

EAST AFRICA & THE HORN: AT A TURNING POINT OR BREAKING POINT?

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TUESDAY, MAY 13, 2025

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James E. Risch presiding.

Present: Senators Risch [presiding], Ricketts, McCormick, Cruz, Cornyn, Shaheen, Coons, Kaine, Booker, Van Hollen, and Rosen.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES E. RISCH, U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO

The CHAIRMAN. The United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

Good morning, everyone. We welcome you all here this morning for what we believe to be—will be an important and informative hearing. We welcome all of you who are here in the audience.

The rules are pretty clear here. We are glad to have you here. There will be no protesting in here other than—and will be subject to the usual rules and met with zero tolerance, arrest, and banning from the committee.

There are people suffering from this right now who made that mistake early on, but have not been back since. We, like I said, enjoy having everybody here, but this is business in the United States that needs to be conducted uninterrupted.

Today, what we bring to you, the distinguished ranking member and I have worked hard to identify areas that really need to be probed and today we are going to probe, arguably, one of the most difficult and frustrating places on the planet and that is Africa and specifically eastern Africa.

All of us here know that the United States has a clear national security and economic interest in the east—in East Africa and the Horn of Africa region. The region borders key maritime trade routes through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden and hosts a significant U.S. military presence at our base in Djibouti.

The U.S. also conducts robust counterterrorism operations, largely, focused on Somalia in partnership with Kenya and others in the region, but in recent years, violent conflicts in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia have destabilized the region. These conflicts provide fertile ground for violent extremist groups like Al-Shabaab, ISIS, and the Houthis.

They enable malign actors like China, Iran, and Russia and devastate local populations and U.S. national security alike. Sudan, in particular, is a crisis.

Too few Americans recognize that as the world's deadliest ongoing conflict. The Sudanese people are enduring atrocities on a staggering scale—genocide in Darfur, mass displacement, and famine across multiple regions.

Sudan is a hotbed of instability and a direct threat to U.S. national security interests. There are no good options or easy outcomes, but that only heightens the need for U.S. attention and leadership.

Over the last 4 years, the U.S. reactions to this crisis and many others on the continent were fragmented, reactive, and ineffective.

President Trump and this administration have already acted to better protect U.S. national security in the region.

In President Trump's first term, his administration engaged in talks with Kenya over a potential free trade agreement, a first for sub-Saharan Africa, and now Secretary Rubio and other senior officials have ramped up engagement and confronted threats from Al-Shabaab and the Islamic State head on.

These efforts cannot be siloed. They must be part of a broad strategic effort to protect American interests in Africa while also protecting the U.S. taxpayer's pocketbook. That means being clear-eyed about our potential and existing partners in the region.

In many cases, these governments are not wholly legitimate, which raises the question of whether engagement is worth the cost.

Take, for example, South Sudan. Its government exists based on a peace agreement that its signatories routinely violate. The U.S. played a central role in the country's creation, a legacy that has carried a financial cost well above \$10 billion in assistance since independence in 2011.

Yet, the returns on this investment in terms of securing sustainable peace and a functional state are marginal at best and, arguably, diminishing. Additionally, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda each face serious domestic challenges that severely limit what U.S. investment can do.

This fact, unfortunately, demands our restraint. Many African nations maintain troubling ties with China including key national security partners. Just last month, President Ruto declared that Kenya, a major non-NATO ally, and China are co-architects of a new world order.

That is not just alignment to China; it is allegiance. I submit for the record the text of that speech. I am going to enter it in the record at the conclusion of the hearing that describes this.

Relying on leaders who embrace Beijing so openly is an error. It is time to reassess our relationship with Kenya and others who forge tight bonds with China.

It is not just an embracement of China, but also the "new world order." Still, there are countries where meaningful engagement is possible, but only with sober judgment and clear-eyed realism.

We must stop building U.S. policy in Africa around individual leaders and instead focus on strengthening institutions, expanding private sector ties, and empowering the region's young and dynamic populations.

We hold this hearing at a moment of profound urgency, but also real opportunity. By tailoring our strategy and spending to align with the potential of our partners in the region, we can build stronger partnerships that serve both Africa and U.S. national interests, ultimately making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today. With that, I turn to our distinguished ranking member Senator Sheehan.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JEANNE SHAHEEN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Like you, I am delighted that we are able to hold this hearing today.

I want to welcome our witnesses, and I think there is a lot of agreement on both sides of the aisle about the importance of Africa to the United States and the need to engage more there.

The United States does have a critical role to play on the continent. Just last month Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo signed a declaration of principles on ending a brutal 30-year war.

It has not quite ended yet. However, it is a positive step and it is the result of deliberate diplomatic work that has been carried out over many years on a bipartisan basis.

Unfortunately, this administration's cuts to foreign aid programs have been very damaging when we look at what we need to do on the continent of Africa.

While reports from the State Department indicate that lifesaving aid continues to flow, what my staff that traveled to Africa 3 weeks ago saw on the ground was very different and we have some pictures that they took from that trip.

[Photos shown.]

Senator SHAHEEN. This is a clinic that was for an HIV/AIDS prevention site for girls in South Africa. Sadly, as you can see, it has been closed because all of the prevention activities around HIV/AIDS on the continent have been shut down.

This is a photo, also in South Africa, of a clinic for vulnerable children, again, around addressing HIV/AIDS. It has also been shut down as the result of the stop in foreign assistance.

This final picture is of a hospital in Angola where USAID used to provide ready-to-use therapeutic foods to address starvation and famine, and while there are still cans—those are formula. Those are not the ready-to-use therapeutic foods. They are totally out of those.

I hope our witnesses today will talk about the impact that cuts to those lifesaving aid programs have on the security, not just of the people of Africa, but of the United States because, as we know, what happens there does not stay in Africa.

We see the impact here in the United States. Rationing HIV drugs gives the virus a chance to mutate into drug-resistant strains. I also hope you will talk about the competition for influence in Africa between the United States and China.

The chairman mentioned that in his remarks. I think it is something that we are seeing, and this is a map that was done in 2023 that shows the influence of China in Africa.

I wish we had the one that we had in the Armed Services Committee several years ago that compares China's impact in Africa to the United States, because they are eating our lunch there and you can see the red is where the PRC has really put a focus on the countries in Africa.

There is—you can see the Chinese base in Djibouti. They are—it shows the 2,000 military troops that are deployed in Africa by the Chinese and 1,775 peacekeepers that support four U.N. peacekeeping operations. Again, Chinese.

It is significant that we are not competing either militarily or diplomatically in Africa and now on the foreign assistance front.

One stark example of this is the Lobito Corridor Project. It is a U.S.-backed initiative that we have spent years developing and investing in. It would create a route for Central Africa's natural resources to flow east out to the Atlantic.

Meanwhile, China has a competing railway project in Tanzania that would send these natural resources east out to the Indian Ocean. I think I said that wrong—it would send the resources west out to the Atlantic.

It is in our interest and those of the people in the region for the United States to come out on top in these situations.

One piece of legislation that has shown its value time and again is the *Women, Peace, and Security Act*. This is legislation that passed with bipartisan support in both houses. It was signed into law by President Trump during his first term.

Our armed forces have made great use of it, especially in AFRICOM. It gives us a real advantage over our Chinese competitors and, sadly, this is a program that Secretary Hegseth has decided to discontinue because he claims it is a DEI program, which it is not, but where WPS authorities allow us to gather intelligence from women and families we can counter violent extremism and we can advance our interests and deepen economic investment in East Africa and the Horn.

As you talk about the opportunities in the region, I hope you will lay out some of the economic and foreign policy tools we can use to achieve success. I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Shaheen. I appreciate that.

We have two very distinguished witnesses with us today. We are going to start by hearing from Mr. Joshua Meservey, who is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute where he focuses on great power competition in Africa, African geopolitics, and counterterrorism.

He was previously a research fellow for Africa at the Heritage Foundation, worked at the Atlantic Council's Africa Center for the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, and for Church World Service in Nairobi, Kenya.

He is a returned Peace Corps volunteer who served in Zambia and extended his service there to work for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Mr. Meservey holds a master of arts in law and diplomacy from the Fletcher School at Tufts University, and the B.A. in history from the Templeton Honors College at Eastern University.

Mr. Meservey, the floor is yours.

**STATEMENT OF JOSHUA MESERVEY, SENIOR FELLOW,
HUDSON INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. MESERVEY. Thank you.

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and members of the committee, thank you for the honor of testifying today and for your attention to an important region of the world.

My name is Joshua Meservey. I am a senior fellow at Hudson Institute. My views are my own and do not represent an official position of Hudson.

East Africa is important to the prosperity and safety of Americans. Because of its natural resources, large populations, and fast-growing economies, it has strong potential as a U.S. investment destination, a market for American goods, and for potential technological breakthroughs.

The region's strategic importance is inescapable as well. It commands an important shipping choke point and lane through the Red Sea, which also has a dense concentration of submarine cables.

It abuts Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and Djibouti hosts American, Chinese and other military bases. As difficult as it already is, the security situation could easily worsen including Sudan, a conflict that is sowing instability, extracting an immense human toll, and providing opportunities for American competitors.

The region could soon host three devastating wars if Ethiopia and Eritrea start fighting and if South Sudan's leaders continue their brinksmanship.

Meanwhile, Somalia's Islamist terrorist group Al-Shabaab is retaking territory as the government in Mogadishu remains mired in corruption and dysfunction.

In a bit of good news, for which the Trump administration deserves credit, the DRC-Rwanda détente is proceeding, though the progress is incomplete and reversible.

Further instability will heighten the cost to the U.S. economy and the dangers to Americans in the region, and make it very hard for Washington to seize the opportunities there.

Additionally, the U.S.' primary geopolitical competitors, as well as friendlier but at times still challenging countries, are prioritizing the region.

In Djibouti, China built a military base with a pier sufficient to host a Chinese aircraft carrier or nuclear submarine.

By participating in anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden, its vessels have gained experience that could be used against Taiwan or in the South China Sea.

Its companies are involved in ports and have built important government buildings throughout the region, and senior Chinese officials have visited over 100 times since 1963.

Russia recently reached an agreement to put a logistics center in Port Sudan. This follows naval visits to Eritrea, a naval agreement with Ethiopia, and a flurry of high-level diplomatic visits between Moscow and East African countries.

In 2023, Ebrahim Raisi became the first Iranian President to visit Africa in over a decade. He visited Uganda and Kenya. Tehran normalized relations with Sudan the same year and started the process with Somalia last year.

Iranian weapons are currently helping the south and previously helped the Ethiopian Government prevail in the Tigray war.

Other outside powers are important, as well. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the UAE have invested heavily in East Africa, made large loans to various countries, and involved themselves in different ways in the various conflicts.

UAE has funneled so much materiel to the Rapid Support Forces in Sudan that it is likely the only reason the RSF has been able to sustain the operational tempo it has.

There are many ways for Washington to ensure Americans benefit from the opportunities in East Africa while protecting against the threats. These include the following.

First, create an East Africa strategy that is integrated into a broader Africa and global strategy. Commercial engagement should be at the core of any such strategy. It is critical as well to quickly fill the senior Africa-focused positions at the State Department and NSC.

Number two, conduct sober assessments of Washington's ability to positively influence democratic growth and proceed accordingly.

For instance, state-building in Somalia is a failed experiment, yet Washington has not pivoted from over a decade of trying the same thing over and over.

Three, upgrade Washington's abilities to support African government and civic institutions and avoid over-reliance on personalities.

Fourth and finally, develop a country-focused framework. Washington should concentrate its finite resources in countries that have a baseline level of competence, strategic importance, and willingness to work with the U.S.

The situation in East Africa is difficult, yet vigorous and sustained U.S. diplomacy could avert the worst consequences for the U.S. and reap demonstrable benefits for Americans.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Meservey follows:]

Prepared Statement of Mr. Joshua Meservey

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and members of the committee, thank you for the honor of testifying today, and for your attention to an important region of the world.

My name is Joshua Meservey, and I am a Senior Fellow at Hudson Institute. My views are my own and should not be construed as representing the official position of Hudson Institute.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EAST AFRICA ¹ TO THE UNITED STATES

East Africa is important to the prosperity and safety of Americans. The region has significant reserves of oil, gas, and critical minerals, the latter of which could lessen the U.S.'s serious minerals supply chain problem. Its economy is fast-expanding—

¹For the purposes of this testimony, the author considers East Africa to comprise Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

the World Bank estimates nearly 6 percent growth this year and next²—and it has 6 of Africa’s 10 most populous countries if including the DRC. Kenya is also one of Africa’s emerging tech hubs. The region is rich with possibilities as a potential market for American goods, for U.S. investment, and for potential technological breakthroughs in key industries like biotechnology.

The region’s extensive coastline spans key shipping routes in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Indian Ocean. The Houthi attacks on these sensitive sea lanes have raised shipping costs globally, including for America.³ Djibouti has more foreign military bases per square mile than any other country, and hosts the U.S.’s and China’s only permanent African bases. The Red Sea is dense with submarine cables that carry vital information around the globe.

The region is also experiencing serious instability with the potential for far worse. If some of the grimmer scenarios materialize, there will be mass displacement throughout the region and potentially into Europe, the Middle East, and beyond, along with a severe human toll.

The world’s worst humanitarian crisis already rages in Sudan where the genocidal Rapid Support Forces (RSF) battles the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). The recent UAV attacks by the RSF on Port Sudan have escalated the conflict even higher. Buoyed by external actors, both sides appear to believe that they can still achieve their goals on the battlefield, suggesting there is no end in sight.

Renewed political violence in South Sudan threatens a return to full-scale civil war. To its east, tensions between Eritrea and Ethiopia remain high and could trigger a disastrous conflict. None of the primary underlying tensions have been resolved. Until they are, the situation will remain on a hair trigger.

In a piece of welcome news, the U.S. recently facilitated a détente between DRC and Rwanda on the conflict in eastern DRC. However, the progress is incomplete and reversible.

In Somalia, the Islamist terrorist group al-Shabaab has retaken territory as the government in Mogadishu remains mired in corruption and dysfunction. Al-Shabaab killed Americans in the region previously and maintains the desire and capability to do so again.

Additionally, the U.S.’s primary geopolitical competitors, as well friendlier but at times still challenging countries, are prioritizing the region. The following is a sample of the activities of some of the outside players active in East Africa:

- In Djibouti, *China* built its first overseas military base, a hardened enclave with a pier sufficient to host a Chinese aircraft carrier or nuclear submarine. Since 2008, its vessels have participated in anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden. After their deployments, the taskforces make port calls to countries up and down both coasts of the continent. The capabilities the PLA Navy is building will likely be useful in any future invasion of Taiwan or for enforcing Beijing’s expansionist territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Chinese companies built and/or operate terminals within Djibouti port and are involved in 17 ports total in East Africa, according to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies.⁴ Some of the largest Chinese-involved infrastructure projects in all of Africa are in this region, and Chinese companies have built sensitive African government buildings in the area.⁵ Between 1963 and 2023, Chinese officials holding four of the most senior Chinese Government and Communist Party positions involved in foreign affairs visited East Africa 101 times.⁶ All but two East African countries have signed letters circulated at the United Nations supporting China’s ethnic cleansing policies in Xinjiang.⁷

²“The World Bank in Eastern and Southern Africa,” The World Bank, October 21, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/eastern-and-southern-africa> [accessed May 10, 2025].

³“President Trump Is Standing Up to Terrorism and Protecting International Commerce,” The White House, March 15, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/2025/03/president-trump-is-standing-up-to-terrorism-and-protecting-international-commerce/> [accessed May 10, 2025].

⁴Paul Nantulya, “Mapping China’s Strategic Port Development in Africa,” Africa Center for Strategic Studies, March 10, 2025, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/china-port-development-africa/> [accessed May 10, 2025].

⁵Joshua Meservey, “Government Buildings in Africa Are a Likely Vector for Chinese Spying,” The Heritage Foundation, May 20, 2020, <https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/government-buildings-africa-are-likely-vector-chinese-spying> [accessed May 10, 2025].

⁶The four ranks are President, Premier, Director of the Office of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission, and Foreign Minister. Data compiled by author from various sources.

⁷The two are Rwanda and Seychelles. Burundi, Comoros, Eritrea, and South Sudan have signed all 10 of the letters. Data compiled by author.

- *Russia* secured an agreement to build a “logistical support point”⁸ in Port Sudan after years of trying to secure a base in the region. Wagner mercenaries supported the Rapid Support Forces for a time in Sudan and were involved in gold mining in the country.

In the space of 2 months in 2023, Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki visited Moscow twice, and less than a year later a Russian Pacific fleet frigate made a 5-day port call in Massawa. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Eritrea in 2023, the first ever such visit by a Russian foreign minister.

In March this year, the Russian deputy navy commander visited Ethiopia and signed with his counterpart a cooperation agreement on capacity building and training.

- *Iran* in the last several years has focused on East Africa to regain some of the influence it lost due primarily to the efforts of the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Ebrahim Raisi became the first Iranian President to visit Africa in over a decade when he toured Uganda and Kenya in 2023. Despite the Iranian-backed terror plots his country has suffered, Kenyan President William Ruto dubbed Iran a “critical strategic partner.”⁹

Somalia and Iran began normalizing diplomatic relations last year, and Sudan completed its own rapprochement with Iran in 2023. Iranian weapons, especially drones, appear to have helped the SAF to reclaim territory and assisted the Ethiopian Government to prevail in the recent Tigray war. Earlier this year, Ethiopia’s and Iran’s police services agreed to cooperate on intelligence sharing and other issues, notwithstanding the 2021 disruption of an Iranian terror plot in Addis Ababa.

Other outside powers are important players as well. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, and the UAE have invested heavily in East African sectors ranging from agriculture to mining to renewable energy. In addition to its economic activities, Qatar mediated disputes including between Djibouti and Eritrea, in Sudan, and, currently, between DRC and Rwanda. It also bankrolled Somali politicians and distributed aid in the country through Islamist organizations.

Saudi Arabia is backing the SAF in Sudan and was once interested in building a base in Djibouti.

Turkiye built a military base and its largest embassy in the world in Mogadishu and recently sent advanced UAVs and hundreds of troops to fight al-Shabaab’s advances. Turkish companies run Mogadishu seaport and airport, and Ankara recently struck a favorable deal for developing Somalia’s oil reserves.

The UAE, meanwhile, has trained troops in Somalia’s Puntland region, operated a base in Eritrea during its military operations in Yemen, and expanded Somaliland’s Berbera port via a state-owned company. It is also the RSF’s primary backer in the Sudanese civil war and has made large loans throughout the region.

This partial survey of outside powers’ activities in East Africa demonstrates their understanding of the region’s importance. Chinese, Iranian, and Russian actions in particular underscore the risks for the U.S. of not being energetically and wisely engaged.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many ways for Washington to ensure Americans benefit from the opportunities in East Africa while protecting against the threats emanating from the region, including the following:

- Create an East Africa strategy that is integrated into a broader Africa and global strategy. The Trump administration should urgently develop a pragmatic, reality-based strategy for the region. What happens there has too many implications for the U.S. to allow American policy to drift. Such a strategy can only be effective if it is plugged into a larger continental strategy, which in turn must be part of a global strategy. It also requires quickly filling the senior Africa-focused positions at the State Department and National Security Council.

At the heart of a properly formulated East Africa strategy would be commercial engagement. Increased American investment and equitable trade would add to the U.S. economy, draw countries closer to Washington, and help address Amer-

⁸“Sudanese diplomat confirms commitment to Russian naval base on Red Sea,” *Sudan Tribune*, June 1, 2024, <https://sudantribune.com/article286475/> [accessed May 10, 2025].

⁹“Iran’s president in Kenya and Uganda to deepen ties,” *The Citizen*, July 12, 2023, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/east-africa-news/iran-s-president-in-kenya-and-uganda-to-deepen-ties-4301232> [accessed May 10, 2025].

ican critical minerals supply chain problems. Washington should upgrade its abilities to facilitate U.S. business operations in the region, including by streamlining the work of the Development Finance Corporation, the U.S. EXIM Bank, and related organizations.

- Conduct sober assessments of Washington’s ability to positively influence issues of democracy and proceed accordingly. For instance, state-building in Somalia is a failed experiment. Clan remains the fundamental ordering principle of Somalia’s society, making a strong central government unworkable. Yet Washington has spent over a decade trying to make just such a system work in Mogadishu. Instead, Washington should work directly with those federal member states and other sources of authority that are friendly and have enough legitimacy and competence to degrade al-Shabaab. The U.S. should coordinate with neighboring states that have strong national security interests in Somalia as well.
- Upgrade Washington’s abilities to support African Government and civic institutions and avoid overreliance on personalities. Institutions are generally stabilizing forces and will often outlast even the longest-serving rulers. Washington should maintain working ties with regional leaders, but overreliance makes the U.S. vulnerable.

Kenya, for instance, is an important country and there are opportunities to work with President Ruto. Yet, he was also recently in Beijing proclaiming his commitment to refashioning the global order, a project that is core to the Chinese Government’s efforts to supplant the U.S. globally.

Uganda is another such case. Its troops are helpfully fighting al-Shabaab, yet President Museveni’s son, his heir apparent, is erratic and intemperate, and may have recently participated in the torture of an opposition leader’s bodyguard.¹⁰ Washington should balance the risks inherent in working with especially long-term leaders and promote durable state-to-state relations by, for instance, offering more technical trainings for African judiciaries and commercial ministries.

- Develop a focus country framework. Given that Washington perennially allocates relatively few resources to its Africa efforts, it should concentrate those resources in countries that have a baseline level of competence, strategic importance, and willingness to work with the U.S. Such countries should receive a full suite of U.S. engagements including high-level diplomatic visits, business delegations with access to U.S. Government support, and commercial officers stationed in the embassy.

TINDERBOX AND TURNING POINT

Africa seems to forever be at a turning point, yet the current situation in East Africa is undeniably as tense and delicate as it has been for decades. In addition to Sudan, it is plausible that there could soon be two other full-fledged wars in the region, either of which would likely be among the worst in the world.

Yet despite these and other dangers, the region is also one of opportunity and importance for Americans. Seizing opportunity while minimizing risk demands vigorous and sustained U.S. diplomacy. Washington is still perfectly capable of mustering such an effort, but urgency is required.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for those thoughtful comments, Mr. Meservey.

We are going to turn now to Ambassador Michelle Gavin. She is the Ralph Bunche senior fellow for Africa Policy Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

She served as U.S. Ambassador to Botswana and the U.S. Representative to the Southern African Development Community from 2011 to 2014.

¹⁰ Bobi Wine (@HEBobiwine), “THE STATE OF EDDIE MUTWE. We just returned from Masaka Main Prison, where we checked on our comrades Eddie Mutwe, Achileo Kivumbi, Mugumya Gaddafi, and Wakabi Grace. Eddie Mutwe is alive—that’s the only good news . . . ,” X, May 7, 2025, 8:04 a.m., <https://x.com/HEBobiwine/status/192008724287112128> [accessed May 10, 2025].

Part of that she was a special assistant to President Obama and the senior director for Africa at the National Security Council where she led major policy reviews of Sudan and Somalia.

She also previously served as managing Director of the African Center in New York. Was an international affairs fellow and adjunct fellow for Africa at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Earlier in her career she worked in the U.S. Senate where she was the staff director for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on African Affairs, certainly a distinguished position.

She was director of international policy issues for Senator Russ Feingold and was legislative director for Senator Ken Salazar.

Ms. Gavin received a masters in philosophy and international relations from Oxford University where she was a Rhodes Scholar and earned her B.A. from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service.

Ambassador Gavin, the floor is yours.

**STATEMENT OF MICHELLE GAVIN, RALPH BUNCHE SENIOR
FELLOW FOR AFRICA POLICY STUDIES, COUNCIL ON FOR-
EIGN RELATIONS, NEW YORK, NY**

Ms. GAVIN. Thank you so much.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Shaheen, distinguished members of the committee, it is wonderful to have this opportunity to appear before you and discuss the very complex and challenging set of issues the U.S. confronts.

I also really want to thank the staff. I do know from personal experience how much work goes into preparing for these hearings—

The CHAIRMAN. I bet you do.

[Laughter.]

Ms. GAVIN. —and I am grateful for that as well.

Obviously, the role of Congress in Africa policy has a really long history. It has often been an oasis of bipartisan cooperation.

It is one reason I enjoyed working on it for so long, and there are sort of numerous historical examples of Congress really elevating issues that sometimes a busy executive branch is, perhaps, neglecting.

Of course, as has been discussed, the forces pulling the Horn of Africa apart are gaining strength. There are very real, eminent threats to stability in several other East African countries.

Nothing is more searing than Sudan's shockingly destructive war, which shows no sign of ending. The recent wave of drone attacks on Port Sudan, along with the RSF's sustained pressure on El-Fasher confirmed that it is, indeed, possible for this terrible situation, the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, to get even worse and famine on a scale the world has not seen in decades remains not just a possibility, but a likelihood.

We have multiple civil conflicts persisting in Ethiopia, and Prime Minister Abiy's ambition to regain a presence on the Red Sea has raised tensions with Ethiopia's neighbors.

Of course, my colleague is absolutely right. Somalia continues to struggle for a modicum of effective governance while battling al-Qaeda's largest global affiliate Al-Shabaab and dealing with a chapter of the Islamic State.

China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Turkey, Iran—all of these states are active in the region. Many are very clearly thinking about their relationships in the Horn of Africa through a long-term strategic lens.

They are investing in influence, and because their interests are not always aligned they are sometimes engaging in proxy conflict, and we see this very clearly in Sudan.

It is, frankly, less clear that the United States has a strategic vision for its relationship with the region. Long-standing problems of understaffed embassies and insufficient prioritization of African issues have joined the immediate shock of these very abrupt changes in foreign assistance and international humanitarian aid delivery to make it very easy for adversaries to paint the United States as uninterested and unreliable.

Other anti-American messages capitalize on the fact that U.S. has been the most powerful country in the world throughout the post-Cold War era and they tend to paint Washington as the enforcer of a painful, unjust status quo, which is one reason there is enthusiasm for BRICS in the region and one reason I am concerned about the cuts to Voice of America, which has provided some alternative perspectives on global issues.

This widespread perception of disengagement exists despite the fact that the United States, as you rightly noted, has very clear vital interests in this part of the world, not least the free flow of commerce through the Red Sea and combating terrorist organizations with very well-documented intent, and in many cases experience, track records of doing so, of harming Americans.

Part of the problem is uncertainty about just what the U.S. wishes to see in the region, what kind of East Africa is in the U.S. interest. We would certainly benefit from a region at peace, with capable governments that can be partners in addressing existing and emerging threats.

We would benefit from a region with growing economies that can become trading partners, attractive investment destinations, potential collaborators in new enterprises, and we would benefit from a region, vitally, that is not beholden to U.S. adversaries or mortgaged to deep-pocketed external actors whose interests do not always align with ours.

To pursue this vision, the United States needs to prioritize conflict resolution and conflict prevention. If these seem expensive, I think we have seen through this exercise with the Houthis in Yemen that it is far more expensive to actually have to turn to military action to protect our interests.

The United States should avoid, I agree, an over-reliance on personal relationships with any specific regional leaders.

Of course, the United States cannot simply impose its will on other states, but there can be no delegating responsibility for pursuing U.S. interests to any partner, not in East Africa and not in the Gulf.

Finally, the United States needs to develop and pursue a Red Sea regional strategy, not a set of a la carte deals, that transcends our own bureaucratic divisions that put Africa in one basket and the Middle East in another.

For several years I have served with other former U.S. officials on the U.S. Institute of Peace's Red Sea Study Group, which has advocated for this kind of more comprehensive approach to the region.

A successful new security architecture would have to take all relevant equities into account.

Thank you so much again for the opportunity. I look forward to the questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Gavin follows:]

Prepared Statement of Ms. Michelle Gavin

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the complex and challenging set of issues that U.S. policy confronts in the Horn of Africa and East Africa more broadly. I also want to thank the staff that work for the committee and its members; I know from personal experience how much work and thought goes into these hearings at the staff level.

This hearing is certainly timely, as the forces pulling the Horn of Africa apart are gaining strength, and there are very real, imminent threats to stability in several other east African countries. Sudan's shockingly destructive war shows no signs of ending, and the recent wave of drone attacks on Port Sudan, along with the RSF's sustained pressure on El Fasher, confirm that it is indeed possible for this terrible situation—the worst humanitarian crisis in the world—to get even worse. Famine on a scale the world has not seen in decades remains not just a possibility, but a likelihood. In at least 10 parts of Sudan, famine is happening now. South Sudan is teetering on the brink of a return to all out war, multiple civil conflicts persist in Ethiopia, and Prime Minister's Abiy's ambition to regain a presence on the Red Sea has raised tensions with Ethiopia's neighbors. Somalia continues to struggle with the presence, and in much of the country, the dominance, of al-Qaeda's largest global affiliate, al-Shabaab.

China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Turkey, and Iran—all of these states are active in the region, and many are clearly thinking about their relationships in the Horn of Africa through a long-term, strategic lens. They are investing in influence—and because their interests do not always align, sometimes engaging in proxy conflict. There is no better illustration of this dynamic than the crowded field of actors fueling Sudan's conflict. Russia is courting the Sudanese Armed Forces coalition in the hopes of securing a Red Sea Port. The UAE funds and arms the genocidal Rapid Support Forces—presumably partly because of its concerns about the Islamist influences in the SAF coalition, which also gets support from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran.

It's less clear that the United States has a strategic vision for its relationship with the region. Today, the longstanding problems of understaffed embassies and insufficient prioritization of African issues have joined the immediate shock of abrupt changes in foreign assistance and international humanitarian aid delivery to make it very easy for adversaries to paint the United States as uninterested and unreliable. Other anti-American messages capitalize on the fact that the U.S. has been the most powerful country in the world throughout the post-Cold War era, and paint Washington as the enforcer of a painful, unjust status quo—one reason why there is real enthusiasm for the BRICS in the region.

This widespread perception of U.S. disengagement exists despite the fact that it is clear that the United States has vital interests in this part of the world—not least the importance of the free flow of commerce through the Red Sea, including vital energy resources and food supplies. Terrorist organizations with the intent to harm Americans—and a track record of doing so—continue to operate in the region.

Part of the problem is the uncertainty around what the U.S. wants in the region. So what kind of east African region is in U.S. interests? The U.S. would benefit from a region at peace, with capable governments that can be partners in addressing existing and emerging threats. The U.S. would benefit from a region with growing economies that can become trading partners, attractive investment destinations, and potential collaborators in new enterprises—and, crucially, give young people dignified work at home rather than pushing them into mass migration. The U.S. would benefit from a region that is not beholden to U.S. adversaries, or mortgaged to deep pocketed external actors whose interests do not always align with ours.

To pursue this vision, first, the United States needs to prioritize conflict resolution and conflict prevention. In addition to the truly horrifying human cost, the

Horn of Africa's conflicts create opportunities for terrorist organizations and international criminal groups, and we have ample evidence that these conflicts do not stay contained within national borders, but spill over to destabilize neighbors and exacerbate their own fragility. Sudan's conflict has worsened instability in South Sudan and Chad. Somalia's longstanding fragility has profoundly affected the security postures and priorities of its neighbors.

Peacemaking and conflict prevention requires senior attention, diplomatic resources, and strategies that give actors on the ground a stake in maintaining peace, which is why job creation and governance matter so much. It requires awareness of the way that migratory flows and resource competition can ignite precarious situations, and timely, professional efforts to mitigate those types of crises. If all of that sounds costly and labor intensive, the truth is that letting these problems fester is even more expensive. Elsewhere in the Red Sea, we are seeing the cost of failing to address militancy and insecurity. Reports indicate that the current administration's military campaign targeting the Houthis has cost taxpayers over a billion dollars, and there is no reason to believe that the problem is definitively resolved.

Conflict prevention also requires looking over the horizon, and I would be remiss if I did not flag for this committee the extremely troubling uptick in political violence in Uganda and Tanzania as those countries approach elections. Avoiding worst-case scenarios requires attention and deft engagement now.

Second, the United States should avoid an overreliance on personal relationships with any specific regional leaders, both because this entire region is in the midst of a major geopolitical realignment, and because this young, urbanizing part of the world is politically volatile. Deals that benefit only small circle of leaders will cease to advance U.S. interests when that circle is no longer in power. It's absolutely the case that the United States cannot impose its will on other states, and that working closely with regional actors and institutions is necessary. But there can be no delegating responsibility for pursuing U.S. interests to any partner.

This is also why it's important to keep a close eye on internal dynamics in the region's diverse countries, and for the United States to develop strong contacts and relationships with actors outside of government. Leadership changes don't have to upend U.S. strategy if we understand the aspirations and concerns that drive them. If getting things done and protecting our interests requires cooperative action, then it makes sense that we need to understand the priorities and interests of potential partners in full. U.S. relations with Kenya, or closest partner in the region, illustrate the point. The United States has worked closely with President Ruto to deepen commercial and security relations with Kenya, but missed opportunities to align with the Kenyan people, who have made it very clear since that fighting corruption is top priority of theirs. The result of the misalignment is a less appealing investment climate for the U.S., and a weakened Kenyan President assiduously seeking support from China and the Gulf.

Finally, the United States must develop and pursue a Red Sea regional strategy—that not a set of a la carte deals—that transcends bureaucratic divisions between the parts of our government that work on Africa and those that work on the Middle East. For several years, I have served with other former U.S. officials on the U.S. Institute of Peace's Red Sea Study Group, which has advocated for this kind of more comprehensive approach to the region. There can be no lasting peace in the Horn without addressing the security concerns and economic incentives that have prompted Gulf actors to fan the flames of conflict. Equally, no peace will be sustainable if it is perceived as a set of deals cooked up in Western and Middle Eastern capitals and imposed on Africans. A successful new security architecture for the region must take all relevant equities into account.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ambassador.

We are now going to go through 5-minute questions around 5 minutes each to each of the senators who wish to participate, and I am going to start.

I have to tell you that watching President Ruto with the Chinese holding hands and talking about a new world order is just stunning.

After all the work and effort we have put in there and see him talking about a new world order, the new world order was constructed by the United States and democracies, capitalist countries that are human rights-loving countries, and the new, new world order that these countries are talking about is being constructed by

the autocracies, the outright communists, socialists, people who have no respect for human rights.

It is stunning to hear countries talk about wanting to join or promote that world order when the world order that was constructed after World War II has served us so really well.

Certainly, not perfectly but, then again, the world is not a perfect place, but so much better than what you would see if the autocrats took over.

It is discouraging to hear that and part of it, I think, is tied to the fact that when we do things in Africa they seem to be individual centric instead of country centric.

We do not focus on institutions—we focus on individuals, and I do not know why it seems to be more prevalent in this part of the world than others.

If each of you could take a quick run at a very complex question. Why do you not start?

Mr. MESERVEY. Thank you, Chairman.

I agree, President Ruto's comments were discouraging. They are not also out of the ordinary for the types of comments that African leaders make, especially when they travel to Beijing, unfortunately.

This is a challenge for the United States. I would suggest that African leaders have not always thoroughly thought through the consequences of this different type of world order, especially smaller countries that are smaller military or economic powers.

The type of world order that China, Russia, Iran are advocating for would mean that they would be victimized probably in many ways.

The grievances that African leaders often express are focused on a few key issues, and then I think these larger powers like China, like Russia, like Iran, have co-opted those issues into their broader agenda to confront the United States.

I think the U.S. should make it clear to African leaders that while, of course, they are welcome to have normal relations with these countries, especially if you are a major non-NATO ally, there are certain responsibilities associated with that, and I think the U.S. needs to be much more aggressive in its messaging, frankly, to African publics and to African leadership about the benefits that you laid out of the world order that the United States has underpinned for decades now.

The CHAIRMAN. I appreciate that, and I think you hit on something that probably deserves more thought and more attention, and that is the fact that this is the kind of thing that they are used to and the reason they are used to it is they see it all over the continent, and they do not have the cadre of people that study in the United States like most other continents do, really.

China, for example, has got hundreds of thousands of students studying here and the Europeans are notorious for having lots of people here, so they are exposed to a different type of government, I think.

Ambassador, your thoughts?

Ms. GAVIN. Thank you. That is such an interesting last point. I could not agree more that bringing more African students to the U.S. would absolutely be in U.S. interest.

We have seen time and again how it can pay dividends down the line, although it is very difficult actually for a lot of Africans to come do university and graduate studies here right now.

The CHAIRMAN. The thing that strikes me, too, is when we deal with leaders, as all of us do from all over the planet, it always amazes me how well—how good their English is, most of them.

You ask them why, and they studied here in the United States. People who are coming up through those other countries are sent by their parents or their government or something to study here, and the result is they take home the view of how important human rights are, how important democracy is.

I am sorry. I interrupted. Go ahead.

Ms. GAVIN. No, no, I agree with you completely. I do think there is kind of an inflection point in many parts of the continent right now because you have these very young populations that are now urbanizing, digitally connected.

There is a lot more political volatility and so part of what I think is happening is a demand-driven desire for an international order that takes African equities into account, the sort of awareness that the Bretton Woods institutions were created right before most African countries were independent.

Then that is capitalized on by U.S. adversaries, right, to distort the message to the U.S. wishes to keep African populations in poverty or that is more or less the thrust of it.

There is also the fact that money talks and for a lot of these African leaders they are dealing with tremendously constrained fiscal space.

They have big debt burdens, and the way the U.S. provides assistance, in ways that we can be accountable to the American taxpayers, it is a little bit different dealing with the Chinese or with some of these Gulf actors who have been gaining influence.

The last thing I would say is that I could not agree more that it is really important to keep an eye on the internal dynamics in these countries and for the U.S. to understand and have strong contacts and relationships with actors outside of government because leadership changes are going to happen and these investments and these one-to-one personal elite relationships will not serve our interests. They will have a sell-by date and will be left in the cold.

The CHAIRMAN. I appreciate that and I appreciate the remark you made about the fact that money talks and we wind up with that all over.

It is hard to explain to people that there is a real difference between capitalism and socialism. Where the government owns the capital and owns all the money, it is easy for them to spread it out in other countries as they deem appropriate, whereas in capitalism you need the profit motive and the free market system to back you up.

With that, Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. You both mentioned messaging and, Ms. Gavin, you mentioned concerns that we are shutting down Voice of America and other information, ways that we can message into places like the Horn of Africa.

Can you talk about what we lose when we do that? I am going to ask both of you this question because we had a hearing in this committee at the beginning of the year and one of the things that one of the witnesses told us is that the PRC is spending over a billion dollars a year just on misinformation and disinformation campaigns.

Much of that, obviously, is going into Africa. What is the impact of that and what is our alternative if we shut down all of our organizations that allow us to correct inaccurate facts, to correct the misinformation campaigns that the PRC and Russia and other adversaries are doing?

Do you want to begin?

Ms. GAVIN. Sure. I think it is actually incredibly important because it is not just the PRC. You are absolutely right, they have made massive investments in media on the continent including hiring local reporters who then are delivering state-approved messages and slants on the news.

I think that the U.S. has a role to play both in supporting independent media in this part of the world, investigative journalism.

This is how one has accountability and more connectivity, right, between populations and their leadership, and I think when we are absent it is, again, just incredibly easy to caricature the U.S. as uninterested or, worse, having some kind of malign interest in the region.

I have been looking at African social media discussions pretty intently for several years as part of a book project and the Russians, they too have their own influence campaigns that are very, very popular and the messages are—you can see why the messages would be appealing.

The messages are about respect for African lives and sovereignty. They are about addressing the frustration that African countries are rich in resources and, yet, people cannot find jobs.

Having an absence of both straight reporting and clear messaging about what the U.S. is trying to achieve it just—there has been just a vacuum and there we are with adversaries quite busily filling in.

Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Meservey.

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes, thank you for that question.

I would like to see American embassies be more proactive in this space coordinating their messaging or maybe receiving messaging from Washington. I do not know exactly how it would look.

There are moments in the geopolitical calendar where there are real opportunities for the U.S. to push out a message that is positive about the United States.

There has traditionally been a reticence or even in some cases I would describe it as almost an embarrassment in some cases to take a really vigorous pro-American unapologetic stance on the U.S. whereas the Russians and Irans and Chinas of the world have no problems at all doing that type of thing.

They do not spend their time worried about injustices from the past that they might have been involved in.

I think that is one area. Another area that always frustrated me was we had these extraordinary programs, PEPFAR being one of them, that literally saved tens of millions of African lives.

Senator SHAHEEN. Did. Past tense.

Mr. MESERVEY. I am hopeful that there will be elements of that continuing, but I understand that is an ongoing process.

We—as far as I could tell, we got very little credit for that and—now, that is not the only reason to do something, but as—because this program was funded by American taxpayers it should have redounded to American taxpayer credit.

The U.S. was just very bad about reminding people of the extraordinary benefits that came from American public health interventions. It was very bad about tooting its own horn, let us say.

I think we need to move away from that reticence and, again, be much more coordinated and even aggressive in touting the American model and demonstrating our track record.

Senator SHAHEEN. I certainly agree with that in terms of being very clear about what we are providing to help in countries. I think the sad thing at this point is we do not have those programs anymore because they are gone. They just got eliminated.

How do we do that and how do we do that—I agree with you on the embassies. I think our embassies ought to be very positive about the United States and what we offer to countries, but without an apparatus to get that messaging out it is going to be really hard to do that, especially when we are up against over a billion dollars from the PRC and providing that kind of information.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

A good point, both of you, on the fact that we did not get any credit for PEPFAR. I think probably the reason for that was we did not do this to get credit.

We did this to actually make a difference and we made a difference, and I think we will continue to do so as we go through these programs, but I think that is probably a lesson for us that when you do good you ought to at least give yourself credit for doing good, and we just did the good and did not take any credit for it.

Senator Ricketts.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

A lot of attention has been given to the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and its impact on global shipping. However, there is a deeper, more strategic, critical problem developing here with regard to the Houthis' funding from Iran and they are moving into Somalia and establishing relationship ties with Al-Shabaab and the Islamic State's Somalia, and this is something that I think is very challenging for the United States.

During the first Trump administration Trump's maximum pressure effort brought Iran's foreign reserves down from over \$122.5 billion dollars under \$14 billion, and I am pleased to see that the Trump administration is again putting maximum pressure on Iran to cut off the flow of money from Iran to terrorist groups like the Houthis.

I think that needs to happen to be able to make sure we are putting pressure on them. We also need to get the snapback sanctions on Iran as well, but this growing pipeline of drones, munitions, and military expertise risks turning the Horn of Africa into an extension of Iran's proxy network.

If left unchecked this could destabilize the region, the shipping lanes, embolden the Islamic insurgents and create a multi-front threat to the U.S. and our interests in the Horn of Africa.

Mr. Meservey, how urgent is this risk that the Houthis are moving into Somalia? Is this a long-term problem? Can you talk a little bit about what you see right now and how urgent that is?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes. Thank you, Senator, for the question.

As you laid out, it is a very real problem. The Kenyans would say it is, it is, maybe their primary national security threat is the prospect of Al-Shabaab getting advanced drones, for instance, from the Houthis or just getting more advanced capabilities.

There is a long history of Al-Shabaab receiving help from AQAP, which was al-Qaeda's affiliate in Yemen. Those routes are well-established and there is also people constantly moving back and forth.

It is highly plausible. Even though the Houthis are a Shi'a operation and Al-Shabaab is a Sunni one, they can be quite ecumenical when they are focused on attacking the United States or other adversaries.

Yes, it is a very serious concern. I have not seen in the open source any sort of definitive account of exactly what the exchanges look like, but, certainly, if it starts to include things like drones or even capabilities around IEDs then that would be a massive problem both within Somalia, but also including neighboring states like Kenya, like Ethiopia, potentially even Djibouti.

Senator RICKETTS. What should the U.S. Congress do to help you prevent it to make sure that the Horn of Africa does not become the next step in Iran's proxy network against us?

Mr. MESERVEY. I think you referenced this maximum pressure campaign. I think Congress should do all that it can to assist such a campaign and remind the Administration that the problem extends far beyond Iran, far beyond the Middle East.

It also extends into places like Africa. The Houthi-Al-Shabaab links are not the only Iranian presence on the continent. There is a long history of Hezbollah receiving funding, especially from West Africa, but actually all across the continent, Shi'a proselytization, and other Iranian activity.

I referenced some of the increased recent Iranian activity in my remarks. Africa should absolutely be part of this maximum pressure campaign and I think Congress can help the Administration do that.

Senator RICKETTS. I am running out of time here so I am just—I want to just switch a little bit to talk about communist China and their influence on Africa, which we have already discussed a little bit.

One of the things that communist China is doing is establish a training school in Tanzania and essentially what they are doing is training the people who are interested in politics about authoritarianism, as the chairman was pointing out, and really working against multiparty democracy.

What, again, should we, as the U.S. Congress be doing to help push back on what communist China is doing in East Africa with regard to how they are trying to undermine the democracies there?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes. Yes, it is—China has a whole-of-government, to use that cliché, approach to undermining democratic norms on the continent. They are very pragmatic; they will work with any type of government.

They are quite explicitly pushing their own model and saying, look, you can enjoy economic prosperity as well as centralized power, even authoritarian power.

Regarding the training school that you referenced, this is—the CCP has long links to the liberation movements in southern Africa especially, and there are constant trainings ongoing between CCP and liberation movement cadres in ANC. In South Africa, their entire NEC—their governing council—has been trained in China.

I think the U.S. needs to try a variety of approaches. One, again, it needs to unabashedly make the case for democracy, free markets, et cetera.

I think it should hearken back to the history the United States has of partnering with countries like Japan, like South Korea, for instance, Germany after World War II, and demonstrate that with strong American partnership you can really achieve significant gains.

I think it should focus heavily on supporting civil society organizations which are oftentimes the best check on overweening government power, et cetera.

Senator RICKETTS. Mr. Chairman, if I may just have a—can I allow Ambassador Gavin to maybe weigh in on that last question real briefly? Is that okay?

The CHAIRMAN. Generous as the chairman is—

Senator RICKETTS. You are so generous. Thank you.

Ambassador Gavin, could you just quickly, again, just kind of—and do not repeat what Mr. Meservey said, but anything else you observed?

Ms. GAVIN. Yes. I think that this relationship between the CCP and these dominant ruling parties on the continent is actually ultimately going to be a disadvantage for China because the sort of discourse about why these ruling parties should be in charge tends to link back to liberation, and most African societies skew very young.

These are populations that do not remember pre-liberation days and are wondering what their government has done for them lately.

I think continuing to hold—it would be nice to restore some of the democracy and governance work that the U.S. did—NDI and IRI—that help really draw a clear line between party and state, which is also important for combating corruption which if you look at Afrobarometer polling is at the very top of African priority list, so we can align ourselves with these populations that way.

Senator RICKETTS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Coons.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much, Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Shaheen, for this important full committee hearing. To the ambassador and to Mr. Meservey, thank you for your testimony.

What I hear from both of you is more engagement; not less. More of what we have done that works and that the abrupt and chaotic closure of a very wide range of our most effective tools for engaging with Africa, from the MCC to YALI to the PEPFAR program, puts all of this at risk.

Mr. Chairman, if I might, given your opening comments and the exchange I would love to work with you on clarifying the U.S.-Kenya relationship.

Their foreign minister and national security advisor were just here last week meeting with the President and folks at the White House, and I agree with you that some of those statements with the PRC are very concerning, given the deep and long relationship and the security relationship we have with regards to Al-Shabaab and Somalia.

The CHAIRMAN. It is disappointing, to say the least.

Senator COONS. You referenced how important it is that there be more students from Africa coming to the United States.

Well, I got a solution for you. It is a 15-year-old program called the Young African Leaders Initiative that has sent 20,000 vetted, promising African students to the United States—the University of Delaware happens to be one of the 20 hosting universities—at a very modest cost that is about to be shut down. Not a good idea.

It brings promising, young African leaders to the United States for a summer to meet with businesses and entrepreneurs, to meet with civil society, to convene in Washington and then go to 20 different states all over the country—one of many things I do not think we should shut down.

To the point you just made, Ambassador Gavin, the Millennium Challenge Corporation—MCC—launched under President Bush explicitly used corruption and combating corruption, reducing corruption, as one of the key indicators for whether or not a country would get a long-term development partnership with the United States.

It is all but closed. Most of its staff have been laid off. Many of its compacts have been shut down. PEPFAR, Mr. Meservey, is all but closed. It has been trimmed dramatically from its scope, a 25-year-old program long deserving of bipartisan support.

I would just be interested in both of you briefly saying what does it do to our reputation on a continent of 54 countries, a continent with enormous human potential and natural resources, a country that China and Russia sees as the continent of the 21st century.

What does it do to our place in East Africa and across the continent if we abruptly shut down these longstanding demonstrated and effective programs?

Madam Ambassador, then Mr. Meservey.

Ms. GAVIN. Thank you, Senator.

It is incredibly self-defeating, is my view. I just do not understand why we are taking a bunch of tools in our foreign policy toolbox and tossing them into a dumpster.

Senator COONS. I think the term is a wood chipper.

Ms. GAVIN. Okay. I think—I suppose so.

Senator COONS. It is tougher to reassemble things that have been put through a wood chipper than things that have gone

through a reasoned, considerable review which is the process that we should have gone through——

Ms. GAVIN. Oh, sure. No, reforms make——

Senator COONS. —is to have this body, Congress, work with the new administration to say, okay, trim this, reform this, change this, shutter this, expand this. That is not what happened.

Ms. GAVIN. No. No, it has not, and not only have we lit our credibility on fire and you see particularly China making hay of this.

The favorite phrase now is reliable partner. China is a reliable partner. They are not going to abruptly pull the rug out from under you.

I think that some of the kind of knock-on effects, consider the tens of thousands of health workers in Kenya who are out of work now.

These are educated, engaged citizens and the messaging we want to do about this long relationship with Kenya, it is at odds with their lived experience now and——

Senator COONS. I am about out of time. I have got less than a minute.

Ms. GAVIN. Sorry.

Senator COONS. Mr. Meservey, if I might.

I do agree that a bright spot is the hard work done under the previous administration by Avril Haines in DRC Rwanda and it is continuing under Special Advisor Boulos.

There is a real chance of peace there. I cannot think of a more concentrated example of the PRC-U.S. competition than the two adjacent bases in Djibouti.

I have just introduced with Senator Ricketts a bill to try and prioritize focusing on denying the PRC more basing opportunities on the continent.

What do you think we ought to make a priority in doing that important work?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes. Thank you, Senator, and I am very pleased to hear about the bill and your attention to this problem.

I would especially highlight the danger of an Atlantic Ocean base. We know quite reliably that China has been pursuing such a base for years. It is not hard to see how problematic that would be for security of the American homeland.

I think the—I mentioned in my original remarks that commercial engagement should be at the heart of a strategy, and I think we need to start giving African countries more of what they want and less of what they do not.

That seems like an obvious proposition, but frequently our Africa strategy does not seem to be guided by that principle.

The existential crisis that every African government faces is youth unemployment, and our development assistance and humanitarian assistance, as useful as that is in some contexts, is not going to address those problems.

I think——

Senator COONS. I do think that the Development Finance Corporation and the MCC really focused on private sector partnerships that fuel growth from the bottom up.

I think to the extent we can focus our messaging, our investments, and our partnerships on combating corruption, on being a

secure and reliable partner, and on helping create reliable, high-growth jobs, this continent of 4 billion people by the end of this century is a place where we can win in the competition with China, and if we do not—if we continue our retreat, we will not.

Thank you both.

Mr. MESERVEY. I agree.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Coons.

Senator Cornyn.

Senator CORNYN. Thank you for being here. I think we all agree that Africa is an important place and that we are not doing everything that we should do or might do in order to influence the direction of that continent.

I do take exception to some of my colleagues' statements about the previous, I will say, the status quo ante with a lot of money being spent in disjointed, wasteful, and unfocused ways by the Federal Government and, obviously, changing that is disruptive, and there is a lot of programs that I think, particularly PEPFAR, which have been particularly important in Africa in terms of our soft power and saving lives.

I continue, obviously, to support that, but it seems to me we lack a coherent strategy, and I am not sure that—I know the Administration is working on some targeted projects—for example, the DRC on the critical minerals front and others, but my visit to Kenya, Angola, and the DRC last August just—I was struck just by not only the magnitude of the challenge, but how we seem to lack any particular strategy to deal with making it any different than it is now.

Maybe both of you—take it in turn, please—what would a successful regional strategy in East Africa look like for the United States?

That does not necessarily have to all emanate from the White House. Congress can begin that conversation. What would that look like?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes. Thank you, Senator.

I think it is important, first, to ensure that any regional strategy is integrated into a broader continental strategy and then global strategy.

As far as the region specifically, the U.S. needs to determine exactly what its interests are, what its goals are, and how it can get there. That all seems obvious.

Senator CORNYN. That seems pretty fundamental.

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes, but sometimes—

Senator CORNYN. One of the things where our goal would be to stop the Russians and the Chinese from essentially preempting us and pushing us out in terms of our influence. Go ahead.

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes, absolutely. I referenced the potential Russian base, really, in Port Sudan. That would be massively problematic. We already have the Chinese base in Djibouti, as we have discussed.

I think—again, I am a big believer in commercial engagement. I think the U.S. Government and the U.S. Congress can help streamline the work of organizations like the DFC and EXIM Bank, make them more fit for purpose.

They are too slow. They are too bureaucratic, and then make that really a—this commercial engagement the centerpiece of the value proposition that the United States brings to these countries.

I also think it should determine which countries it can actually achieve things with. There are just some country or some governments on the continent that are so hostile and so, frankly, inept that it is very hard to determine how the U.S. could ever actually achieve much of anything with them.

I would—some specific areas you could talk about critical minerals. EAC does have such things. I know that critical minerals is already a cliché to talk about, but it is a reality for the United States and Africa.

Senator CORNYN. Yes, it is not just a cliché.

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes, it is a real thing. There is a reason everybody talks about it. It will—Africa will have to be part of the solution for the United States.

The U.S. needs to figure out how to support its companies. It should work with the companies of allied countries because we have very few mining companies anymore in this country.

The Australians, the Canadians, they have huge mining companies and look for possibilities there. They should also work closely with other allied countries on financing arrangements and take a much more systematic and harmonized approach with allies to these regions to focus on the core interests of the United States which, again, would be security and then some of these economic issues.

Senator CORNYN. Ambassador.

Ms. GAVIN. Thank you.

I think, particularly for the Horn, it is really important to integrate what we are trying to accomplish in Africa with a strategy that looks at the other side of the Red Sea.

This is—broadly, what we need to do is stop treating Africa like an extra credit project in foreign policy and make it part of the core curriculum and integrate it into the way we think about achieving U.S. interests globally.

I think that more engagement, as Senator Coons said, a focus on peace and conflict prevention because the conflicts in Africa provide opportunities, particularly to Russia and to various criminal networks—terrorist and otherwise.

This is not in our interest. Commercial deals, yes, but making sure that deals do not just benefit a set of elites at the top, but are deals that we can talk about benefiting both sides of the Atlantic in a way that addresses some of these job creation issues.

Senator CORNYN. I see my time is up.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the witnesses for your helpful testimony.

I want to return to the chairman's opening comments where he introduced an article into the record and talked about the recent discussion of the Kenyan President in China about this new world order.

Let me read from an article that I would like introduced in the record. Kenya calls for new world order that reflects Global South

realities, and this is from KBC Digital, the Kenya Broadcasting Company.

If I could introduce it into the record.

The CHAIRMAN. So entered.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to above can be found in the "Additional Material Submitted for the Record" section at the end of this document.]

Senator KAINE. From April 23, just recently.

Speaking during a public lecture at Peking University in Beijing, President William Ruto emphasized the need to fashion a new world order which takes cognizance of present realities.

The President was in China for a state visit. Okay. China is welcoming the Kenyan President for a state visit. Said this, the ongoing trade tariff wars could signal the end of the old world order as it has existed since the end of World War II.

Further, regarding the relationship between Kenya, China, and the rest of the world, Ruto remarked that Kenya and China are not just trade partners, but "co-architects of a new world order."

His comments are putting the U.S. and the old world order that has not helped the Global South—this is what he is asserting, whether or not it is true, how true it is. He is suggesting that the trade wars might be the destruction of the old world order and the creation of a new world order where China and Kenya and other nations focus more attention on the Global South.

How do we get to a place where the President of Kenya, where we have had this long relationship, just 2 weeks ago is making those assertions in the middle of a state visit to China?

I do think comments that have been made by my colleagues—the recent apparent abandonment of PEPFAR, the defunding of USAID, NED, the DFC, the MCC, the YALI program, which also has a presence at the University of Virginia.

AFRICOM is not based in Africa and has perennially been under-resourced. It is based in Germany. Picking a fight with South Africa, a pretty important nation, and labeling them as committing genocide against Afrikaan farmers, accepting Afrikaaner refugees while we are shutting off other refugees from Africa.

Mr. Meservey, you used to work with Church World Service. Church World Service work on refugee issues has been dramatically curtailed. The church I go to is heavily Congolese refugees who have been resettled in Richmond by Catholic Refugee Service. Their work has been curtailed.

We do not get the benefit of the doubt necessarily, and people look at evidence and they interpret it as to what it means and what they are interpreting the evidence that I have cited and other bits of evidence is that the U.S. is, to put it charitably, uninterested, and to put it not so charitably, affirmatively disinterested, and that leads a President like President Ruto to make those kinds of comments, almost gleefully, hoping that Donald Trump's tariff war will destroy the world order that the U.S. created in the aftermath of World War II to the benefit not only of the United States, but other nations all over the world.

We have got to reverse this. We have to reverse it. I hear this all over Latin America as I travel there, we would rather deal with you than with China.

I think in the Americas there is even a closer cultural connection because of migration patterns and family ties, but there are with Africa as well. We would rather deal with you than China.

You got to have something on the table, and China does and they are not going anywhere and, yes, the conditions may be bad and, yes, there are strings attached and, yes, they may not perform, but they got something on the table. What do you have on the table? The things we have on the table are being hollowed out.

We can wring our hands about this all we want in this committee, but if we keep bringing out the architecture of the relationships with Africa or other parts of the world, China has got stuff on the table.

They are going to continue to—I do not know so much about Russia or Iran—their staying power. China is going to have staying power.

I wanted to ask you, Ambassador Gavin, one question, and you were getting to it sort of at the end of the Q&A with Senator Cornyn.

I thought it was intriguing in your comments—your opening comments about, hey, let us look at East Africa in connection with Yemen. We divide CENTCOM from AFRICOM. We divide in this committee, Africa from the MENA region.

Talk a little bit about what a coordinated Red Sea strategy might look like.

Ms. GAVIN. Sure. I think that it would require convening both the African side of the Red Sea and the powers there with these Gulf actors who are clearly intervening to try and stake out influence and territory and trying to tease out what exactly are the core security concerns that these actors are worried about and what is a more opportunistic approach.

Ultimately, these two regions are going to need to build an institutional security architecture. We can assist with that, but our own thinking about U.S. security in the Red Sea, in the Bal el-Mandeb, in the Gulf of Aden, we need to be thinking much more holistically and bringing the expertise from our different communities to bear.

I do really recommend USIP's work on this. They have been doing incredibly important work on this issue for a long time.

Senator KAINE. I yield back. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. There is nothing to yield back, Senator.

Senator KAINE. I guess you are right.

The CHAIRMAN. I will be delighted—

Senator KAINE. I will yield some back next time.

The CHAIRMAN. I will put that on the record for next time.

Senator McCormick.

Senator MCCORMICK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member. Thank you both for being here today.

Mr. Meservey, I understand you are a Pennsylvanian so it is good to have you here today.

I want to start with just a word on PEPFAR. I have been a long supporter of the President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief, which was created when I served during the Bush administration.

By some estimates that program has saved 26 million lives in just over 20 years, so my question to you is really two fold.

Number one, how does that program advance U.S. national security interest. Second, some countries in Africa have started to move to their own versions of that program. What is the path to self-reliance and self-sufficiency for that program?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes, thank you, Senator, and greetings from your home state.

Yes, I will take the last one first. One of the problems that we had with PEPFAR, even though it was tremendously successful, was that some host governments were not taking the ownership that they needed to. It was never supposed to be an open-ended program.

I think that—I hope that elements of this are reconstituted. I genuinely do. Public health interventions have been successful on their own merits.

If it is reconstituted, I think there needs to be a very clear road map for receiving countries to take ownership.

It needs to be thoughtful and reasonable, of course, but one of the dangers of long-running aid programs is that eventually they just become an entitlement that countries just receive as a matter-of-fact and do not take ownership for.

That would be one thing. Regarding—and then I think probably with some countries you need to do an assessment of do they all need PEPFAR anymore? Which ones really need it? Which ones are at greatest risk?

I lived in Zambia at the height of the HIV pandemic and that was an obvious—it was a focused country for very good reasons. We need to continue those types of assessments.

Then, how does PEPFAR help national security interests? One, it does contribute to soft power. It is very hard to quantify and I think we were not good enough about getting as much soft power as we should have from PEPFAR, but I think it is also undeniable that it did help us in that respect.

Also, mass death in a society is fundamentally destabilizing and it prevented mass death in some cases, and it allowed for a much higher quality of life for many—for millions of people, even beyond the lives—

Senator McCORMICK. Destabilizing, yes.

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes.

Senator McCORMICK. Thank you.

I just want to reiterate as someone who is a big supporter of the program, the initial vision at creation was never that it was perpetual. There was a transition to self-sufficiency.

Thank you for that and, Ambassador, thank you for being here. We read and hear a lot about the Belt and Road Initiative and growing influence of China in Africa and expanding security assistance.

What challenge do those activities pose to U.S. counterterrorism efforts and in particular what would you suggest the United States be doing to ensure that in light of that investment on the part of

the Chinese that we are evolving our counterterrorism efforts to be as effective as possible?

Ms. GAVIN. Thank you. I think the Belt and Road investments—certainly some of the digital Belt and Road investments raise questions, make it difficult for us to engage in intelligence cooperation with some of these partners because of concerns about Chinese access, but some of the infrastructure investments, quite frankly, redound to our benefit too, right? We are driving on the same road that they built and that can help us get some things done.

I do—I just want to flag that China is not going to leave Africa, not ever, and so learning how to compete effectively will require recognition that African governments are not going to reject all Chinese investment and trade.

It is their largest trading partner, et cetera, but on counterterrorism I think that it is really about influence, trust, the kind of relationships with security establishments that enable meaningful cooperation in any security space and China is working very hard on establishing those kinds of relationships.

Again, I think that the U.S. potentially has an advantage if we can work more institutionally rather than personally because of turnover.

Senator MCCORMICK. To the chairman's point, yes.

Mr. Chairman, I yield as well.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. I will take it. Thank you so much.

I have on this side in order of appearance Senator Rosen, Senator Van Hollen, Senator Booker. I know it seems like you were here, but they actually were here before you, left, and came back, so under the rules—sorry about that—Senator Rosen.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen. Thank you to the witnesses for your work and for your willingness to serve.

I am going to talk a little bit about Somalia first. There is a lot of extremist problems there because over the past year ISIS Somalia has emerged as a key player in the Islamic State global financial and operational network that is facilitating the movement of money, foreign fighters, and military trainers to Islamic State affiliates throughout Africa and beyond.

ISIS Somalia just does not pose a threat to U.S. forces and our partners in the region, their aggressive efforts to plan and conduct external operations are a threat to U.S. citizens everywhere.

U.S. forces have taken action to degrade ISIS Somalia's capability, but there is more that must be done. Ambassador, during the last Trump administration the President withdrew almost all the U.S. troops from Somalia. What would be the consequences of the Administration doing that again now?

Ms. GAVIN. I think the consequences would be incredibly dangerous. The situation has evolved even from that period of the first Trump administration and we do have two different terrorist organizations that wish us harm and have a track record of being able to carry out attacks at some distance.

I am sympathetic to the argument that I know my colleague will make that it is very frustrating to have been continuing to try to build Somali capacity to combat these threats themselves year

after year after year only to have these efforts essentially undermined by poor governance in Somalia.

The question is what is the alternative? Being frustrated and sort of washing our hands of it does not address these very, very real threats.

Senator ROSEN. Let me ask you this then. Research has shown that violent extremism surges during humanitarian crises and you talk about both not good governance and those things.

How are the Islamic insurgents in Somalia taking advantage of these issues to recruit and what does the Administration's—our cuts to humanitarian aid compound this to what you were just mentioning?

Ms. GAVIN. Certainly, it does feed right into the messaging about who the enemy is, but it also creates the kind of resource scarcity that leads to desperation, people seizing—who might not really be ideologically aligned, but are looking to survive.

There is a—you have to sift through these groups in Somalia. Some are—some of it is survival. Some of it is sort of hardcore believers. Some of it is Somali nationalism.

It is certainly not helping. It is hurting.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I want to stay on Africa for a minute because, Ambassador Gavin, again, this is a difficult period for everyone residing in East Africa and the Horn. I want to talk about women's role there.

We know it is particularly hard for women and for girls. The war in Sudan, extremism in Somalia, the post-conflict reconstruction in Ethiopia—they have left thousands of women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence struggling for justice.

Across the region women continue to battle forced marriages, child labor, lack of social protections, and murder just for being a woman. They struggle to break through economically, politically, and through any social norms to gain equality.

Ambassador, could you talk about how the U.S. has supported women's and girls' advancements in East Africa and the Horn and, really, the importance of doing so and, again, the impact of the U.S. terminating these kinds of programs on the region and success of the region.

I think women can—support of the family. It is really critical to family structure and stability in some ways, right?

Ms. GAVIN. It is—of course, it is essential and in many African societies women are a backbone, of course, of what creates peace and stability. You are right about the really jaw-dropping and appalling level of sexual violence that we are seeing associated with the conflicts in the Horn right now.

This happened in Tigray during that crisis. It is happening in the Amhara and Oromo areas right now and, of course, Sudan's plight is heartbreaking and when the U.S. is not there to try and provide assistance, medical assistance, and support, and, critically, a voice speaking out about some international norms, I think we all are invested.

Senator ROSEN. Violence against women, right?

Ms. GAVIN. Yes. Then we are missing a chance to strengthen these societies that we would like to have as peaceful partners, going forward.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I, too, will follow the norm and yield back.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Rosen.

I do not mean this disrespectfully, but your criticism about pulling troops out of that area, I think it is important for the record to note that when you have troops there, the question always is, is who are you going to train and who are you going to fight with, and when you have Somalia, Puntland, Somaliland, all of whom have disputed borders and incredibly entangled tribal issues there, who do you stand with?

Now, obviously, we fight ISIS there and we fight Houthis there. If we can identify them, okay, but boy, the rest of this stuff, this is really a tough question.

I appreciate the criticism, but there is a lot more to this than just here are the good guys and here are the bad guys. Finding good guys is really, really difficult there.

Anyway, thank you for your thoughts.

With that, we will turn to Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank both of you for your testimony today.

I am actually going to pick up where Senator Rosen left off with respect to Sudan. We are now in the third year of a brutal civil war in Sudan.

When Secretary Rubio was here for his confirmation hearing, he testified that helping resolve that conflict would be a top priority of the Administration.

Clearly, that has not happened. In fact, the cuts to U.S. humanitarian assistance have made a desperate situation in Sudan even worse.

Ambassador Gavin, you wrote a piece for the Council for Foreign Relations I think back in February entitled, "The Abandonment of Sudan."

Obviously, we need to look for ways to put pressure on some of the outside parties. I have proposed actually stopping U.S. military assistance to the UAE so long as it continues to support the murderous RSF, and I think I heard you say, Mr. Meservey, that the RSF could not continue its military operations without that outside help from the UAE.

Let me—if I could start with you, Ambassador Gavin. What should we do and should we be using more of our leverage to put pressure on some of the outside parties that are fueling this murderous conflict, including the UAE's support for the RSF?

Ms. GAVIN. Yes, I absolutely think we should be using more of our leverage with the UAE and having real conversations. I think Emirati officials are aware that the RSF is never going to govern all of Sudan.

They have concerns about what the other side of the coin looks like and so do we, frankly, or we should, and what we have called the SAF for a long time is a coalition of entities and actors, some of which are highly problematic in terms of U.S. interests, and I do not think that that is likely to hold together in a scenario where there could be a military solution.

The reality is there is no military solution. What needs to happen is a set of talks that involve Sudanese actors, pressure on these external actors who continue to arm and fuel both antagonists, but most importantly, really, a greater effort to elevate the civilian voices in Sudan who have never given up.

They continue to be in many, many parts of the country the only source of medical care, of food, which is quite scarce, and they have been organizing to try to come up with some clear principles they would like all parties to agree to. That needs to be raised up and given validation and credibility from the U.S.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

Given the time I am going to turn briefly now to Ethiopia and Eritrea. I think we all know that Ethiopia stands at a pretty critical juncture as it grapples with the aftermath of the conflict in Tigray, and as we speak we see Eritrea.

I think the leader there called up the troops—at least there are reports to that effect. I guess my question for each of you is if you were in charge right now of U.S. policy, what practical steps would you take today to try to address the bubbling, really, almost boiling situation with respect to Ethiopia and Eritrea?

Why do we not start with you, Mr. Meservey?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes, thank you. I think there is a few key issues here. One is that the Eritreans are still inside of Ethiopian territory in western Tigray in violation of the Pretoria Agreement, which is what ended the Tigray war ostensibly.

There has to be a process for having them leave, but, of course, their presence is also tied into the internal divisions where the Amhara claim that area. The Tigrayans also claim it. It is a major flash point.

I think right now what the U.S. can do, and I believe what it did do along with other partner countries, was to unequivocally demonstrate to both sides that we are watching and that a conflict would be unacceptable, and then it should offer its good offices for either convening discussions or trying to mediate around some of these issues, but they are intensely difficult and I am not, frankly, terribly positive about the immediate prospects for resolving them.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

Ambassador Gavin.

Ms. GAVIN. I would just quickly agree and add that mobilizing more of the AU member states to insist on actual implementation of the Pretoria Agreement would be a helpful focal point. This is something everybody has already agreed to, but it has not been fully implemented. It is in this strange limbo.

I think that getting that kind of regional engagement would be helpful.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you both.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Cruz.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

Mr. Meservey, as we have been discussing, I believe the Chinese Communist Party presents the most significant long-term strategic threat to the United States. I also believe that China is a global threat that has to be confronted globally, including in Africa.

We have a vast range of interests in Africa and a complicated security architecture. Our interests there are counterterrorism, trade and critical mineral supply lines, global biosecurity, preventing illegal immigration that threatens allies in other parts of the world, blocking illicit finance of hostile actors, and even, importantly, space development.

Across Africa again and again, the Chinese have exploited local political, economic, and sometimes even cultural conditions to undermine American national security interests.

Sometimes they do it by securing bilateral and multilateral agreements that block American goals. Other times they do it by creating instability, but they are actively doing it.

Talk a little bit about the specific tactics that China is using in East Africa and the Horn and what are the specific conditions they are exploiting?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes. Thank you, Senator, for the question.

China, first of all, has a long-standing strategy for the continent that has been a topic of this conversation as the U.S. does not have anything comparable, and they are highly disciplined about implementing it.

That is sort of the foundation of what they are doing. As far as specific tactics, they like to engage at a very senior level—the highest possible senior level. They do that in a variety of ways.

Some of it is as open as bribery, but a lot of it is helping leaders, for instance, with key infrastructure projects that helps them politically in the domestic space or just expressing solidarity. That rhetoric is important.

Even the diplomatic exchanges they engage, as I said, at a very high level, but they do it constantly as well. I referenced in my opening remarks over a hundred visits from senior Chinese officials to this area.

They engage at a much higher tempo and at a much more senior level than U.S. diplomats do. Those are some of the specific tactics that they use, but they are not unique to East Africa.

They use them across the continent to great effects, and then easy money loans, very important to their strategy. Investment trade agreements—we are seeing more and more free trade agreements where the so-called green lanes with their preferential access to the Chinese market for agricultural goods.

It is genuinely a wide array of tactics that are grounded in a long-term strategy.

Senator CRUZ. How has Chinese involvement impacted the ongoing conflicts in the region?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes. I think in—usually China actually prefers stability because that facilitates what they are trying to do in other areas. They generally try to stay out of these types of things.

We have seen some sort of, I would argue, weak diplomatic efforts from the Chinese. They do have a special envoy for the region who occasionally goes and talks to the various leaders, but I do not think anything substantive comes of it.

They do contribute to peacekeeping operations, but that is much more, I would argue, about them building both diplomatic heft, but also capabilities for and experience for the troops in these types of austere environments where they are often put.

I think they are not nearly as helpful as they could be. I think where they actively are negative are the Chinese weapons that flow through the area.

Back in the original Sudan civil war they armed the Omar Al-Bashir regime, which was genociding Darfuris at the time. They armed both Ethiopia and Eritrea during their border war in the late 1990s and Chinese weapons continue to flood the area.

We are seeing Chinese bombs and other things probably reexported from UAE show up in Sudan.

Senator CRUZ. Many of the agreements China has been locking in are explicitly military agreements. Since 2017 China has operated a military base in Djibouti. The CCP Beijing is actively working to deepen ties across the region to secure greater access to the Red Sea and key maritime routes.

Describe the nature of China's specifically military cooperation in the Horn.

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes. You referenced the flagship, which is the Djibouti base, but we have seen a very real uptick in military trainings.

I think it was 2 or 3 years ago they inaugurated—the Chinese inaugurated an annual meeting for African defense chiefs. They convened in Beijing, and that has been ongoing, I believe, for 3 years, if I remember correctly.

I also referenced in my written testimony the fact that PLA Navy vessels participate in these anti-piracy task forces in the Gulf of Aden.

They then will go all around the continent doing port calls both on the Indian Ocean, but also the Atlantic Ocean side and the—that is clearly an effort to build blue water naval capabilities that they covet so they can project power into the South China Sea and probably for an eventual invasion of Taiwan.

Again, the weapons, so weapons training deployments, and I already referenced the peacekeeping operations. I would say those are the primary elements.

Senator CRUZ. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Cruz.

Senator Booker.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to start by adding to, I think, some of the sentiments expressed that we have a colossal problem right now by our failing to understand that if you look at all of humanity, the future is in so many ways Africa.

We have one out of every four people on the planet Earth and by 2050 are going to be on the continent one out of every three working-age people.

The continent is indispensable when it comes to the future strength, opportunities, prosperity, health of Americans. It is stunning to me that we are lacking a vision for engagement with the continent and are making such colossal mistakes.

What the Trump administration is doing right now is not only unacceptable, but it is a series of self-inflicted wounds when we cut the kind of programs that have created economic stability and opportunity for American companies, that have gutted public health

and our response to public health because a public health crisis anywhere now is a threat to public health everywhere.

We are stopping, especially as we see the Tanzania elections and the Uganda elections and the instabilities there—we are cutting back our resources helping with democratic stability at a time that democracies are under retreat all across the globe, and the democratic freedoms and ideals that we preach are being undermined by forces that do not share our values.

We are in a state of crisis right now when it comes to our relations with the continent and other competitors of ours, from Iranians to Russians to Chinese to people that do not always align with us, from the Emiratis and others, are flooding the zone where we are retreating in a stunning way.

We are seeing our retreat on public health, on economic empowerment, on national security and creating a more volatile and dangerous environment where there are forces there that want to see the destruction of America, and there is no place that to me that this is more obvious in just this retreat we have, even in—where our embassies and consulates that are—that this administration is slating to close.

China has embassies in every single country and we now see a list that consulates and embassies all over the world, but six embassies and two consulates in Africa, including around the Horn, are being shut down.

When I travel through Africa, the power of our presence there, our ability to combat misinformation and propaganda, our ability to create deep partnerships and connection, we are truly pursuing a set of policies that are going to undermine America's safety, security, and economic strength in the future and make us be more targeted by forces from the Red Sea all the way to terrorist attacks here at home based upon the instability and folks who are focusing and targeting and trying to undermine America.

Again, I am stunned. I have already been upset in past administrations with our failure to prioritize, but what is happening right now is just utterly stunning and generations of Americans will pay a price for it unless we find a way, in a bipartisan way to focus and do more.

In my scarce remaining time I just want to focus in on Sudan. You call it, Ambassador, rightfully the worst humanitarian crisis on the globe, and if you want to talk about ethnic cleansing as the Administration rolls out the red carpet for some South Africans recently, the horrors of what is going on there, the instability it is causing to South Sudan, to Chad, the threat to the Horn in general, it cannot be overstated.

If you—in the time that you have before me can you please help us as a committee understand that the failure of American focus—there was a bipartisan letter we just put forward to get a special envoy—just the failure of Americans to focus on this is not only contributing to greater humanitarian crises, but creating a level of instability and crisis that advantages forces that we are opposing like the Chinese and the Russians and more.

Ms. GAVIN. I can take a stab at it.

You are absolutely right. Russia thrives in environments of chaos where they can cut a deal to do regime security whether the regime is legitimate or not, and get access to resources.

Sudan's problem is bigger than Sudan. My concern is that we are going to end up with this belt of metastasizing instability all the way across the continent from the Atlantic to the Red Sea.

You have the crisis in the Sahel. Things are not looking great in Central Africa, although I am hopeful that some advances will bear fruit, and then you have what is happening in the Horn.

As these conflicts spill over, they relate to each other and it gets harder and harder to disentangle the threads, right?

It is hard enough to make peace with two or three parties. Trying to do it with 16 is a very, very tall order.

So I agree with you. I think that a de facto partition does not mean stability. These are fractious armed entities on either side and it is, I think, important always to remember that Osama bin Laden used to operate from Sudan. The Islamist forces that are a part of that Port Sudan coalition have a long history of wishing America harm.

Senator BOOKER. Mr. Chairman, before I yield, there is a staggering moral failure here in our ability to exercise American influence—greater American influence on this crisis, but what is worse than this is I fear that if we do not—are not successful in addressing the abject lack of attention, focus, and energy from a diplomatic perspective that this crisis will grow worse and have implications on our own national security, as our witness indicated, and I am hoping that we as a committee can take even more actions to try to get the Trump administration to give a higher priority to solving this crisis and showing some true American leadership.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator, we—my partner here and I made the decision to hold this hearing for the reasons you have indicated. There are serious problems here, and as you indicated or as has been suggested, everything has to be prioritized, and the difficulty is, as always, it is a question of money.

Going into debt a trillion dollars every 150 days is unsustainable, so where do you put the money?

There are things here that absolutely cry out for our attention, and the other fact that I think has been underscored here again and again and again is that Africa has such a galloping influence on the planet that it really does need our attention, particularly when it is getting such close attention by people who have values that are very different than ours other than democracy and respect for human rights. That was the purpose of the hearing.

Senator BOOKER. Mr. Chairman, the one thing that I would request, and I have a feeling that the Trump administration will listen to you more than me, this does not cost any money to simply nominate ambassadors to key countries in Africa.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator—

Senator BOOKER. There is a scarce lack of even them coming forward with putting up leaders as we see them filling posts from European nations and others, but in critical areas we are not even getting ambassadorial nominees.

The CHAIRMAN. A fair point. We get that, but, again, this comes back to there is only so many hours in a day and, as you know,

moving ambassadors through here is a—without regard to the politics, moving ambassadors through here is a very cumbersome job that the Founding Fathers handed us with the system we go through, but thank you for your thoughts.

Senator BOOKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. I know we are out of time, but I would like to just make two points. One is apropos the earlier conversation about PEPFAR and it not being an entitlement.

I would like to point out that multiple African countries have, in fact, increased their financing to help pay for PEPFAR and to address HIV/AIDS.

I would hope that we would continue to help work in partnership with them on that issue. The other thing I would point out with respect to Sudan, one of the things that we know from the data is that when women are at the table in negotiations that those negotiations are more likely to last longer term and more likely to be successful.

It is a mistake we made in Afghanistan when we totally left women out of those negotiations for conflict and it is the reason why I have been so supportive of the Women, Peace and Security legislation that we passed, that President Trump signed in his first term and that now has decided to get rid of because he thinks it is a DEI program.

It is not a DEI program. It is a program that recognizes that women make up half of the world and they need to be part of negotiations and part of ongoing efforts that we make and that we get a benefit from doing that.

I just want to put that on the record, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Shaheen.

That will conclude the hearing, and I want to sincerely thank both of you for what I think has been an eye-opening experience for people who really are not exposed to this as we all are every day on this committee and in the lane you work in.

For information of the members, the record will remain open until close of business tomorrow, May 14. We ask the witnesses if they do get such a question that you respond as promptly as possible and your response will be included in the record.

Also, I am going to enter in the record the speech that has been referred to regarding Dr. William Ruto given April 23, 2025, in Beijing, China.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to above can be found in the "Additional Material Submitted for the Record" section at the end of this document.]

The CHAIRMAN. With that and the thanks of the committee, the hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:43 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF MR. JOSHUA MESERVEY TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH

Question. What went wrong with the U.S.' Mogadishu-focused strategy in Somalia?

Answer. The key flaw in the U.S.' Mogadishu-focused strategy is that it ignored the reality that a strong centralized government cannot work in the current Somali context. Most Somalis' preeminent loyalty is to clan—or, more precisely, to even smaller sub-clan formations—and not to any government. That is likely one reason why Somalia has scant historical practice of strong centralized government. The exception is the tenure of dictator Mohamed Siad Barre who ruled so disastrously that Somalia eventually plunged into failed state status.

There is also a long history in Somalia of clan competition, including violence, that has bred distrust among the clans. Barre's two-decade rule likely exacerbated clannism in the country. As just one example, a core Somaliland grievance today against southern Somalia is the extreme anti-Isaaq violence Barre's government unleashed that was often perpetrated by Isaaq clan rivals.

Despite these realities, U.S. policy for over a decade has focused on supporting a centralized government in Somalia often at the expense of engagement with sub-national entities that better map the distribution of clans. Such impracticality cannot succeed, and it has crippled American policy in the region.

Furthermore, Washington has too frequently ignored, or been too blasé about, the widespread corruption in Somalia's government and military. Policymakers must sometimes make unpalatable decisions for the sake of a higher national interest, yet the U.S. has responded so weakly to corruption for so long that Mogadishu's elites likely calculate they have little to fear from Washington on this score. Corruption undermines the scant legitimacy the central government has as well as the fight against al-Shabaab.

Question. Can we work with the federal government and member states without picking sides?

Answer. One driver of political instability in Somalia since the advent of the federal government system has been the contest for power between the states and the central government. Both sides seem to believe they are fighting a zero-sum contest for power. That would make it difficult for the U.S. to appear to not be choosing sides if it engaged unilaterally with the states.

Nonetheless, the U.S. is obliged to pursue the good of its own people first. Engaging unilaterally with Somalia's states has a greater likelihood of protecting American interests in the country and region than continuing the demonstrably failed approach of granting the Mogadishu government a virtual veto over what Washington can and cannot do with the states.

Question. What would more thoughtful engagement with Somaliland look like?

Answer. The U.S. should unilaterally engage with Somaliland as its interests dictate and as other countries like the UAE already do. Given its pro-American orientation, diplomatic relations with Taiwan, strategic location, recently renovated and expanded Berbera port and airport, relative stability, and its decades' long practice of democracy, Somaliland is an obvious American partner in a difficult but important region.

Before ramping up engagement with Somaliland, Washington should create a workable and clear roadmap for building the relationship. Unless U.S. national interests demand otherwise, engagement should begin with basic and relatively easy to achieve measures. Those could include agreeing a bilateral trade and investment framework; arranging an American commercial delegation visit; deploying technical experts from the relevant U.S. agencies to help Somaliland write a mining code and improve its economic regulatory environment; and a U.S. Geological Survey project to map Somaliland's natural resources.

In tandem or in succession, the U.S. and Somaliland could intensify the relationship through security cooperation activities, including bolstering the Somaliland Coast Guard's capabilities and including Somaliland in the U.S. National Guard's State Partnership Program. Further measures should include establishing a military base in Berbera and a consulate office in Hargeisa, and, ultimately, recognition by the U.S. of Somaliland's independence. As part of that effort, the U.S. should coordinate with other countries that are willing to recognize Somaliland.

Wherever practicable, the U.S. should partner with Taiwan in these efforts to enhance the trilateral relationship.

**Speech Given at Peking University, Beijing, China By
Dr. William Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya,
Dated April 23, 2025**

Submitted by Senator James E. Risch



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**SPEECH BY H.E. DR. WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO,
CGH, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA
AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE
FORCES AT PEKING UNIVERSITY: REIMAGINING
MULTILATERALISM FOR A SHARED FUTURE**

APRIL 23, 2025

BEIJING, CHINA



SPEECH BY H.E. DR. WILLIAM SAMOEL RUTO, CGM, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES AT
PEKING UNIVERSITY: REIMAGINING MULTILATERALISM FOR A SHARED FUTURE

Prof. He Guangcaj
Chair of University Council,

The President of Peking University,
Prof. GONG Qihuang,

The Management and Faculty of the University,

Dear Students, Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. On behalf of the people of Kenya, let me express my deep gratitude for the honour and privilege to address this iconic and top-ranked university, which is not only one of China's most historic and prestigious universities but also a global citadel of intellectual vibrancy, academic excellence, and groundbreaking research.
2. From its founding in 1898 as a symbol of reform to its pivotal role in shaping China's intellectual and academic identity, Peking University has consistently stood at the vanguard of rigorous scholarship and public service. I commend your leadership, faculty, and the entire community for cultivating a world-class institution that fosters mutual understanding, talent development, and knowledge sharing between China and the world.
3. Peking University has played a vital role in China–Africa educational relations, having educated over 4,000 African students since 1956, including many Kenyans. We are proud of our academic collaborations, including the partnership with Kenyatta University in literature and cultural studies.

These exchanges, and the scholarships you provide, are building lifelong people-to-people bonds and transforming lives in tangible ways.

4. Indeed, education is a pillar of our diplomatic partnership. As Kenya deepens its focus on science, technology, and innovation, we welcome further partnerships with Chinese institutions, particularly in STEM fields, AI, biotechnology, and the creative economy. Kenya's "Silicon Savannah" is established at our Konza Technopolis, and our upcoming National AI Strategy (2025–2030) offer a unique platform for cutting-edge collaboration.

Ladies and gentlemen,

5. We gather at a time of profound and accelerated global change. From regional conflicts, economic shocks and climate disruption, to cyber insecurity and demographic shifts, the challenges we face today are complex, interconnected, and urgent. But within these challenges are opportunities; opportunities for renewed partnership, bold thinking, and a reimagined global architecture.
6. Africa and China have emerged as pivotal partners in this shifting landscape bound by history, powered by mutual interest, and grounded in a shared future. Two days after Kenya gained independence in December 1963, China opened its embassy in Nairobi, becoming the fourth country to do so. Our ties have only deepened since, culminating in the establishment of a Comprehensive Strategic Co-operative Partnership in 2017.
7. China is now Sub-Saharan Africa's largest trading partner, and Kenya's largest overall. We export tea, coffee, flowers, and more, and I trust many of you have enjoyed a cup of Kenyan tea or a bouquet of our fresh roses. Over 3,000 Chinese companies operate in Africa, most from the private sector.

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Our co-operation under the Belt and Road Initiative has delivered flagship infrastructure projects, including roads, ports, and the Standard Gauge Railway, infrastructure that is reshaping regional connectivity and integration.

8. But even as we celebrate these achievements, we must confront a sobering truth: the post-war multilateral system is broken, dysfunctional and no longer fit for purpose, and the escalating trade tariff war may be its final death blow. Allow me to give my perspectives on four aspects, namely, peace and security, the climate crisis, the global financial architecture, and global trade, and suggest possible ideas on the way forward.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. On the United Nations and UN Security Council, no other circumstance, other than the post-war situation, would have made the current structure of the UN and more particularly the UN Security Council, that is the five permanent members with individual powers, an acceptable peace and security structure. The Security Council, once a beacon for peace and diplomacy, now has one permanent member invading one country, while another member takes sides in conflict in contradiction to the Council's own resolutions. Yet today, the permanent members live in denial and resist reform, even as the Security Council becomes less and less legitimate and its relevance being put to question.
10. On the other hand, the Global multilateral financial architecture is outdated. The Bretton Woods institutions recently commemorated their 80th anniversary. Eighty years ago, two-thirds of the world's nations did not exist as sovereign states when this architecture came into being. The IMF was established to buttress the "gold standard" fixed exchange rate system, a system that collapsed 50 years ago.

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The World Bank was established to rebuild Europe, an assignment now overtaken by events.

11. This financial architecture presents four intertwined challenges. First, the challenge of liquidity, or financial safety net for the multiple and persistent climate and economic shocks that we face today. Second, inadequate finance for development and climate action. Third, cost of capital, what we are calling the "*great financial divide*". Fourth, the problem of recurring debt crises in developing countries, which is a consequence of the first three.
12. The climate crisis is perhaps the most urgent and existential challenge of our time. Africa, despite contributing the least to global emissions, bears the greatest burden through floods, droughts, displacement, and food insecurity. We have scientific consensus that these extreme weather events are human-induced. But even if it were otherwise, decarbonisation of the economy is progress in its own right. Conservation of nature and clean air are desirable ends in and of themselves. But thirty COP conferences later, national interests continue to stand in the way of global collective action, notwithstanding the fact that the atmosphere has no national boundaries. We continue to play dice with nature.
13. When the WTO was mooted in 1945, world trade consisted primarily of goods. The wealthy industrialised countries exported manufactured goods, while the less developed countries exported primary products and raw materials. But today, the world of trade has changed dramatically. Trade in services now accounts for a quarter of global trade and is growing three times faster than merchandise trade.

14. The business processing outsourcing (BPO) and IT-enabled services, which were inconceivable in 1945, are currently in the order of \$300b and projected to grow at 10% annually over the next decade. Trade in services, particularly digitally enabled services, defies the traditional goods logic, as it enables professionals in developing countries to compete with their counterparts in industrialised countries with ease. But this levelling of the playing field goes beyond digital services, for example, affordable air travel enabled medical tourism to emerge as a growth industry.
15. Ladies and Gentlemen, having contextualised the situation as it is now, allow me at this point to suggest my views on where I consider the opportunities for the future lie.
16. For the first 45 years of its existence, the post-war multilateral system was shaped by the bipolar ideological divide of the Cold War. This divide, the East-West divide, suggests that we are unable to overcome the bipolarism of that era. Seemingly, there appears to be Cold War warriors that are unable to see a world that is not ideologically polarised and are determined to reinvent a polarised world by other means. In a world where globalisation is no longer an option but an existential imperative, any polarisation is unnecessary, undesirable and untenable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

17. Two structural forces have driven globalisation; namely technology and demography. They are irreversible. Until very recently, perhaps no more than a decade ago, it was taken for granted that the industrialised West would maintain a competitive advantage in high technology industries, while the global south would remain in low-tech, labour-intensive and primary goods industries.

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Today, disruptive cutting-edge innovation can pop up anywhere in the world. The DeepSeek AI disruption and Kenya's revolutionary mobile money transfer technology are signs of our times.

18. Additionally, there is a saying that demography is destiny. Economic development cannot be divorced from demographics. It is people who produce and consume.
19. At the dawn of African independence in 1960, the combined population of the US and EU at 520m (170m and 350m respectively) was double that of Africa at 260m.

Six decades on, it is the reverse; Africa's population of 1.5b is now double the combined US/EU's population of 800m. The demographic dynamic has an inevitability about it. Ageing societies would want to reverse the trend, but there is little they can do about it. So, inevitably, capital will have to flow to where the workforce is.

At 19, Africa's median age is less than half of Europe's (45 years) and comparable to China's median age in the mid-70s. By 2050, Africa will account for a quarter of the world's workforce, the same proportion as China today. If the first half of this Century belongs to China, the second half will belong to Africa.

20. We must therefore imagine a new peace and security architecture, one rooted in democracy, equity, transparency and equal regional representation. It is my view that the security architecture of the World as is today should be representative of the five continental blocks, that is, the Americas, Europe, Asia-Pacific and Africa/Middle East, with equal representation for each of the regions.

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Seeing as Europe already has three members—France, the UK and Russia—it seems reasonable that the membership for each region be set at three, for a total of 12 permanent members. Such a council would better reflect today's geopolitical realities and uphold the principle of sovereign equality among nations.

21. Global opinion is divided on whether the current international financial institutions can be reformed. My view is that, as difficult as it is, it is still easier to reform than to abolish them, even though the latter would be the better option. At the heart of the Bretton Woods institutions is a fundamental issue: these are shareholder institutions. At the time they were formed, the shareholders were also the primary stakeholders and beneficiaries.
22. Both the World Bank and the IMF have evolved into development finance institutions, but the ownership and power remain with the wealthy countries that they no longer serve. The interests of the shareholders and stakeholders and beneficiaries are at great variance. This anomaly became apparently glaring during the IMF SDR issuance, where 64 per cent of the allocation ended up with wealthy countries that did not need liquidity support. The poorest countries, which needed it most, received only 2.4%.
23. There are many reforms required in these institutions, but I believe that the most consequential is governance changes that will transform them into independent, apolitical global institutions, insulated from the national interest of their shareholders. Surprisingly, this requires no more than adopting modern corporate governance best practice. The shareholders should elect directors, and the directors should appoint and supervise competent, professional management.

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I believe reform, not abandonment of multilateralism, is the path forward.

24. The inaugural Africa Climate Summit held in Nairobi in September 2023 resolved to, and I quote, “urge world leaders to rally behind the proposal for a global carbon taxation regime, including a carbon tax on fossil fuel trade, maritime transport and aviation.” This principle is accepted at the national level, and is implemented through carbon taxes, subsidies to green energy, and national emission trading systems, yet we continue to resist taking this to its logical conclusion, namely a global carbon taxation regime. However, I take note that earlier this month, the International Maritime Organisation adopted a global emissions tax. Kenya generates over 90% of its electricity from renewables and has enshrined climate adaptation in law. Nairobi is now home to the second headquarters of the Global Centre on Adaptation - the first global institution co-located in both the Global North and South.
25. I wish to commend China for its leadership in renewable energy technologies, particularly in solar power and electric vehicles. Without China, many of these technologies would remain unaffordable for much of the developing world. Today, solar panels, e-bikes, and electric buses are commonplace in African towns. This is what meaningful South-South co-operation looks like.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

26. As the world’s trade system evolves, we must update our assumptions. While the language of international trade is framed as an issue of trade between countries, much of it now occurs within international supply chains of global corporations. Actual trade flows as captured in export and import data provide a very limited, maybe even distorted, view of international trade.

Let me share some perspectives:

27. Apple Corporation reported \$391b sales in 2024, of which the Americas contributed \$167b and rest of the world \$224b. In effect, more than two-thirds of its market is outside the US. Nike reported sales of \$49b, \$21b in North America and \$28b from the rest of the world. By and large, America's global corporations generate between half and two-thirds of their business abroad.
28. The question we have to ask is: how is this value distributed? When Levi's or Calvin Klein jeans are stitched in Cambodia and Kenya, then sold in China or India, with the profits accruing to the Global North corporations, which share of the value is global trade and which is not? It stands to reason that when the entire value chain is factored into the trade equation, North America enjoys an even more significant "commercial surplus" from the global trade than is reflected in trade statistics. Indeed, this is the conclusion reached in a study by the European think tank, Centre for Economic Policy Research, published in 2024 titled "Globalisation and Profitability of US firms", and I quote: "Lower trade barriers allowed North American firms to enter new markets and utilise their intangible assets to boost profitability. Foreign profitability of US firms increased by much more than domestic profitability."
29. Kenya's response to these realities is rooted in economic diversification and regional integration. Through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), we aim to unlock value chains and markets across our 1.4 billion-strong continent. Nairobi, our capital, serves as a UN headquarters in the Global South and as a hub for environment, finance, media, and innovation.

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30. We are also a diplomatic hub. Kenya has remained a non-aligned nation committed to peaceful resolution of conflict, sovereignty, and mutual respect. We support the One-China Policy, a two-state solution in the Middle East, and dialogue, not escalation, in the Russia–Ukraine conflict. As we say in Africa, when two bulls fight, the grass suffers. Let us choose understanding over confrontation.
31. Kenya’s greatest asset is its people: young, skilled, and entrepreneurial. Over 80% of our population is under 35. We are building institutions and ecosystems that will harness this demographic advantage through education reform, digital innovation, and youth entrepreneurship. Initiatives like our Silicon Savannah at Konza Technopolis and our Big 5 university research clusters are already attracting global partnerships.
32. Peking University can play a pivotal role in this future. We encourage deeper collaboration through scholarships, AI research, innovation labs, and student exchanges. We envision a digital future that is Kenyan in location, African in identity, and global in impact.
33. Ladies and gentlemen, Kenya and China are not merely trade partners, we are co-architects of a new world order. One that is fair, inclusive, and sustainable. Let us measure our success not just in GDP growth or trade volumes, but in how many lives we uplift, how many futures we secure, and how much dignity we restore.
34. This visit, as the first African state visit to China this year, mirrors my 2024 visit to the United States, the first African state visit there in over 15 years. Perhaps, symbolically, Kenya can serve as a bridge between East and West, North and South, in an era of deepening geopolitical tensions.

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35. Let this be our shared legacy: that China and Africa, through trust, vision, and partnership, helped build the foundation for a 21st-century multilateralism that serves all humanity.

I thank you.

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Article From KBC Digital Regarding President William Ruto's Visit to China, Dated April 23, 2025

Submitted by Senator Tim Kaine

5/13/25, 2:11 PM

Ruto says Kenya committed to partnering China to champion interests of Global South | KBC Digital

Ruto says Kenya committed to partnering China to champion interests of Global South

By [Eric Biegon](#) • April 23, 2025 • [Save It](#)



— President William Ruto

President William Ruto has reiterated Kenya's commitment to collaborating with China to promote the interests of the Global South on the international stage.

During a public lecture at Peking University as part of his state visit to China, Ruto underscored the significance of South-South cooperation in tackling current challenges such as poverty, climate change, and the reform of international financial systems that often disadvantage developing nations.

"The financial and security architecture that arose out of the ashes of that conflict has largely benefited the Global North at the expense of the Global South with exclusion of he noted.

He stated that this partnership is especially crucial in the context of the need to reform global institutions to make them more representative and effective. He highlighted the necessity of creating a new world order that acknowledges present realities.

5/13/25, 2:11 PM

Ruto says Kenya committed to partnering China to champion interests of Global South | KBC Digital

The President contended that while both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have evolved into development finance institutions, the ownership and power remain concentrated in the hands of wealthy countries that they no longer serve effectively.

"This anomaly became apparently glaring during the IMF SDR issuance, where 64 per cent of the allocation ended up with wealthy countries that did not need liquidity support. The poorest countries, which needed it most, received only 2.4%," he said

"Kenya and China are not merely trade partners; we are co-architects of a new world order—one that is fair, inclusive, and sustainable," he asserted.

He praised China's contribution to the development of Global South countries, emphasizing that Kenya has greatly benefited as a result.

"I wish to commend China for its leadership in renewable energy technologies, particularly in solar power and electric vehicles. Without China, many of these technologies would remain unaffordable for much of the developing world. Today, solar panels, e-bikes, and electric buses are commonplace in African towns. This is what meaningful South-South co-operation looks like," he stated

"Our co-operation under the Belt and Road Initiative has delivered flagship infrastructure projects, including roads, ports, and the Standard Gauge Railway, infrastructure that is reshaping regional connectivity and integration," he explained

