legal immigration, that they will enforce? Isn’t President Biden’s behavior since inauguration day with respect to the borders alone adequate grounds for impeachment?

Consequences with Allies: in various Embassies and Missions where I worked throughout my career, we often needed to work jointly with our NATO allies. It was a running joke among the Americans: what is a synonym for “feckless”? Because amongst ourselves, it was usually a three-word phrase: “feckless NATO allies,” at least in terms of cooperating effectively in multilateral diplomacy. And yet, after 20 years of many of them serving steadfastly alongside us in Afghanistan under Article 5, the mutual defense clause of the NATO Treaty, we were the ones who proved to be feckless, cutting and running from the battlefield without even

properly consulting with our allies. Biden didn't even return UK PM Boris Johnson's phone call for over 36 hours after we fled Bagram Air Base. It sits very poorly with me that the United States is now viewed as the untrustworthy NATO ally. Let's see what those consequences will be.

COMMON PROBLEMS AMONG THUG REGIMES

Our fecklessness and perceived weakness will also most certainly embolden our adversaries. But before we look at the potential consequences of the greater danger posed by China, Russia, Iran and North Korea following the debacle in Afghanistan, let's look at some of their own internal challenges and some of the dynamics they have in common as thug regimes. First, there's the issue of demographics. China is in big trouble, as is Russia, while most Iranians feel like destitute prisoners in their own country, and North Koreans continue to starve. I will never forget reading an article on Christmas Day 2017 on the BBC website which described a cookbook the North Korean government had just published for its citizens, telling them how to safely cook and eat tree bark and grass. Unbelievably, the food situation has gotten even worse in the nearly four years since then. The average North Korean is about 5 inches shorter than his South Korean cousin.

Russia's population steadily shrank from its peak of 148.5 million citizens in 1995 until it bottomed in 2009 at 142.7 million. Since then, it has risen to 146.1 million in 2021, and is projected to remain roughly the same for the next five years. However, the Russian population is expected to shrink to 128,600,000 by 2050, despite the government's financial incentives for women to have more children. That is not a healthy dynamic. Further, while life expectancy for women has risen from 74.79 years in 2009 to 78.17 years in 2019, the average lifespan for a Russian male is ten years less as of 2019. In 2009, it was nearly 12 years less. According to one UN-related study, this is the largest gap in life expectancy in the world, and it's largely due to higher rates of heart disease and alcoholism among Russian men. Covering 11 of the world's 24 time zones, Russia's economy ranks only 11th in the world, and it is roughly a trillion dollars less than the state of California's.

Now let's look at China's demographics. Since I retired from the State Department three years ago, I spend a lot of time gambling on the stock market with some of my own IRA money. I am oversubscribed to too many investment companies. One of my favorite investment gurus, Jim Rickards, with Agora Financial, wrote in one of his investment letters for this month: "... no political or

economic event for the remainder of this century will have more impact on the world than the demographic disaster unfolding in China. Nothing like it has ever happened in world history, not even the Black Death of the fourteenth-century.

“The birthrate needed to maintain a population at a level size is 2.1 children per couple. If the birthrate is 1.0, the population will be more than cut in half in 40 years. The only exception to these ironclad rules is immigration. Still, China and Japan in particular are highly homogenous and anti-immigration. This means their birthrate will determine their destiny as a society.

“China’s birthrate today is reported to be 1.7; however, there is good evidence that the actual birthrate is closer to 1.1. At that rate, China will lose 630 million people by 2100. Its population will drop from 1.4 billion to 770 million. This does not mean China and the world will have 70 years before the impact is felt. The impact will be felt starting now and only grow worse as China’s population implodes.

“Not only will the population shrink catastrophically, but it will also age dramatically. China will soon be a society with hundreds of millions in their 80s, 90s, and even over 100-years old....

“This declining birthrate was greatly amplified by China’s one-child policy from 1980 to 2015. Because of a cultural preference for boys, the one-child policy led to the murder of 60 million girls through drowning and sex-selective abortions. This resulted in a skew of boys to girls of about 120:100. The normal biological skew favors boys about 102:100. This means that 60 million men in China cannot find wives because of the murder of infant girls.

“China ended the one-child policy in 2015 and announced a two-child policy. Recently China changed to a three-child policy. It’s too late. Chinese women have decided they will defer marriage, defer children and perhaps not have any children in order to pursue educational and career opportunities. The Chinese culture has become profoundly anti-child. No government policy can change that.”

Rickards explained that these cultural and demographic changes slam productivity because China will lose productive workers as society ages, more of the productive workers who remain will be occupied in low-productivity elder care, and China will be left with hundreds of millions of elderly who have zero output and incur huge costs for elder care. This will be the end of the of the so-called ‘China Miracle,’ which was never really a miracle. It was just a classic case-study in growth from a low earnings base from rural agriculture to urban manufacturing that created a middle class, followed by inertia in the middle-income trap. China’s

economic growth is dramatically slowing due to many factors, among them, massive debt to the tune of \$47 trillion, which is a staggering 281% of GDP; a severe drop in real estate prices following the Evergrande property developer's collapse; and energy shortages due to expanding demand, cold weather, and supply-chain disruptions. The CCP is already closing factories on a large scale to conserve energy for residential heat and light. Mr. Rickards predicts this energy shortage will get much worse in the coming months, particularly since Beijing canceled its coal imports from Australia last year after Canberra challenged Beijing's version of how the COVID 19 epidemic started. Now Beijing is reportedly begging for Australian coal imports, but the Aussies have found new, diversified markets for their much-needed fossil fuel.

Meanwhile, China will remain stuck in the dead end of the middle-income trap, perhaps more so than other developing countries, because the country remains in the steadfast grip of Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party, and Communists make lousy capitalists. They don't care about profitability, only power. This means that Beijing props up state-owned companies while legitimate private businesses are starved for cash; it stifles creativity and innovation, the very ingredients required to break into the ranks of high-income countries by adding intellectual value, since such risk-taking is seldom rewarded in a dictatorship. Therefore, the Communists steal Western IP for a living and simply copy it.

Iran's economy also suffers from the limitations, waste, corruption, and lack of imagination of dictatorship, but it also suffers from international trade and banking sanctions, even if they are unevenly applied. North Korea has little of a genuine economy. Like the other three countries, in fact, its government can be called a criminal enterprise, but in the DPRK's case, that is nearly the sum total of its economic output. As its people starve, the government peddles narcotics (heroin, cocaine, crystal meth, and more) around the globe, as well as conventional weapons and WMD- and missile technology to the most thuggish, unsavory regimes including Syria, Iran, Sudan, Myanmar, and Libya. It has trafficked in counterfeit U.S. currency in the past, particularly \$100 bills. This is a primary reason why the U.S. Treasury has had to add lots of security features to our currency over the past decade plus. With these ill-gotten gains, the Kim family crime syndicate has funded its high-tech weaponry and its own lavish lifestyle.

Somewhat similarly, China ships and smuggles copious amounts of fentanyl into the U.S. every year, enough, over time, to kill each and every one of us. Its dodgy pharmaceutical manufacturers make the stuff, and they either try to ship or mail it into the U.S., marked as some other legitimate commodity, or its mafia triads work

with the Mexican cartels to smuggle it across our southern border. China, like the Soviet Union and North Korea with their gulags and labor/death camps, runs its own “re-education camps” that are full of Muslim Uighurs, Falun Gong members, and thousands of Christians as well. China has added a new twist of evil: it not only cruelly tortures and abuses these prisoners of conscience, it also harvests their organs, sometimes while they are still alive, and without anesthetic. Organ harvesting is a multi-billion-dollar industry for the CCP, and transplants to “organ tourists” provide the major source of income for some hospitals.

I support some Christian missionary ministries in China, Iran, and North Korea, and the tales they tell of the constant torture, including up to death, of Christians in all three countries is horrific. And yet, there is little mention of these martyrs in the Western media. The USG has repeatedly called the torture of the Uighurs in China “genocide,” so I don’t understand why there is so little Western condemnation for the torture and killing of Christians in these three countries in particular, as well.

The bottom-line commonalities between all four tyrannical regimes is that they have virtually no respect for the rule of law; the law is whatever the dictator decides it is on a given day. All four run various cyber-criminal schemes for profit, in addition to cyber-espionage against other states, particularly the United States, and they all use misinformation and propaganda, far more than the truth. They care nothing for individual liberty, or religious, civil, or property rights, which are the means by which we pursue our right to happiness in America. Beijing and Moscow both make use of their indigenous mafias, which operate as appendages of the state when it suits the state. In short, they are dark, evil, criminal regimes that only care about preserving their own power, whatever the cost in human lives or freedoms. Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping, and Kim Jong-Il are all unreformed Communists, while Ayatollah Khomeini and his fellow clerics in Tehran are radical Shi’ite Islamists who behave just like the Commies, except that they seek out and welcome the end of the world according to their ideology. The beauty of nuclear MAD doctrine, mutually assured destruction, is that it works when a country’s leaders are sane. It means they can be deterred from bringing about the end of the world. But that is the Ayatollahs’ ultimate goal as it means their 12th, or Hidden, Imam has returned and will be their gateway to paradise. Something to think about

CONSEQUENCES WITH CHINA, RUSSIA, IRAN AND NORTH KOREA

CHINA:

Let's start with a deeper dive on China and the actions it may take in the coming months as Beijing assesses how much bad behavior it can get away with on Biden's watch. China has long engaged in a global "hybrid warfare" strategy, similar to what the Russians have been doing, and which I will explain more fully below, but in essence, it's "soft power" outreach, combined with cyber-warfare, influence operations/propaganda/misinformation forms of information warfare, hacking to steal commercial and military intellectual property and gather personal data on every human being in countries of interest around the globe to the extent possible; in other words, it's low-level, often concealed attacks on other countries' militaries and civil society below the level of open conflict.

Yet China has a lot to learn about wielding soft power. In an "Epoch Times" article on September 25 about a French military think tank's report on Chinese influence operations, the French concluded that "China's biggest enemy is itself." Its aggressive bullying tactics around the world are back-firing, and over a dozen countries have withdrawn from Xi Jinping's "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR, or "Belt and Road") global trade routes initiative. China's self-serving approach to trade and building out other developing countries' infrastructure under OBOR has often proved too bad a deal for the recipient to live with.

In addition to the Belt and Road initiative, the PRC has been establishing a

China's "String of Pearls" Maritime Port Strategy – in Addition to Its "Belt & Road"



maritime military and trade port route that U.S. officials dubbed "The String of Pearls." Under Xi Jinping's leadership, China has become much more assertive in flexing its military muscle around the globe. It now has permanent military bases in Pakistan and Djibouti, among other places, and it now boasts a larger fleet of blue water Navy ships than the

U.S. has. Its base on the coast in Djibouti in eastern Africa is almost side-by-side with U.S. AFRICOM's sole base in Africa. The Chinese use it in part to spy on and harass our forces there.

Further, China's hyper-aggression in the South China Sea has alienated formerly quiescent Southeast Asian neighbors. Since about 2010, China has dredged up and built artificial reefs and islands in several locations in this sea, causing international alarm about the breadth of its ridiculous, illegal claim to almost the entirety of the South China Sea, as well as causing enormous environmental damage. The Philippines took China to court at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague. The ruling was issued in July 2016, finding that China's spurious claim to some 90% of the South China Sea had no legal standing under the Law of the Sea and other international laws, and upheld the Philippines's suit in its entirety. However, China rejected the Court's unanimous decision, and essentially got away with thumbing its nose at international law. Just who is going to enforce international law in such cases? While the case was pending in The Hague, the people of the Philippines elected a new President, Rodrigo Duterte, who was a thuggish mayor himself who proudly admitted to extra-judicial killings of drug criminals. After the PCA's ruling, President Xi invited Duterte to Beijing and reportedly paid him off with a sizeable bribe. Duterte merely asked for fishing rights in his own territorial waters. Since then, the Chinese military on "its" islands in the Spratley and Paracel Island chains continues to rattle its saber every time an unfriendly foreign navy transits the South China Sea on Freedom of Navigation operations. Besides being able to choke off a major global maritime line of communication near its mainland, China is also aggressively seeking to dredge up oil and gas in the territorial waters of Vietnam, Brunei and others. This area bears close monitoring, to say the least.

The biggest national security gamechanger for the United States, however, is China's two recent tests of hypersonic glide missiles. As I understand it, the U.S. was the first to invent hypersonic technology, but we largely abandoned it at Entry into Force of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty with the Soviet Union in 1988 because the range of hypersonic missiles we were working on then was within that range. With the demise of the INF Treaty after we caught the Russians cheating on it in 2014 for the exact same purpose of working on intermediate range hypersonic cruise missiles, we have gone back to working on that technology ourselves. But the Russians, Chinese, and



even the North Koreans, are all ahead of us. All three have tested hypersonic missile variants within the past few months. What makes them so dangerous is that they are fast, flying at five times the speed of sound, and they are maneuverable in-flight, and thus can defeat all our missile defenses which rely on a predictable straight-line, incoming trajectory.

I saw General Jack Keane the other night on Fox Business News discussing China's hypersonic missile tests, accusing the PRC of "weaponizing outer space." I had to think about that for a minute. He said the PLA had strapped the hypersonic missile, capable of carrying nuclear reentry vehicles (warheads), to the top of an ICBM. The ICBM circled the globe and then released the hypersonic missile from space. This is almost certainly a violation of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, which explicitly forbids placing and firing weapons in outer space. It was also a wake-up call for Washington that the Chinese can attack us from anywhere at any time, and we are defenseless against the incoming hypersonic glide or cruise missiles. The Russians likely have this same capability, and the North Koreans are trying as well. Take note.

Even so, China itself is not an unstoppable, ever-growing economy and threat to us. It has cause to fear riots and instability at home. Its private pension funds called "Wealth Management Products" are turning out to be nothing more than giant bank-run Ponzi schemes. Now there's a run on the banks as people are comprehending what's happening, only to find that Ponzi, or pyramid, schemes don't work in reverse! Chinese citizens sometimes are being offered deeds to useless properties instead. It goes back to the CCP's poor management of the economy, to include the Evergrande problem of bad real estate deals, and the building of numerous ghost cities to keep employment high. Jim Rickards stated that these dodgy state-run property investments have wasted a lot of foreign investment and wiped away two to three percent of GDP annually.

He suggested that the declining birthrate, crashing population, skewed proportion of males to females, and lost productivity will cause a crisis of confidence in the Communist Party and may precipitate regime change independent of other factors including the potential for war," which I will discuss next.

Rickards quoted from a September 2021 "Foreign Policy" magazine article entitled "China is a Declining Power – And That's the Problem," written by two American professors. The commonly held view around the world is that China is a steadily rising power that can bide its time while building its economic, political, and

military strength vis-à-vis the United States. However, the two professors detailed the many reasons why China's power is actually peaking right now, due to many of the factors described above, along with unilateral and multilateral moves by other nations to counter China's growing strength and aggressiveness. The professors pointed out that, "Most alarmingly, think tank assessments and U.S. Defense Department reports show China's increasingly formidable military now stands a real chance of winning a war against the United States in the Western Pacific." Indeed, in my last year on the faculty at the U.S. Army War College, I participated in numerous multilateral diplomatic negotiating sessions at various universities around the U.S. focused on the South China Sea scenario. I also played in tabletop South China Sea war game exercises at the Army War College and mentored strategy papers on this same topic. While the U.S. has been focused largely on Afghanistan and Iraq for the past 20 years, our adversaries have not remained static. China, Russia, Iran and North Korea have all focused massive investments into strengthening and positioning their militaries, and especially their nuclear capabilities, to counter our forces to maximum effect.

Now, while the two professors predicted that China must act within the next decade to seize Taiwan and fully integrate it with mainland China, both Jim Rickards and another one of my financial gurus are predicting that Beijing could move militarily against Taiwan at any time after November 12th – just 10 days from now. In the coming days, the 19th Communist Party Central Committee meeting will take place in Beijing, from which Chairman Xi will emerge as China's de facto Emperor for Life, with what Chinese culture calls the Mandate of Heaven. Both of my financial gurus recommend selling all your Chinese and Taiwanese stocks before November 12. Other commentators, perhaps more sensibly, think President Xi will wait until after the 2022 Winter Olympics. Here's one key reason why Beijing may attack Taiwan sooner rather than later, though: it would gain control of almost all the most advanced semiconductor chip manufacturing in the world, simply by holding Taiwanese territory. I'm working on selling my shares of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing, the biggest, most important chip foundry of them all, and United Microelectronics Corporation, also located in Taipei, and perhaps the second most important chip foundry.

On his October 25 show, Larry Kudlow on Fox Business News quoted as follows from a Chinese government statement: "The Biden government is the most incapable and degenerate in U.S. history." I think Chinese officials have had five decades to take the measure of the man, and unfortunately, they know Joe Biden

and his son Hunter too well. So, we must ask ourselves some questions: How much more vigorously will Beijing threaten and seize underwater natural resources from its neighbors in the South China Sea and push its “One Belt, One Road” initiative throughout the globe to other nations’ detriment? Because of Biden’s unbelievable display of weakness in sneaking out of Afghanistan and then *taking orders from the Taliban* in Kabul to evacuate vulnerable Americans and Afghans, how much sooner has he moved Chinese President Xi Jinping’s desired timeline up to overtake the United States as the sole global superpower? Xi has openly declared he wants to replace us by 2050. What is that putative timeline now? Further, what sleazy deals will China make with the Taliban in order to extract Afghanistan’s trillion dollars’ worth of underground minerals? The Russian website RT reported two nights ago that Bagram Airbase was operating again, and rumor control posited that it was China at the helm there now. Of course! And China may well invite Pakistan, Iran, and/or Russia to come play in the center of the Afghan sandbox, rather than each of them continuing to make mischief from their respective border areas. How will Pakistan exploit its inroads in Afghanistan from its 40+ years of complicity with the Taliban, perhaps together with China? Will this open cooperation with the Afghan tyrants lead to further radicalization within Pakistan? How might China and Pakistan work together from Afghanistan to go after India, a country they both hate, and with whom they both fight continued border skirmishes?

How soon will China attack Taiwan, or at the least, further ramp up the fears of the Taiwanese that the United States will not have Taipei’s back if and when China does attempt to seize and regain that island? American soldiers are reportedly now present in Taiwan, but I do not know how many. Taiwan’s defense strategy is to position itself like a porcupine – too difficult to attack. But China has overwhelming firepower. The main question is whether Biden has the decency and intestinal fortitude to help defend Taiwan. Japan says it will help if we will. It breaks my heart that this is even an open question.

RUSSIA:

Let me start with the fact that I’m an Old Cold Warrior – and I’ve never stopped. Unfortunately, I’ve been proven right. I was a Russian linguist as a U.S. Army Sergeant at a strategic military intelligence site in West Berlin from 1983 to 1986. I was a 98-Golf – an Electronic Warfare Signals Intelligence Intercept Operator –

but I can't tell you what I did! I've spent much of my career as first a soldier, then a diplomat, opposing communism and socialism, and espousing freedom and capitalism. The irony is that I'm fighting socialism at home now, evidently as a domestic violent terrorist! Who knew? (Let's go, Brandon!)

Anyway, following my Army days, after earning a degree in Central and East European Affairs and Russian Language Studies, I became a diplomat in 1990. Among 10 overseas assignments, I served in Moscow from March 1993 to February 1995, and eight hours down the road in Minsk from February 1995 to August 1996. During my stint in Moscow, although Russia was floundering politically and was on its knees economically, as we felt history galloping in front of our eyes every day, there was still a sense of hope that Russia might make the strategic decision to develop an open, pluralistic society and a Western-looking, market-based democracy. However, those hopes did not pan out. There was simply too much totalitarian baggage, disrespect for the rule of law, and suspicion of the West that Russia was unwilling and unable to overcome. The United States' encouragement in 1993-4 of economic "shock therapy" – the sale of state-owned enterprises into private hands – did not help our cause. Valuable strategic assets were sold for pennies on the dollar to kleptocrats in corrupt deals, creating the infamous oligarchs who first surrounded President Yeltsin, then President Putin after him. And we have observed how Putin has dispatched with any oligarch who has displeased him. Putin himself is rumored to be one of the world's wealthiest men; no extra credit for deducing how he got that way. But I digress.

Pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet Russia have always viewed internal instability and chaos as the ultimate enemy, thus justifying imperial or Soviet or post-Soviet authoritarianism as the appropriate preventative mechanism. Current Russian political philosophers further define chaos as the forces of Western liberalism – the "intervention of ideas that are alien to our culture," and thus it falls to the *state* to restrain or prevent those forces from affecting sovereign Russia. Accordingly, in a February 2017 article in the "Times of Israel," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov articulated Russia's main foreign policy objective as seeking "an end to the Western-dominated world order."

A main problem for Russia in at least the Soviet and post-Soviet era, is that it is morally and spiritually bankrupt. Other than xenophobic Russian nationalism wrapped loosely with the Russian Orthodox Church, it has no effective counter-narrative to Western liberal values and ideals; like Tom Cruise in "A Few Good

Instruments of National Power				TOOLS OF NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY/STRATEGY		
DIPLOMATIC	INFORMATION	MILITARY	ECONOMIC	FINANCE	INTELLIGENCE	LAW ENFORCEMENT
Diplomatic Recognition	Public Diplomacy	War	Trade Policy	Fiscal Policy	Knowledge	Review Decisions of National/Multinational Legal Organizations
Representation	Public Policy Statements	Nuclear Warfare	Trade Promotion	International Monetary Fund / World Bank	Analyzed Information	Treaty Compliance
Negotiation	Public Affairs/ Press Releases	Conventional Warfare	Trade Sanctions	Debt Forgiveness	Activity	UN Security Council Resolutions
Advocacy	Diplomatic Demarches	Forcible Entry	Trade Alliances	Taxes in Support of Elements of Power	Collection of Information	Customary International Law
Signaling	Print, Electronic and Film	Strikes/Raids	Economic Development	Borrowing for Expenditures	Exchange of Intelligence Information with Other States/ Multinational Orgns	Extradition
Intimidation	Information Operations	Unconventional Warfare	Embargoes	Subsidy in Support of National Policy	External Training	Stationing and Overflight Rights
Coalition Building	Psychological Ops	Coercion/ Compellence/ Deterrence	Foreign Aid	Regulation	Covert/Paramilitary Activity	International Law Enforcement
Consensus Building	Military Deception	Show of Force/ Freedom of Navigation Operations	Technology Controls	Environmental		
Restrict Diplomatic Activities	Computer Network Operations	Deploy Carrier Battle Group	Blockade	Freeze/Seize Monetary Assets		
Recall Ambassador	Electronic Warfare	Upgrade Alert Status	Overseas Presence	Monetary Policy		
Break Diplomatic Relations	Public Affairs	Military Operations Other Than War/ Peace Support Operations	Arms Control	Exchange Rates		
Embassy Draw Down/NEO/Total Evacuation	Operations Security	Peace Enforcement/ Peacekeeping				
Coordination with International Organizations and NGOs		Non-Combatant Evacuation Ops (NEO)				
		Humanitarian Assistance				
		Sct'y Assistance/ Mil-Mil Contacts				
		Nation Building				
		Homeland Security				
		Military Assistance to Civil Authorities				

Men,” Russia “can’t handle the truth.” Its only means of competing with truth are with lies, deception, and brute force.

The DIMEFIL acronym explains the tools in a country’s “national tool box” with which a government can wield both soft and hard power as

the means to influence or coerce other countries, using the capabilities within each government department, agency, or ministry. Here’s a relatively new twist on how Russia is using them. In February 2013, General Valery Gerasimov—Russia’s Chief of the General Staff, published a 2,000-word [article](#) in a military journal that outlined a new kind of warfare that was soon after labeled “The Gerasimov Doctrine.” He described a combination of hidden military and civilian methods of attack that are now known as “hybrid” or “asymmetric” or “gray-zone warfare,” to include all methods of information warfare – propaganda, misinformation, etc., combined with cyber-warfare to not only mislead populations, but to steal information, and attack banks, utilities, and other critical infrastructure, along with conducting targeted assassinations, espionage, and so on. In other words, it’s every kind of state-sponsored guerrilla warfare below the level of kinetic military force-on-force warfare. American information warfare expert Molly McKew wrote an article explaining the Gerasimov Doctrine in “Politico” in September 2017, sharing some of the General’s quotes: “The very ‘rules of war’ have changed. The role of nonmilitary means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness. ... All this is supplemented by military means of a concealed character.”

McKew added herself, “The Russian security state defines America as the primary adversary. The Russians know they can’t compete head-to-head with us—economically, militarily, technologically—so they create new battlefields. They are not aiming to become stronger than us, but to weaken us until we are equivalent.”

McKew continued, “Russia might not have hacked American voting machines, but by selectively amplifying targeted disinformation and misinformation on social media—it arguably won a significant battle without most Americans realizing it ever took place. The U.S. electoral system is the heart of the world’s most powerful democracy, and now—thanks to Russian actions—we’re locked in a national argument over its legitimacy. We’re at war with ourselves, and the enemy never fired a physical shot.”

“The information space opens wide asymmetrical possibilities for reducing the fighting potential of the enemy,” Gerasimov wrote. McKew added, “... there’s no question that Russian intervention is systematic and multi-layered. This structure challenges us, because we don’t necessarily understand how it has been put into practice; like all guerrilla doctrine, it prioritizes conservation of resources and decentralization, which makes it harder to detect and follow. And strategically, its goals aren’t the ones we’re used to talking about. The Kremlin isn’t picking a winner; it’s weakening the enemy and building an environment in which anyone but the Kremlin loses.

“Herein lies the real power of the Gerasimov-style shadow war: It’s hard to muster resistance to an enemy you can’t see, or aren’t even sure is there. But it’s not an all-powerful approach; the shadowy puppeteering at the heart of the Gerasimov Doctrine also makes it inherently fragile. Its tactics begin to fail when light is thrown onto how they work and what they aim to achieve. This requires leadership and clarity about the threat—which we saw briefly in France, when the government rallied to warn voters about Russian info ops in advance of the presidential election. For now, though, America is still in the dark—not even on defense, let alone offense,” McKew concluded. I think it’s time for a belly laugh. Here’s a great piece of Russian military recruiting propaganda. Click thi link to view the video:

<https://rumble.com/embed/vcchtf/?pub=1>

Indeed, it has taken us far too long to understand that Russia is in fact conducting a daily, full-on, frontal, rear, direct, and indirect assault, not just on Ukraine, but on the entire West. We must accept that we can’t wish it away or pretend it’s not happening, just because we can’t always see it. It’s taking place across the political, economic, informational, cultural, and cyber spectrums, not just in the military realm. Our societies – our civilians – have to learn to handle and protect

ourselves from this unseen psychological “invasion.” Every one of us needs good cyber-security tools online, and lots of common sense!

Yet Russian disinformation and subversive cultural campaigns against the West are nothing new. Moscow has been prosecuting what U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General Matthew Ridgway in 1955 observed was “a continuous state of conflict as a matter of national policy.” I wrote a term paper at CU Boulder in 1988 about how the KGB funded the World Council of Churches-led anti-nuclear protests across Europe in the early-mid-1980s. This was when the Soviet Union was deploying 333 intermediate-range triple-warheaded SS-20 nuclear missiles in East Germany that were capable of independently targeting 999 West European sites. The United States deployed its intermediate-range Pershing-II missiles in West Germany in response – and as we defended Western Europe, left-wing West Europeans blamed the U.S. for the conflict!

Here’s another, more recent, example of Russian dirty money at work. Fox Business News reported in mid-2017 that Russia was funding U.S. environmental groups opposing the development and expansion of American fossil fuel extraction projects. This was done in order to prevent the United States from exporting gas, oil and coal to Europe to provide Russia’s neighbors with viable energy options.

Let’s look deeper at Vladimir Putin’s “whole-of-government” approach to using Russia’s oil and gas as not just a hard-currency earner, but as a political weapon. Over the past 20+ years since the Soviet Union’s collapse, through a variety of unprovoked asymmetric actions in order to keep its periphery weak and destabilized, Russia has succeeded in keeping most of its “near abroad” out of the arms of the EU and NATO. Further, by weaponizing the provision of oil and gas as economic cudgels, Russia ensures these nations remain at least partially economically dependent on Moscow’s good will, since Moscow has turned off the taps at will to punish bad behavior. With Germany and Russia soon completing the Nordstream II gas pipeline from Russia under the Baltic Sea and directly into Germany (thanks to Biden waiving the sanctions instead of shipping oil and gas to Europe ourselves), the Germans too will likely experience what it feels like to be held hostage by Moscow and literally be left out in the cold at Putin’s whim.

Microsoft reported in an Oct. 24, 2021 blog post that Russian hacker Nobelium's latest wave targeted "resellers and other technology service providers" of cloud services. This is the same Russian hacker tied to Moscow that attacked the entire U.S. Government last year through the Solar Winds breakthrough. At the same

time as these ongoing attacks occurred between July and September, Russian hackers also tied to Putin's government shut down a major U.S. East Coast oil pipeline – remember that?

Here's another cyber-hacking example. As a soldier in West Berlin back in the 1980s, I remember hearing about how Soviet "spetsnaz" troops were prepared to physically infiltrate the U.S. in order to poison our water supply and attack our critical infrastructure. Now, the Russian Government and its proxy hackers evidently can shut down U.S. nuclear power plants and our electricity grid, without ever having to leave Moscow.

Meanwhile, back in June, for weeks Russia mustered a large fleet and aerial assets in the Pacific Ocean near Hawaii in what's been widely recognized as Russia's largest Pacific military drills since the end of the Cold War. The Pentagon closely monitored the somewhat unprecedented exercises which have seen at least 20 warships, along with submarines, fighter jets, and long-range bombers operating a mere 300 miles off Hawaii's coast. But at one point, Russian vessels and aircraft **came a mere 35 miles off Hawaii's coast** as the massive war games were underway. A spokesman for US Indo-Pacific Command said, "We closely tracked all vessels." And twice scrambled Hawaii National Guard F-22 Raptor jets, as Russian Bear bombers headed too close to our shores. The Russian side is now divulging that its military was undertaking **mock attacks on a simulated aircraft carrier strike group**.

One of my conservative bloggers sent me an email on Monday, October 25th, 2021, reporting that "after their provocative sail through of the Tsugaru Strait on the previous Monday, a narrow chokepoint waterway through Japan, **a large group of Chinese and Russian warships continued encircling Japan during an Indo-Pacific patrol mission** that went into the weekend.

Russian media cited the country's defense ministry as follows on Saturday: "Russian and Chinese navy vessels have completed their first joint patrol mission in the Pacific Ocean, covering a distance of over 1,700 nautical miles (around 3,100km) in a week." It included **at least ten warships**, with Russia's military releasing some stunning footage of the large naval group. Chinese state media "hailed the joint patrol mission as a crucial counterweight to the U.S. presence and Washington's '**destabilization**' of the region."

Here's some further Russia/China cooperation. Now, I'm not a big believer in global warming, but the fact is, the Arctic waters above Russia have been

warming, and Russia is being paid by China to clear new northern transportation routes for Chinese goods to reach Europe throughout the year. Meanwhile, Putin's oil oligarchs have successfully expanded oil and gas drilling in the Arctic as his military has established a permanent base on Franz Joseph Land, near the top of the world. And get this, Putin has laid even claim to most of the Arctic as Russian territory, all the way across the top of the world to islands just north of Canada! There is massive natural resources wealth beneath the Arctic waters, and Russia wants to claim it all!

In addition, as many Western avenues have remained closed off to Russia due to sanctions imposed on it because of its 2014 invasion of Ukraine, Moscow has expanded its trade and security ties with much of the rest of the world, trying to emulate China in establishing critical footholds in Africa, Asia, and South America. Ominously, it now has a permanent naval port and airbase in Syria, along with a land base in Sudan, and is trying to con Middle Eastern and other states that it would be a more reliable security partner than the United States is. However, unlike China, Russia does not have the economic wherewithal to invest in massive infrastructure projects in developing countries. It can only sell its natural resources, which still represent the bulk of the Russian economy. Russia's long-term failure to diversify its economy poses another risk to its social well-being as the best-educated Russians continue to emigrate to greener pastures around the globe.

Putin's relentless aggression in Ukraine and his seizure of its territories, his maintenance of the other frozen conflicts in Russia's so-called "near abroad" in Georgia, Moldova, and Armenia and Azerbaijan, his seemingly permanent air and naval bases in Syria, his growing security ties to China and Iran, his cyber-hacking and disinformation programs and meddling in Western election campaigns, his provocative overflights of NATO and Scandinavian territories, Russian military aircrafts' deliberate near misses with our aircraft and naval vessels, and Russia's massive military and nuclear modernization, all speak to Putin's desire to prove that Russia is still a superpower that must be reckoned with.

While we've been occupied in Afghanistan and Iraq and elsewhere for the past 20 years, Russia has been steadily improving its military weaponry across nearly the entire spectrum, from new nuclear weapons to ships to aircraft to electronic warfare and anti-air defense systems. And it had the chance to deploy and try out its cutting-edge technologies in Ukraine and Syria, testing more flexible tactical

warfighting methods. Starting in about 2014 it violated the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty with the deployment of medium-range nuclear-capable cruise missiles, and the INF Treaty is now defunct. And Russia has built (as has China, as noted above) hypersonic glide vehicles that can penetrate U.S. ballistic missile defense systems. If Russia – and/or China -- were to launch enough of them with a nuclear payload, it's game over.

Russia is expected to deploy next year the oft-delayed RS-28 Sarmat missile, which NATO calls the SS-X-30 "Satan 2". Each RS-28 Sarmat missile can reportedly hold 10 or more nuclear warheads, enough to effectively decimate the entirety of Texas or of France, with just one missile.

So while Russia has vastly improved its overall military capabilities and its nukes in particular over the past 20 years, our entire aging nuclear triad needs **\$1 trillion** in upgrades and modernization, just to remain viable. We have not rolled a nuclear warhead off of a new production line since 1992. Yet, the Democrats' "Build Back Better" bill they're working on right now includes tens or hundreds of millions of dollars for something called "tree equity"!

Moscow has reconstituted four armies on Ukraine's borders, rebuilt the Black Sea Fleet, created a powerful anti-access and area-denial bubble in the Black Sea, militarized Ukrainian energy installations there, and prepared the logistical infrastructure for a major war with Ukraine, including potential amphibious operations in the South. It has been building nuclear bunkers in Feodosiia and Sevastopol. The Russian military clearly regards large-scale, protracted conventional war, backed by mounting nuclear threats, to be a real possibility, at least with respect to keeping its territorial gains in Ukraine.

According to three researchers from the U.S. Army Cyber Institute in mid-2017, in addition to kinetic operations in Crimea and the Don Basin and pervasive cyber-attacks, Ukraine has seen unconventional tactics like targeted assassinations; distributed hit lists against Ukrainian officials, officers, and soldiers; and information operations directed against the population.... In the last two years, the Ukrainian energy grid has been attacked twice. Rail, financial, aviation, security, and civilian business sectors have also sustained robust cyber-attacks. These events significantly affect the everyday lives of the country's citizens, combining to create a siege mentality."

Per the views of the two U.S. Army majors at Ft. Leavenworth, as for humanitarian effects, Russia and the separatists have not been reluctant to inflict civilian

casualties in Ukraine. In fact, as of the spring of 2017, the fighting in eastern Ukraine had cost some 10,000 lives, and displaced a few million. This is Russia's practice of limited warfare which does not seek to topple the existing regime, but to "perpetually conduct operations aimed at weakening the adversary from the inside out," or, put another way, to surround the Ukrainian forces, cut off their access to the outside world, and slowly bleed them out over time. This allows Russia "to operate with near impunity while inflicting severe losses on the Ukrainian military and civilian population." Such active measures have not been targeting the military and political system in isolation, but they are typical as part of a broader effort to subvert Western institutions including the news media, financial markets, and intelligence agencies.

Questions: Will Russia make further incursions into Ukraine, overtly threaten the Baltics, or other former Soviet states? Daily watching the weaknesses of Biden and his administration, how far will Moscow push its pet envelopes of mayhem and destruction across the DIMEFIL spectrum, whether alone, or in concert with other troublemakers China, Iran, and Syria? In the economic sphere, I've seen articles about China, Russia, and Iran contemplating a gold-backed multilateral crypto-currency that would serve to end the U.S. dollar's reign as the de facto world currency. Hatred for the greenback is something all three have in common.

Oh, and meanwhile, the nuclear ashes at the Chernobyl nuclear plant in Ukraine continue to spark and flare, and it's uncertain whether they will cause another

meltdown, even though they've been encased in a concrete sarcophagus. Lest you run out of things to worry about, stay tuned on the Chernobyl channel.

Iran's Direct Route to the Mediterranean



IRAN:

Let's turn to Iran. How many of you realize that since about 2016, Iran has achieved direct land and air routes from Tehran to Beirut

and the Mediterranean Sea? Iran profited greatly from our military involvement in Iraq and has free transit routes over and through that country. Then, Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Hezbollah militias pretty much own the southern third of Syria, as well as almost free rein in Lebanon, with their troops sitting right on

top of Israel and Jordan's northern borders. Any questions as to why Israel conducts regular air strikes in southern Syria?

How many of you are aware that Iran recently conducted a drone strike against U.S. military forces in Syria? According to an October 26 report in "The Hill," U.S. officials reportedly believe that Iran was likely behind a drone attack the prior week on a military base in southern Syria that houses American forces. They asserted that Iran provided resources and encouraged the attack at a military outpost in al-Tanf, Syria, The Associated Press reported, but that the drones used to carry out the attack were not launched from Iran. The attack is believed to have included five drones laden with explosive charges, and both the U.S. side of the al-Tanf base and the Syrian side were hit. No injuries or deaths were reported from the attack. Finally, on October 29, Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the U.S. was sanctioning six Iranian targets linked to the regime's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle activities.

However, instead of confronting Iran for its malfeasance since taking office, according to an October 8 report from "The Hill," the Biden administration officially lifted sanctions on two Iranian groups involved in the manufacturing of deadly missiles. The sanctions, targeting the Mammut Industrial Group (Mammut Industries) and its subsidiary Mammut Diesel, were originally imposed by the Trump administration in September 2020 as part of efforts to increase a maximum pressure campaign of sanctions on Tehran over its nuclear activity and actions in the region criticized as malign and destabilizing. The entities were identified as being "key producers and suppliers of military-grade, dual-use goods for Iran's primary developer of liquid propelled missile programs." They are part of an estimated 1,500 sanctions imposed by the Trump administration since 2018, when then-President Trump withdrew from the international nuclear accord with Iran, called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The move occurs just as the Biden Administration is formally attempting to restart talks with the Iranian regime.

Let's talk about the JCPOA. I was there in Vienna in 2014-15 when the nuclear deal was being negotiated with Iran. Then-Secretary of State John Kerry seemed to constantly visit our Mission for the negotiations. You have no idea what an ordeal the care and feeding of the President or a Cabinet official is for the hosting embassy or mission. I was the Arms Control Counselor and my section did everything arms control-related that didn't involve the International Atomic Energy Agency or IAEA. So my sister section, the IAEA Section, bore the brunt

of the logistics burden. But the negotiations themselves between the P-5+1 and Iran were very tightly controlled by Kerry and Energy Secretary Moniz, without even a notetaker from the U.S. Mission. In my opinion, the deal that was struck was so bad that President Trump was 100% correct to tear it up. The Iranians were the ones needing sanctions relief and normalized banking and trade relations, not us. However, there's an unwritten rule in negotiating: the side that wants the deal the most is playing the weakest hand. That side will surrender more of its requirements and redlines in order to seal the deal. It was clearly evident to me, watching from a slight distance, that Obama and Kerry (evidently because they desired to achieve this "legacy") wanted the deal more than the Iranians or anyone else at the table, and thus, Iran largely dictated the terms. Most of the benchmarks in the agreement that Iran had to meet, such as limiting the amount of heavy water it could possess, or centrifuges it could run, were only temporary and set to expire in periods of 5, 10 or 15 years, essentially leaving Iran to just wait out those provisions and then it could legally pursue nuclear weapons. And the verification procedures are so weak that, to me, they were a joke. The Iranians themselves were allowed to gather the air and soil samples from the suspect nuclear sites at Qom, or Bushehr, or Esfahan, or wherever, and hand them over to the IAEA inspectors. For all we know, those samples were gathered in the Ayatollah's backyard in Tehran.

However, here's the biggest rub. Not for one single minute since the deal was signed in July of 2015 has the Islamic Republic of Iran been in compliance with the JCPOA. It has always deliberately done something wrong: still possessed too much heavy water, had too much UF₆ running through its centrifuges, or processed the uranium to a higher level of enrichment than the agreement allowed, or decreased cooperation with the IAEA, etc. Do you remember Secretary Kerry promising that the moment Iran ceased to be compliant with the JCPOA, "snap-back sanctions" would immediately be imposed? Yeah, right.

And now, here's the killer point: there's a missionary to Israel that I support named Mike Evans, with the Jerusalem Prayer Team. In a letter he wrote in mid-September, Dr. Evans reported that a senior Israeli defense official had told him that Israel anticipated that Iran would have sufficient weapons-grade uranium for a nuclear warhead within two months. David Albright, the well-known American nuclear scientist of the Institute for Science and International Security concurred with this assessment a few days later, based on analysis of the IAEA's reporting. Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz himself stated last month that Iran was two months away from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

Friends, we may be only days from the Ayatollahs possessing a nuclear weapon. Let that sink in. We know they purchased the design for a nuclear warhead from the A.Q. Khan Network in Pakistan in the 1990s. Now it's a matter of forming the warhead and mating it to an already existing long-range missile. Granted, the Iranians have not done any active nuclear testing, but there are ways to simulate that, using sub-critical tests.

Yet at the G-20 Meeting in Rome this past weekend, the French, German, British and American leaders expressed their “grave and growing concern” over the Islamic Republic’s accelerated pace of nuclear development. They vowed to ensure “Iran can never develop or acquire a nuclear weapon,” even though it may already be too late. They also committed to continuing to “work closely” with Russia, China, and the European Union High Representative “in resolving this critical issue.” How confident do you feel that that JCPOA signatories, and wanna-be-again signatory Joe Biden will actually do anything significant to stop Iran? A better question is, what do you think Israel might do – in the very near future? Particularly in conjunction, perhaps, with its Middle Eastern partners under the Abraham Accords?

Also, how much more will Iran try to shake down the Biden administration, and how much further will it go to threaten Israel’s existence while continuing to destabilize its neighbors from Iraq to Lebanon to Yemen, especially if it has, or the world thinks it might have, an operating nuclear weapon? How will a weak and deluded President Biden handle that?

North Korea:

Then there’s good ole’ North Korea, which has already restarted its nuclear reactor at Yongbyong. A BBC article online on October 10, 2021 summarized NK’s continuing progress in developing WMD as follows: “In September, the country tested four new weapons systems including a new long-range cruise missile, a train-launch system for a ballistic missile, a hypersonic missile, and an anti-aircraft missile.” This is cutting edge stuff.

Yet Biden’s administration barely made a peep as Pyongyang successively tested these new missile and weapon systems in September. Why not? Does it not have the professional bandwidth to deal firmly with Kim Jong-Il while simultaneously confronting bad behavior by China, Iran, Russia, and the Taliban? Can you imagine how President Trump would have reacted to the DPRK’s missile tests?

What will Kim Jong-Il perpetrate next? Will he start colluding more directly with China, Russia and Iran, which I would categorize as today's Quadrilateral Axis of Evil. Kim knew better than push President Trump too far. One has to wonder whether he feels constrained at all by the Biden administration.

SOLUTIONS:

If I were not a Christian with faith that our almighty God can still cause “all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose,” I would be scared and broken-hearted beyond repair. But I know that our King of Kings and Lord of Lords can still bring beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning through the miracles He can create, despite the self-serving mendacity of certain political figures. Keep praying, including for all our leaders, as we are instructed to do in the Bible! It can be hard to find the right words to pray for the Dems, but there's a marvelous website I commend to all of you, called Intercessors for America. You can find it at IFApray.org. It's like finding a massive conservative Christian prayer chain across our land. Also, pray that Almighty God will thwart the evil plans of these dictators named above to do harm to our allies and ourselves.

Next, the Biden administration needs a firm, realistic understanding of the world as it is, not as it wants it to be, accompanied by realistic, achievable strategies that incorporate our allies and friends as much as possible.

THE NEED FOR A NEW POLICY ON, AND STRATEGY FOR, COUNTERING CHINA AND RUSSIA:

The United States needs a whole new policy on, and strategy for, containing China and Russia, as well as Iran and North Korea. It must be a clear-eyed, hard-headed, comprehensive policy and strategy. First, the Administration must take pains to explain to the American people what these four capitals in particular, and as appropriate, are up to in their continuous, subversive, expansive conflict against us and all of the West, in both the civilian and military spheres. The U.S. military also must do away with its phasing construct: we are no longer in a “peace-war-peace” paradigm, but in a steady state of low-level, largely hidden civilian and military clashes with both of the other two military superpowers. The United States and all Western nations should have long ago acknowledged that neither Chinese President Xi Jinping nor President Putin was ever our friend. On the contrary, while they may not aspire to directly overthrow the United States or other

Western governments, the evidence shows they both remain committed to thwarting the Western-dominated post-WWII world order. Therefore, their national objectives and ours almost never converge. We have to educate ourselves on their governments' malign activities against us, develop counter-strategies, and we have to quit kidding ourselves that we can work together with them in all but a few circumstances. In other words, our government and the American people need to readopt a Cold War mentality, clearly grasping that these four dictators are already on a war footing against us, sometimes individually, and sometimes collectively, so it's time for us to do the same.

As a retired diplomat, I will nearly always support continued engagement with our adversaries. We have to promote dialogue in order to understand each other's motivations and national positions, avoid miscalculations, and strive to influence one another's behavior. When negotiating, a common American mistake, however, through the past seven decades has been to assume that our counterparts across the table think like us and share our values. Certainly, the Chinese, Russians, Iranians and North Koreans do not. For all of them, truth and the facts are something to be manipulated for national gain; they are not guides for moral behavior. We must accept that reality while we grapple with their mendacity and manipulation of our values against us. It's so much easier for an individual, or a country, to lie, destroy, cheat and steal, than it is to be honest, honorable

To go along with a new policy, we must develop a new, multi-pronged and muscular but wise, strategy to counter all their audacious actions that have opposed international law and international norms; a strategy that exposes for all to see their behavior for what it is and that demonstrates our resolve in countering it and offering better options to the international community.

-- First, likeminded Western nations must "sing in harmony" to vigorously expose and condemn pernicious behavior from these thug regimes. For example, the U.S. should join with Australia in calling out China for its deliberate spread of the deadly COVID 19 virus around the globe; a virus it deliberately created in its Wuhan lab where it illicitly creates offensive bio-weapons.

-- Second, the United States should continue and add to the economic and political sanctions against officials from all four nations as their continued violations of international norms and laws dictates, in conjunction with allies. In doing so, we message to them that unacceptable behavior in the international arena begets punishment from the international community.

-- Third, we must continually shine a spotlight on their behavior, holding them accountable for destructive actions. In other words, our media needs to relearn how to cover the international arena, and how to tell the truth. Our diplomats also need to directly and aggressively challenge these countries' misdeeds in international multilateral fora, from the UN to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Vienna where Russia continues to flout its obligations to resolve the Ukrainian crisis, to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna where Iran flouts its nuclear commitments, to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva where Russia, China and Iran make significant arms control mischief for the sake of doing so, to the World Trade Organization where Russia and China look to see what they can get away with under international trade laws and regulations. We have to remember: we have the truth and the facts on our side; Russia, China, Iran and North Korea have little international credibility left, and we must continue exposing their lies to the light – with both our domestic and international audiences.

-- Fourth, Washington should develop something like a “Breedlove Doctrine.” Former SACEUR General Breedlove called on NATO to take offensive counter-actions against Russia in cyber-space and information operations. NATO did get to yes on the question as to whether a major Russian cyber-attack against a NATO nation would trigger Article 5 of the Washington Treaty for NATO's collective self-defense, and finally NATO countries need to collectively muster the political wherewithal to go on the counter-offensive, after years of constant cyber-attacks on SHAPE HQ and NATO countries and Western infrastructure.

-- Sixth, the United States also should reverse course and provide as many energy resources to Europe as possible, thereby undercutting Russia's key economic weapon against its neighbors, giving them energy options, and limiting Russia's overall economic prowess to do harm across all spheres.

-- Seventh, the Biden administration should never again meet with Iranian or North Korean leaders without brand new, signature-ready agreements in hand on our terms to be signed unconditionally, that require both nations to verifiably denuclearize, **or else**. Each agreement would offer carrots as well as sticks.

-- Eighth, America must lead the West in general to find the political will, economic underpinnings, and social compact with our populations to counter China and Russia's perpetual, whole-of-government threat. It took us over 45

years to win the long Cold War with the Soviet Union in which the existential threat to us was stark and clear. Now we have to remain prepared to face these sustained but ambiguous, unpredictable, asymmetric attacks against our friends, our economies, our critical infrastructure, our values, and our very psyches. This means the entire population of each Western country must be awakened from its lethargy to adopt an updated Cold War mentality against all four nations, actually, and become vigilant in protecting our on-line lives, and our way of life, from these predators.

We need to continue to refine our “active measures” – to coin the Soviet phrase – across the DIMEFIL spectrum to affect Beijing and Moscow’s calculus. We will likely never be friends with the PRC or Russian Federation, and I don’t want to be implacable enemies. Unfortunately, it suits the ongoing mentality in Moscow and Beijing to view us as such, in a political zero-sum game. Washington, both the Administration and the Congress need to “get it” – that it is *Moscow and Beijing* that are trying to interfere in our democracy and we are no longer going to let them get away with it.

Here are more tactics: The U.S. and allied Navies must perform constant multilateral Freedom Of Navigation exercises in the SCS and the Black Sea to send the message to China and Russia, respectively, that they do not own these bodies of water; the U.S. must increase arms sales to Japan, ROK, Taiwan, Australia, India, Israel, Ukraine, and NATO partners, and increase multilateral exercises everywhere; engage NATO and ASEAN more effectively – but it’s just that trying to be a credible actor/leader after Afghanistan is so much harder. Australia and others are seeking Free Trade Agreements with India; we have now formed AUKUS, the trilateral security arrangement between Australia, the U.S., and the UK in the Pacific; and we finally have agreed to the QUAD (Australia, U.S., Japan, and India) as tighter strategic engagement with India and a stronger counterweight to China. All this is just for starters. Let us pray that the Biden administration finds the cahones to adopt some of these ideas.

Thank you for listening. I look forward to your questions.

A Partial List of what the Taliban scored from the U.S. in Afghanistan:

- 2,000 Armored Vehicles Including Humvees and MRAP’s
- 75,989 Total Vehicles: FMTV, M35, Ford Rangers, Ford F350, Ford Vans, Toyota Pickups, Armored Security Vehicles etc.
- 45 UH-60 Blackhawk Helicopters

- 50 MD530G Scout Attack Choppers
- ScanEagle Military Drones
- 30 Military Version Cessnas
- 4 C-130's
- 29 Brazilian made A-29 Super Tucano Ground Attack Aircraft
- 208+ Aircraft Total
- At least 600,000+ Small arms M16, M249 SAWs, M24 Sniper Systems, 50 Calibers, 1,394 M203 Grenade Launchers, M134 Mini Gun, 20mm Gatling Guns and Ammunition
- 61,000 M203 Rounds
- 20,040 Grenades
- Howitzers
- Mortars +1,000's of Rounds
- 162,000 pieces of Encrypted Military Communications Gear
- 16,000+ Night Vision Goggles
- Newest Technology Night Vision Scopes
- Thermal Scopes and Thermal Mono Goggles
- 10,000 2.75 inch Air to Ground Rockets
- Reconnaissance Equipment (ISR)
- Laser Aiming Units
- Explosives Ordnance C-4, Semtex, Detonators, Shaped Charges, Thermite, Incendiaries, AP/API/APIT
- 2,520 Bombs
- Administration Encrypted Cell Phones and Laptops -- all operational
- Pallets with Millions of Dollars in U.S. Currency
- Millions of Rounds of Ammunition including but not limited to 20,150,600 rounds of 7.62mm, 9,000,000 rounds of 50 caliber
- Large Stockpile of Plate Carriers and Body Armor
- U.S. Military HIIDE, for Handheld Interagency Identity Detection Equipment Biometrics
- Lots of Heavy Equipment Including Bull Dozers, Backhoes, Dump Trucks, Excavators