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:**

Neuburger Mary Neuburger, Director of the Center for Russia, East European and Eurasian Studies

Breedlove General Philip Breedlove, USAF, Ret.; Former Supreme Allied Commander Europe

Farkas Evelyn Farkas, Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia

Fried Daniel Fried, Former Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs

AQ Audience Question

Neuburger: I’m glad that last panel ended on an inspirational note because it was rather dark for most of it. And speaking of dark, this next panel’s on Russia, an equally complex problem, one that came up in the first panel but one that I hope we can dive deeper into here. We have three distinguished speakers, I'm not going to give their full bios; they're in the program. But just to introduce them here, we have General Philip Breedlove, who’s a former Supreme Allied Commander of Europe and the U.S. Armed Forces. We have Evelyn Farkas, who’s the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia in the Obama Administration. And Daniel Fried the former Assistant Secretary of State for European affairs in the Obama Administration. Each panelist will speak for about 8 to 10 minutes and then we’ll have a conversation after. I’ll ask a few questions and then we’ll open it up to the audience. We’ll try and keep to time and then they'll be a break after this panel. So Philip, would you like to go first?

Breedlove: Please. So first of all, thanks to the organizers for having us here. This is my second time at this meeting and I really enjoyed the last one, so I'm glad to be back. And it is also good to be on this panel because these are not strangers to me and I call Dan the professor because I've read and followed and listened to him for many years of my life. And as it was said a little earlier, it’s always fun to have and good to have great friends who might be from a little different political persuasion than you. Evelyn and I have worked together a lot in our life and we agree on about 98.5% of stuff. But we do come from a little different political background but it’s wonderful to have a great colleague and it’s great to be back on the stage with both of you.

So I usually start these kinds of things by answering a question that I am always asked every time in these kind of forums and that is, are we in a new Cold War? And I usually shock people because I tell them, no. I don't think we’re in a new Cold War. I think we’re in a warm war. It’s very different than the one that we’ve experienced in the past. Several of us in the group here are fairly aged and we served in the Cold War for many, many years. And the Cold War to me was very well understood. Things were well defined. We knew who, what, where, and when our opponents were. We studied them, we understand their thinking, and the framework by which they act. I don't think that’s anything like what we face today. We face opponents--we’ll talk primarily about Russia. You will talk more about China later--that don't meet any of those criteria anymore. And the norms that we had in the Cold War are now not norms anymore.

I like to talk about Russia being engaged in a war below the lines. Some people call it active measures. Mr. Gerasimov talks about indirect means, asymmetric methods. There's lots of neat words out there but it’s very different than what we did before. The tools are the same but they’re being used in very different ways and what I think is most shocking, very audacious, very bold ways, very forward. It’s interesting to note that Mr. Gerasimov has been writing about this for a while. If you Google him today and go to the diagrams, you can see a PowerPoint slide that he built. It was built in Russian but it’s also in there in English and you can just watch how he tracks the way that he does this war below the lines across in many countries. And it goes to different levels in each country.

What is even more shocking now is that a couple of Chinese authors--you’ll probably hear more about later--have written a book called “Unlimited Warfare.” And it looks almost exactly like Mr. Gerasimov’s indirect means asymmetric methods. And it tracks in a very similar way. And now we see the same sort of tools being used against us.

But Russia is very different in its approach, I think, to the United States of America and to its near abroad than it was during the Cold War. And I think that's the essence of why we find ourselves in a very different place. And it’s my assertion and my guess is that you will take me on, on this in the Q&A, [**TIME CODE: 0:05:00**] that we see a relatively un-checked Russia, that Russia does not feel like it is being bounded in the actions that it can employ in those spaces of the former Warsaw Pact and in Eastern Europe. And that they see what they perceive as a lack of action by the West as they took further action in Crimea, post Georgia in Crimea. Then in the Donbassand other places. They see that the relative inaction of the West has allowed them a certain amount of freedom in their response. And I expect that you will take me on, on that in our Q&A.

We in America have all the tools that other nations have. We face an opponent that understands how to attack us broadly across all the elements of national power. As a simple fighter pilot, I use a very easy model. There are lots of models for national power and some of them, the acronyms go on for half a page. I use D-I-M-E because I am a fighter pilot. Diplomatic Power, Informational Power, Military Power and Economic Power. We see Russia as it attacks nations--let’s just talk about Ukraine--broadly trying to discredit the Ukraine government in Kyiv. In saying that the Maidan was illegitimate and sponsored by Western nations and that the resulting government is not reflective of the people of Ukraine.

Information or disinformation campaigns, we don't have to talk about how Russia uses that. I would be wasting our mutual time.

Militarily, we see Russia once again putting military force back on the table to change internationally-recognized borders in Europe. We had hoped that was over. We now see Crimea occupied. Donbass, a large support from Russia as its occupied etc., etc.

And then finally economically we have seen some very exquisite pressures brought on Ukraine and other nations via energy. The recalling of loans, the changing of pricing, the shutting off actually of the flow of some energy during cold winters. And so broadly, we see Russia applying diplomatic informational, military, and economic power as they bring their war below the lines on some of our friends and allies.

How do we respond? Diplomatically, I would say we didn’t respond very well. We handed the fight over to Ms. Merkle and Mr. Hulan through the **Mentz** process to take care of this Ukraine thing.

Informationally, we haven’t engaged anybody in an information war--Al Qaeda, China, Russia--we just haven’t. Militarily, we have avoided provoking Russia and so we took very light military responses and then economically, when we deal with Russia, that’s we do it. We have massive sanctions and every time we think about responding to Russia, the first thing out of our mouth is we need to do more sanctions or what are the possible sanctions. So I'm being a bit provocative but what I'm saying is that we face an opponent that uses all of the elements of national power when they address their near-abroad and us in the West. And we in the West tend to come back at them in a very unbalanced way and maybe should examine some of the other approaches that the military should respond to Russia.

Okay now, just for the last minute or two of my time I want to do something very uncharacteristic of me. As a Major Commander many times in my life when bad news came in the door, I remembered two rules that I was taught as a young man. It’s never as good or as bad as your first hear and the fact that you're going to be told a story that supports whoever’s walking in the door to give you the issue. And so there's always two sides to the story and you need to be observant of that.

So I think that it’s an instructive that we listen a little bit to what the Russians are saying. So in the last several months, we’ve had a couple of delegations that went to Russia at a very high level and brought back some pretty interesting feedback. And what they paint is the story--this is the other side of the story, not our side. They see a nation that is very much aggrieved. They [**TIME CODE: 0:10:00**] continue to believe that NATO is purposely expanding, that U.S. involvement in their near abroad is dangerous and expanding and they're very focused on what we’re thinking about for Poland. They say--and these are some of their specific words captured. Of course, they were in Russian translated to English. Everyone is against us. Russia is automatically guilty of everything. You, the United States, are unpredictable. You make our security deeply uncomfortable. We didn’t start this. We didn’t interfere in your election. We didn’t start this diplomatic war and oh by the way Russia and Ukraine are the same. We’re tired of talking about it. The U.S. is and was irresponsible in Iraq, Libya, and Syria. And the legitimacy of American democracy is declining. Your election shows the fragility of the U.S. experiment. Our relationship grows darker and darker. We understand each other less and less all the time.

So I hate to start on a bad note, but I'm an engineer by training and we study vectors. And our vector with Russia is bad. Vectors don't change themselves. We have to do something about it. And in my opinion in today’s political environment and I blame both sides of the aisle equally on this issue. In our political environment, we are unable to enter into what I would call meaningful discussions with Russia because you either get called a pro-Trump or an anti-Trump person and often the conversations are then minimized. My big plea or my last and closing comment today is we desperately need to find meaningful ways ahead to have conversations with Russia about how to address the grievances that we clearly disagree on.

Farkas: Well, first of all, thank you very much to the organizers--to Will and Bobby. This is a phenomenal group of people and so far fantastic conversations. So hopefully I won’t be so provocative or so boring that you won’t consider inviting me back someday. And thank you, Mary, for moderating. Thank you all of you for your attention.

I've thought and re-written and re-written my own remarks because sometimes I assume that people know a lot about Russia and why Russia is doing what Russia’s doing and why we have a terrible relationship with Russia today. And so I don't want to insult the intelligence of the audience and then I get tempted by my good colleague, Phil Breedlove, General Breedlove, who had made some excellent points and some of which I want to agree with and as he said, 98% which I want to agree with. And then there are few things where I would maybe tailor them a little bit. So let me just I guess step back just a second because what I like to do really any time I talk about Russia is step back, take a big picture look, and say why do we have this problem with Russia?

Essentially since the end of the Cold War, we have tried to treat Russia like any other European country. To most of us in the room, that sounds great. To the Russians that sounds horrible. They never wanted to be treated like any other country so when we had experienced diplomats like Secretary Albright say we treated them with respect, we offered them even the potential in the long run of NATO membership. We gave the economic assistance, etc., etc. That goes by the Russians because what they really wanted was a special relationship. And that’s what they continue to want. They don't consider themselves a nation just like France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, you name it. They consider themselves separate, special, and it is in a sense the loss of empire. There's a lot of trauma associated with that in the sense of being special. And we in the West fail to understand that. So I would say that where we failed was in the misunderstanding of the Russian psyche, of the people, and they people leading Russia, and that includes Boris Yeltsin even that relationship, which I would say was the most positive and fruitful relationship when Russia was most weak and couldn’t really stand up for itself. That relationship was positive but even then you had Boris Yeltsin very clearly standing up for Russian prerogatives and refusing to be a state like any other European state. So I think it’s important to understand that part of the problem we have with Russia is a misunderstanding of how we perceive them versus how they perceive themselves. The second thing having to do with NATO [**TIME CODE: 0:15:00**] is, yes, of course, from a military perspective if you're sitting in the ministry of defense in Russia, you don't like the idea of NATO expansion.

But from a political military perspective, I believe that the Russians should at least try to understand a little better what we were trying to achieve with NATO expansion. Because it never was fully--only for some members was it completely--like Poland--completely about checking Russia and making sure that Russia had no revanchist impulses left. In fact, for the majority of the NATO members, when they expanded to Central Europe and then even more importantly to the Balkans and other areas, it was about spreading stability and security. It was the best way that we knew to foster democracy, the transfer to a capitalist free market economy, and so we saw and we continued to see NATO as a way of spreading stability. Because one of the first things you have to do when you say you would like to join NATO, is you as a country have to say I accept my borders, I have good relations with my neighbors, internally we take care of our minorities, we have good relations between the ethnic groups in our country, so we will not be prone to civil war that NATO will have to deal with in one way shape or form, and certainly we will not wage war on our neighbors.

And so that’s really, I think, the crux of what NATO’s all about. Of course, if there's an outside power like Russia, where there's a long history of mistrust and invasion, and you're Central European, you would have a different perspective. But nevertheless, I think the Russians, maybe they don't understand it or they don't want to understand it. So I think with NATO expansion as being a cause of upsetting the relationship or irritating the relationship, I have very little patience for that. So I want to make point before maybe it gets raised in Q&A.

Then today’s problem really, and the first panel talked about it at length. The Russians are basically challenging the status quo even though they benefitted from the international order as the Soviet Union coming out of the 2000s. Vladimir Putin decided that this order was not to Russia’s liking. He wanted to go back to a balance of power sphere of influence international order. We know from history what that’s led to--World War I, World War II. Again, we heard that from the panel this morning. But that’s why Russia is so dangerous because Russia’s essentially challenging the international order saying the big guys, the strongest powers can negotiate the state of international affairs among them and the rest have to go along. So you see why it’s so dangerous for Russia to--for the first time since World War II--seize Crimea illegally annexing that piece of territory that belongs to another country, changing a border for the first time since World War II, by force. That is dangerous because if Russia gets away with it, then there are other countries who are very happy to follow suit.

I'm sure many of you--I can make a joke and say I'm sure you all noticed that Victor Orban shortly after the seizure of Crimea and the statements that Vladimir Putin made about needing to take care of the Russian people and the **Ruskimere** the Russian world. The Hungarian Prime Minister came out and said well we understand this because we have Hungarian minorities. And they do, they have Hungarian minorities in five countries around Hungary. These territories used to be part of Hungary until the end of World War I when they lost and the territories now belong to other states. And Hungary of course, as a member of NATO, has accepted the inviolability of the existing borders but nevertheless, Victor Orban has, with the help of Vladimir Putin, over time increasingly started to put questions in people’s minds.

And so what Russia has done is so dangerous because it’s given other countries the sense that there might be an opening also for them to somehow negotiate borders. And so Crimea’s very important and then of course what Russia’s doing in Donbasswhere they’ve essentially started a civil war. The latest confrontation in the **Kerch** strait between the Sea of Azov and Black Sea, that I see as a political economic maneuver. That’s Russia trying to exert political pressure through economic means on the government in Kyiv. Why is Russia doing what it’s doing vis-à-vis Ukraine? Because again it gets back to the balance--the sphere of influence. Russia wants to have a sphere of influence over Eastern Europe, over the former Soviet space to include--actually if they can get away with it because Vladimir Putin and his kremlin are very opportunistic--the East Bloc as well. So he's very happy to also have good friendly relations and do business with, as I mentioned earlier, Hungary and other states in the former East Bloc.

So I think that, for me, is what's important about Russia and the problem of Russia today. It’s because Russia’s challenging the international order. And it does also align with the problem we’re having with regard to the standoff between democracy [**TIME CODE: 0:20:00**] and autocracy because again Vladimir Putin not only does he want his sphere of influence but he wants to maintain his rule, the way that he rules within Russia which is an autocratic rule, a crony capitalism, and he doesn’t want his rule to be disturbed by any democrats inside of Russia or outside of Russia. He sees the United States in particular, but also our allies to some extent, as trying to force democracy on Russia and get rid of him. I always say the more he acts the way he does, the more we wish that we had a different government in Moscow, but the United States of course has never had a plan to eliminate the government of Russia. But Putin sees every move that’s made politically--all of the advances democratically in the region around Russia as very much a potential threat to him.

And Ukraine which is considered by the Russians as the General just said, part of one political entity with Russia. That would be the biggest threat to the Russian government if Ukraine became a viable strong political economic democracy. And I say that because I remember going to Kyiv and listening to the Ukrainians after the Maidan Revolution and after they had the shooting of a hundred people and the realization that now they were at war with Russia. And the generals and the politicians all said the scales fell from our eyes. We realized these Russians, they're not our brothers. And we finally understood what the young people wanted. And this I think relates to Putin’s sphere. The young people looked at Poland, and if you're Ukrainian, historically you're big. And you're string and you are always better than Poland. Yet they looked across the border and they saw this very wealthy prosperous Poland. Ambassador Fried knows this very well. And they said, “Wait a minute. How did those guys get so far ahead of us economically?” And so the youth in Ukraine was largely to responsible for--I'm wrapping up--largely responsible for the Maidan and the move to really push the Ukrainian government at the time to move towards the **new** association agreement rather than staying within the Moscow sphere of influence.

So I just mention that because it’s a good reminder of what is going on when we talk about the Russia challenge. I think for the United States, it’s imperative that we defend the international order and that we defend democracy because we see democracy is weak now across the board without the leadership that we have. Somebody said something to me, “Well, these United Nations, all these institutions, they're useless.” They’re only as useful as the leadership that leads them. And so if we can get a good set of leaders--American and Transatlantic, I would argue with our other democratic allies, Japan, Israel, etc.--we could actually defend democracy better. And so I guess I would end by saying we really need a new set of leaders. We need a call for leadership.

Fried: Okay, well... What is left for me to say? The previous panel talked about Russia as a declining power but doing damage on the way down. And that’s about right. You’re getting this spelled out in pretty graphic terms. But to try and match Phil Breedlove with provocation, I’ll start with a quote from Donald J. Trump. “Wouldn’t it be nice if we got along with Russia?” Right? He said that in 2016. He's right. It would be nice which is why the Clinton Administration, Bush Administration and Obama Administrations all tried. And they all failed. And in fact the arc of try and fail between and Bush and Obama was almost identical. And I participated in both those administrations’ Russia policies, at least Obama in the beginning. And it was not for lack of trying on the part of the United States. And because two such different presidents failed in such similar ways leads to suspicion that the problem wasn’t really the United States.

So what would it take--and this is to get to Phil Breedlove’s closing challenge which is the right challenge. What do we do about it? What would it take to work with Russia? Russia’s terms for a good relationship with the United States are not hard to figure out and it’s what Evelyn was talking about earlier. Russia insists on a sphere of influence Russian style. Russian style means they keep the countries around [**TIME CODE: 0:25:00**] them subservient, weak, under their thumb. The difference between American policy towards Mexico and Russian policy toward Ukraine is this: for the United States, a prosperous happy wealthy Mexico is a good thing. We make lots of money, the problems tend to go away.

For Russia, a prosperous stable democratic Ukraine is a nightmare because such a Ukraine is apt to try to join the European Union and pull away from Russia. And this, Russia cannot stand. They really do, by the way, think of the Ukrainians as their little brothers and the Ukrainian language as a debased peasant southern Russian dialect. And then the Ukrainians object to being told they don't exist except to the degree they do, they’re fascists.

That’s the problem with a better relationship with Russia. It requires to us to give the Russians a free hand in what they call their sphere of influence which is basically any country Russia has dominated. That, we cannot do without abandoning our own principles and the last hundred years of American grand strategy. And that is the source of the standoff. Why is Russia so insistent on sphere of influence of that type? And I recently re-read George Kennan’s long telegram from 1946 and it was depressingly current. Kennan describes Stalin’s motives in ways that apply to Vladimir Putin. Russia is backwards compared to the West. Russia is not willing to reform its domestic institutions to allow itself to prosper and therefore it has to keep democracy, the West, and all Western influence at bay both geographically and ideologically. Therefore, Russia must discredit democracy in principle and it must crush democracy where it threatens to succeed in any of Russians neighbors. Alright Stalin, Putin--yeah, I know it’s not the same in terms of the bodies piling up, at least not yet. But it is the same in terms of world view and Russian grand strategy.

Now, are we doomed to deal with that kind of Russia forever? Now Russia hands can be divided up into many categories but here are two that I'm going to try out. There are those Russia hands that believe that Russia can be nothing better than its lousy current self, that we’re doomed to the kind of Russia we have, that all they understand is force. And that the best we can expect is a long term policy of containment. Now there is, I will admit, an awful lot of evidence to support that dark view. But I don't completely share it and that’s a surprise because I am known as, at least R.T., the Russian propaganda machine calls me one of the chief Russophobes, and since I was the architect of the sanctions against Russia, they really don't like me at all.

Okay, but in the Clinton administration Tony Blinken, Jim Steinburg, and I were champions of NATO enlargement so they haven’t liked me for a very long time. But I don't believe the countries are necessarily prisoners of their own history. Now that's my American distortion, right? My American optimism coming in, kicking in here. But I think that Russia has in its history been better. I think before the Russian revolution, it was on a convergence course with the West economically and even beginning politically. It was drawing even with the West in terms of culture--Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Tchaikovsky.

I don't think that the failure of Russia’s democratic transformation in 1990s was inevitable. I think it was that transformation was harder in Russia than it was in Poland because Poland had regained its sovereignty, Russia had lost its empire, but I don't think that Russia [**TIME CODE: 0:30:00**] is doomed to live down to its worst history. But to get to that better Russia, we need to deal with and push back against the lousy Russia we’ve got today. So I do not disagree and much as I’d like to with Phil Breedlove’s characterization of warm war because I see it every day. Right? The disinformation campaigns in Europe and the United States, the attacks against Ukraine recently, just days ago in--at the Kerch straits, as Evelyn was talking about.

To get to that better Russia, we have to discredit the Putin argument that he is leading Russia to renewed greatness. Now, this is not an original thought on my part. Eric Edelman and I were in the Reagan Administration on the Soviet desk when both of us had hair. [*laughter*] It was a long time ago. And we had under Reagan and George P. Schultz, probably the best Soviet policy this county ever had, which was simultaneously putting pressure on the Soviet Union across the board and reaching out to the then new Gorbachev leadership. Two tracks. And George Schultz was told, “You can’t do two. You have to link positive steps and negative steps,” and he said, “Nonsense. We’re going to reach out to them where we can and we’re going to push back where we have to and we’re not going to worry about the contradiction between hot and cold; that’s their problem.” We can’t do that with Putin. You can’t reach out much to him. But you can and probably should start having a dialogue with serious Russians. Those nasty quotes that Phil Breedlove mentioned, I've heard them too. But I've heard and I bet you’ve heard and Evelyn’s heard other things that Russians are saying.

It feels to me like it was in the early 1980s when I served in the Soviet Union. You have Russians looking around making sure nobody’s listening and then saying, “We can’t go on like this. There's something wrong.” Yeah, that’s right, guys there is, and you're going down a very dark road. It’s going to get nastier. And at the end of that road, that light at the end of the tunnel is probably the Chinese waiting for you to emerge so they can eat you alive. I enjoyed telling that to the Russians. [*laughter*]

But why on Earth should we assume that current trajectories in Russia are inevitable? When has Russian history followed a straight line, like ever? And I remember that the principle failing of some parts of the Reagan Administration, though not President Reagan himself, was to assume that nothing could change? That the Soviet Union could not be anything other than the evil empire. Actually, Reagan had figured out that since--he figured communism was doomed, maybe Gorbachev understood that too and things would change. It is possible to get to a better Russia even if we act in a firm determined manner to deal with the lousy Russia we’ve got today.

And a final topical thought since I started with Donald J. Trump, I will end with President Trump. I'm glad he called off the meeting with Putin at the G20 because no meeting is better than a bad meeting. But as an American, that should not be our binary choice. The U.S. President should not be so distracted by Russia factors in American domestic politics and his own, let us say, personal complexities with the Russians to be able to deal with the Russians. I'm inspired by Phil Breedlove here, the right message to Putin would be, we know what you're doing in Ukraine, don't waste my time denying it. We know what you're doing in the United States and Europe; cut it out. We will deal with you as handily as we did in the 1980s. If you figure out a different path, we’re ready. And here are the areas we could cooperate on.

Now that's not so hard a message. But I and a lot of others were relieved that the meeting was canceled because remember Helsinki. And for those of us watching the press conference live, you could tell when the President went of the script, the perfectly capable statement his NSC staff [**TIME CODE: 0:35:00**] had prepared for him and started winging it. We deserve better circumstances than this. I suspect we will get them. The challenge is great. The possibilities exist for a better relationship ahead. And if Will Inboden is here, thanks for the opportunity, this is great. [*applause*]

Neuburger: Okay, well, I'm going to open it up to the audience in a minute but first I want to ask a few questions. There's a lot here. It seems to me, there's some suggestions on what we should do, moving forward with Russia. We talked about conversations, more conversations with Russia. You’ve said it’s hard to have conversations with Putin. You’ve talked about a mixed approach. But concretely, really, what can we do or what should we do about Russia’s actions particularly in Ukraine? It seems to me, we’re following a path of appeasement right now and that this Ukraine is really the front line for a lot of what we’re talking about. Of course, our own democratic process is also the front line, which we can talk about in a minute. But the other one is what's going on in Ukraine. So I'm just wondering, what are we prepared to do or what should we do if things escalate in the Russian-dominated regions or the ones under Marshall Law right now?

Breedlove: I’ll take the first swing at it since I sort of commented to it that I believe that in our response to Ukraine to this point, we have been very much in the silo of the economic reply. Back to my simple DIME model, we threw the diplomacy over the transom to **Hulan** and Merkleand the **Minsk** process. We need a different **Minsk** process; this one doesn’t work. It’s not accomplishing its goals. I think that American leadership is needed in these spaces and we’re not there right now.

I think we need to answer the information problem. The example I like to use is after the crew and the Russian missile shot down the Indonesian and Dutch airliner, the Russians had four stories on the street within a couple of hours about how the U.S. CIA shot that thing down and caused all of that. And how long did it take the Western world to answer? Two years and seven days later, we had a definitive presentation by the Dutch and the Indonesians about what actually happened. And really, we knew everything that they said within hours of the shoot down. There was no new news and what it took us two years to respond.

So we haven’t figured out how to respond in the information spaces and I would never advocate for misleading Americans or others but we have significant truths that we could tell aggressively to answer in the information campaign. I was involved with the military reply to Russia. We had a much broader set of possibilities to try to lay out. We chose a very narrow constrained reply because we didn’t want to provoke. If we make all of our decisions in a manner such that we’re not to provoke Russia, Russia will understand that and threaten that everything will provoke them and we will never move forward in any way. I know this sounds harsh and very militaristic, but we need to have the courage of our convictions a little bit and realize that Russia responds to power and to strength and we need to be able to show in a reasonable way that we’re not going to cave to their pressure.

Farkas: And I would just say so my good friend the General has taken all of the points that I was going to say. Really, so to try to say it more succinctly, and then move on to another point! [*laughter*] I want to talk about arms control.

Breedlove: This is Evelyn at her finest!

Farkas: No, okay so just to sum it up. I really believe what we know about the Russians is that they respond to firmness. You can’t have contradictory messages coming out of the U.S. or out of the transatlantic community where we want to talk to you and maybe we want to sanction you but maybe we don't. The Russians need to know this is what we expect of you. [**TIME CODE: 0:40:00**] If you continue doing what you're doing, these will be the consequences. If you change what you're doing in this fashion, and you spell it out, we will then follow suit, we will then lift these sanctions, we will do these things. It’s very clear. You have to just spell it out in terms of what the consequences are. And the Russians will respect that.

I also agree very much with General Breedlove that we have really missed so many opportunities even if you follow closely what happened in the Kerch Strait. This didn’t pop out of nowhere. The Russians said right away right after they seized Crimea that they were going to build a bridge. And then they started building the bridge. The bridge was completed in May. Then they started their blockading action and detaining vessels. This didn’t pop up all of a sudden and if you have any kind of strategic cell in your brain and you're looking at the region you would’ve realized that this was the likely outcome of seizing Crimea and building a bridge.

So we need to just stand up to Russia. I do think there's more we can do on sanctions. I’ll leave it to Dan because he's the sanctions expert, to suggest some things. On the military front, I think that we also could be a little bit more daring. We have been too afraid--I won’t say of--well, provocation is one way of putting it--that we heard often. The other one was escalading. We’ve been afraid of escalation. These are very valid fears but I think they need to be--you need to just grab the courage of your convictions, gird yourself, and be ready to be a little firmer on the military side. What does that mean? At a minimum, more freedom of navigation, missions in the Black Sea area. I would argue that these should be more international so why not have the Australians and the Japanese and others join us? It’s the same principle that’s at stake in other parts of the world, in their part of the world where they're more concerned--the South China Sea for example.

I would also say that we need to provide more lethal assistance to Ukraine in order for them to be better able to defend themselves on the maritime front. Also, surveillance and reconnaissance equipment, that’s easy. And then we need to think about if the Russians continue to blockade the strait, well, why don’t we blockade them in some way, shape, or form? Something that’s proportionate and is in response but it’s still--it’s not escalading massively but it’s meeting them at the level that they’ve escalated to. And I understand it’s tricky.

So now I want to flip to the area of our relationship that we haven’t talked that much about although Eric Edelman did talk about nuclear issues a little bit on the panel. I would say that the area where we really need to be engaged in constant dialogue with the Russians is on the issues of strategic stability which is their way of saying the overall military balance first and foremost looking at the nuclear--they’re always looking at the nuclear balance, strategic, and tactical. That balance includes not just what kind of weapons we have on either side but what the doctrine is. What are the rules for using those weapons? The Russians have an over-reliance on nuclear weapons, mainly at the tactical level, of course. But they also have first use in response to the fact that they still remain--in comparison to the United States conventionally--weaker.

But we need to have important discussions with the Russians because their reliance on the nuclear weapons, their nuclear doctrine, their military doctrine, is something that's dangerous because it lends itself to miscalculation and very rapid and dangerous escalation potentially. And we are now moving into an arms race with Russia, regrettably because of the Russian violation of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty. I think there's room to be creative there. I will say it’s hard to imagine how to get the Russians to back down from that particular missile system without going full force a la President Reagan and threatening and being ready to deploy our own missiles. However, I also understand the argument on the other side and there are voices in Congress now trying to block any new weapon on the U.S. side because those voices believe we have other ways of dealing with the threat--the ground launch cruise missile threat from Russia.

There are also very valid points the Russians make about the need to make the arms control discussions, specifically the nuclear ones, more international. That’s code for include the Chinese but I would say why not include the Indians and the Pakistanis as well. Those kinds of talks need to happen and those are important not just for the sake of reaching a negotiation but also for eliminating or minimizing misunderstanding. So I probably have spoken too long in answer to that question, but I wanted to get that point out there about the need for arms control dialogue.

Fried: Alright. So I'm in the unaccustomed position of being the panel optimist. I'm not used to that, really. [*laughter*] Of all the world’s frontier problems, Ukraine is the one with the highest percentage [**TIME CODE: 0:45:00**] of a really good outcome. We pass good in the rear view mirror in Syria years ago. I believe the good for Ukraine is still attainable and I define good as a Ukraine which is sovereign, out of the Russian yolk, and able to move towards Europe through its internal reforms. Such a Ukraine would be devastating for Putinism. Kyiv is still largely a Russian-speaking city. And although the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is now independent of the Russian Orthodox Church, it’s an orthodox church. The liturgy is the same. Russians can go to Kyiv and it feels culturally similar. If Kyiv is a free city and Ukraine is a prospering country following roughly the path of Poland a generation ago, Putinism is discredited and probably dead. And Russia may have another historical model to follow.

If the Russians consider the Ukrainians their own, their brothers, or their twin, Russians will start asking, how come they live so much better? How come they're not run by a bunch of corrupt oligarchs as we are? Or a Putinesque kleptocracy more accurately. Let’s say that the odds of a good outcome are only 25%. That's the best odds I've had in a long time in any foreign policy endeavor. Right? That’s worth investing in. So let’s then take that--if that's our goal and if that's the upside potential, then take Phil Breedlove’s DIME--Diplomacy Information Military and Economic--and figure out what you're going to do to play to those odds. Yeah, probably we should be doing more militarily with Ukraine and certainly our information turnaround is just awful. We were never very good at it in the Cold War. We got a little better, but for God sakes, American companies run the Internet and instead of Facebook doing whatever it is you want to call it’s doing, we ought to be figuring out how to use these platforms as effectively as RFE, RL--Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty in the Cold War, right?

Economic? Yeah, look, I was the sanctions guy and we did a lot because that’s where the Obama Administration--we got running room, that's why we did and not military.

Farkas: We did some military.

Fried: We did some. We could do more that I don't want to get into sanctions wonkies but there is headroom to do more against the Russians in ways that will actually hurt them and not us and not our friends. There's more and we should probably send the message to Russia with the Europeans that if they don't restore freedom of navigation in the Sea of Azov and un-blockade the Kerch Strait, we will make them hurt and by the way we know how. Okay. And we really do. We’ve been preparing--before I left the Obama--before I left government, we had prepared escalatory options and the Russians knew we had prepared them and the Europeans knew what they were. So it’s there, okay? But the larger point is we need to find the right combination of pressure on Russia and reaching out to those Russians who are concerned about where Putin is taking them because I think that potential is there based on my own experience in the 1980s and seeing the dynamics change in what we thought was a permanently bad relationship after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. So again, it’s weird being the optimist on the panel but there's nowhere else to go but up! [*laughter*]

Neuburger: Well, I wish I shared your optimism for Ukraine. But I actually want to open it up to the audience because I have a lot more questions for all of you and I was thinking of asking something about Trump and whether he's in the pocket of Putin but maybe not a good idea. So instead, let’s open it up to the audience because we only have 15 minutes left for the panel and see what kind of questions we have. There should be someone with a microphone coming around. Okay, yeah. Go ahead.

AQ: Hello my name is John Garcia, I work [**TIME CODE: 0:50:00**] for the Joint Staff. I'm out of San Antonio so I'm an info ops operator there so I feel your pain. Ambassador Fried, this is to you, sir. Poland has offered for long-term presence, offered to fund a lot of that. What is your opinion on long-term presence in Poland and we already have a rotation brigade in there for six months or to a year, I'm not sure. But should we put a long-term presence and how large should it be, and then should we reduce our footprint in Germany and shift to Poland?

Fried: Well, I’m really not the person to answer this on the panel. Former \_\_\_\_\_\_ [0:50:37] we have both been working to answer this question. And with Evelyn and with Sandy **Verspow,** and Ian **Brazinski,** we’ve been working on an answer to this question. The Poles have a point. They were asking something in a political way. Fort Trump--some big presence. I get why they were trying to do that. That’s the answer but they're right that we need to increase our presence. It’s not about Poland; it’s about the strength of NATO’s Article 5 commitment to defend all of NATO countries, particularly Poland and the Baltic states. And we’ve been working through the options. There is a way forward. And this fits Evelyn’s point that you have to show the Russians there is a cost to what they have been doing. For God sakes, the Russians attack Ukraine and then the Obama Administration, of all ironies, which starts out with a reset, reverses 30 years of American \_\_\_\_\_\_ [0:51:50] in Europe and actually gets NATO to put forces into the Baltics and a rotational U.S. brigade in Poland. That was Obama. And if you were talking to the Russians, you’d say congratulations. You got a center left government to take steps that George W. Bush wouldn’t do after the Russian invasion of Georgia. How smart do you guys really think you are? Without getting into the details, that’s the way I would frame up the issue, but full disclosure, we’re working on that answer right now. And I really hope I didn’t screw up the answer.

Farkas: The Atlantic Council will put out a report sometime soon, right?

Fried: And Phil Breedlove is actually the brains behind this.

Breedlove: So just a short add, this is not new. Ever since the Wale’s meetings, we have been on a path towards correcting our presence in Europe in the face a resurgent Russia. And we did it in the name of assurance at first and then we moved into more of a deterrent posture and a posture that would help us to answer some of these tough problems that Russia can give us now with a rapid assimilation of force that they showed us both Crimea and in the Donbass. So the enhanced forward presence, E-F-P, is an ongoing U.S. military endeavor and I would say we’re not done yet. And General Scaparrotti and others are still working that in a formal way and as Dan said, a group of us at the Atlantic Council are about to put out a report of some thoughts that we have on that. But I do agree that we are not finished. We, the alliance, are not finished and we, the United States, are not finished in the work that we need to do in our posture forward in Europe.

Neuburger: Okay next question. So who has the mic? Okay. Yes.

AQ: Hi my name is Susan **Sternthol.** I am an independent researcher and writer. Many Russian analysts often begin their various tracks by commenting that the West doesn’t really pay attention to the domestic discourses within Russia. And I was interested to hear General Breedlove relate the various grievances cited by the Russians at a meeting, which are all part of a longstanding domestic narrative in Russia, for the population to foster besieged fortress mentality and [**TIME CODE: 0:55:00**] to obviously distract the population from the many, many, many domestic ills that Russia is facing and various problems. My question to all of you is, based on your experience, do you feel that enough attention has been paid to the various internal discourses within Russia of the government and also of those within--what are they called--the opposition within the government and in the first instance \_\_\_\_\_ [0:55:34, *Russian name*] is one such person who has a very different take on what's happening and what Russia needs from what Putin is proposing. And that is my question. Do you think that more attention should be paid? Is there something that we could possibly engage with based on these various internal discourses that may help us resolve this issue of not understanding and not connecting with Russia? Thank you.

Breedlove: Well, I’ll go very short because these two are much smarter on this than I am, but here is what I’ve been counseled over and over. I try to surround myself when I was a \_\_\_\_\_\_ [0:56:15] with some people who thought very differently, so that I could get differing views. But there was one thing that all my advisors were absolutely steady on, no matter how I hired them. And that is that if we are seen as beginning to meddle or try to reach out to and meddle in internal Russian politics, that is a quick trigger to big trouble. In other words, Mr. Putin thinks every day that we’re trying to foment the next Maidan in Moscow. And so I will leave this to the experts now but as a military leader, I was advised over and over that we in the military need to stay very clear of that. If our nation in its diplomacy in other ways decides to do that, that’s okay, but we are not going to give them any reason to say that we’re fomenting Maidan inside of Moscow. Now I’ll turn it over to learned colleagues.

Farkas: I’ll be brief and let the former Ambassador from the State Department address it. From the Defense Department perspective, we always wanted to understand what was happening internally in Russia whether it was within the population writ large or more importantly what was happening in the ministries of power. So in the presidential administration or in the Ministry of Defense or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. So we of course worked very closely with our intelligence analysts who would try to give us the latest and greatest and we followed the press and of course we had our embassy giving us information as well. But if you're working from the United States and you're working on national security, you're not interfacing with very many Russians except for your official counter parts and that’s mainly in English because you use your language when you're meeting with them. So unless you had your own--in my case, I didn’t have a relationship with Russia prior to working the account. So I didn’t have people I could go and talk to and check things aside form officials and journalists and the like. So in that sense it differed from other parts of the other countries that were in my portfolio because we had 14 countries total. So I would say it really depends on what your job is but you want to be aware of what the differences are but you don't want to meddle in them and exacerbate. We see--just look at what Israel’s done in terms of its diplomacy vis-à-vis the United States meddling in internal party politics. I don't think has redounded to the benefit of Israel.

Breedlove: Can I, Dan, before you start? Dan used a word earlier that I use a lot. And I haven’t used it today because it is provocative, but I see Russia as a kleptocracy. Dan called it a Putinesque kleptocracy. And I don't think that we understand well how these dynamics that you are talking about work in a kleptocracy and how any nation on the outside would seek to help with or address these things. I'm demonstrating my ignorance because I don't know how these things that you're writing and asking about work in a kleptocracy. And I do believe that’s what Russia is.

Fried: I spent 40 years as a Foreign Service Officer. And one of the most critical and perhaps *the* most critical role of Foreign Service people on the ground [**TIME CODE: 1:00:00**] in countries where they serve, is to know what’s happening in the country beyond the power structure that’s there. Okay, **thought** experiment. Wouldn’t it have been nice in 1977 to know that the political support and social support for the Shah of Iran didn’t exist? And maybe we ought to start thinking about something beyond that. Like just to know, right? Junior officers--and I was one of them--used to have to responsibility of finding out what the Soviets dissonants were thinking. The Soviet establishment hated it. They used to beat us up, like literally. Doesn’t matter, that's part of the job. It’s not interference. The Russians will accuse us of interference no matter what we do. Okay? So you might as well do the right thing because you’ll be accused anyway.

We need to know what's going on. We need to know what the dynamics are in Russia and in every country in which we’re stationed. You can pick up a lot of that on the Internet but it’s not the same. It’s not the same. You need to have people out there who understand the dynamics in the country and that means both understanding the Russian litany of grievance, even if it is a product of government propaganda, and understanding the Russians who are beginning to have a different take. Or the Russian officials like **Kudrian** and others who are certainly loyal to their system but want to see it--for the sake of its own survivability--want to see it adjust its course. So that’s a larger issue of the role of American diplomacy. And in the American foreign policy establishment, there needs to be a system by which the ideas that are circulating out among people around the world get played into decision-making more at the top. Saudi Arabia? I don't know a thing about it. I'm utterly unqualified to have an opinion but wouldn’t it be nice to have somebody who *was* qualified out there figuring out what people really do think about the Crown Prince and what he's doing, and where the country is going? Isn't that important rather than simply betting all on whatever leader simply is dominating everything and then assuming that that’ll never change? When’s that happened in history?

Neuburger: I think we might have for one more quick question as long as we have a quick answer, maybe even not all three people answer. And it would be nice for it to come from a student, so who will over there in the plaid shirt.

AQ: Hi, so my names Matthew **Warma**, duel degree student with LBJ and actually the Russian Studies Department. I wanted to piggy back on this question about Russian domestic politics and where it’s headed. Russia has this new constitution, the 1993 constitution which was written in consultation with a lot of Western Harvard educated Stanford legal scholars. I think my most estimations it is democratic and liberal, at least in my opinion. There's some differing opinion on that but that’s another question. My question though is, well there's something I noticed when I went to **Retchawich** is that if you go to top-tier universities in Russia--St. Petersburg, **St.** Moscow **State**--and you ask them who is your representative in your single member district? Smart people, political science students, they don't even know. And I would hope that in this auditorium most of us know who our representatives are in the House of Representatives, who our House member is. But I was wondering is there any way we can encourage civic knowledge in civic engagement as the long-term way to bring an end to Putinism?

Neuburger: Do any of you want to take this?

Fried: Alright. A quick answer is, sure, there are lots of good programs out there. The Russians make it hard because they’ve shut most of them down. But all of those channels--it’s weird how soft power is usually dismissed and is the first on the chopping block by budget cutters and then really works [**TIME CODE: 1:05:00**] out in the end. In Poland after 1989, a new democratic government comes in and three quarters of the cabinet had been Fulbright and other exchange students in the United States. Okay, that's one of the reasons their GDP per capita has tripled since then. So don't knock soft power. But it’s not going to give you return on investment in a measurable way, especially in the time you’ve promised and whatever memo you’ve written to the President. It'll happen, but never in a convenient time for your personal career. [*laughter*]

Farkas: That’s good.

Neuberger: Takes a while I guess. We have just two more minutes do either of you want to say anything or should we--are we done?

Farkas: Maybe if I channel a little bit on Tony Blinken, and you asked about President Trump and I think my parents came here from Communist Hungary. They fled here for greater opportunity economically and politically. Then they were much surprised when Hungary became a democracy and now Hungary’s no longer a democracy and my parents are frankly alarmed about the state of democracy in the United State. So I think if I could leave with any note, it’s that we are all responsible for democracy and while I said before that we need leadership on the international stage, when it comes to America at home, we all have a role to play in making sure that our democracy is vibrant, that we have a healthy two-party system, that we stand up to would-be autocrats and that we stand up for the American people, for free market economy against corruption. So I think the only thing I would do is leave on a positive, inspirational, and action oriented note which is every one of us should be thinking daily, monthly, what more can we do to strengthen our democracy and to preserve it?

Breedlove: I am also a fan of vibrant two- party system, but I also believe there are times in our lives where we have to understand that some subjects have to get beyond politics and I think Russia is one of those where we have got to find the old Sam Nunn kind of leader who works from the middle pulling to a problem as opposed to from the edges poaching the people in the middle.

Fried: Bravo. [*applause*]

Neuberger: I want to thank the panelists and Bobby and Will for organizing this. We have a 15-minute break--

[*End of Recording*]