

The Nixon Seminar - State of U.S. National Security
November 2, 2021

Hugh Hewitt: Good evening. I'm Hugh Hewitt, the president of the Nixon Foundation. Welcome to the November 2021 meeting of the Nixon seminar chaired by former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and former National Security Adviser to the President, Ambassador Robert O'Brien. We're down a couple of seminar members tonight with two abroad and Christopher Cox during election night. But the question for the evening is how has the National Security situation of the United States changed in the one year since the presidential election of 2020? I asked Monica Crowley if she would tee us up.

Monica Crowley: Thank you very much. And it's great to see everybody tonight on this election night. I thought that I would give a broad overview, a very brief, broad overview of where we were a year ago, versus where we are today and then I'll turn it back over to Hugh. So everybody else can weigh in. I think that if we think about the change in the national security posture of the United States, it can basically be summed up as from America first to last, from American strength to American weakness, and from peace and stability to conflict and chaos. Last year, despite the pandemic, America's preeminence had been restored. And we were using our extraordinary power, politically, economically, diplomatically, culturally to bring about greater stability and peace. And all of these successes that we're going to talk about tonight are a direct result of the leadership of President Trump. Secretary Pompeo and Ambassador O'Brien so thank you, gentlemen. Let's remind ourselves of where we were one year ago, which seems both yesterday and an eternity ago. So a year ago, the Trump administration had delivered historic peace agreements in the Middle East, changing the regional dynamic in very real ways that cultivated economic and other kinds of cooperation that in turn, is really engendering stable peace. It had successfully pushed back against China's adventurism in the South China Sea and the Pacific Rim more broadly. It had successfully contained Russia's adventurism in it's sphere and slow the gift at the Nord Stream two pipeline, it had successful diplomacy underway to contain North Korea's nuclear ambitions. It had withdrawn from the catastrophic JCPOA with Iran, and was using its extensive sanctions authority to contain it. It had realigned our relationship with our NATO allies, getting them to contribute their agreed upon freight to enjoy the benefits of that alliance. It had successfully negotiated fair trade deals with China, our North American free trade partners, South Korea and Japan among others. It had begin to modernize and rebuild our military left hollowed out by the Obama-Biden administration. This is just a partial list of the Trump administration's stunning international achievements, which are now all in jeopardy. Because of the new administration that believes in reversing much of what the Trump team did, either out of policy differences or out of spite or both. Keep in mind that the new administration's grand strategy to the extent that it exists, is to redistribute everything American, our power, wealth, resources, our military and diplomatic advantage, economic competitiveness, our leadership, our borders, and yes, our very unique exceptionalism. Just in the last 10 months, America has lost a tremendous amount of power, credibility and prestige. Most of that is due to the catastrophic withdrawal from Afghanistan, of course, but it's also coming from the overall pandering and apologies, retrenchment and multilateral grovelling coming from the Biden administration. American weakness is destabilizing and it is a

provocation. That's why America's enemies are now emboldened as they probe and advance and threaten us in our interests around the world. The southern border is a dangerous free-for-all of unchecked illegal immigration. The defeat in Afghanistan has created a power vacuum into which we have seen the Taliban enter ISIS al Qaeda, China, Iran, Pakistan and so on. It's also made our homeland more vulnerable to terrorist attacks, particularly when coupled with a wide open southern border. Iran is marching toward a nuclear weapon. Russia enjoys a free hand now to engage in energy extortion of our European allies. Thanks to Biden's acquiescence to Nord Stream too. China remains unaccountable and everything from the origins of COVID-19. To its threats to Taiwan, to its increasingly aggressive behavior in the Pacific and beyond. To its widespread human rights abuses. They've also crippled domestic energy production, sending Biden begging to OPEC and other hostile foreign energy producing regimes, making us more vulnerable to energy extortion as well. So policy matters. And unfortunately, I think we've only begun to see the very dangerous consequences from this shift in policy from the successes that came from American strength in the Trump administration, to the failures coming from this administration and America's weaknesses. So on that happy note, I will turn it over to Hugh.

Hugh Hewitt: Thank you, Dr. Crowley, Alex Wong

Alex Wong: Wonderful. Thanks Hugh. Thanks, everyone. Good to see everybody. You know, I thought a little bit about the topic tonight. And you know, I want to kind of just briefly touch on something that I think will inform a lot of the comments tonight and something that Monica touched on as well, which is the fact that since last year, I think very rapidly, it's become clear that China has made a choice. It's made a choice to be very upfront about its policy of confrontation, and its policy and its vision of revising the international order, something that it hadn't really done before it always tried to hide the ball and Charlie's tried to straddle you know, a kind of a softer face to the world while having some strategic ambitions hidden but I think what's become really clear is they've begun a political consolidation at home sometimes at the expense of their their economic potency. They've begun making very aggressive and assertive demands, political demands abroad, and they made very clear their investments in conventional as well as nuclear, military hardware to back up that political consolidation home and the demands abroad. You know, the reasons for this are debated. It could be that the political like exigencies of their Senate that the Communist Party Centennial required this type of move, it could be that Xi Jinping senses that he is now on the downslope of a demographic or economic trend, where he has to consolidate these gains now or he's not going to ever. But whatever the reason, this choice, this clear choice by China, I think is sharpening some of the challenges in various hotspots around the world for the United States but as well as for our partners in the free world. I want to touch on just one that that I worked on together with many on this on this in the seminar, and that's the the DPRK and take a step back when President Trump pursued his diplomatic outreach to Kim Jong-un from the Singapore summit on there were a couple of factors there that made it possible that we would have a breakthrough with North Korea or at least create a situation stability. Number one was the crushing sanctions that we were able to get together with our partners at the United Nations. Number two was that we had a president who was unorthodox, who was willing to shake up the strategic chessboard and use his political

capital to do that in North Korea or in the Korean peninsula. But third, we had a united world behind our diplomacy. And at least in part, we had China's at least curiosity if not full buy in on that. That effort. China was taken aback I think mate was unsettled by us, the U.S. and President Trump's policy in North Korea. They were unsettled by the missile test, the nuclear test, by North Korea, and they saw perhaps an opportunity here to deal with what is a nuisance on their border. So they assisted us. But I think since last year, we've seen trying to make a different choice. They've made a different turn. We've seen them give de facto sanctions relief to North Korea for failing to enforce the UN sanctions on North Korea. We've seen them give aid to North Korea. And I don't think it's too much speculation that China is encouraging. At least this is my theory is encouraging Pyongyang to try to split the ROK off from the United States by pushing the DPRK to ask for sanctions relief, separate from negotiations and separate from substantive steps on denuclearization. So I put this out there because this makes the challenge harder. And it makes clear that China is looking at the peninsula, not as an area where we can cooperate to resolve a challenge that does threaten the entire world. But as another kind of playing field for its grander, strategic designs. And that's not a surprise, you know, when China feels it is under threat and around its periphery or it's under threat from across the world. It is historically drawn closer to it. Its traditional allies really it's only true ally. It's only treaty ally in North Korea. So this makes that issue harder, that makes that challenge harder. Doesn't make it impossible, but it will take some creative diplomacy and perhaps some harder diplomacy and harder action on our part, as well as the part of our allies in the region to unstuck that problem. But I'll stop there because I know there's some other comments to be had here. But I appreciate seeing everyone tonight.

Hugh Hewitt: Thank you, Alex. Let's stay with the Alex category and go to Alex Gray.

Alex Gray: Thanks you and I really appreciate Monica's opening remarks. I thought that laid out a lot of concerns. I'm sure many of us on here have about the direction things have taken the last nine months. But I'm actually going to confine my remarks to a little bit a little different approach and talk a little bit about what I think the last nine months revealed. about continuity and consensus in American foreign policy and in particularly in two ways. One Alex touched on as it relates to China policy and China being the organizing principle of U.S. National Security and I think we saw that embraced in documents and in actions by the Biden administration. And that was, of course, a complete carryover from how President Trump approached the issue from his National Security strategy on down. But I think what will be President Trump's greatest legacy and that's part of it is related to China and part of it's beyond that is the the maximum economic security is national security. And Nadia shallow doesn't seem like she's with us tonight. But she very eloquently put this into the National Security strategy. It's one of the first lines in President Trump's NSS and it continued on into the interim National Security, strategic guidance, the Biden administration, and it's been borne out through a number of policies, and I think this is a sea change of the President Trump inaugurated and how we think about the intersection of economics and security policy. And in a lot of ways, it's been perpetuated and so everything from the focus on the supply chain, some of the executive orders that are coming out of the White House, and out of the Defense Department, some of the policies coming out of the Defense Department focus on actions like The Jones Act that protect our maritime industry and

the continuation of that coming out of this administration, continuing to have a more nuanced view of trade policy that looks not just at the foreign policy benefits of our trade policy, but also at the impact of our trade policy on the industrial base in the United States, both from a jobs and livelihood standpoint. But also from a defense industrial standpoint and you can go on down the list in terms of specific policies that the Biden team has been pursuing that very much mirror, what's come out of the Trump administration by America is another one where they've actually in many instances built upon and even strengthened the emphasis on by America, implementation of by America legislation that the Trump administration was very passionate about. So I think what we've learned looking back in the last nine months, well Monica laid out a lot of very real concerns we all have one of the what I would say positive outcomes has been a realization that there really is not a large divergence on this question of the intersection of economics and security and the need to strengthen our domestic industrial base to deal with a rising China to deal with long term great power competition with the PRC. I think that's going to be a feature of Washington policy discussion over the next at least decade, if not more, and we can thank President Trump for having inaugurated that and the Biden administration for having wisely continued that focus.

Hugh Hewitt: Thank you. Let's stay in the NSC veterans. Matt Pottinger, please. Are you muted Matt? Okay, I think we are sorry, there we are.

Matt Pottinger: Yeah. So just to add to all the all the good remarks so far, I think that that, you know, is with respect to China policy, like Alex Gray just mentioned there is there is a significant degree of continuity that we saw from the end of the Trump administration rolling into the Biden administration, where there wasn't any attempt to practically roll back a lot of the things that we had put in place, but we're now 10 months into the administration, where, frankly, with this great power competition that we're in with China, level steady flight is not going to get us to where we need to go. We've got to actually have an appetite for imposing costs, additional costs for things that are damaging our national interest, and we need to accept short term costs in order to have long term stability and prosperity. So what I would really like to see is that is that appetite that President Trump on down, Secretary Pompeo, other cabinet officers were willing to take those critical steps. I'll give an example. You know, we knew that the Chinese Consulate in Houston was highly problematic because of espionage that was taking place and other activities in the sort of gray zone of recruiting people working in our sensitive labs. And the President with Secretary Pompeo, and Ambassador Brian's advice, said that, you know, the actions that China's undertaking are unacceptable. We think that it's important to accept some costs and impose some costs by closing that down. The upshot of that was that China scrambled to evacuate roughly you know, according to the Department of Justice 1000 officers PLA officers who were working undercover in the United States or were working in with either, you know, false visas, where they had disavowed the fact that they were actually affiliated with the People's Liberation Army. Those people were evacuated. That was an example of imposing costs and accepting some short term costs in order to actually achieve greater security, economic security, national security, Defense Security. For the United States. So where we are now, you're starting to see what I fear, which is some kind of a divergence within the Biden Administration. Between those on the economic side of the administration who just want to

continue with business as usual. And those more national security minded officials who realize that we're in the competition of our lives, and that we're gonna have to start imposing greater costs. We're gonna have to start cutting off the flow of capital that is going into China's technology sector, when the Chinese technology sector is part of a military, civil fusion with their military all of everything that we invest, every bit of technology we give China is potentially legally obligated to flow to the People's Liberation Army, as well as to the national security apparatus, the internal surveillance apparatus of China. So it's unacceptable that we're not taking proactive steps to defend our technology, frustrate China's own efforts to try to leapfrog ahead of us in autonomous systems in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, biotechnology and the like. So that's really I think that attitude of imposing costs, accepting short term costs, accepting a certain amount of risk in the relationship is what we really need to see more of now.

Hugh Hewitt: Thank you, Matt. Jonathan Burks. Did I lose Jonathan? I believe I lost Jonathan. All right.

Then let me go on to John Noonan.

John Noonan: Thank you. And it pleases me to be the first to say that I've seen my first announcement in the Virginia governor's race. He may be getting a little ahead of himself. But I've seen one respected pundit and data guy call it for Glenn Younkin. So I know that makes the Virginians among us happy campers and I'm sorry to pollute your good foreign policy event with with politics here, but you know me I can't resist.

I'd like to just continue on the theme of the past year. And I think it's probably a little unfair to make hasty conclusions about the overall success or failure of the Biden foreign policy. This early on you know, their barely command at the State Department. Diplomacy takes time. The criticism is coming, but I want to at least caveat and not be unfair as I dunk mercilessly on the Biden foreign policy and for what I think is good reason. I think you can summarize it in a lack of focus, or at least a miss a series of misplaced priorities. You saw the first several months. They moved quickly on things like the queen star extension for the Russians for I know everyone on the call here knows what start is but for if you're listening in and you're not familiar with the treaty is a strategic Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty limits nuclear weapons and provides on the ground inspections, both the US and Russian Federation for the boat their nuclear arsenals. That was a tremendous win for Vladimir Putin. And they follow that up quickly with a lifting of sanctions on the Nord Stream two pipeline, that's a natural gas pipeline from Russia to Eastern Germany. It was a big project of Angela Merkel. My understanding is the pipeline has been completed but gas is not flowing yet but should be soon. The concern is amongst not just conservatives and Republican American foreign policy types, but many NATO allies as well as that that's this is going to allow the Russians to essentially hold the continent hostage using energy prices, a very effective form of coercion at that, as I think many Americans are seeing and experiencing with the price of gasoline at the pumps themselves, just how effective of an economic tool that can be. Of course, and then I think probably without going down the full list like the elephant in the room, of course is Afghanistan. We burned a lot of oxygen on that, I think good oxygen at that in the last session. But I think it's fair to say that whether you were for

leaving a small presence behind or whether you were more of an absolute us and felt we should leave immediately leave and leave absolutely. America was humiliated and I think Americans don't particularly like that and if you have widespread opposition to popular opposition to your foreign policy, I think it's difficult to characterize it as a success, particularly if there was no meaningful gain made out of it. And what we've seen is an Al Qaeda that will be able to reconstitute itself, far quicker than we had an original ice estimates that provided for General Milley said in testimony earlier this month that it could be as little as a half a year before Al Qaeda and ISIS could reconstitute and, and threaten us interests or threaten Americans and the homelands. And we have no reason to suspect that timeline cannot be even accelerated further. So this is all in the theme of misplaced priorities getting you know the big things out of the way. What I thought were bad decisions Afghanistan, Nord Stream, start and you see it paves the way for what they really seem to care about is things like Paris climate deal and resurrecting that renewing the Iran nuclear deal, which was a failed a failed program to the Trump administration's great credit. Left that bad deal. And I think what's particularly concerning on the on the climate side is that it feels like just watching the actions of former Secretary Kerry and his statements that climate is the most important diplomatic priority that the Biden administration has for China to the point where it undercuts real strategic, diplomatic, economic and military competition with China.

If that is indeed the highest priority, then I think we've got a problem because the the China problem is immediate, it's now it's not something that can be mitigated, like climate change by engineering and technological innovation, although that's certainly a small dynamic of the US China Cold War if you want to use that term. So that's some, that's a lot in nine months and I don't think that the weathervane is necessarily pointing or blowing in the right direction just in terms of US national security interest. I will give them credit. I thought that the submarine deal that they signed with the United Kingdom and Australia, providing for nuclear powered submarines to the Australian Government which has a world class submarine service. It was a good it was a good deal was bungled a obviously isolated the French and restoring what they said restoring relations with our NATO allies was a top priority though so you could say that actually undercut one of their priorities, but it was it was fundamentally a good deal and I think that the AI the shared AI and quantum computing component of that deal is not something that can be overlooked. That's just as important as having a nuclear powered submarines in the water and ostensibly in the South China Sea. I'll finish with this. Something that is both concerning to me as a veteran of the Air Force and concerning to my boss, Senator Cotton, is a series of misplaced priorities much like their foreign policy on the Defense Department. We hear from rank and file sergeants and majors and captains and colonels every day, saying, look, I've never been more demoralized than I am right now. The Biden administration is dumping all this superfluous crap down our throats whether it be you know, now I have to focus on climate change just as much as I focus on China. I have this very controversial counter-extremism training, which some of you may have read about in the media. It only focuses on so-called right wing extremism versus all forms of extremism. And then, while everyone agrees that the military should be open in an even playing field for all Americans, regardless of your race, sex, gender, what have you. There has been an unhealthy what I would characterize as an obsession over diversity, equity inclusion to the point where we are not promoting the best people.

We're promoting officers based on race and this is fundamentally contributing to a military that is not as focused, not as determined, not training as hard, not concentrated on the threat as much as our Chinese and Russian adversaries who focus 100% of their training time on killing Americans. I think you need to put it in a crude term, you put it in a sports analogy, if you have two football teams on a field and one of them trains 70% of the time to win the big game and the other one trains 100% of the time to win the big game. It's going to be the one that trains 100% of the time that has the Vegas odds on it. That has got to change. I think it's going to take congressional leadership to do it. Which means we're going to have to take back both chambers but I have rambled enough and hopefully didn't depress anyone's who much in the process. Thanks Hugh.

Hugh Hewitt: Thank you, John. Since you mentioned congressional leadership, let's move to our abrasive Congressman Congressman Gallagher.

Congressman Mike Gallagher: I'll try not to be abrasive. I think it's fair to say that the Biden administration came in with a desire to resuscitate the Iran deal which was dead or dying and was mugged by Iranian political reality which has thus far prevented them from doing that, thankfully, and then I China I very much agree with the sentiment that there is a shocking amount of continuity between the previous administration and the current one. I think that's a testament to the work of Secretary Pompeo, Nash great advisor O'Brien as well as deputy last trade adviser pottenger you saw the the US Trade Representative for example, say they are going to not rescind the the secretary one trade investigation. You saw them not completely get rid of the DoD is Communist Chinese military Companies list but rather amended, in some cases not quite great but expanded in other areas, but by and large, I think on China, the administration is undecided and beset by two competing factions, one of which has a more realistic view of China and recognizes that there's no going back to the status quo ante there is no going back to the status quo pre Trump, we have to have a more competitive relationship. But the other faction is that led by former Secretary of State John Kerry and that is the climate change, evangelist faction. And that sort of naturally leads you into a more cooperative relationship with the CCP, which I think would be naive and misguided and I agree with everything that John Noonan said, I actually think that wing in some ways is ascendant and given the overarching focus on climate change, which I expect to be reflected in the national security strategy, as well as the national defense strategy I think that could be very problematic for the administration. That being said, the three biggest changes in my opinion, the first is most obvious and Noonan touched on this as well. The Afghanistan tobacco debacle, even if you were a proponent of getting out of Afghanistan, I'm not sure how you could defend the ham handed way in which this administration conducted the withdrawal. I do think that is going to have a negative effect on our deterrent posture in other regions of the world. I think it is causing allies to question the credibility of us commitments. I think it is emboldening the Chinese Communist Party to test America particularly within the Taiwan scenario, and I think that will be a perhaps unrecoverable error for the by administration. The second thing I would say, Matt ponder mentioned the need to

crack down on the outflow of US capital to China and it is remarkable that China is probably going to second set a record this year in terms of foreign direct investment. Even after a Coronavirus pandemic that emerged from China. US capital continues to flow into China tech into Chinese technology companies that are betting genocide, defensive Jason companies. It's remarkable to me, but I actually think perhaps the biggest thing that has happened that may stop that, ironically, is action that General Secretary Xi Jinping himself has taken in terms of his crackdown on Didi the ride sharing company in China, as well as his torpedoing of the and financial IPO. I think more than anything else that has sent a signal to Wall Street in America, that it is just as a fiduciary matter. It is not wise to continue to invest money in China, but we'll see if they get that message. And I do think there's a growing divide between financial elites and national security professionals in America when it comes to investing in China. And the final thing I'd say, and I'd be curious if my friends who served in the previous administration agree I actually think one of the biggest changes between where we were a year ago and today is the fact that the lab leak hypothesis, which was once derided as a crazy conspiracy theory that Robert O'Brien was cooking up in his basement somewhere, is now the most likely hypothesis to explain the outbreak of the pandemic and there is an overwhelming amount of evidence that suggests that and that's having a real impact on Capitol Hill as much as the Democrats are trying to ignore it as much as they refuse to subpoena key actors. That is absolutely critical. If for no other reason, then it will help us to prevent the next pandemic, as well as give us a greater understanding of the nature of the regime we are dealing with in the Chinese Communist Party. So those are the three things that I would highlight.

Hugh Hewitt: Thank you congressman. Congressman Michael Waltz.

Congressman Michael Waltz: Thank you, good to be with everybody. I only have a few things to add. I think it's more points of emphasis to everyone's great comments. And I may just add a few things that we're working on from a congressional perspective that is a bit different. But I think in terms of the change in the last year, it's certainly been a change from the previous administration. But frankly, it's really more of the same from the Obama administration, or what I've started to call the "O-Biden" team. I mean, it's the same team - Blinken, Austin, Sullivan, Finer- I mean, all the number two threes and fours are now in the number one, two and threes. And I think Obama really captured it best in his -their underlying philosophy towards foreign policy. In his second inaugural speech when he said we're going to reach out a hand to the world, rather than a fist. And I think that's their approach in Vienna to the Iran deal. The approach to the Taliban, we can really go around the world where it's "how can we get people to the table" through concessions, and, and, frankly, through appeasement, and hopefully if we are kind enough, the rest of the world will be kind of back and I think anybody who's served around the world understands that's not that's not how our adversaries think, I do, of course, Noonan's right, we spent some time on Afghanistan last time, just to update and receive.

You know, I've received a series of briefings since then, I think we're in a period very similar to where we were in between 2011 and 2014. When we went to zero in Iraq, left no residual capability there. And and not long after the analyst watching it closely began beating the drum of the rising threat, and the reconstituting al Qaeda that we all know then turned into ISIS. We're

already seeing that. I think in many ways. Candidly, the intelligence community is starting to kind of cover their rear end - cover their six so to speak and make sure that it is known that the assessments are out there. So that they can't be blamed later for an intelligence failure because we're getting them loud and clear that the the threat to the homeland - that cancer, that is terrorism, Afghanistan is spreading. And I think from an oversight perspective, that's something we're going to have to watch very closely and make sure we don't have a similar scandal to what we had. That Mike Pompeo knows quite well to what we had down in CENTCOM where analysts, we had a number of whistleblower analysts who were trying to raise the alarm about the rising ISIS and that they found out that wasn't very good for their career wasn't very welcome through their chain of command because it wasn't welcome in the White House. And of course, the commander at that time was then General Austin, and now Secretary Austin.

So, I think we're in that same dangerous period. My question is I asked a number of the administration folks coming over is how bad do we let it get? How loud will the red, you know Will the alarm bells ring? How red will the alarm lights be? You know, do we before we take some time before we reverse course and take some type of meaningful action. And that's really unclear what those tripwires are, what those thresholds are, in terms of dangerous to the homeland, frankly, I don't think and then defined because there's an obvious recalcitrance across the across the administration to admit that maybe this wasn't the right policy road to go down. That's really that's really disturbing the other pieces, one of the biggest, one of the biggest drivers and and kind of top line reasons for the draw down to zero was to be able to shift to the Indo Pacific and be able to focus our assets which I think right way to our greatest threat is the CCP, but yet we're already seeing assets have to shift back from the Indo Pacific back into CENTCOM to be able to do the much harder job of monitoring the growing terror threat from abroad. So while the Air Force wanted to minimize its ISR, fleet and shift to fourth and fifth Gen fighters, they're now going to have to reinvest in ISR because we're going to need that many more orbits to fly from so far away, and a number of our other clandestine assets are having to shift because we have nothing on the ground that could have done this, I think much more cheaply and efficiently.

And that's just a sad irony on the China piece. You know, Gallagher and I attended a meeting today that I thought was really illustrative and kind of the financial services world. I don't see. I just don't see that much changing, frankly, and the non military piece, I would have thought that then the recent hypersonic launch, which should be I believe, is a Sputnik moment. I was out in space calm and NORAD receiving the detailed briefings the week before it went public. And I can tell you, their hair is on fire as it should be. But when you shift over and this is what I see really, my mission, Gallagher's mission and others who see this threat clearly in the public space is continuing to explain this to the American people of why this is such a problem. But when you see our debt spending that will continue to be out of control knowing that the Chinese theory of victory is us just being able to not be able to afford to compete. When you see Larry Fink at Blackrock encouraging his investors to triple their investment into China. When you see things in the "build back better" plan for example, one of the provisions will close our largest copper mine that the company has invested billions into because it's sitting on public lands. And then you know, we're already seeing advertisements for the genocide Olympics, and you're gonna

see this spawned the, you know, the sponsors and others, turn a blind eye very publicly, and really provide a platform for Xi's propaganda machine. You know, I'm just not optimistic that the whole of government non military pieces are falling into place, from cutting off capital to bringing our supply chains home to reducing our dependencies on critical minerals. I would.

I would give one bit of good news that I think between endless frontiers and the House version of the National Science Foundation reauthorization, there is a bipartisan drive to invest into stem, invest into some of these critical research areas. I'm the ranking member on research and technology, and we were able to get some important security provisions in things that I would think most Americans with a more common sense, like the security office, they are being able to ask for any contracts and actually review the contracts that any researcher and professors entered into but I think we've given them some important tools. And you know, literally quadrupled the amount of resources they have in those security offices and those inspector general's in the National Science Foundation, they received 1,000% increase in referrals from the FBI, just in the last two years.

And then I would be remiss, as a Floridian, to not mention Cuba, and just what a missed opportunity in our own hemisphere. That wasn't just a change from this year. That was a generational opportunity. Those brave souls that put their lives and their whole family's lives on the line to make a stand, and they didn't even get so much as a speech from this White House, much less garnering the international community, the Organization of American States, the UN and others to really rally around those brave souls and condemn the Cuban regime. They got nothing they got basically a written statement. And that's just a shame. That's, I think, frankly, sad, but it is also not going to bode well for this administration politically. In Florida, I think it's going to solidify a lot of the shift that we seen between the socialist policies that are trying to move through their Congress right now, though, they keep tripping on themselves, and that lack of action against the Cuban regime. Alright, with that, I'll stop here.

Hugh Hewitt: Congressman, I know our co chairs has seven dire assessments, Ambassador O'Brien, you get to pick that up and then I'll go to Secretary Pompeo.

Robert O'Brien: Well, thank you. It's great to be here with everyone. Let me start by just commending Monica on that tour de force of an introduction, that wasn't wasn't pretty but was eloquent. So thank you for getting started. Let me also just just before we get started, I'd like to extend some condolences to the family of General Powell. And he was the 16th national security adviser and I succeeded him, - he was the Secretary of State, Mike succeeded him. He was a great American, didn't always agree on politics, but he was an example of integrity and service for the country. So all my wife and his kids, you know, have our condolences and I didn't want to let a night of the Nixon seminar where we've celebrated past national security advisors go without mentioning General Powell. So let me start with China. And look, I think that we've got a couple of things happening, and I thought Alex Wong's comments were an excellent analysis setting the stage. I think Alex Gray was right, talking about continuity. What worries me about continuity is something that Matt pointed out and Mike Gallagher echoed and that is, I think, at the senior level, I think the Jake Sullivan and Tony Blinken, even Lloyd Austin level.

And I understand from Congressman Waltz, that those are Obama veterans, but they do seem to understand the threat that we're under, what concerns me the levels down at 234 and five, where there there doesn't seem to be that same commitment and that same understanding of the of the threat, the generational threat that Mike Pompeo pointed out in his speech at the Nixon library last summer. And I pointed out, and Bill Barr, and Chris Rea, and vice president the president all pointed out in their speeches. So I think it's a thin layer of continuity, that there's always the threat of it. being undermined, especially when someone throws out that climate. So I think that there, you know, in fact, I'm sure there are people in the administration that would gladly trade Taiwan's independence and freedom for three less coal plants by 2045. And we've got to make sure that that sort of deal never happens and the climate doesn't drive that. I think we've got a window that we need to be extraordinarily concerned about. From the end of the Beijing Olympics. I don't think that President Xi will do anything to upend or create too much of a problem with Taiwan prior to the Olympics. Dictators love the Olympics, at least modern dictators - and they wouldn't do anything to undermine them. But I think after the Olympics and prior to the next presidential election, I said this to Nikkei the other day in an interview with the Japanese paper, that they're concerned about a President Pompeo and President Trump taking offices to China hawk in January 2025. And and so I could see Xi Jinping looking at that window between the Olympics and the the next presidential election as his opportunity to begin a very course of campaign against Taiwan, if not an invasion.

My three highest priorities as National Security Adviser. We're number one, you know, hypersonics - by a mile. Number two, modernizing the nuclear triad, and number three is rebuilding the Navy. And what really concerns me are some of these comments that are now coming out of the Pentagon. that folks are stunned by the 200 ICBM silos that China's building in western China, that they were somehow stunned by the hypersonic tests. These were things that that Alex Gray and Matt Pottinger and I were pushing extraordinarily hard on the defense front at the NSC. So we are moving forward with hypersonics there's There's not a great defense to hypersonic weapons at this point, but deterrence is what we need to do, and we need to actually not just develop and deploy our hypersonics. All those hypersonic programs were shut down for eight years during the Obama administration. And frankly, it didn't get turbocharged until a group of us really pushed harder in the last two years of the Trump administration. What concerns me now is a comment that John Noonan made and I've heard this from other sources in the Pentagon, as well as it on hypersonics on modernizing the triad on rebuilding the Navy, all of the official policy hasn't changed. There's a lack of a sense of urgency to do these things and that lack of urgency could be very dangerous to the United States going forward. Let me just mention Europe, to a new start, where Vladimir Putin is number one and number two foreign policy objectives. We gave him both of those goals of his as far as I can tell, unless there's some secret accord that we haven't seen, some secret guarantee of Ukrainian sovereignty and maybe there's a you know, some old school diplomatic notes somewhere, but as far as we know, the West and the United States got nothing in return for giving Vladimir Putin his top two foreign policy objectives.

Now, if the idea was to try and create a cleavage between China and Russia and break up that what was becoming a very tight military alliance, if not an outright Alliance, you know, that would

be one thing but but we don't see any any progress on that we don't see anything in return. And again, John Noonan pointed out those issues, but we were prepared to do a one year extension in return for a freeze of non START compliant nuclear weapons. The Biden administration didn't even pick that, but START becomes dangerous given the massive buildup of Chinese nuclear weapons. So we're again like we did with hypersonics and short term missiles, or short range missiles. We're tying our hands on the nuclear front. And we're gonna face very shortly two adversaries with nuclear triads that are as large or exceed independently the total of US nuclear weapons and when it comes to nuclear deterrence, and all those things we learned about in the 80s and early 90s. That's a bad place to be.

Briefly on the Middle East. You know, it's unfortunate to see there's been very little, all of the Abrahamic Accords have not been undermined to a large extent other than, you know, I guess but by the desperation, to reenter the JCPOA there's been no movement on peace in the Middle East. And that's a shame because I think, you know, Mike knows this. I understand this. And President Trump and reelected I think, would have had two or three additional countries, potentially even the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, joining the Abraham Accords, and we just haven't seen that overall, and I'll wrap up here soon. So other folks can comment, I want to hear from Secretary Pompeo. We've got a crisis of U.S. credibility. I think everybody touched on this in a way I'm not going to get into Afghanistan, which we talked about at length, but it was a catastrophe. And what the United States is not projecting is a peace through strength approach to the world peace restart doctrine of national security. It's been working since Roman times. This isn't something that the United States invented. Obviously, President Reagan made it the centerpiece of his national security policy. It's President Trump and, and Secretary Pompeo and myself that made it a centerpiece of President Trump's approach to foreign policy, because the alternative is weakness. And weakness is just, you know, allowing the status quo to take place or allowing genocide to continue to take place in western China or or the Russians to continue to move in, in Eastern Europe and undermine democracies. It's actually provocative. It encourages bad action and bad conduct and malign activity. And so we've got to make sure that even if the basic policies of the Trump administration, the legacy that Alex Gray talked about, remains in place. It remains in place but the United States looks weak, and it is perceived as being weak. Even if we aren't, that's extraordinarily dangerous.

So then, you know, the question is, how do we how do we fix things? And I'm an optimist. I believe in the United States of America. I believe that we're the last best hope for mankind. I believe that God has a role for this country, that maybe in 2021, and I'll tell you, elections matter. And if we're going to get back to leading the free world - to becoming the leading leader of the free world, if we're going to get back to a projection of peace or strength, posture to the world, we need to win in 2024. But first we need to win in 2022. We got to take the house back. Bills begin in the house. We got appropriate money for the hypersonics, we got appropriate money to keep the F 20 twos which the Air Force now is claiming they're going to start decommissioning before the next generation air defense fighter. We've got to appropriate money for a navy that's sufficient to defend the United States from partners, - now allies, getting the house back and I thought the Senate would probably be a little out of reach. But I think given the way the polls look for the President, the current president and the difficulty there. The Democrats are having

and the overreach that we're seeing there's a good chance we take the Senate back as well. So I think I think the best thing we can do, and the best thing the American people can do on this when I tell folks when they ask how do we how do we change things is work like hack for next year, and it looks like from from Twitter that that Ken's gonna be the next Governor of Virginia which is which is great. But I think that gives a lot of hope to the folks on our side that if we can take back the House, if we can put Mike Waltz and Mike Gallagher and chairman or Subcommittee Chairman positions. If we can get real oversight of what's happening in the Pentagon. I think it will make a huge difference. Selection matters and then it puts us in position in 2024 whether President Trump runs for re-election, whether you know Mike or the vice president or Senator Cotton or the 20 others that are being mentioned, become the next president, any of them we have a massive improvement over where we are now. So I think the help that we have is ballot box, and it's in 2022. And we start to change course within the next year and it's gonna be a lot of work for everybody. For the seminar and, and all of our friends who are involved in politics around the country. So with that, I'll hand off to Hugh and Secretary Pompeo.

Hugh Hewitt: Thank you, Ambassador. Mr. Secretary, you get to bring us home on this on a very good night. We're finishing a very bad year. It sounds like what's your assessment? Tom on this on a very good night. We're finishing a very bad year. It sounds like what's your assessment?

Michael Pompeo: Well, thanks. You mean, let me second Ambassador O'Brien's gracious note with respect to Secretary Powell. He was a servant. And we should all pray for him and for his family. Second, Monica, you kicked it off incredibly well. We should also give props to you and Secretary Minuchin and Treasury who were part of this economic effort that we've talked about tonight, how we use American economic power, we're often in the same place I will say one of the places where I think there has been continuity and I actually recorded is that there needs to be a lot more work on the financial side. It's the case that Wall Street and big financial companies and Departments of Treasury, even in a Trump administration are always less willing to do things that have to do with money. With respect to China. We wish we had been able to do more. I wish we had accomplished more in that space. I regret these folks are probably going to retrench from even where the Trump administration or when it comes to using the financial power that we have in your distaste for paying.

Ernie in China book I had a long list. We've gone through many that I had three little ideas and then a couple big ones. A little one that was not much noted what happened in Sudan over the past few weeks. That's that, that's unfortunate. There was a structure there that was better than what it looks like. I hope that the military will get this right and restore civil control in Sudan. It enabled us to make a peace deal with them and allowed us to lift the state designation and pair on them if they have a small, but important place on the map in Africa and certainly in the Arab world in the Middle East as well. Second, Congressman Waltz mentioned Cuba, I would have I think he's on there. I think I would extend that even to all of our neighbors and South America. I want to know where the heck we went. The folks in Colombia are worried, Brazilians are worried. They think we can think about the last time hasn't been actually mentioned South

American as part of a priority. The agenda he was working on. I think there's real risk in Mexico and I'll talk about immigration in just a moment. That's changed over the past year. We had a serious concerted effort to try and build up relationships that ran north to south not just east west, and we had made real progress there, and watching the Mexican government is now putting its energy sector at risk as massive pieces of real estate that are ungoverned. This is not good for the United States of America and our security.

Last item it's not particularly small, but important about this continued use of economic power is that you can't shut down American energy and so thank you for using true American economic power to formulate diplomacy around the world and use it as one of your key levers. So whether it was the abandonment of the Keystone XL pipeline or the or drilling on federal lands or just the general idea that somehow fossil fuels are deeply disfavored. It is putting a real cap on American economic growth. And thereby the capacity for us to use that energy for deployment against that I used so powerfully under President Trump during our time I can't tell you how many times I was on rotations in Eastern or Southern Europe or in Asia and the thing they really wanted to get American LNG to them how many what was the what was the cost of crude fully delivered into their backyard, turn the lights on for their people.

Second, and Ambassador O'Brien hit on this. I think the biggest change over the last year is the perception of American foreign policy that says a first order impact in terms of how folks will be able to set an order impact about what had been said in the secret meetings between countries that we aren't part of. They have come to be very skeptical about our willingness to actually defend the things that need to clarify as redlines, things that matter to the United States of America and they're all wondering, will we really do that? Well, we really do the things that have risked us to the United States that might help secure our freedom. And there's that perception morphs into reality all too quickly.

A final thought, you know, the campaign that ended roughly a year ago today was fought over competence in so many ways. Right? The administration said we know how to make the levers of American power work with trained professionals. We all went to the finest schools we've all served multiple times and administrations. We know how to make the machine work. There's one thing we've learned in 10 months that is falling. It is fundamentally false. I can't tell you how many times I would read things - "were the barbarians- we were naive. Goodness gracious. You had a Secretary of State who was a soldier from Kansas. What the heck does he know about American diplomacy? Right the same story would be told for so many folks in our administration.

No one believes these folks are actually executing whatever it is they set as their priority, and that's dangerous. That's really dangerous because if you can't actually deliver even if you have the intention to, if you can't deliver American, if you can't defend America's war, fighting cheaply has fundamentally focused on warfighting if you can't say that American diplomacy is fundamentally about protecting America. If you can't say that, my goodness gracious. We're not up to full on a new start at a pipeline in the course of a matter of days in exchange for nothing if you can't execute. Using the leverage available to us in America is powered by American exceptionalism, then you truly present real risks because in the end, it's not only what your

policies are, it's the capacity to execute. And we had our moments where we didn't have it exactly right, either. But we've demonstrated over the course of four years that if we met and we said we were not only going to follow through on it, but we would deliver that last thought the other thing that has changed and accelerated in this last year is the fundamental idea occupied by the progressive left of American self loathing. I find this incredibly dangerous not only from a security perspective, but more broadly to our Republic, the idea that somehow we are a nation founded on a racist tradition that we accept when the Chinese sit across the table from us and rant about BLM and why it's the United States of America. You have too many in our nation say, you know, we're just not going to build Iron Dome, but allow the Israelis to depend on these. This is about self loathing and apology, this is a hearken back to President Obama in his time, at Central conceit that so many of our advertisers nor want to spread and have propagated around the world is truly dangerous. And I think this administration, starting with the president of the United States, will often fall into the trap aren't prepared and the greatness of the United States of America when we do risk is manifold. And so with that, I'll close. Thanks, everyone, for joining us tonight, but a great conversation.

Hugh Hewitt: Thank you, Mr. Secretary, I want to thank the members of the seminar. You and Ambassador O'Brien for a great first year of the Nixon Foundation, Nixon seminar. We'll reconvene on the first Tuesday in January and I believe I persuaded Mary Kissel to take over this job. So you all have a much harder taskmaster come the New Year in 2023. Enjoy and thank you, and join in the celebrations online which are loud, noisy and welcome. Thank you all and good night.