

“Opportunities Amid Geopolitical Difficulties: A Look at Global Threats in 2025”

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“Emerging Global Threats: Putting America’s National Security First”

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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, esteemed Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

A brief biographical note before turning to the substance of my remarks. I serve as Director of the Center for American Security at the America First Policy Institute. I was trained as a historian of the Middle East, having received my Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton University, and have spent over a decade working on national security issues inside and outside of government, both issues connected to the Middle East as well as those beyond it.

Our world today is highly interconnected. This means so are the threats facing the American people.

The symbiotic relationship amongst China, Russia, Iran and North Korea presents a more vexing threat to the United States and the West than the sclerotic Soviet Union ever did. However, the key to reducing the global threat that a neo-Maoist People’s Republic of China poses is to continue to weaken its appendages and cut off its avenues for producing global mischief.

It is worth reminding ourselves that the state of today’s threats and the connectivity between them is the direct result of either bad policies or no policies whatsoever from the Biden administration. This includes the hasty and chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, where terrorists are once again on the path to reconstitute, to encouraging Russian President Putin to invade Ukraine (and offering slow and disorganized U.S. support to Ukraine throughout the now-three year war), to lifting the sanctions on the Iranian regime while conditioning urgently needed military assistance to Israel and barely responding to over 160 attacks on U.S. troops by Iran-backed militias.

If past is prologue, as it should be, President Trump and his team bring precisely the right creativity and boldness to meet today’s circumstances head-on. Barely a month into the new administration, he and his team are reshaping our world and facing all these challenges simultaneously. As in 2017, in 2025 our foreign policy requires heterodoxy, boldness and new thinking.

The policies of the first term of the Trump administration are the foundation for how to protect the American people and their interests abroad today.

The world in 2025 could not be more different than that which they inherited in 2017. The Middle East is the part of the world I know best and so is the focus of my remarks here. The region has

transformed overnight in unimaginable ways due exclusively to the bravery and sacrifice of the Israeli Defense Forces and the Israeli Air Force, with the invaluable support of the United States. The Iranian regime is the weakest and more vulnerable than it has ever been since its founding, and yet appears to have a higher tolerance for risk and regional aggression as it inches closer to acquiring a nuclear weapon. Iran's diminished regional footprint means that countries like Syria and Lebanon are once again entering a new period of transition and uncertainty.

In 2017 the world was introduced to the Trump administration's America First foreign policy, with tremendous achievements to boast: the first peace agreement between Israel and its neighbors in a quarter of a century, the elimination of the ISIS caliphate, a contained China and Russia, a secure southern border, and historic agreements with our neighbors in Latin America to help us address our border crisis. It also saw a reshaping of the tools of national power, from foreign assistance to military power to trade policy all to affect transformational change for the American people.

In 2025, the America First foreign policy has a new mandate: to harness that foreign policy approach to identify and pursue opportunities in every difficulty presented in this web of threats rather than to view difficulty in every opportunity to address them, to paraphrase Winston Churchill.

What does this look like in practice?

First, it means adopting a specific perspective towards the global threat landscape.

The political psychologist Philip Tetlock speaks of viewing the world with "dragonfly eyes" – viewing, like dragonflies, events through multiple perspectives simultaneously. That is how we should think about the world today.

Then there are the steps to take. In the Middle East there are today three difficult problem sets that require urgent attention – how to deal with Iran, how to eliminate the threats facing Israel, and how to restart the Abraham Accords.

The administration was right to not only reintroduce the new maximum pressure campaign against the Iranian regime, but to expand it in a manner that addresses the range of Iran's threats as they exist today – this includes Iran's threats within the United States, confronting its proxy network and denying it a nuclear program. This is the right approach and it is hopefully just the beginning.

On the same day that he announced the expanded version of the maximum pressure campaign, President Trump offered a bold and new approach to the future of Gaza, one that envisions a brighter future for the Gazan people. It was the right move to elevate Gaza's future – a topic that no one wanted to address – to a top priority, and the announcement has compelled cooperation among our partners on this urgent issue.

As the administration works to complete the hostage deal with Hamas, it doubtless is looking to restart the Abraham Accords. In viewing these historic agreements through the prism of 2025, there are opportunities for our regional partners to fill the vacuums left by Iran's new absence in different parts of the region, from Gaza to Lebanon to parts of Syria. This move – which builds on the regional cooperation with Israel to defend against Iran's attacks over the last eighteen months – ensures that peace and stability can endure and reap dividends.

What can Congress do?

The most immediate step is to go and visit our partners in the region, ask what they need. There is nothing like learning firsthand on-the-ground from those on the front lines.

The second is to augment the administration's efforts on both Iran and regional stability by looking seriously at Syria and Lebanon and identifying where the United States can meaningfully lead regional partners to fill areas vacated by Iran with new institutions and structures that not only help the people there but also prevent Iran or terrorist groups from taking advantage.

An America First foreign policy agenda does not mean America alone. It means a projection of strength that brings peace and stability to our allies while ensuring our adversaries stay in check. This is the way to protect Americans and advance our interests abroad.

You, as the voice of the American people in Washington, are endowed with the responsibility to shape the conditions for peace around the world that ensure the safety and prosperity of the American people.

I encourage you to help build a national security policy that protects the American people, secures their interests abroad, and leaves behind a better future for our children.

Thank you.