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Thank you, Bob, for that generous introduction. It’s an honor and a pleasure to be here in this wonderful part of the country at such a prestigious venue.

As a non-Marxist historian, I have always believed in the power of individuals to shape events. Nonetheless, it has been a very long time since the leader of a democratic country has so dominated events the way Donald Trump has.

Ladies and Gentlemen, to spare you any suspense I will say up front that I judge the first year of President Trump’s foreign policy to have been overwhelmingly unsuccessful. Although he has made a few worthwhile changes, they have been overshadowed by an erratic, “shoot from the lip” *modus operandi*, which amid the resulting chaos has revealed a fundamental break with the principles that have successfully guided our international affairs for seven decades.

So what do I see as the major foreign affairs challenges for the United States in the 21st century? In the short-term the paramount challenge is protecting American security by blunting the nuclear threat of North Korea. In the long-term, our most important task is dealing with a rising China that is countering American interests in a variety of ways.

At the same time, maintaining a robust transatlantic relationship with European allies and friends, a task which at the present involves countering aggressive Russian behavior, remains central to American security and our economy. This includes finding a way to neutralize cyber-warfare, practiced primarily by Russia, which seeks nothing less than the undermining of the fundamental institutions of Western democratic society.



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Resisting Iran's regional influence in Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen and through its support of Hezbollah must be a major policy element, as should attempts to break the impasse between Israelis and Palestinians. The Islamist terrorism of ISIS and al-Qaeda, although horrifying, should not present a fundamental threat to our way of life if we confront it in a forceful, level-headed way, including -- together with our allies and friends -- coming to grips with the immense issue of refugee flows.

Engaging with the incredibly diverse and vibrant continent of Africa, especially given China's increasing presence there, is very important. We must, of course, continue to cultivate amicable relations with our hemispheric neighbors in the Americas.

And looming over all these and other challenges is the overarching, existential imperative of combatting global warming.

Most of these challenges were headlined in the Trump administration's *National Security Strategy* released three weeks ago. The major exception was climate change, which was downgraded to a subcategory in a section embracing "energy dominance" despite the fact that the National Defense Authorization Act of 2018, signed by the president, includes a provision declaring that "*climate change is a direct threat to the national security of the United States.*"

The core of the National Security Strategy was actually previewed last spring in an op-ed for the Wall Street Journal (May 31, 2017) by National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn and National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster. They wrote that President Trump has "*a clear-eyed outlook that the world is not a 'global community' but an arena where nations, nongovernmental actors and businesses engage and compete for advantage.*" The senior officials added: "*Rather than deny this elemental nature of international affairs, we embrace it.*"

The National Security Strategy repeats this vision of a dangerous, Hobbesian world of interests and conflicts, where the law of the jungle applies, and survival rests on national power. In its conception and initial execution its zero-sum mentality represents the most radical departure from a bipartisan U.S. foreign policy since 1945. What do I mean?



First of all, I disagree that previous American Presidents denied “*this elemental nature of international affairs.*” To be sure, human history is replete with competition and conflict, but U.S. foreign policy has amply reflected this environment. The United States boasts by far the world’s most powerful military, including more than 200,000 troops stationed in bases in dozens of countries around the globe, with ongoing operations on several continents. This is not a country unaware of or daunted by political and military competition.

What *did* change after 1945, however, is the structure that Trump apparently wants to bypass, if not demolish. As Fareed Zakaria has summarized ([Washington Post](#), June 2, 2017) “*seven decades ago in the wake of two of the deadliest wars in human history, with tens of millions killed and much of Europe and Asia physically devastated, the United States tried to build a new international system. In an unparalleled burst of creative leadership we fashioned institutions, rules, and norms that would encourage countries to solve their differences peaceably — through negotiations rather than war. We forged a system in which trade and commerce would expand the world economy so that a rising tide could lift all boats. We set up mechanisms to manage global problems that no single country could solve. And we emphasized basic human rights so that there were stronger moral and legal prohibitions against dehumanizing policies such as those that had [just] led to the Holocaust.*”

In his September speech at the United Nations General Assembly, President Trump railed against this American-built international system, spending most of his time rather incoherently defending the sovereignty of member states, except for North Korea in whose case he sided with the multilateral UN, which ironically is trying to curtail Pyongyang’s sovereignty.

The key point is that despite some setbacks, under American leadership the rules-based, post-World War II international order performed miracles in the areas that bought into it: the U.S., Canada, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and eventually also Japan and South Korea. It is an achievement of which we Americans can feel justifiably proud.

From the start of his political career, Trump has seemed unaware of this history and ignorant of these accomplishments. He has consistently been dismissive of the United States’ closest political, economic, and ideological allies. Trump appears to hold the fanciful belief that the United States can go it alone.



In that regard, Trump's threats about possibly disregarding NATO's Article 5 mutual defense commitment may, indeed, have served to push several European allies to recommit to the promises on raising defense expenditures to the 2% of GDP level that they had made at the last two NATO summits in Wales and Warsaw.

His ultimatums, however, contained a serious downside. Public castigating and threatening allies are unlikely to work a second time, and they poisoned the atmosphere. It took the President several months to reaffirm full support for NATO, thereby sowing doubt among our most vulnerable allies. The new National Security Strategy, while stressing burden-sharing, does give a formulaic reaffirmation of Article 5. But Trump's personal commitment to Article 5 still seems unenthusiastic as his campaign speech last month in Pensacola showed. He warned that we might "end up in World War III for somebody that doesn't even pay," again criticizing Germany and Angela Merkel by name while, as usual, failing to condemn the actions of Russia and Vladimir Putin.

By way of comparison, U.S. defense expenditures amount to about 3.5% of GDP. The Trump administration's FY2018 budget submission calls for a fairly modest 3% increase over what was projected for FY2018 in the last Obama budget. The FY 2019 defense budget is expected to both "build capacity" and "improve lethality." In other words, the administration's position is that a buildup will begin in FY 2019. It is worth noting that this fiscal year's defense request of \$603 billion is \$54 billion, or 10%, over the caps on national defense spending for FY 2018 established by the Budget Control Act of 2011.

Most observers, certainly not I, would disagree with the assertion in the National Security Strategy that China and Russia are our rivals and revisionist powers *"determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence."*

The question, of course, is what we intend to do about it.

In that regard, I welcome President Trump's pressure on China to change its discriminatory trade and investment policies and its violation of intellectual property rights. Moreover, the administration is reportedly considering steps to keep China from investing in promising American technology. I also applaud the fact that the U.S. has



filed a brief with the World Trade Organization opposing China's designation as a market economy.

So far so good, but what is lacking is a comprehensive approach to address the fundamentals of the long-term Chinese challenge. Under Xi Jinping the Middle Kingdom is openly charting a course intended to make China a global power on a par with the United States by mid-century. Its tool kit includes military expansion, huge foreign direct investments, resource hoarding, and influencing international rules and norms. China is embarking on its trillion-dollar "Belt and Road Initiative" to create a massive Eurasian, China-centered trading network. What are we doing? Well, to satisfy his protectionist domestic political base, Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a meticulously crafted 12-nation trade accord.

As a result, did the partnership collapse? Hardly. In November in Vietnam the other eleven signatories announced a tentative agreement among themselves. China is taking advantage of America's unilateral withdrawal to claim the leadership of the economically most vibrant part of the world through the soon-to-be-ratified Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

Meanwhile, President Trump says that he prefers bilateral trade pacts, in which he asserts the U.S. would not be taken advantage of. So far, alas, his administration has been unable to conclude even a single one.

A metaphor for the difference between forward-looking and backward-looking is the two countries' energy policies. China is racing to become the leader in renewable energy; it already produces more electric-powered vehicles than the rest of the world combined. And the U.S.? President Trump brags about rejuvenating the American coal industry.

The China expert Evan Osnos summed up the situation: "China's pursuit of a larger role in the world coincides with America's pursuit of a smaller one." ("Making China Great Again," The New Yorker, January 8, 2018).

What about dealing with Russia? Last August in near-unanimous votes Congress strengthened the sanctions against Russia for its annexation of Crimea and continuing military aggression against Ukraine. Trump, who frequently voices his admiration for



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Vladimir Putin, was furious and had to be convinced that if he vetoed the legislation it would be overridden, which would be a humiliation. So after four days he signed, but ominously since then he has ignored the mandated date for implementation of the sanctions.

Trump's continuing stonewalling led Moscow commentator Iurii Makarenko on December 16th to write bluntly that "*the White House ... is consciously dragging its feet on implementing the notorious sanctions and at this time is playing on Russia's side.*" (Белый дом ... сознательно затягивает введение пресловутых санкций, и в этом тайме играет на стороне России.) (politikus.ru/events/102753-zachem-tramp-tormozit-antirossiyskie-sankcii.html)

Nonetheless, the administration has decided to provide Ukraine with lethal defensive weapons in its war against the separatist and Russian forces, including Javelin anti-tank missiles and sniper rifles. If this schizophrenic policy sounds confusing ... it is. The Trump administration's policy is evidently uncoordinated, and I suspect that Kremlin is responding in muted fashion because it correctly sees the implementation of the sanctions as more harmful than the defensive weaponry, which it can – albeit at some cost – still overwhelm.

Turning to Iran, we see that the anti-government demonstrations pose a serious policy challenge for the U.S. Keeping silent is no option, while any attempt at direct intervention is out of the question. The current twitter-based policy may be the worst of all choices, accomplishing little other than providing the Iranian clerics with interference by the "Great Satan" to excuse their misrule. The most effective policy would combine judicious statements of support with the creation of more space on social media platforms and perhaps an internet satellite to facilitate communication with, and among, the Iranian protestors.

What is *not* helpful is partisan and misplaced scapegoating of the Iran nuclear deal. In the unlikely event that in the next few days at the newest mandated waiver decision-point Trump decides to pull out of the nuclear deal (JCPOA) by re-imposing sanctions on Iran, the rest of the so-called "P5 +1" (the U.K., France, China and Russia plus Germany) will continue to honor the deal, and relations with our closest allies will deteriorate further.



Of course, Iran might then decide to back out of the agreement and openly re-start its uranium enrichment program, which would be a real catastrophe, blowing a hole in the global non-proliferation regime and possibly igniting a regional conflict. No less important for the United States, Trump's decertification of the deal last October virtually guaranteed that North Korea's Kim Jong-un will refuse to sign any agreement with the United States. Why sign an agreement if the President of the United States can simply renege on it despite the verification that Iran is in compliance by on-site inspectors, by our allies, and even by our own State Department?

The core of Trump's new policy in Afghanistan, which abolishes deadlines for withdrawal of U.S. troops in favor of letting conditions on the ground dictate timetables, is a welcome change. It is undercut, however, by his refusal to push for desperately necessary civilian reforms, presumably because that would smack of "nation building."

Trump's Middle East policy has contained one-off events such as the cruise missile strike in Syria last April -- a nice symbol but without follow-up or any indication of a coherent U.S. strategy now that the campaign begun under President Obama has successfully eliminated ISIS in that country. If anything, by tempering assistance to anti-Assad moderates, Trump appears to be ceding to Russia the role of arbiter in Syria, with Iran still a key factor. This policy also conflicts with Trump's evident desire to put all his cards in Saudi Arabia's basket in its regional rivalry with Iran. Moreover, the President's travel ban on citizens from predominantly Muslim countries has severely tarnished the image of the United States in the region.

I think that President Trump's decision last month to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and within a few years to move our embassy there was misguided. I should add parenthetically that twice in the last eighteen years (2000 Ehud Barak and 2008 Ehud Olmert) Israel has offered the Palestinians peace deals that included sovereignty over the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, but that's not the main point here. Trump's move might have made some sense if it had been part of a negotiating strategy that in return demanded a definitive halt to Israeli settlements and a firm commitment to a two-state solution. But Trump asked nothing of the Israelis. Consumed by the desire to shore up his domestic political base, the self-described deal-maker didn't even attempt to get a *quid pro quo*.



He then compounded his mistake by threatening to cut off aid to countries that voted for a UN resolution condemning the U.S. declaration on Jerusalem. Trump's pressure tactics didn't work. The vote went overwhelmingly against the U.S. (128 to 9, with 35 abstentions) with many recipients of American foreign aid refusing to kow-tow to Washington.

Clearly infuriated, Trump, in his very first tweet of 2018 lambasted Pakistan, which had voted for the Jerusalem Resolution, saying that in return for the billions it had received over the years it had "*given us nothing but lies & deceit*" and had provided a "*safe haven to the terrorists*" from Afghanistan. His characterization, although exaggerated, does contain more than a grain of truth. Unfortunately, Islamabad's imperfect cooperation on counter-terrorism remains important to the U.S. effort in Afghanistan. Trump's unique version of public diplomacy and his suspension of military assistance to Pakistan is a major gamble, which is already pushing that country toward China.

Trump has also threatened to cut assistance to the Palestinians, a move which even all but the most right-wing Israelis warn would be a recipe for West Bank chaos and violence.

Where I *would* personally cut President Trump a good deal of slack is on dealing with North Korea, since the various measures carried out by Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama all failed to constrain Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program. But even here Trump's style has been counter-productive. His trash-talking to the North Korean dictator hasn't worked and risks igniting a nuclear war. I will return to this clear and present danger in a few minutes.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in fewer than twelve months we have witnessed the demise of the U.S. as the "indispensable nation." Aside from our unilateral withdrawal from economic leadership, we are abdicating our responsibilities to combat global warming. Has *that* worked? Simply put, no. Despite Trump's bluster in his announcement of the intended U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, the other 194 countries party to the agreement are continuing its implementation, which after 2020 will leave the U.S. as the only UN member state outside the Agreement.

A supreme irony was summed up by Mark Leonard, director of the European Council on Foreign Relations: "*After the twentieth century, who would have thought that Britain*



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and America would turn their backs on the liberal world order while the German chancellor would be spoken of as the leader of the free world and a French president would emerge as the champion of an open trading system?" ("Brave New Europe," The New York Review of Books, November 9, 2017)

Let me offer a few examples of how President Trump's "America First" policy has translated into behavior toward our traditional friends.

Early in his administration Trump flew off the handle at the Prime Minister of Australia, one of our closest allies for more than a century, over how to deal with a relatively small number of refugees.

Even more striking – and dismaying – has been President Trump's repeated cavalier and arrogant treatment of Great Britain, our closest ally.

Soon after he was elected, Mr. Trump gave the British the benefit of his unsolicited advice that they should appoint Nigel Farage, the former leader of the U.K. Independence Party, to be Ambassador to the United States.

Then in June 2017, he engaged in an unseemly public spat with London Mayor Sadiq Khan in which he criticized as "pathetic" the mayor's response to a terrorist attack on London Bridge that left seven people dead.

At the end of November Trump sank to a new low by retweeting three fake anti-Muslim videos originally posted by a fringe fascist group in Great Britain. When Prime Minister Theresa May said that it was wrong for him to have promoted the videos, the President lashed out at her in personal terms.

The news release from the White House didn't help matters by dropping the letter "h" from the Prime Minister's first name, thereby confusing her with a British porn actress.

British politicians from every quarter sprang to the Prime Minister's defense. Stephen Doughty, a Labour MP, told Parliament that Trump was: "... *either a racist, incompetent, or unthinking – or all three.*"



The widower of Jo Cox, the MP who was murdered in 2016 by a British racist, succinctly pointed to the nexus between our president's domestic and foreign policies when he complained: *"Trump has legitimized the far right in his own country; now he's trying to do it in ours."*

British public opinion is so passionately anti-Trump that fear of violent demonstrations may compel the president to indefinitely postpone his state visit to the U.K.

I'd like now to turn to the values component of foreign policy. President Trump sees little merit in propagating democratic ideals. While he has been critical of almost every democratic leader of Europe, he repeatedly has spoken admiringly of strongmen such as Russia's Putin, China's Xi (*"a very special man"*), Egypt's Abdel Fatah al-Sissi, and the Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte (*"We've had a great relationship"*).

In his inaugural address President Trump declared that *"we do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone."* Thereafter, in a statement accompanying the 2018 fiscal year's budgetary request, the State Department said that it would eliminate *"direct funding for quasi- and non-governmental organizations that serve niche missions,"* most of them promoting human rights. In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (June 13, 2017), Secretary of State Rex Tillerson explained the Trump administration's priorities thusly: *"... we are motivated by the conviction that the more we engage with other nations on issues of security and prosperity, the more we will have opportunities to shape the human rights conditions in those nations."* In other words, a kind of trickle-down human rights policy.

Fortunately, as with other aspects of Trump's foreign policy, on human rights there have been isolated contradictions between rhetoric and deed. He did react forcefully to reports of a poison gas attack in Syria, and he reportedly pressured the Saudis temporarily to relax their blockade of a Yemeni port to allow in humanitarian supplies for a few weeks. And occasionally when it suits other geopolitical interests, such as criticizing Iran or excoriating the North Korean regime for its appalling treatment of its citizens, Trump will speak out. Otherwise, as on the President's trip to Asia two months ago, he stayed away from human rights issues – in China, in Vietnam, in the Philippines.

But, Ladies and Gentlemen, what is called for is constant and unambiguous moral leadership by the President of the United States. Advocacy for human rights around the



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world has been central to this country's identity for decades. Several years ago I had the privilege of leading the U.S. delegation to the largest human rights conference in Europe, the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting of the OSCE in Warsaw. During the two weeks of the conference, brave defenders of human rights who had endured persecution, imprisonment, and even torture by their authoritarian governments told me that they looked to the United States -- not to the EU, not even to the UN -- as their only hope. It would be shameful for us to abandon, or even to lessen our support for these people.

I am happy to say that in this regard Congress has not been sleeping. In 2016, Senator Ben Cardin, a Maryland Democrat, introduced the so-called Global Magnitsky Act, which allows the executive branch to impose visa bans and targeted sanctions anywhere in the world on individuals responsible for committing human rights violations or acts of significant corruption. The bill attracted broad bipartisan co-sponsorship and was signed into law by President Obama in December 2016.

Three weeks ago, building on the Global Magnitsky Act, President Trump signed an executive order declaring a national emergency with respect to serious human rights abuse and corruption around the world and providing for the imposition of sanctions on thirteen actors engaged in these malign activities. And there is more to come.

In passing sanctions against Russia for meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election campaign, Congress also ordered up a separate list — due later this month — of Putin's closest cronies. Many of them reportedly are desperate to stay off the list. Since -- as I mentioned -- Trump has stonewalled on the implementation of an earlier set of sanctions, Congress will be closely monitoring his compliance on the upcoming ones.

Common values underpin alliances, so it is not surprising that President Trump — who views all relations, between countries as well as between persons — as transactional, assigns minimal importance to alliances. I doubt that he has any appreciation of the transatlantic community of values that forms the glue of NATO. Trump limits his definition of American "greatness" to economic metrics — jobs, wages, economic growth, GDP. He cultivates a nostalgia for a U.S. of the 1950's and 1960's that dominated the world economy. But American greatness, then and later, was never about dollars and cents alone. Prosperity was a means to an end, not an end in itself.



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The greater objective was to promote democracy and mixed economies, with power divided between the market and government. In short, it was enlightened self-interest.

So can the United States pursue a go-it-alone jingoistic policy? I don't think so. We no longer have the global predominance we enjoyed in the 1940s and 1950s. If we utilize our extensive system of alliances and friendships we can still lead, but to be an effective international leader a country must provide a model. Our strength has always come not only from the "*example of our power,*" but also from the "*power of our example.*" Despite its flaws, American democracy has provided that example for decades.

Now President Trump has gone on the attack against some of the fundamental pillars of our democracy. Here are only a few of the many examples I could cite:

Trump disparaged the U.S. judiciary when he publicly questioned the objectivity of U.S. District Judge Gonzalo Curiel simply because his parents were born in Mexico.

Trump's continuing attacks on the FBI (calling its reputation "*in tatters*") and on the Department of Justice look like a preemptive attempt to delegitimize law enforcement as the Russia investigation draws ever closer to his inner circle and him personally.

Trump persists in defaming the U.S. election system as "*rigged*" despite not providing a shred of evidence to substantiate his assertion that three to five million illegal immigrants voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016.

Trump has disdained and disregarded the U.S. intelligence services, all seventeen of which made a formal assessment "with high confidence" that Russia meddled in the 2016 elections by cyber-attacks. Nonetheless, the President subsequently said about the identity of the hackers: "*nobody knows for sure; it could be a 400-lb. guy sitting on his bed.*" He went on to describe three respected former leaders of the intelligence community (former CIA Director John Brennan, fired FBI Director James B. Comey and former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper) as "political hacks" and added that the idea of Russia's having meddled in the elections with Trump campaign collusion was an "*artificial Democratic hit job.*" Let me re-emphasize that Trump made all of these statements despite a top secret intelligence briefing on January 6, 2017 in which he had been presented with definitive proof that Putin had personally ordered the cyber-attacks.



Trump has repeatedly called the media the “*enemy of the people*,” a chilling label straight from the old Soviet lexicon, has tweeted that the Senate Intelligence Committee should be “*looking into the Fake News Networks in our country*,” and has fumed that the broadcast licenses of NBC and other networks might be revoked.

And last but certainly not least, there is Trump’s relentless undermining of American religious and racial tolerance and debasing the office of the presidency itself, most glaringly revealed when he declared that there had been “*some very fine people*” among the torch-bearing, Nazi saluting marchers chanting anti-Semitic and racist slogans last August in Charlottesville, Virginia.

As a result of this unprecedented trashing of our democracy at home, and of the president’s generally bellicose and erratic behavior, our image abroad has plummeted, as was dramatically shown by a recent Pew Research Center poll of more than 40,000 respondents in 37 countries. When more people around the world think that the President of China can be more trusted to do the right thing than the President of the United States, then you know we’ve got a problem.

Trump’s behavior bespeaks a fundamental rejection of norms, and amounts to a unilateral, unnecessary U.S. surrender of power. With world public opinion against Trump it’s harder for him to lead internationally. Foreign leaders can more easily oppose him without suffering adverse domestic political consequences.

The role of Trump’s personality in foreign policy formulation is absolutely key -- he is insecure, impulsive, susceptible to flattery, foreign to nuance, and unwilling to take the time to master the essential details necessary for successful international negotiations. During Trump’s visit to Saudi Arabia last May, King Salman rolled out the red carpet for him, projecting Trump’s image on the side of a hotel and all the while hammering home the Saudi view of intra-Arab disputes with Qatar. Almost immediately thereafter Trump uncritically backed the Saudi position, apparently not realizing that Qatar is home to the regional headquarters of U.S. Central Command (Al Udeid Air Base).

The Chinese have millennia of experience in flattering foreign guests, and last fall Xi Jinping gave a textbook example with various public displays of praise and by reopening



a long-shuttered theater inside the Forbidden City to host President and Mrs. Trump at a gala evening of Chinese opera.

But perhaps the most outrageous, and dangerous, demonstration of the flaws in Trump's personal diplomacy was his brief meeting last November with Putin at the margins of the Asia-Pacific Economic Summit in Vietnam, at which time the Russian President assured him that the Kremlin did not interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign. Trump's assessment of the former KGB lieutenant colonel is worth repeating: *"I really believe that when he tells me that, he means it. I think he's very insulted, if you want to know the truth."* I must re-emphasize that this was more than six months after Trump had received definitive proof of Putin's culpability from all seventeen U.S. intelligence agencies.

The most alarming aspect of Trump's refusal to acknowledge the Russian election meddling is that it has had grave policy consequences. The President has not convened a single cabinet meeting on the subject. He has not initiated any counter-measures against almost certain Russian attempts at interference with the 2018 elections. And the intelligence community, aware of Trump's rage at reports of aggressive Russian actions, has reportedly tailored the *President's Daily Brief* accordingly. This unprecedented self-censorship is frightening for national security.

And then there is the President's mishandling of the deadly serious crisis with North Korea. I don't agree with the caricature of Kim Jong-un as crazy. His aggressive policies are designed to keep his dynasty in power. But if he's not nuts, at the very least he is impulsive. A detailed CIA psychological profile of Kim reportedly assessed that he has a massive ego and reacts harshly and sometimes lethally to insults and perceived slights. If Kim feels he is losing face with his military and security services, he could lash out. (*"Axios AM" by Mike Allen, September 23, 2017*)

So what point is there, then, for the President of the United States publicly to mock the North Korean leader as "rocket man" and "a madman" coupled with threats to "totally destroy" his country? And then to engage in an adolescent "my nuclear button is bigger than your nuclear button" exchange immediately after Pyongyang had extended a tentative olive branch to Seoul?



Initially some optimists thought that this bluster was just a cover for behind-the-scenes lines of communication at the working level with Pyongyang. No, the President directly undercut this initiative by tweeting on October 1st that our Secretary of State was “wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man.” He added, “save your energy, Rex, we’ll do what has to be done!” (October 1, 2017). Just four weeks ago Trump contradicted another overture for talks by his own Secretary of State, who fell into line the next day.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I don’t have a magic formula to solve the North Korean crisis. I would, however, much prefer to use effective diplomacy, backed by an overwhelming deterrent capability -- a policy which worked during decades of the Cold War -- augmented by the most extreme economic sanctions than to give Kim a bloody nose in a “limited” operation, which could easily spiral out of control into a nuclear holocaust that would kill millions of people, many of them Americans.

Look, at some level process drives policy. As former Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken cogently outlined ([New York Times](#), August 31, 2017):

“The National Security Act of 1947 — which established the National Security Council — laid the foundation for a deliberate, multi-tiered process, managed by the national security advisor, to bring government agencies together to debate and decide policy. These sessions typically culminate in a meeting of the National Security Council itself, chaired by the President. There, the commander-in-chief can choose among the options his advisers present or make his own prescriptions. Senior officials and diplomats then enunciate and carry out the administration’s policy. President Trump’s disdain for this process is sowing confusion around the world. Even the most respected members of the administration never know for sure if they are speaking for the President — and neither do our allies or adversaries.”

Trump, as he has said publicly, considers himself to be his own most important advisor. The president’s unsupervised tweets regularly contradict stated administration policy. The old “fake left, go right” move may work once or twice, but pretty soon its tactical value is dwarfed by its strategic incoherence. Moreover, when, as often happens, Trump doesn’t follow through on his twitter threats, he and his foreign policy lose credibility.



Therefore, it is no wonder that most analysts have wondered how seriously to take even the more sensible declarations in the National Security Strategy. One glaring example is the accurate portrayal of the challenge posed by Russia, which is totally at odds with Trump's unwillingness until now to implement the sanctions law that he signed and also at odds with Trump's refusal to criticize Putin for his seizure of Crimea, for Russia's efforts to destabilize Ukraine, and for the Kremlin's violations of a key nuclear treaty with the United States (the 1987 Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty by testing a new cruise missile).

There is one more crucial, and frightening, connection between Trump's personality and his foreign policy – the President disregards the truth on a near-daily basis, either intentionally or under the delusion that whatever he says is, in fact, the truth.

The launch pad for Trump's political career was the vile Obama birther conspiracy lie. By the end of August 2017 the Washington Post reported that since taking office Trump had made more than 1,000 false or misleading claims. That's an average of more than five per day! A recent count has it even higher. By late December a mere 4 percent of the President's public statements had been rated true by PolitiFact.

Ladies and Gentlemen, President Trump's habitual lying substantially weakens U.S. foreign policy. During the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, President Kennedy dispatched former Secretary of State Dean Acheson to show the CIA's surveillance photos of the Cuban missiles to French President Charles de Gaulle. I don't need to see pictures of the weapons of mass destruction, de Gaulle replied: *"The word of the President of the United States is good enough for me."*

To state the painfully obvious, that wouldn't happen today. In fact, I'm not sure that our allies, let alone other countries, would even give us the benefit of the doubt.

This denial of objective truth has been accompanied by discrediting the idea of expertise itself and elevating the president's gut instincts. Even though Trump has next-to-no foreign affairs knowledge-base, he often goes into meetings without the benefit of a detailed intelligence briefing, preferring to "wing it." At the meeting with Russian President Putin at last July's G20 meeting in Hamburg, Trump did not include his National Security Advisor McMaster, a widely respected expert who earned his doctorate down the road from here at Chapel Hill, or the highly talented Russia



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specialist on the NSC staff, Fiona Hill. At a plenary session of the same G20 meeting as his substitute at the table he chose, not Secretary of State Tillerson, not National Security Advisor McMaster, not Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis -- but his daughter Ivanka.

Meanwhile most of the highest-level positions in the State Department remain unfilled, as do scores of ambassadorships, including to South Korea. Now if we had a scarcity of talented diplomats, this policy might be minimally justifiable. But, Ladies and Gentlemen, I believe we have the finest corps of Foreign Service Officers in the world. Perhaps the one salutary result of the *WikiLeaks* affair a few years ago was the revelation that in most cases the analytical cables and reports by our diplomats were spot-on and remarkably prescient.

One of my own responsibilities on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was oversight of our European embassies. Time and again during on-site visits I was impressed by the intelligence, knowledge, and work-ethic of our diplomats.

President Trump's FY2018 budget request called for a nearly 30% cut in the budgets of the State Department and of the Agency for International Development (USAID). The 30% cut won't hold, but the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has directed the State Department to slash the number of its employees by 8% -- a draconian measure by any standard.

If that were not enough, the president delivered an insult – astonishing even by *his* standards – when the Russians demanded a radical cut in diplomatic and support personnel at our embassy and consulates in Russia. What was Trump's reaction? I quote the president: *"I want to thank him [Putin] because we're trying to cut down the payroll. As far as I'm concerned I'm very thankful that he let go a lot of a large number of people (Trump actually said that!), because now we have a smaller payroll."*

No wonder morale at the State Department has hit rock-bottom, as acknowledged by Deputy Secretary of State John J. Sullivan (House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing, September 26, 2017) with resignations occurring in great number. This waste of talent is suicidal for national security – or if you prefer, for national "greatness."



CENTER FOR TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

In this week's issue of The New Yorker, Evan Osnos writes: "*Barack Obama's foreign policy was characterized as leading from behind. Trump's doctrine may come to be understood as retreating from the front.*" I think he is correct.

The Trump foreign policy has certainly not "made America great again." Rather, it has made America smaller and more inward-looking by unsettling our alliances, by ceding our leadership role in international trade to China, and by rejecting a common effort to combat climate change. Regionally, in certain theaters like NATO-Europe the U.S. continues to be predominant -- but only because of Congressional push-back. Nonetheless many of our allies now doubt the strength of our commitment and no longer trust the word of the President of the United States.

Can anything turn the negative trends around?

Yes. A change in our environmental policy; honest bargaining and norm-setting on international trade in a multinational format; forceful and genuinely committed U.S. leadership in NATO; full implementation of sanctions against Russia and measures against further cyber-attacks; and finally, Mr. Trump's acting like a President who understands, respects, and supports American democracy -- all would greatly improve policy and begin to rehabilitate the image of the United States as a model for others.

Ultimately we return to the core question: can a narcissistic, thin-skinned, strong-willed 71 year-old without previous governmental experience change his ways? For the sake of all of us, I sincerely hope so.