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Thank you, Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Frisch, and distinguished members. It's an honor for me to appear again before this committee. It's been almost 6 years since I last appeared here for my confirmation hearing to be the Ambassador to South Korea. I thought then that that would be my last testimony before you. I thought wrong. Today, I'm honored and even intimidated to testify alongside the esteemed-dare-I-say-venerated Professor Walter Russell Mead...a distinguished strategist, historian, teacher, and prolific writer who understands well the challenges and threats that confront America in the 21st Century, as well as the importance of alliances to our Nation's security.

Let me begin by thanking this committee. That this timely hearing to examine the state of U.S. alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific comes immediately after Japanese PM Kishida's and Philippine President Marcos' visit and two weeks after we celebrated NATO's 75th anniversary sends a powerful signal to the world in general and to our adversaries in particular. This Committee's introduction last week of a bipartisan resolution underscoring the strength and importance of the United States-Japan alliance serves as an authoritative reminder that 2024 marks 64 years of our formal alliance with Tokyo.

More broadly, I'm grateful for Congress' bipartisan passing of the FY 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, which was signed by the President last December. This NDA (1) included strong support for Taiwan including increased military aid and security cooperation to that embattled island; (2) authorized the sale and transfer of defense articles and services relating

to the implementation of the AUKUS partnership; (3) increased funding for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI); and (4) reinforced alliances and partnerships.

Importantly, this month marks the 45th anniversary of the signing into law of the Taiwan Relations Act. In my opinion, without Congress' active intervention back in 1979 when your predecessors of the 96th Congress crafted the Act, Taiwan would have long succumbed to the People's Republic of China, or PRC. Today, 45 years later, Taiwan is democratic, an idea factory, and a global force for good, despite the PRC's unrelenting quest to intimidate, isolate, and finally dominate this beleaguered island. The CATO Institute's 2023 Freedom Index ranked Taiwan as the freest country in Asia. A reference points, Taiwan ranked higher than Japan, South Korea, Australia, Canada, and the United States. The PRC ranked a dismal 149 out of 165 countries. I've called for ending the almost 44-year U.S. policy of strategic ambiguity in favor of strategic clarity. I also believe we should ink a bilateral Free Trade Agreement with Taiwan as soon as possible. The Administration's Indo-Pacific strategy specifically supports an environment in which Taiwan's future is determined peacefully by its people. My successor at Indo-Pacific Command testified before Congress in 2021 that the PRC could invade Taiwan in six years. That's 2027...three years from now. We ignore Admiral Davidson's warning at our peril. Unlike our policy of strategic ambiguity, the PRC's intent is crystal clear and oft-stated. We must never allow the PRC to dictate America's Taiwan policy.

I was in Taiwan a year ago for the Council of Foreign Relations...again last May on INDOPACOM business where I met with President Tsai...and again just last December where I delivered remarks to their National Defense University. In my opinion, Russia-on-Ukraine has galvanized them. They get it. But they need our tangible support...not our best wishes.

The Congress' continued bipartisan actions to strengthen the technological backbone of the United States against the relentless challenge posed by the PRC through passage of the CHIPS and Science Act in 2022 and your ongoing close examination of Tik-Tok are significant. I'll take this opportunity to express my hope for speedy passage of NDAA 2025.

Throughout my long military career and my short stint in the diplomatic world, I underscored the fact that the United States' single greatest asymmetric strength is our world-wide network of alliances and partnerships. Today, we face a global security environment more complex and volatile than any I have experienced. Today, more than ever, alliances are critical to our national security. Alliances and allies matter.

President Reagan once said, 'We cannot play innocents abroad in a world that's not innocent.' This statement is as true today as it was in on December 7th...through the Cold War...on 9-11...on 2-24 when Russia invaded Ukraine, and the 7th of October when Hamas terrorists invaded Israel. Over a thousand Israelis -- including women, children, and the elderly - were subjected to unspeakable cruelty, murder, and rape...and hundreds were taken hostage. This is pure evil, and it baffles me that there are those who seek to justify Hamas' actions.

Indeed, the world remains a dangerous place or, as Professor Mead calls it, a "terrifying" place. The unipolar moment following the Cold War is long over.

Today, more than ever, I believe America's security and economic prosperity are inextricably linked to this network of alliances and partnerships. We face challenging and precarious global crossroads where tangible opportunity meets significant challenge. Nowhere is this truer than in the Indo-Pacific. We find ourselves, again, in peer -- not "near-peer" but "peer" -- competition with adversaries who are developing and deploying cutting-edge weaponry and information disorder to undermine democracy with a goal and intent to defeat us. An aggressive North Korea is building and testing nuclear weapons; a revisionist PRC seeks regional, even global, dominion; and a revanchist Russia is not only on the move in Europe but increasingly conducts operations and engagements throughout the Indo-Pacific and, importantly, the High North. I agree with Professor Mead's piece in the Wall Street Journal where he opined that we get it wrong when we believe that giving in to leaders like Putin will satisfy them. The same can be said of Kim Jong Un and autocrats the world over.

Last year, I testified before the House Armed Services Committee on the threat from the PRC. My testimony occurred in the midst of the spy balloon fiasco, which is so illustrative of

the PRC's bad behavior and disregard for international norms. That Beijing would claim this incursion over sovereign American airspace was innocuous and unintended beggars the imagination.

In 2022, the current Administration released its National Security Strategy. Though I would use the term "adversary" rather than "competitor", this strategy recognizes that the PRC is the only competitor with both the intent and, increasingly, the capability to reshape the international order. As this committee knows far better than me, there are very few bipartisan issues in Washington these days, but our national concern about the PRC is one of them. As Michele Flournoy has said, "There is a strong bipartisan consensus in seeing China as the pacing threat, economically, technologically, diplomatically and militarily."

The PRC's aggression in the South China Sea continues unabated -- in fact, it has increased -- despite the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration's tribunal ruling that invalidated China's ridiculous 9-dash line claim and unprecedented land reclamations. The PRC's actions are coordinated, methodical, and strategic, using its military, "grey zone", and economic power to erode the free and open international seas.

China's considerable military buildup could soon challenge the U.S. across almost every domain. While some might say the PRC is already there, I am not one of them. However, the PRC is making significant advancements in hypersonic weapons, 5th generation fighters, a blue-water navy with aircraft carriers, an incredible buildup of its nuclear arsenal, and in the next wave of military technologies including artificial intelligence and advanced space and cyber capabilities. Geo-politically, the PRC seeks to supplant the United States as the security partner of choice for countries not only in the Indo-Pacific, but globally. As I testified before the Congress when I was in uniform, and again last year, I believe Beijing seeks hegemony not only in East Asia, but greater Asia and beyond. The PRC wants to set the rules for the region, indeed the world.

The United States has made it clear that we reject foreign policy based on leverage and dominance. The United States won't weaponize debt. We encourage every country to work in

its own interest to protect its own sovereignty. And we must work in our own enlightened self-interest to develop our own reliable sources of critical materials, including rare earths, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals essential for weaponeering, independent of the PRC. Former Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategy Nadia Schadlow wrote in 2022 that the PRC is "the sole source or a primary supplier for a number of critical energetics materials." By "energetics," I'm referring to those materials that are used for explosives and propellants -- from bullets, to artillery, to missiles. I was stunned to learn about our reliance on the PRC for this critical capability.

We find ourselves sailing into rocks and shoals, to use a nautical analogy, and we must invest and innovate to right the errant course we're on. If the United States does not keep pace, the Joint Force will struggle to compete with the People's Liberation Army on future battlefields.

Now, I note that the current Administration's fundamental understanding of the PRC is consistent with its predecessor. Consider that the Secretary of State testified that the previous Administration's tougher approach is right; that what's happening in Xinjiang is genocide; and that democracy is being trampled in Hong Kong. The Secretary of Defense testified that he's focused on the threat posed by the PRC and he promised strong support for Taiwan.

I'm worried about the trajectory of the PRC's body politic. As former Australian Prime Minister and now Ambassador to the United States Kevin Rudd wrote, the 2022 party congress is likely to be "an era-defining event...cementing Xi Jinping as China's paramount leader...solidifying the country's turn to the state and away from the market... and officially underscoring the primacy of Marxism-Leninism." In other words, Deng Xiaoping is dead in more ways than one. If the first era of modern Chinese politics was Mao Zedong's, and the second Deng Xiaoping's, the third is unquestionable Xi Jinping's.

Equally concerning to me is the dangerous and growing alignment between the PRC, Russia, and North Korea, and now, Iran. Clearly, we are in what I call the decisive decade. In 2018, I talked about the challenges facing the United States, including the perception -- which, by the way, I completely disagree with -- that the United States is a declining power facing

unrelenting challenges posed by North Korea, the PRC, and Russia. Of course, today, I would add Iran to that list. Over the past 6 years, the situation has worsened in almost every geo-strategic measure. Consider that Taiwan is under siege, Israel finds itself fighting once again for its very existence, Ukraine is ablaze, eastern and northern Europe is under threat, and our Navy is involved in countering Houthi rebels who have effectively shut down commercial shipping in the Red Sea.

Regarding alliances in general, I was recently asked during a Q&A session following a speech I gave in Florida about the U.S. acting as a global policeman, an idea which has gained some traction in some quarters. The question was posed along the lines of "why are we the world's policeman?" I reject this notion. We are not the world's policeman. Police and law enforcement officers do their difficult jobs out a sense of true noblesse oblige...of altruism of a high order. They risk their lives to protect their communities, often with little pay, no reward, and scant appreciation from those they protect. Their actions define "selfless service." But, as a nation, when we act on the global stage -- whether because of alliance obligations or some other cause or need -- we act out of enlightened self-interest. What we provide to our allies is matched by what we selfishly gain from our allies -- whether that is access, basing, trade, or even broad international military support like we saw after 9-11. We are not in this alone. Ambassador Emanuel, our envoy to Japan, put it this way just this past Sunday: "We're betting on our allies and they're betting on us."

Let me now discuss five examples of how the United States benefits from alliances -- one global case and 4 Indo-Pacific cases.

I'll begin with the global case. 75 years ago this month, the United States and eleven other countries signed the North Atlantic Treaty to counter the threat from the Soviet Union. Professor Mead wrote back in 2001, just a few years after NATO's 50th, that the United States "...built the NATO alliance, the largest and longest-lasting intimate security partnership among sovereign states in modern history." Many call this the most successful alliance in history and I tend to agree. Today's NATO -- with 32 member countries -- is not only the largest NATO has ever been, but I would submit, it's the strongest that NATO has ever been. I need not remind this

committee that in NATO's 75-year history, Article 5 -- the collective defense piece -- has only been called into action once: following 9-11 when we were attacked. In other words, on that darkest of dark days, NATO came to our assistance, not vice versa.

Now, Japan. I've already mentioned last week's state visit by Prime Minister Kishida. There was also a trilateral summit with Prime Minister Kishida, President Marcos of the Philippines, and President Biden. America's alliance with Japan stands as the cornerstone of prosperity, security, and stability throughout the Indo-Pacific region. Since the end of World War II, the network of U.S. alliances has been at the core of a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific...benefitting us as much as any of our alliance partners. Now, no country can shape in a positive way the future of the region in isolation, and no vision for the region is complete without a robust network of sovereign countries cooperating to secure their collective interests.

This is why trilateral cooperation between the U.S., South Korea, and Japan is so important. It's crucial for our three nations to work together to enhance our security cooperation and preserve the international rules-based order. The reality is that no important security or economic issue in the region can be addressed without both South Korea's and Japan's active involvement.

This is also why bilateral cooperation between Tokyo and Seoul is critical. I'm heartened by Prime Minister Kishida's and President Yoon's outreaches to each other. Frankly, the stakes are too high to embark on any other course. Last year, President Yoon travelled to Japan for bilateral meetings with Prime Minister Kishida -- the first such meeting by a sitting President of South Korea in 12 years. This is statesmanship in action. The recent trilateral decision to implement the North Korean missile warning data sharing mechanism has reached full operational capability...this benefits us all. As does the multi-year trilateral exercise plan established by Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul which begins this year.

Japan's remarkable commitment to dramatically increase its defense spending to historic levels is both welcome and critical to our Alliance and stability in the region. Tokyo's decision to move surface-to-ship missiles to Okinawa is part and parcel of this buildup and is both an example and clear recognition of the twin threats from China and North Korea.

I agree with Professor Mead's assertion which he made over a decade ago that America's Cold War alliances were insufficient to meet the needs of the 21st Century. To this end, we worked hard on expanding our international structures when I commanded USPACOM, and my successors have moved the ball in ways I couldn't even imagine. So today, in addition to the United States, Japan, South Korea trilateral I already mentioned, we have the Quad, AUKUS, and a new relationship involving the Philippines. Let me briefly touch on these.

I'm a big fan and booster of the Quad. That's the informal grouping of like-minded democracies: the United States, Australia, Japan, and India. I called for its resurgence when I spoke at the inaugural Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi in 2016. Jake Sullivan calls it the "foundation upon which to build a substantial U.S. policy in the region." I've called for the establishment of a Quad Secretariat, headquartered somewhere in the region, to coordinate what issues to take on...and, perhaps, to also get at the question of how new members can join. You know, in college football, the Big 10 used to have 14 teams and the Big 12 had 10 teams. So, there's nothing that says the Quad has to have only 4 teams. But let me be clear. The Quad is not NATO nor will it ever be NATO. It's a grouping of like-minded democracies who share an outlook on the region's opportunities, challenges, and dangers. It is not a defense pact.

Now, the new Australia, United Kingdom, and U.S., or "AUKUS" arrangement is a defense pact...and I, for one, am all for AUKUS and am excited by it. AUKUS is a game changer. I cannot wait to see a nuclear submarine under Australian colors underway in the Indo-Pacific. I don't believe this will take decades as some have said. After all, we put a man on the moon in 8 years and developed a Covid vaccine in less than 1 year. Last year, President Biden and Prime Ministers Sunak and Albanese announced a plan...an imminently do-able plan in my opinion...to do just this. We are already training Australian submariners and technicians in nuclear reactor management. I'm optimistic. One of the outcomes of last week's visit by PM Kishida was bringing Japan into AUKUS Pillar Two. To be clear, this will not make Japan an AUKUS Pillar One partner. Nevertheless, this is a significant development which underscores both Japan's technological prowess and the importance of AUKUS to the region writ large.

Also encouraging and, frankly, exciting, is the new, formal trilateral partnership between the United States, Japan, and the Philippines. This trilateral will change the power dynamic in the South Chins Sea. It is long overdue in my opinion.

All of these relationships reflect a fundamental change to America's approach to alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. In my day, we worked on improving bilateral relationships using the hub-and-spoke model. That is so 20th Century! Today, our approach is analogous to a lattice structure with multiple connections between members and across structural boundaries.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, since I was the Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, I would be remiss if I didn't spend a few paragraphs on our alliance with South Korea. In my opinion, the textbook case for the power of alliances is the U.S.-South Korea Alliance -- which will be 71 years strong this year. Forged during a devastating conflict, it has stood the test of time. It's mind-boggling to consider how much has changed in the world in general, Northeast Asia in particular, and the Korean Peninsula especially, since 1953.

Some changes have been for the better, such as South Korea's miraculous growth into an economic and cultural powerhouse, a vibrant democracy, and a high-tech "innovation nation." Other changes have been for the worse. Why is North Korea, far away in Northeast Asia, a challenge for the entire world? The answer is simple: Kim Jong-Un's missiles point in every direction. Today, North Korea stands out as the only nation this century to test nuclear weapons. North Korea is ruled with an iron fist, by a brutal dictator, who values power over the prosperity and welfare of his own people. The North's unrelenting pursuit of nuclear weapons, the means to deliver them, and its unmitigated aggression towards South Korea and America should concern us all.

I believe KJU wants 4 things: sanctions relief, keep his nukes, split our Alliance, and dominate the peninsula. Last September, KJU stated unequivocally that he'd never give up his nukes and that North Korea's status as a nuclear weapons state is irreversible. This past January, by declaring that the North would no longer seek peaceful reunification with the South, and depicting the Republic as the North's "primary foe and invariable principal enemy", he abandoned a

foundational doctrine of the Communist regime. As the Wall Street Journal stated, "Kim Jong Un has a new Enemy No. 1—and it isn't the U.S."

This doesn't sound to me like he's going to get rid of his nuclear ambitions anytime soon. In fact, he's telling us precisely the opposite. The North continues to test missiles of ever-increasing complexity. A year ago, we saw multiple drone incursions across the DMZ. And now, KJU is trading low-cost weapons for Russian technology -- why am I not surprised?

Clearly, this is no path towards peace. While we hope for diplomacy with North Korea to be successful, we must recognize that hope alone is not a course of action. The quest for dialogue with the North must never be made at the expense of the ability to respond to threats from the North. Dialogue and military readiness must go hand-in-hand. Idealism must be rooted in realism.

By his declarations and actions, KJU has eliminated any remaining fantasy about potential peaceful reunification with South Korea. Let's not sugar-coat his words; let's take them at face value. Maya Angelou once said, "When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time." Time and time again KJU has shown us who he is, and shame on us if we fail to believe him. Therefore, I believe our heretofore U.S. policy goal of negotiating away North Korea's nuclear program has reached its useful end. We must up our combined game. Deterrence by appeasement is not deterrence at all.

This is why I'm encouraged by South Korean President Yoon's vision to make the U.S.-South Korea Alliance the centerpiece of his foreign policy. I'm pleased that he places a primacy on defending South Korea against the threat from the North, which means a return to joint military exercises and an emphasis on combined readiness. And I'm heartened by his outreach to Japan which I've already discussed.

President Yoon's State Visit with President Biden last year underscored the vitality and, frankly, the global necessity of our Alliance. The outcomes of this visit are significant, including the Washington Declaration on extended nuclear deterrence.

Mr. Chairman, I'll conclude my written testimony with this observation. The United States made 2 flawed geopolitical assumptions last century: one, we assumed that the PRC would morph into something like a global force for good and, two, that Russia would no longer threaten its neighbors or the West. Today, the Russian bear is afoot and we find ourselves shooting well behind the Peking duck. We must step up our game or we'll find ourselves outgunned, literally and figuratively. While American interests in the Indo-Pacific are real and enduring, and challenges to our interests are equally real and daunting, I believe our resolve is powerful and durable. And we are bolstered, sustained, and strengthened by our allies and partners. Again, to quote Professor Mead, "a distracted America still leads the world." As he wrote in 2012, "the American world vision isn't powerful because it is American; it is powerful because it is, for all its limits and faults, the best way forward." I thank this committee and the Congress for your enduring support to our diplomatic corps and armed forces. I look forward to your questions.