Notes: This transcription is smooth format, meaning that we do not transcribe filler words like um, er, ah, or uh huh. Nothing is rewritten or reworded. Transcriber notes such as [*cross talk*] are italicized and contained within brackets. A word that the transcriber could not understand is indicated with a six-space line followed by a time code like this \_\_\_\_\_\_ [0:22:16]. A word that the transcriber was not sure of is **bolded**. Punctuation is to the best of our ability, given that this transcript results from a conversation.

**Key:**

Gventer Moderator: Celeste Ward Gventer, Associate Director of the Clements Center for National Security

May Andrew May, Associate Director of the Office of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense

Long Mary Beth Long, Former Assistant Secretary of Defense

Feaver Peter Feaver, Former Special Advisor for Strategic Planning, National Security Council

Colby Elbridge Colby, Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense

AQ Audience Question

Gventer: Thank you, very much. I think the topic that this panel is going to address is going to fall along very, very naturally to what we just heard from the previous panel and from the senators and from Senator Sasse. This is going to be really where the rubber meets the road, I think, on a lot of this. So it’s Strategies, Tactics and Tools.

It’s my great pleasure to introduce to you today, again you have the bios--I’m terrified, now that Senator Sasse has set the standard of memorizing bios. I didn’t know that that was what I was supposed to do. I can’t perform that task, so I will just tell you how honored I am to have this tremendous panel here. I’m going to start out by introducing Mary Beth Long. Marty Beth is a longstanding idol of mine and was the first female Assistant Secretary of Defense so greatly admired by all of us. Also, Peter Feaver served as a Senior Advisor on the National Security Council, a very respected academic expert in civil military relations and many other issues. He also invented “The Surge.” You can ask him about that. We also have here Elbridge Colby. He’s the Director of the Defense Program at the Center for New American Security in Washington, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy. And also, Andrew May. He’s the Associate Director of the Office of Net Assessment in the Pentagon, and if you know anything about ONA, you know that that’s where all the big brains are and we have one of them with us today. So with that, I’m going to have them go ahead and give their opening remarks. Andrew, why don’t you go ahead and start?

May: Thank you. Well, thanks for hosting me. I’m one of the few folks here who’s actually still in government, so I have to start by saying I’m just speaking for myself here; I’m not representing ONA. And then, by and large, ONA often doesn’t represent the rest of the government, as **Bridge** has had to clean up after us before, and I think you have, too. So I’ll be speaking for myself.

What I thought I would talk about is none of the stuff that I was supposed to talk about, but something different, which is, the job of Net Assessment is to try to help inform our strategy. We don’t create the strategy, we don’t implement the strategy; we’re trying to give better information to the Secretary and to officials like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_[0:02:36] and Mary Beth so they can craft better, more informed, more comprehensive strategy.

So I thought I’d talk a little bit about the analytic and knowledge base that I think is going to be needed as we move forward into the next phase of the competition with China, focusing on China, principally. And then, focus more particularly on two areas where I think folks at universities and outside of government, more generally, can make a particular contribution. So there’s lots of information we’re going to need, and there’s lots of work that’s going to need to be done. We need to understand better how the Chinese look at this competition, how they keep score, what their ambitions are. We need to revitalize our war gaming so we can better understand the character of future conflict. We need to revitalize military experimentation so we can then develop some new operational concepts that are appropriate to that theater and that adversary. So there’s a whole host of things that need to be done.

But in particular, as I said, I want to talk about two areas where I thought outside work, the expertise that is resident outside the government, might be most useful. Because of that assessment, because we look at us and them, I thought I’d have one bin where we need to understand something about ourselves, and another bin describing some of the things I think we need to understand about the Chinese.

For ourselves, I think one of the big challenges we’ve got with this competitions is that, it’s not just a new adversary and it’s not just a competition that has new dimensions to it, but that the U.S. military is likely to have to enter into wholly new businesses, and this is different from the beginning of the Cold War where by and large, we had been in the power projection business and we were going to continue to be in the power projection business. That was going to be our job. We were **“cheming”** them in. And so a lot of the stuff we had been buying to fight World War II was appropriate to the contest we were entering into with the Soviet Union. That may be different in the case of the Chinese.

The Chinese military itself is trying, and has stated an ambition, to enter into the power projection business. Now, they’re going to find that’s a very, very difficult business to be in, as we have found. It’s a very, very difficul**t [TIME CODE 0:05:00**] business to be in. They’re trying to enter into it; they’re going to have a lot of problems. One of the things that we should be thinking about doing is making those problems worse for them, making this a more difficult business for them to get into. But that means we will need to enter into the counter power projection business or the anti-access area denial business. And that’s not, generally speaking, a business that the U.S. military likes to think of itself as being in.

We’ve disestablished our coastal artillery. We don’t really do that kind of thing anymore. The stories we tell ourselves about our greatest military success are by and large stories of us projecting power to somewhere else, and now we might be in the business of trying to frustrate someone else’s power projection. There’s a million opportunities to do that, and there are a lot of great ways to do it, but it’s going to entail difficult transformations inside the U.S. military. It’s going to involve standing up new kinds of units, new kinds of career paths, maybe whole new organizations. As a consequence, that’s going to mean disestablishing organizations and units and career paths as new ones gain prominence.

One thing we might need is some historical work on, how has this gone before? This is something the U.S. military has done before, this is something we know how to do; it’s costly and it’s painful and it’s disruptive, but we can do it. And one thing we maybe ought to be doing is some historical work, studying ourselves, to see how we’ve done it in the past, what sort of approaches work for us, and how we might, therefore, learn from that past and do it successfully in the future.

There’s a los a lot we need to know about the Chinese, and here, I want to talk a little about the kinds of things that Eric Edelman raised this morning. In particular, the weaknesses and competitive hobbles that the Chinese are going to have. These need to be looked at, in my opinion at least, in a particular way. We don’t want to minimize the threat that the Chinese pose. They are a determined adversary, they are extremely ambitious, and if they got what they wanted, it would be bad news for almost everybody under their yoke. But that does not mean that they are perfect. Eric talked this morning about some of the structural problems they’re going to face: an economy that is poorly structured for long-term competition and they’re not doing a very good job of reforming, demographic problems, pollution problems, corruption problems. Those are all real and those are all going to limit the ways in which the Chinese can be effective.

But a different class of weaknesses that I think we ought to be studying more thoroughly, because it will open up strategic opportunity for the United States, are the special costs that are imposed on China by their tyrannical system of government that we know, from history, that tyrannies are incredibly inefficient. Our system of government is not just morally excellent, but it’s also a great way to run a country. And we know, we should know from our own history, that it confers tremendous competitive advantages on us, and yet, we tend to not pay adequate attention to the special problems the Chinese create because of their system. We know from looking at them that these kinds of systems generate inefficient corruption, they generate distrust, they generate paranoia, they generate an inability to look at the world as it is and make proper assessments of what’s really going on. Well, that’s a lot of fodder for a very informed strategy to exploit those weaknesses, and there’s not really very much the Chinese can do about those weaknesses, other than change the kind of regime that they are, and that ought to be one of our overriding goals in the competition. So if we can place those kinds of weaknesses at the heart of our strategy, I think we have an opportunity to not just gain advantage, but drive this competition toward the sort of conclusion that we should be hoping for. And with that, I will surrender the balance of my time.

Gventer: Outstanding. Thank you, Andrew. Mary Beth?

Long: One of the things we were asked to talk about was to think through what had been spoken about during the day and see what might be added before we all dive into China before we go home, and what things at least need mentioning that maybe haven’t come up. I think, from my point of view, I’m probably unusually situated for that. I started out life actually as a CIA Case Officer in China, and then under State Department Cover, and then ended up doing drugs and thugs, the first real, real dive into the overlap of military foreign policy and law enforcement, and also of intel and military under State Department Cover **[TIME CODE 0:10:00],** and then I went and was a lawyer for a while, but then went back to DOD where I had literally, I’m a utility fielder, literally every geographic area under my responsibility at one time or another. So I look at all of this in a very broad, and many would tell you, secretly not very deep sense.

But I do have an unusual perspective in that I was both an intel producer and an intel consumer, when I sat on the Deputy’s committee, and also, when I left CIA, I was never going to meet more patriotic people, more motivated people on the planet, or even smarter people. And then I went to Williams and Connelly, and they were smarter, but I ended up at DOD and I realized that here was everything. Here was smart, dedicated, patriotic, capable--everything you would ever want in a military, and also, everything you were afraid of at the same time. It’s the afraid of part that I want to talk about just a little bit, to tee up some discussions.

We’ve talked a lot about geographic threats: Russia. If we had been here maybe 10 years ago we’d be talking about counter-terrorism, about militant extremists. A little bit before that, when I joined CIA in the ‘80s, it was the post-Cold War, really, the government was floundering a bit as to what was supposed to be our unity of purpose. Was it going to be an economic espionage? Was it going to be…what was it going to be?

I think we’re in one of those floundering moments, again. That has resulted in an over-reliance, I believe, on the military to solve our problems. Some of our other speakers have talked about that, and it ends up being a function of the fact that our military is as superb as you would ever want it to be, and has taken on tasks that just five years ago, certainly 10, were unimagined for the military, the mission creep of the preparing the battlefield before the battle, collecting the intel tool to avoid the battle, the clear hold build, where nobody could really hold, certainly not build, so they slid into really decisive roles on the soft power. No one wants to talk about soft power because it’s not a threat, but it’s that lack of soft power and the fact that we’re over-relying on our military, and particularly, our incredibly capable Special Forces that I think leaves us very vulnerable in the future, because they’re so good, they’ve left us gaps that we haven’t been honest with the American public about filling.

Those gaps are clarity of strategy and purpose. Senator Sasse talked about that in ways that I won’t repeat, but he was right on. All these great tools, particularly when it gets down to the men and women in uniform, are worth nothing if you’re not directing them, and you owe it to them to direct them in a clear, purposeful, strategic way in order to make your foreign policy executable and executed well, and the military being just one tool.

The second place I think we’re really falling down, and I have the utmost respect for Sue, but I have to tell you, I’m so glad she left because I’m particularly critical of our intelligence capabilities. In part, again, we have not had an honest conversation with our population about the role of intelligence and the need for different, increased, and less chaotic intelligence as the rest of the world focuses on the collection effort, and as we all use tools to speed up the consumption of intelligence. It’s really the consumption of information.

It’s not magic that makes it intelligence that’s useful, and we’ve gotten worse and worse and worse on that. And part of that is, an over-reliance, again, on technical means, technical collection. Someone has to feed those algorithms that Sue was talking about, someone has to prioritize what you’re looking for, and that has to fit into a strategy, a policy, and an objective that you’re searching towards. All those algorithms are written by people. Machines aren’t going to do that for you; they’re a tool, they’re a means to an end. But we’ve glommed over the fact that, at the end of the day, it’s well-trained, well-educated, experienced, mature individuals who understand the role of intelligence as a driver of the information that informs your strategy, your policy, your military operations, and presumably, your foreign policy.

One of my big beefs, I suppose, and I was a little saddened to hear Senator Sasse talk about creating another center. We have too many centers, too many diversified, chaotic, uncoordinated, duplicative, **[TIME CODE 0:15:00]** and competing intelligence organizations, many of whom reside in their own deep little corners of DOD, so they’re not even counted in the 17, by the way; it’s probably closer to 50 competing for the same resources, chewing over the same raw information, coming up with different conclusions, regurgitating something another organization said. But at the end of the day, very little honest to goodness, non-technological, thoughtful collection.

When I was Assistant Secretary of Defense, I went out to Baghdad and visited the station and was thrilled to see, I think it was 400 plus operations officers. When I asked them how many active cases they had, there was crickets. The answer was, I can’t really say, but you and I could do it by ourselves in a traditional station; that’s how many cases they had. There’s this desire to compete for resources through numbers, there’s a desire to compete for resources through technology. Our human collection capability has become decimated on the unilateral perspective, and we’ve swung way too far in intelligence support to the military, which we were not very good at, but we’ve left in the dust traditional understanding of how decisions are made and why, a lot of which depend on human beings, their prejudices, their fears, their daddy issues. As I think President Obama recently said, “We all have mommy or daddy issues,” their daddy issues, the relationship with their wife, where they’re feeling with their boss that week, how they’re vulnerable, where their ego is, and how it all fits into the larger context. You can’t possible sort through or design an algorithm that understands technical collection on Russia unless you understand the Russian psyche, and that involves getting to know Russians and a lot of vodka, at a minimum. And you can’t do that through a machine. So I worry deeply about our lack of human intelligence and our over-reliance on technical solutions, not only to collection, but for aggregating collections and correlating it.

The other thing, and it’s a bit of a beef, and perhaps, because I was a human collector, I’m myopic, but that’s one of the things you get to be in life, and that is a lack of understanding and abandonment of traditional covert action and Title 50 authorities, which have been utilized most recently to target air strikes in Yemen, and to support the military in the most amazing ways. But we have lost a lot of the covert action capabilities and lore that took us through the ‘80s, when many people would be surprised to learn that there were 20 covert action campaigns going on in CIA in the mid ‘80s when I was there. Twenty. Most of which, reported to Casey.

How many of you are familiar with the Solidarity Party in Poland and the sea change that that took? There’s a great book out. I was gob-smacked when I realized that they had declassified that information. The Solidarity Movement actually was a movement that consisted of less than 20 people that the CIA got a hold of and decided that they would sponsor. They thought maybe it could be a viable political party; it was never going to be much of anything, but all they were asking for were pens, paper, and a mimeograph, the ones with the purple ink that smelled sort of funny, and every once and a while you’d go to your office and go [*sniffing*], just because it was so odd. That’s what we sent them. We basically sent them, we, the CIA, and solidarity through well-placed understanding of the vulnerabilities of the Russians, the sentiments of the Poles, and the untapped marriage of Polish pride and of the unions and the hard-working Poles, combined with the beauty of religion, the pride of the Catholic Pole. That’s what brought you the Solidarity Movement, which became the biggest pain in the butt to the Russians when it came to the Poles, and introduced a sea change in Polish governance and in Polish politics that reverberated throughout what was then the Soviet Union. We don’t do that stuff anymore, and we don’t do it by choice. **[TIME CODE 0:20:00]** The authorities are there influencing operations, propaganda, what we used to respond to, and we used to be a bread and butter as part of the Cold War. We choose not to do it, in part because we’ve become an overly litigious society, we’ve got ourselves all tied up in knots regarding the tug of war between First Amendment rights, privacy issues, and the impossibility to do these kinds of things without it ending up on the Internet and, oh my goodness, somehow touching upon U.S. persons or a U.S. server, and we can’t do that under Executive Order 12333. We’ve tied ourselves up in knots, why? Because we’re dealing with authorities and prejudices that were written in 1947 and 1949. Now, what kind of sense does that make?

If we’re going to get serious about really competing with the nation state threats that we’ve been talking about, and other threats, going into the future, we’ve got to get serious about a conversation, first of all, with the American population about, what do you want out of your intel organizations? Are you going to be worried about people sneaking through my Google to make sure that I’m not an ISIS supporter? I can understand that. But what do you want out of your intel organizations? Are you willing to assassinate? Are you willing to take out the bad guys? Because, at the end of the day, foreign policy is either you win, or you don’t. There’s a lot of baggage and garbage out there about covert actions in the bad old days. Okay, so let’s have a serious and honest conversation about what we should be doing. I know many people are going, “You’ve got to be kidding me. We went through this.” No, actually, we’re either going to go through it deliberately, or it’s going to happen to us and we’re going to go through it. Not making a decision is a decision, and we’re there already with the use of social media and the use of advertisement and critical economic tools that the other nation states are plying against us, that we do not have a whole of government approach to, and we won’t in the near future. One of the places that we need to get smarter and better is in intelligence.

So I’ll stop there on my two big beefs, over-use of the military and under-use of Intelligence authorities, and just throw out a couple other things that I don’t think have been raised, just for bullet points. I understand peer-to-peer, we’ve got to do a reset there, but this peer-to-peer, and someone already mentioned this, are going to be a different peer-to-peer, and we’ve got to pay attention to Antarctica and places that don’t look all that important but are critical to freedom of navigation and resources, particularly as to climate change and what Antarctica’s going to be like, and how economically, that passageway is going to be a game changer.

We’ve got to take a look at other aspects of climate change, where you already have tensions in some countries where water is going to be a critical resource that people are going to end up fighting over. They’re fighting a little bit already now. It’s not going to cause a war, it’s not going to cause a world war, but it’s going to either be exacerbated by being utilized by our enemies as a place where they can weave into our cracks and agitate us, or a place where the non-state actors, extremists, are going to be able to recruit and form a dangerous civil or other regional conflagrations that we’ll get sucked into, one way or the other.

Nano-technology: too scary to even talk about. There’s a lot of smart people out here, smarter than I am, but we don’t think about how an introduction of nano-technology either into our health system, our water or other places could be, again, a game changer. I went to, actually, a CIA panel the other day about little bots that you could drink, and how you could decimate a force, and how everyone’s really trying to figure out how you can airily disperse the next great chemical weapon and have it actually be something that would react later scares the begeezus out of me. The other really important things for people to think about: that’ll be used by our traditional and our non-traditional allies. And I’ll leave it at that.

Gventer: Thank you, Mary Beth. That was tremendous. So now I know Peter Feaver will discuss hypersonic missiles.

Feaver: Yeah, now I’m scared. I’d like to say that I’m really happy to be here, but as you can tell, I’m fighting a cold, so I don’t know how happy I am to be here this morning. I texted my wife and said, “You know, I’m feeling kind of puny. You should pray for me.” She texted back, “Dear Lord, please help my puny husband.” [*laughter*] That didn’t make me feel any better, but it did make me reconsider a fact of life for me, which was, **[TIME CODE 0:25:00]** when I was working with Will in the White House, we would go from office to office knocking on the doors saying, “We’re here from Strategic Planning, and we’re here to help you.” And everyone in the NSC would burst out in laughter when they saw us. Of course, I assumed they were laughing at Will, [*laughter*] but now I’m wondering if they might have also been laughing at me.

Well, it is good to be here and I’m very proud of and envious, really, more envious than proud, of what Will and his team have built here. This is really remarkable. We were asked to talk about the tools. What tools and strategies are needed? I have the bad news and worse news. The bad news is, we don’t have what we need, and the worse news is, we don’t have the political will to create what we need. I want to focus on that second piece, because I know Bridge, who knows the tools so much better than I do, is probably going to be more practical than me. But I want to focus--and this is something of a riff on Senator Sasse’s really wonderful keynote address--I want to focus on five questions that should have been asked in the last presidential election that weren’t asked. I think these questions are really still hanging in the air. There needs to be a political debate in our country asking and answering these questions.

The first question is, do Americans understand the price of freedom? Do we really understand this? I take students on staff rides so that we go to the battle fields and actually walk the terrain. Gettysburg, of course, is a classic staff ride. But we also have done the beaches of Normandy and the 100-day offensive at the end of World War I. These are pivot moments in American history when Americans realized the price of freedom, and it was a price that then reached back and touched every state, every community in the country. There was a time when Americans understood the price of freedom. Do we today, does the policy that we represent today, understand the price of freedom? There really was very little in 2016, or in the last several years, engagement on that question.

Second big question is, do we Americans understand the benefits of American global leadership? Sadly, there was even less engagement on that question. I think what we heard, and what we’ve heard too often on cable news if you turn it on is, just the costs of American global leadership, and they are high. But what about the benefits of global leadership? And here, I thought Senator Sasse was quite eloquent about the consequences of what the world would look like without American leadership. So what would we lose? The flip side of that is, what do we gain by American leadership? And Americans, I don’t think, can give a good answer to that right now.

Third, do our adversaries know that they must resist the temptation to exploit American disinterest or distraction or divisions. We heard this morning from the panel of senators that Russia thinks quite the opposite. They saw tremendous opportunity in exploiting our divisions. I was particularly struck, Mary Beth said, did I learn anything yet? I said, “I’ve learned a number of things.” One of the things I was struck by was General Breedlove’s comment that the Russians still don’t think they’ve paid a price for that. That’s really a shocking fact. I trust General Breedlove, who knows this better than I do. If that’s the case, that should really bother us that the Russians feel like they haven’t yet paid a real price for what they did. And not just the Russians, do our adversaries, in general, know that they would pay a price and should resist the temptation?

The fourth big question that Americans are not really wrestling with enough, although this is talked about more on cable TV: do our allies trust us to lead? And do they respect us enough to cooperate with reciprocity? I think one of the achievements of the Trump Administration has been to get our NATO allies to pony up more on defense spending. This is something that every previous president basically since Truman has been asking for, and I think President Trump and his team have extracted more **[TIME CODE 0:30:00]** from our allies. But have they extracted that along with trust? Do our allies trust us? And can we say that reciprocity is the norm that’s guiding our relationship with our allies? I worry that the answer to that is “no.”

And then fifth, does our government, and by government I mean executive, legislative and judicial branches, does our government have the political competence and focus to sustain a proactive line of action to address these challenges and not just react? I think what we heard from numerous panels today was that the answer to that is “no.”

I think there’s reasons to worry about all five of these. I wish the American people were engaged in meaningful debate about all five of them. I just want to pull the fifth one a little bit further, because I think it speaks directly to the process by which we would create the tools that we need to address these challenges. If you look at our government dysfunction, there’s lots of reasons for it, but there’s three trends, in particular, that are longstanding and do not begin with this Administration, don’t begin with the 2016 election, don’t even begin when Will Inboden joined the government. It’s much earlier than that. But it has intensified, and I think it’s reached something of a crisis point now.

The first is, the breakdown in the regular order of governing. Now, this is the kind of thing that my students, if I even start to talk like this [*makes* *snoring* *noise*]. They’re out like a light. Nothing could be more boring to them than the ordinary process of regular order governing: authorizations, well, first budget a bill, authorizations, appropriations, a normal inner-agency process of paper working its way up in decisions and implementation guidance and going back down. This is the boring stuff of actual governing. But when you’re at a great school, like the LBJ School, and you leave from there and work in government, you realize, wow, that’s actually what makes the government work or not work. And as a country, as a governing body, our government has gotten out of regular order and we’re doing things like the Budget Control Act, which is an absurd approach to appropriations.

We have let lapsed norms that govern self-restraint on what people will do with the power that they have. We have completely--not completely, because I was very inspired by what I heard today from the Senate, Intelligence Committee representatives--but we’ve mostly lost quality oversight, legislative oversight. It’s rare to have the kind of oversight that you saw embodied in Senator Burr and Senator Warner, and much more common, sadly, is oversight that is political theater for the TVs.

All of this is actually the workings of our advantage that Andrew was describing. What makes our government work well is our capacity over time to develop these bureaucratic techniques or these governing techniques that function, and they have broken down. There’s a long path to how they broke down, but it’s at a crisis point.

Second factor, the vicious cycle of polarizations, which means the parties sorting geographically and ideologically so the left-most Republican is still more conservative than the right-most Democrat. And you’re likely to live near people who think like you, politically, or likely go to church with people who think like you politically, etc. Polarization, separation combined with tribalist party loyalties, where its party label will trump ideological commitments, ideas. I was tough on Russia before, but now I’m soft on Russia. What changed? Well, my party leader has changed. It changed the stance, so I’m going to flip my stance. This kind of party as tribes, so whatever my tribe says goes, even if it’s the exact opposite of what I was doing last time. That’s a vicious cycle **[TIME CODE 0:35:00]** that repeats itself and makes governing hard.

The third point: the decline in the market place of ideas. This, I think, begins actually, in the academy. So here I’d lay the blame squarely in my profession, universities across the country, a decline in the marketplace of ideas. But it also extends the decline in the marketplace and think tank community, and then even within government. What I mean here, what I’m referring to is a reluctance to credit the other side with a plausible argument. It may be wrong. It may be actually wrong. At the end of the day, you’ve persuading the other to go a different direction, but they have a plausible argument, and you can see the logic of it, you can benefit from learning from it, and maybe even adjust your approach slightly by borrowing the best ideas from theirs. This kind of approach to argument and to the marketplace of ideas has been replaced--and I fear now, we may have even lost the ability to do that kind of empathy. It’s been replaced by a bonfire of straw men, where the other side’s ideas are so painfully stupid. How could anyone do this? This is not limited, this is not a critique of this president, per se, because while I see it in this administration, on the way down here I read Elizabeth Warren’s Foreign Affairs piece, and that was a bonfire of straw men. And of course, it goes back much longer than our present day.

But I want to emphasize, and I want to end on emphasizing this point about the marketplace of ideas, because I think that’s where everyone in this room can make a contribution right now, tonight. Actually, I would say you’re already making a contribution by being here. You’ve heard a range of opinions, you’ve heard some disagreements, you’ve heard a more sensible kind of debate than you might if you were just watching TV, and I credit the panelists who went before. But you all can contribute to that and I want to especially thank Will Inboden and the Clement Center and the Strauss Center, which I think is a beacon of how this ought to be done. At the end of the day, I’m optimistic in the same way that Senator Sasse was, and the same way that several of our folks are. I’m still going to bet on America, but I’m going to win that bet if we improve the quality of our debate, if we get over this polarization, party tribal loyalty, this inability to see that the other side has a good idea and if we can get back to regular order governing. And if so, then I think I’m going to win that bet. I’ll close there. I’m still alive!

Colby: Don’t breathe on me. Thanks, Celeste, and thanks, Will and Bobby and the whole crowd here at UT for the invitation. I am pleased to be here, actually. The topic for the panel was strategy, tactics, and tools. I’m very not handy with tools, and I’m pretty absent-minded, so I’m going to stick to strategy, both content-wise and I’m also going to talk about its role. There’s been a lot of discussion over the last few hours about how we lack a coherent strategy, and I thought Senator Sasse threw down the gauntlet on that. Well, let me try, because I think we can have a pretty firm grasp. It may not be very romantic the way I’m putting it, but I think it’s fairly clear, and I think it’s reflected basically in documents like the National Defense Strategy and the National Security Strategy.

That is, I think the organizers here rightly focus on great power competition as being the defining, salient factor in global politics. There’s been a lot of discussion about non-state actors today, and certainly over the last generation. I’m of the view that states remain the decisive actors in international politics. If we’re trying to be parsimonious and you’re trying to make a strategy and make hard decisions and guide people making hard decisions, I think you need to come to some tough calls. Non-state actors can have an enormous influence. Obviously, 9/11 is the unparalleled, sad example of that. But fundamentally, as we’re seeing, I think the Internet, actually, is a great example. The Internet was developed with all this fanfare that it was going to prove--I like to quote the Monty Python line--the anarcho-syndicalist mindset that basically was going to be developed **[TIME CODE 0:40:00]** in a way where states wouldn’t have a role and it would empower individuals. Actually, what we’re seeing is that states do have an incredible--and they can leverage the power of the Internet. Look at China and this total information capital. It’s terrifying stuff, but states will be able to adapt and until we see something different, they are the locus of power for good or ill.

So if that’s true, what is it that we’re really looking to do in the world? I actually think this is fairly consistent over a very long period of time, in fact, through the existence of the Republic. U.S. interests are fundamentally in maintaining favorable, regional balances of power in the key regions of the world, and those are particularly Asia above all, because of its wealthy and dynamism, as well as Europe, and to a more limited and focused degree, the Persian Gulf, because of the wealth that can be leveraged resident there. Not the broader Middle East, but the Gulf, in particular.

Obviously, other regions are important. Certainly, the Western Hemisphere is important for us, but when we’re thinking about the glomeration of power and the ability to capture wealth and military power and other **pertinences** of state power, those are the key regions. The world could be arranged in a different way where they were randomly distributed, but they’re not. So for instance, obviously, the Western Hemisphere is very important for us, but it’s not a strategically-decisive theater, because even if you could dominate the Western Hemisphere, it would be very easy for the United States to balance it.

So if that’s the case, why do we want these favorable regional balances of power? What we want to prevent happening is, we don’t want to dominate these regions; what we want to be able to do is deny even potentially-hostile hegemon, or discriminatory hegemon from dominating these regions, or a collection of states from dominating regions. Why? Most practically because we don’t want to have a closed door. If you go back in American history and you look at the policy of the United States towards China, 100 and so years ago, the Chinese don’t like this term but I think it’s basically an innocent approach, we want an open door. We do not want a discriminatory trading regime imposed upon us, which a hegemonial power would have the ability to do. If it’s a balance of power, if there’s an open field in places like Asia and Europe, we will be able to deal with them and come to reasonable commercial and other trading arrangements, or other arrangements and we’ll be fine. But if, say, a China or Russia or, in the past, the Soviet Union could dominate a region, they could set the terms of trade and an inner course in those regions and basically disfavor us, which ultimately would have an effect on our way of life and in the worst case, would allow those states and those regions to project power ultimately in the Western Hemisphere. You don’t need to think that they’re going to land on the coast of Cape Cod or Northern California, and I don’t think that’s going to happen, but rather, they’re going to be able to have influence. I don’t want to be too alarmist, but you can imagine the kind of power that the United States wields in other regions of the world being brought to our shores, and when we’re thinking about our politics, that’s not what we want.

What’s the challenge here? The challenge here is that the U.S. power advantage which we enjoyed for two historical blips is structurally eroding. I’d point you to--there’s been all this talk about McKenzie, but a good friend of mine, I think Will’s, and others, Drew Ordman, who’s now in the government in Missouri had a great McKenzie graph that showed the center of world economic activity. If you look at 1400, it’s in Asia; it then moves to the North Atlantic by about the 20th Century, and now it’s moving back. So the structural reality is that the United States no longer bestrides the world like a colossus as it did after World War II, which was because the rest of the industrial world had destroyed itself. And then, when the Soviet Union fell, and we had this resurgence of economic activity, we also saw what was probably an unusual resurgence of our economic strength.

I’m actually quite optimistic and I wrote a piece actually with Drew and Paul Leto a couple years ago. I think we have a lot of advantages in the United States, but it’s going to be a much more competitive world. And actually, the powers that are really losing this kind of economic vitality are our traditional, established allies, particularly in Europe. So if you look at the world balance, we are in a much more competitive environment.

What’s really going on here? It’s not really a dissemination in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_[0:44:15] terms. Really, what’s happening is, China is rising. To some extent, India, obviously some other countries in Southeast Asia, but above all, it’s China. As Napoleon said, “When China raises from its slumber, the world will shake.” And that’s what’s happening. So China will continue to rise. Jim Steinberg and I were having a spirited argument in the back. I wish we could be having it up here. It would have been fun. But in my view, China must be the focus, because it is the most powerful potential hegemon and it is a potential hegemon in the world’s most important, dynamic, wealthy region. You can only be as worried as the Mexicans were about the Americans in the mid-19th Century to be very scared about what the future of China is. Actually, I like Chinese culture, I’ve been to China many, many times, **[TIME CODE 0:45:00]** I have tremendous respect for China. I just look at human nature, appetite grows with the eating, and you see that with **Xi Jinping**. So I think we should be quite worried, and of course, many of their neighbors are extremely worried.

So to me, that’s the strategy. I think you can put a lot more lyrics on it, but that’s basically the core logic. In terms of the DIME that General Thomas was talking about, obviously, all the demands are important and the competitions is going to be in all of them, but I think we should never take our eye, particularly the defense establishment, should not take its eye off the military dimension. There is a tendency today, and certainly not General Thomas, but there is a tendency today among defense experts and senior officials to talk about the DIME, and to put the “M” at a lower level. I think that’s a mistake, because I think that is actually assuming a projection of the future of the dominance that the American military has enjoyed or earned over the last quarter century. But, given China’s economic development, that is going to be much, much more challenging to sustain.

So what does this mean in the strategy context, thinking about a strategy as a bureaucratic exercise? So when I was in the Pentagon, I worked on the National Defense Strategy. I’m a fan, but I’m biased. It’s Secretary Mattis’ document and I think he deserves enormous credit for it, first of all, for identifying the great power of competition and the absolute central importance of the American military returning to a focus on war fighting and prevailing and strategically-significant plausible war fights. That is crucial. Obviously, also being conscious of the way the military instrument interrelates with the other parts of the DIME, but also in the fact that it made hard choices. I think you’ve started to see, there was an article in the Washington Post by Missy Ryan a couple weeks ago demonstrating some of the desire to move to a new approach, for instance, in the Middle East. I think this is absolutely crucial as a bureaucratic reality because strategy to be useful, one of its most important roles is to send a signal down to the organization. Not, “here’s how you do everything like the central planning kind of thing,” but rather, to animate the organization and the experts in the field, whether they be in uniform or not, to go and figure out the problems. But a crucial element of that is to tell them and to assume at the political level the responsibility for taking risk on hard choices. That cannot be delegated, and that’s certainly something that I saw, and that’s something I’m concerned about as we go forward.

I think if we’re thinking about an era of great power competition, and we’re talking about strategy, we need to be talking about hard choices, about what to focus on, and what not to focus on. I was thinking of an analogy recently and it’s like, “If you’re a Florida homeowner, you might buy some tornado insurance, but you really better buy some flood insurance.” Certain kinds of plausible threats are more consequential than others, and I think that Secretary Mattisdeserves a tremendous amount of credit for that. The main issue now will be implementation. But with that, I look forward to questions.

Gventer: Excellent. Thank you, Bridge. I hadn’t realized that I was going to be heading the “Losing My Will to Live” panel. It’s an extremely grim portrait. So I’m going to go ahead and just ask you guys to follow-up a little bit on these comments and just identify a couple of the very common themes I heard and push a little bit. Andrew, Mary Beth, all of you really hinted at this general floundering. We’re wrestling with what is happening to us. We don’t really know what we’re in. We’re calling this conference The Era of Great Power Competition, but are we there yet? Are we getting there? But yet, we have more information than ever, and not very good understanding. You both really sounded that theme. And then, Peter made it clear, though, that we’re actually unable to really speak to each other anymore and even function normally to develop the understanding. So we’re kind of in a real conundrum. Bridge, just to push on you a little bit, is the answer to this just a better document? Is that the way to get there? So for all of you, really, now what? What do we do about this fairly grim situation? Thank you, Peter, for suggesting that the Clement Center was a solution. But there’s not very many of us. So we’ll help.

May: Well, with more funding, you could be.

Gventer: Exactly. Okay. You heard it here, folks. So anyway, if I could get you guys to respond to that.

Colby: I’m actually, I’m not super grim. I think the competition is going to be very serious, but I’m encouraged by what’s happened, again, with some of these documents, but also the National Security Strategy. Nadia Schadlowand her colleagues deserve an enormous amount of credit there. Quite candid.  **[TIME CODE 0:50:00]** Ahead of the curve. A lot of what’s going on is obviously a hashing about with a really difficult set of problems. The solution is not a strategy document, but a strategy document is a way for politically accountable leadership to communicate their seriousness and to assume responsibility that then frees up the experts at lower levels to be able to go figure out the problem.

So I think the change in tone on China is great. I think Vice President Pence’s speech, Matt Pottinger and other deserve a tremendous amount of credit for that. I think we’re actually--I’m pretty impressed by our systems’ adaptation, actually compared to the alternative.

Gventer: Okay. Now, I feel better. Thank you.

Feaver: I’d point out that we’ve been wrestling with this temptation to isolationism for a long time. In fact, I worked in the Clinton Administration, and the Clinton National Security Strategy orientation identified isolationism as the problem, that’s why the strategy was a strategy of engagement, to resist to the come-home America temptation at the end of the Cold War. President Clinton had very strong political instincts, and he sensed that isolationism fermenting and wanted to fight against it. I remember vividly, President Bush in the second term. I think it was the 2006 State of the Union address, but he said, “I’m worried about return of isolationism.” So here he had gone through re-election, so he had sort of been out in the **hustings** talking to Americans, hearing their vibe, won re-election, but, nevertheless, he was worried about a return if isolationism. Then, if you read Goldberg’s interview with Obama, President Obama worried about it, too. So the last three presidents who won second-term, so they’re kind of good at reading the American mood, have worried about this.

That being said, the last three presidents to win, ’16, ’12, and ’08, their message was, compared to their alternative, was the problems are simpler if we don’t engage abroad. So I think that message resonated. That was the message that won in 2012. You had old Romney talking about the geo-political crisis. He looks pretty prescient today. I thought he looked prescient in 2012, but he lost, and he lost on the foreign policy debate. The American people thought that President Obama’s perspective, which was a much more benign reading of the world, was won out over Romney. Of course, in ’08, it was a similar dynamic.

So in this sense, I think Senator Sasse is right. No one has made the case to the American people yet in a way that the American people will click on and say, “I’ll get it. Yeah, I get it. I’m willing to sign on for that.” So that’s the challenge. I think we do have coherent national security strategy; I think we’ve had a coherent national security strategy since the end of the Cold War, and I think it’s been pretty successful. But what it has failed at is enrapturing the imagination of the American people, and that legacy strategy has now played its course, because it was premised on no great power conflict. The great power conflict upends what we had been doing for the last 25 years; we need a new one, and we need to do a better job of getting one that the American people will embrace. I think that was the important message from Senator Sasse today.

Long: Well, I’ll associate myself with what both of you said with a small twist. I do think that post 9/11, when we had unity of purpose, in part because we saw unity of threat, and everybody affiliated and associated themselves with the idea that this has to do with me. This is about my security, my home town, my Mall of the America.

I would quibble with Peter, and Peter’s a lot smarter than I am and he writes beautifully, in that I don’t understand how you can have a national security policy that’s successful, but then say, “but it didn’t engage the American people.” Because, at the end of the day, then it’s not successful; it’s transitory, at best, because if we don’t engage the American people, you don’t get the political will, and if you don’t have the political will--you can have the tools and the tool kit, and you can have great pieces of paper **[TIME CODE 0:55:00]** and process, but if you can’t implement or you won’t implement because you’re worried that people won’t support you, then really, what good is it? And I think we’re there.

I think that--I’ll bluntly say--we don’t have the forcing mechanism that has pulled Americans together and said, “This is important to me.” In fact, we’ve had dialogues that were very different, and I think you articulated those best, in that most Americans don’t see how these fights in China or against Putin or these conflicts in Afghanistan that are still bugging us, and oh, my goodness, we still have people in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and the Baltics and how does NATO, they’re really not paying their fair share. And where that impacts me sitting in voter box is that, my life hasn’t changed and the economy is supposed to be going great guns, and I’m still clipping coupons.

So we have done a miserable job telling the American people that this is important or more important, really, than the Cold War, and that if anything has happened, the threats are proliferated and they’ve become much more complicated. So that, I don’t think we’ve done, and I don’t think we’re going to get there, frankly, until something really terrible happens. I’ve never heard of a bureaucracy that transformed or changed itself because it realized it wasn’t doing the job, and it’ll take a big old hit for us to wake up and realize that, for example, the DNI doesn’t really conduct operations at all, and something that was supposed to be a couple thousand people is now a couple tens of thousands of people, and that the linkage between law enforcement and intel doesn’t really work that much better than it did up until 9/11, and we’re going to end up stumbling over ourselves.

So I think it gets back to what you were saying [*pointing to Feaver*] and you were eluding to, but I think Sasse said it better than I’d ever heard anything say it, is that we don’t have unity of purpose nationally, and we’re much more interested in who’s coming up on tweets and a lot of things that are a part of our consumerism and being American, but we forgot the part that we are the gatekeepers to freedom in the world, and we are the bastions of democracy, and if we don’t lead, somebody else will. There are unbelievably bad people out there, and it’s not a culture misunderstanding, and it’s not a religious misunderstanding, and it’s not a cultural insensitivity; there are bad people out there, and they want to kill us and destroy our democracy and humiliate us and burn our children. And if we’re not willing to do the same, then we’re going to lose. That’s a hard fact, and people don’t want to talk about it, except for people who have their family in the military. And they not only talk about it, they live it, and we’re increasingly dividing our society between those who live the American dream and those who protect it. And that, from my standpoint, is a huge problem that we’re all dancing around a bit, and it gives us this luxury of not talking about, in a very serious way, our national security.

May: I’m not a political person, and so, I’m a civil servant, so I will say something a little bit different, which is that I want to accept people on this stage currently for my comments. But I will say I think one tendency that I see come up a lot is to describe our strategy and say, “Well, our preferred strategy is--why don’t these people get it? We’ll have to explain it to them again. We’ll have to set up institutes to explain it to them.” It’s conceivable, maybe, that we should turn this around and maybe our strategy should reflect the interest that the people enunciate and that, instead of--again, it’s going to sound like I’m commenting on Mary Beth and I’m really not.

Long: No, go for it.

May: I think there is a tendency to describe people who have a less ambitious view for the U.S. in the world as somehow life’s losers, the people who have become embittered, they’ve somehow lost out on the American dream, and they’re lashing out by wanting to withdraw. I think that is not a useful paradigm to take in. And instead, maybe, it’s conceivable, at least to me, that there is an intellectual, intelligent, and coherent argument for different interpretations of what U.S. interests may be. Those interests have, in fact, changed over the course of our history. It was not written by **[TIME CODE 1:00:00]** God that the United States take the role and position that we have taken in the last 75 or 100 years. It’s been a very good time for the world; it’s been a very good time for the United States, but it is not the only way it has ever been and it’s not ridiculous to suppose that intelligent, informed, patriotic people could have very different interpretations.

One of the things we’re trying to do inside the office is sponsor work on alternative strategies that are based on different interpretations of what U.S. interests might be. One of the most remarkable things--the office \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_[1:00:38] has a good reputation for being willing to explore dangerous ideas, and for protecting the identities of the people who help us explore those ideas, because they often have other jobs and they can get into all kinds of trouble if it turns out they’re saying heretical things. Even in that case, it’s very difficult to get people to articulate different visions or different views of U.S. interests because they’re terrified that it’s going to be held against them at some later date. It’s not that they don’t think it shouldn’t be done; it’s that they’re scared that it’s going to cost them, professionally. That’s a disastrous situation for us as a country, because it’s a real possibility that lamentably or not, the U.S. populous will decide that they do have a less grand scope of their interests, and it’s incumbent, I think, upon at least the Department of Defense, to be prepared for what that would look like and what inappropriate strategies that support that set of interests would be, and we’re having a hard time getting it done because taking that view has become a subject of mockery amongst, I would say, the elite in Manhattan, Washington, DC, and San Francisco. We’re not helping the country by taking that tone.

Gventer: Fantastic. Okay. I want to take some questions from the audience. I just want to say, I’m reminded of I think it was Atchison who said to Truman before the Truman Doctrine Speech, “Scare the hell out of the American people.”

May: I would say, “Listen to the American people,” but what the hell do I know?

Gventer: Yeah. [*points to an audience member who has a question*]

AQ: Thank you. My name is **Ruva Gujon.** I’m part of Stratford. We’re obsessed with the great power competition theme. But really, I wanted to get more specific about strategy and location. So to Andrew May’s point, what areas come to mind when you’re talking about taking advantage of our exploiting areas where we see China’s nascent power projection capabilities to your point on Poland, and the types of covert operations we’ve done in the past. Central Asia is a huge field. The fault line between Russia and China where most Americans can’t even name all the stands, but this is an area where it seems like a gold mine of opportunity. Denial and deception operations in the tech realm, there’s a lot there. So in strategy and tactics, some ideas that may come to mind, or at least are being tossed around.

Long: I’ll jump in, because some of it’s about covert action. The Central Asia countries are exactly where--and also, you could get a two-for there, because I don’t know if you’ve listened very carefully to Russian articulations lately, but they’re increasingly articulating the Central Asian aspects of the Russian bear with a nod toward, at least building empathy or sympathy for Russia in the Central Asian countries as a nod toward China, making sure that there’s some kind of commonalities. But as you know, those are countries that are not something that have had a lot of U.S. attention in the past, and there are opportunities there.

I also think an easy one for us is Latin America, where if you really wanted to address Russian and China efforts, you could argue that they’re certainly not a strategic threat. But if you wanted to just counter their influence, these are countries that are extremely predisposed toward the United States; they have a fairly receptive attitude towards the U.S. I was there for the turnover of the Panama Canal. Central America was up in arms about the Chinese are moving in and are going to control this waterway.

Central America warned us during the Rumsfeld era that this was going to happen, the deterioration of this nation state to a--there, for very little bang on your buck, frankly, and very little **[TIME CODE 1:05:00]** investment, you could really start countering, or at least responding to. I’d separate those. We don’t respond to the active measures, the influencing operations of the Chinese. We don’t even like talking about it. There’s very few people who want to talk about it, and it came up today and I was a little surprised of the Confucius organizations and the pro-China organizations or the Zen studies organizations that are proliferated in our college campuses that are really used as platforms for Chinese sympathies to be built, as well as intel and other collections.

I’m just going to say, and I know it’s not politically correct, but we really need to be much, much more savvy on our counter-intelligence, and it runs smack up against our political correctness and our fundamental pride, and rightfully so, of our American diverse population and our freedom of ideas and exchanges. We can’t sacrifice that, but we also can’t be dumb and not recognize threats for what they are. So we’ve got to find the balance, and we need to have an honest conversation with our intellectual communities, our academics, etc. Those are our places. Some of them are at home.

Africa, also, several places where there’s a lot of tension, where China has tried to really isolate us from, particularly, precious metals, precious earths, and a lot of resources we’re going to need where the local population is a little nervous. On the one hand, where I think for Africom, if it could have a little bit more resources and we could get our messaging straight, we could do a lot.

May: On the possible weaknesses of tyrannies, I’ll give you two. I’ll draw, just for sensitivity reasons, on the Soviet case, but I think it’s reasonable to imagine these kinds of things manifest themselves in other tyrannical regimes. Both have to do with people and how you trust them. I think we saw in the Soviet case that there was great distrust up and down the command chain. In fact, there was a study called “What Soviet Commanders Fear From Their Own Forces.” And they really did fear things, and there was not trust all up and down the chain. As a consequence, they were inhibited in their ability to conduct certain kinds of operations that depended upon an ability to adapt quickly, to delegate authority. They became more and more incapable of operating on the more modern battlefield, and we were able to do things and to push warfare in directions that exacerbated that and could credibly demonstrate to them that we were going to put them in positions where they were going to need to operate in a more distributed way, and they were going to fail. We knew it and they knew it.

Another example is the custody over nuclear weapons. Soviet Union very, very, very concerned about letting its military forces have custody over assembled nuclear weapons. That’s maybe why. They were doing it not because they were concerned about someone starting a war against the United States; they were worried about someone using one of those weapons against the Kremlin. And they should have been afraid, right? When you run that kind of country, people are going to try to kill you. Your own people are going to try to kill you. And that inhibited their ability to conduct certain kinds of deterrence operations, where we were able to do strip alert, airborne alert, we were able to put weapons in the air, push them forward, and put that kind of pressure on the Soviet Union. They were unable to reciprocate against us, and that created an overwhelming, enduring day-to-day advantage, and it put them in a situation that they could not recover from. So I would say those are two examples, and I think they are probably analogues in China, if people like you all begin to look.

Gventer: Okay. I’ll take these two questions at the same time, please, and then I’m going to let you guys have a final word, if you’d like, on anything else you heard, either today or on this panel. You look like students. Are you students?

AQ: Yes.

Gventer: Okay, great.

AQ: Hi, I’m Jordan. I’m the founder of the Wisdom Factory at Texas State, and we specialize in getting rid of that polarization that you talked about in the beginning. If I could just say, one observation that I’ve noticed with the success that we’ve had with our group is that if you want to have a depolarization and blur the lines, and erase the lines that divide us ideologically, what you need to do is create organizations that are multi-partisan. That’s what we’ve done and we see **[TIME CODE 1:10:00]** that that works, because when you have a multi-partisan organization, you become apolitical, because everyone aligns in their values, to a certain point, especially when there’s patriotism in the mix. With that, I just want to get to my first question for these two gentlemen right here.

We talked about strategy, we talked about tactics. So I have one that I would like your opinion on. When it comes to this one **dog** and one **road** initiative, we see that the Chinese are going and they’re building networks of infrastructure: ports, schools, power plants, and all of these things that take the people in these countries, a lot of times from the stone age straight to the information age, and that impact on these people is of a value that is not even numerical. It sort of gives them the ability to create access to markets, it helps them create partnerships where they can solve global problems, and it helps them create alliances for the future.

So my question to you is, why can’t the United States have a similar program, where we’re investing and using our engineers and using our manufacturing capability to also develop these countries in a similar way? And second, whenever these countries find themselves in a debt trap, why can’t we loan them the money to get them out of these severe conditions that would be imposed on them? If they default on Chinese debt, why can’t we then finance that trap in order to get them out of these situations and then we would be the one would be able to impose these conditions? And real quick, for Mary Beth--

Gventer: No, no, no. Nice try. Sir, did you have a hopefully short question that you wanted to ask?

AQ: Yeah, I have a quick question. So the thing that I was wondering was, how do you see a trade and economic policy as fitting into our efforts to constrain China and Russia? Because there’s a lot of things that were brought up in this panel that I think are really relevant to that. On one hand, the rise of China is something that’s been largely financed by the United States through trade deficits. But on the other hand, as has been mentioned, our willingness to trade with other countries is something that’s very important for our international legitimacy. And this is something that’s further complicated by the rise of economic warfare and the return of mercantilism, particularly with China, as well as efforts by China and Russia to use businesses as proxies to interfere with our intelligence gathering capabilities and with our political system. So what my question is, where do we draw the line with this? Do you see Trump’s tariffs as being something that’s beneficial? And if not, what kind of alternatives, in terms of economic and trade policy would exist in order for us to counter their rise in those areas?

Gventer: Great, thank you. So if you guys want to address those questions, and then any final remarks you’d like to make, please.

Feaver: Okay, so, actually, development aid has been a very powerful tool that the U.S. has used. President Clinton greatly increased the development budget over what he inherited, and then President Bush doubled it over that. So this has been an extraordinarily powerful tool, and this is, sadly, one of the places where the American people don’t understand the return on investment that we’ve got for it. And when you ask the American people, “How much are we spending on development aid?” If it’s debt relief--you said debt forgiveness. Holy cow. How much do you think we’re spending? And how much should we spend? “Oh, we’re spending about 5%. We should spend more like 3% of our GDP,” is what they say. And of course it’s .01. It’s a tiny fraction of our GDP is what we spent; great investment. Now, that’s not what Beldam Road is. **Beldam Road** is a boondoggle of bad investments, and I would love to torment the China panel by going on at length with my opinions on China, but I’m not going to do that.

The last point I’ll make about economics as important, it’s vitally important, but I don’t think the tariff force is the way to go. I would much prefer a rules-based, being insistent and dogmatic on rules-based and on reciprocity. If we insisted on reciprocity in our interactions with China, then we would get at intellectual property, protections would get at their mistreatment of our companies that go in there and they have to force and surrender information to China, but we don’t require that of China’s companies here. The reciprocity is the better tool. Tariffs, I think, produces too much negative externalities as we’re seeing, even in the headlines. So I’m all for being smart about our economic tools of leverage on China, and getting tough on China, but I would lead with reciprocity, rather than with tariff force.

Colby: Yeah, I’d just say, I know we’re short on time, so I think Senator Sasse’s point is right, which is--I mean, I’m not **[TIME CODE 1:15:00]** the world’s expert on it for sure, but more trade is generally a better thing. My impression, and I think I really echo Andrew’s comments earlier, is that there is discontent in the country about the economic state and our future. Obviously, our economy is doing well right now, but we’ve got an entitlement’s crisis at some point in our horizon. So structurally, there’s going to be very, very tough times and sacrifices. I think for a long time, particularly after the Cold War, the implicit or often explicit American policy was, we’re going to take on more costs and responsibilities basically, because we’re doing very well with the Internet boom, and then after 9/11, and President Bush had very high aspirations and a high-minded kind of approach. I think the bill has come due, certainly over the last 10 years, and I think it won’t go away. Which is to say, the American people--I said this to Germans yesterday: it’s unconscionable that the American people spend 3% of their income defending other people, and the Germans spend 1.2%. The collective defense was basically invented for their benefit.

So the American people are basically right. This is not a sustainable approach, either from an equity point of view, or from a strategic point of view in a more competitive world, where we have to sustain our economic competitive. So we do need to right size this, and there is a lot of urgency. Things like debt relief, development relief, they’re great, but they need to be looked at with a careful eye. I think our better approach, rather than trying to meet the Chinese is, dollar for **Remin B** is rather, to say, “Look, this is a debt trap. This is going to corrupt officials.” What Americans have to bring is more in the way of private sector, transparency, competitiveness. We work with you; we’re not going to impose an impossible burden on you, and over the long-term, I think we’re going to be better off.

I think the basic message I’ll just end with actually, is really, again, echoing Andrew, is I think it’s on people like us to hear what the American people are saying and say, “How is this actually in American peoples’ interest to have…” The calls for leadership, for instance; leadership is an instrument. There should be some pursuit that we are trying to achieve, some goals that we’re trying to achieve, that make sense at a pocketbook level for the American people, and that should be explainable. I think they way that I’ve laid it out is net beneficial over time for the American people. It’s a bit abstruse, but I think if we get blocked out of Asia, American standards of living over time will be substantially worse than if we’re not, and the cost and risks are worth it. But I think that’s a pocketbook argument, and I think people like us, and certainly politicians, need to be able to make that pocketbook arguments.

Gventer: Excellent. Thanks, Bridge. Mary Beth?

Long: From a final comment standpoint, just two points: I think there’s a difference between deciding that you’re going to have an honest, non-partisan, fact-based dialogue with the American people about what you’re doing with your economic funds, and what you’re doing with your foreign policy, and the role of the United States and the globe, and have that dialogue and have it in a way that the people can make--it’s not value or judgment-laden, but that you would talk seriously about where we are and where we should be going, from a global standpoint. I think that’s different and shouldn’t be collapsed with criticizing the way Americans, or appearing to criticize the way the Americans have voted. They’re legitimate, I think, and I think overwhelmingly, the message went from Americans in this election and previous ones, as you point out. I think in the foreseeable future is, they don’t see and understand what is going on in the foreign policy world, and are frightened and confused, and in some cases, just disgusted with the ambiguity of the messaging and goals and targets and roles that we’re playing.

One does not necessarily mean the other, and the problem we have fallen into is that the dialogue has become so--it only happens when people are running for office, pretty much. It’s so value-laden and politicized, that it ends up being judgmental or appearing to make people afraid if you say, “I think differently.” We’ve got to get away from that. The American people are smart. Look what they’ve built; they’ve built this. They’re very wise, at the end of the day. They vote and they get the right thing. We need to trust them to have a conversation, though, particularly about intelligence.

How many people are thinking today about the tens, if not hundreds of thousands of people, that were intercepted by the NSA, that the American people didn’t even really hear about until well after the fact? **[TIME CODE 1:20:00]** And then there wasn’t a lot of discussion about, “Wow. Did we just turn one of our primary intelligence-gathering weapons on ourselves?” We need to have that conversation, because it’s an issue.

The other thing I think we need to talk a lot about, which hasn’t come up here is, it’s so hard, from the economic standpoint, at the end of the day, it’s very difficult to use economic tools and trades and etc. when you --- I’ll quote Chairman Mike Mullen, who said I think maybe about 10 years ago now, that at the end of the day, the biggest threat to American democracy is our deficit, and the fact that we are unwilling to make hard choices when it comes to resource allocation. And that was many moons before our deficit has come to the place where it is now. At the end of the day, all of this is going to crash up against itself, and it’s particularly difficult to address foreign policy issues when a lot of your deficit is being held by China and other actors, with whom you don’t share foreign policy goal. We don’t want to talk about that because it’s difficult. But it’s something that everybody needs to be very aware of. We’ve tied our own hands. We can untie them. But again, it’s got to be a conversation, and it can’t be value-laden, and I leave it at that.

Gventer: Thank you, very much. Andrew, any final comments?

May: My last comment is actually, I’m here today because I wanted to come yesterday, and yesterday I spent the day talking with some of the faculty and even more impressively, the students here at the Clement Center and the Strauss Center and I will say, while today was a remarkable and will only get better with the next panel, remarkable demonstration of experience and deep thinking, you should have seen yesterday. It’s an amazing group of people that you all have assembled, and it was just a terrific way to spend a day, and very, very, very impressive and a cause for some hope for the rest of us. So thank you.

Gventer: Excellent. Thank you. Please join me in thanking this great panel. Thank you, so much. [*applause*] Thank you. Awesome.

[*End of Recording*]