A Call for National Renewal

Applying the lessons of history to the challenges of today

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Introduction

A Call for National Renewal

As we embark on a new year it is a time to heed the call for national renewal. We as a nation are living through a period of deep division, mistrust across the political chasm, and shaken belief in our democracy. There is thus an urgent need to clarify our core values and build bridges to common ground. As Washington, D.C. remains distracted by inter-necine political warfare, profound challenges continue to mount, including a lingering global pandemic, dangerous great power tensions and a fierce competition to own the advanced technologies that will undergird national security and shape the future. To succeed in this rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape we must work harder than ever to build consensus across opposing political camps at home, and to renew bonds of friendship and mutual security with our allies abroad. Faith in democracy may have been shaken, but it is left to the community of democracies to light the way and pull together to secure a rules-based international order that continues to reflect our values.

This time of renewal requires marshalling the next generation of leaders, imparting to them the lessons learned from a long history of facing daunting national and international challenges, and creating space and opportunities for them to grow and find new ways forward. For that reason CSPC has invested significant effort in expanding the reach and depth of our Presidential Fellows Program, our marquee program for preparing America’s next generation of leaders. We have cultivated relationships at new schools that will bring increased racial, socio-economic and geographical diversity to the program, ensuring that it better reflects the vast spectrum of human capital in the United States. By broadening the reach of our Presidential Fellows Program we are providing new opportunities to some of the nation’s most promising young people. At a time when faith in American democracy is deteriorating alarmingly among our youth, we are redoubling our efforts to train young leaders to grapple with the challenges in our politics, and engage in civil public debate. Whether they choose career paths in the public sector, private business, academia or other routes, we seek to instill in them a drive for national service and an embrace of causes greater than just themselves.

Renewal in the face of global challenges from authoritarian regimes also requires that we strengthen alliances and relationships with countries that embrace open societies and share common democratic values. For that reason the U.S.-Japan relationship is a key area of focus as we work to support bilateral dialogue and find ways to strengthen mutual security. We are similarly supportive and seeking new avenues of engagement with multi-lateral alliance structures in the Indo-Pacific, including the AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom and the United States) trilateral security pact announced in 2021, and the QUAD (Quadilateral Security Dialogue) strategic engagement between the United States, India, Japan and Australia. As the great powers competition increasingly comes to define this transformative era, we will continue to focus on preparing the nation and our allies for the “geo-technology” competition with China in areas such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing and 5G networks.

As the United States necessarily continues to promote the benefits of democracy on an international stage that is trending dangerously towards authoritarianism, CSPC has also worked to rally like-minded leaders from government and business to support reforms of our own electoral system, making it freer, fairer and less rewarding of hyper-partisanship and incivility. We will also continue celebrating the statesmanship of leaders who demonstrate a willingness to work across party and ideological divisions, and keep the best interests of the nation rather than party or personalities foremost in their minds.

On behalf of the Trustees of the Center, we are deeply grateful for your interest in our work and invite you to partner with us as we meet the challenges of 2022 head on.

Glenn C. Nye III, President and CEO
Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress
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THE PAST YEAR has been one of the most tumultuous and tragic in modern American history. It began with an angry mob ransacking the U.S. Capitol to try and derail the peaceful transfer of presidential power. The year was shadowed by a continuing global pandemic that as of this writing has claimed the lives of more than 800,000 of our fellow citizens, and by the resultant economic struggles. As the year ended we witnessed some of the most offensive and uncivil rhetoric ever to echo in the hallowed institution of the U.S. Congress.

The late Ambassador David M. Abshire, the long-time president of the Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress (CSPC), and a former adviser to numerous presidents, warned in his memoirs that the nation was heading in this dangerous direction because of hyper-partisanship and a great deterioration in civility in our political debates (see page 46). Too many of our political leaders claim to revere the Constitution, he noted, and yet they reject the spirit of consensus-building and compromise that created it in the first place.

At CSPC we view it as part of our core mission to promote bipartisanship and civility in our politics, the better to find the common ground necessary to move our nation forward. To advance that cause, former Representative Mike Rogers, R-MI, continued his important work as the inaugural David M. Abshire Chair at the Center. Rogers’ spirit of bipartisanship, reputation for reaching across the political aisle, and deep expertise on matters of national security were all on display during his many years as Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. As his record of the past year and the following essay make clear, Rogers has brought all of these attributes to bear in his important work as CSPC’s David M. Abshire Chair.
A Call for Unity

This year could well be viewed as a period of transition for our country. Last August the United States formally withdrew its forces from Afghanistan—a disastrous and painful process—ending at least in the minds of the public the most notable manifestation of the two-decade “Global War on Terror.” At the same time, much of the public became painfully aware that our nation is in the midst of an intensifying strategic competition with China and Russia. The former seeks to fill the vacuum of U.S. leadership and power in the Indo-Pacific, and the latter covertly and overtly is sowing instability across Europe in order to reclaim vestiges of empire.

On the domestic front in the past year, we have witnessed the horrid ransacking of the U.S. Capitol on January 6th, 2021, widespread protests last summer in response to social injustices, and the continuation of a global pandemic that has claimed the lives of more than 800,000 Americans and inflicted profound disruptions in our economy. Any one of those crises would be a strain on our national resources and social fabric, but coming as they have all at once, they represent a collective challenge unprecedented in the post-Cold War era.

And yet as a nation we have overcome profound challenges before, some even greater in magnitude and scope than those that face us now. Our country was nearly torn asunder by a Civil War, but we persevered. We defeated nationalist aggression in World War I, and fascism and imperialism in World War II. We fought bitterly to overcome the legacy of Jim Crow and segregation to build a more just and equitable society during the Civil Rights movement, a fight that very much continues to this day. We overcame the Soviet Union and its communist ideology during the long decades of the Cold War, eventually emerging victorious. We withstood the terrorist outrage of September 11, 2001, the worst attack on the homeland since Pearl Harbor, and subsequently dealt with issues such as war and peace, and privacy versus security, that strained the fabric of our society.

Despite this tumultuous modern history, I’m confident that we will weather the current storm and come out stronger. Why? Because of our country’s experience in overcoming the profound challenges of the past, and because the fundamentals and foundations of our democratic republic remain strong. At the Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress (CSPC) our core mission is to look to the past for lessons to help our leaders navigate the challenges of today, and tomorrow. Those challenges are profound, but they are not unprecedented. By looking beyond our domestic divisions, putting partisanship to the side, and working together to find common solutions to shared problems,
Americans have proven time and again that we can overcome any challenge.

The current strategic competition with Russia and China does not represent a new Cold War. While such an analogy may offer convenient shorthand, it masks nuances and complexities that make this era much more dynamic and challenging. Beijing is not so much advocating a competing ideology as the Soviet Union once did, but rather it is advancing an alternative socio-economic-political model predicated on techno-authoritarianism, one that seeks to undermine the liberal, rules-based international order. This rules-based order has been under siege as of late, but it brought stability and progress to the world after World War II and the Cold War. It has also lifted more people out of poverty globally, even while ruling over the longest period of peace between the major powers, in recorded history. The building blocks of this international order are a set of multilateral institutions, as well as values and principles that place democracy, capitalism, and human rights at the heart of geopolitics.

By contrast, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) seeks to supplant that rules-based order with one that favors the mighty over the weak, making the world more conducive to authoritarian regimes eager to use military threats and coercion to carve out hegemonic spheres of privileged influence. Indeed, Beijing is already offering the world a preview of what a China-led international order would look like, as
it marshals its considerable economic and military power to threaten its neighbors and challenge democracies and weaker countries in its own region, and around the world. Just consider what China is doing in Africa, Latin America and elsewhere in the developing world with its “debt diplomacy,” cutting infrastructure deals with corrupt leaders in many cases that leave countries saddled with unsustainable levels of debt, the better to coerce them. Even powerful western corporations have been silenced from criticizing Beijing by threats to withdraw their access to the vast Chinese market, where their intellectual property is stolen.

Meanwhile, at home the CCP brooks no dissent, aggressively stamping out any ideas or individuals that are seen to disagree with or challenge authoritarian “Xi Jinping Thought.” Witness Beijing’s recent crushing of free speech and individual liberties in Hong Kong, or its genocide against Uyghurs in Eastern China who are rounded up and imprisoned in “reeducation camps” by the hundreds of thousands.

Thankfully countries are waking up to the insidious threat posed by an increasingly aggressive and bellicose CCP, with its “wolf warrior” diplomats trying to bully their counterparts into submission with threats and bluster. Yet untangling the networks of business and financial interests that bind the West and China will be exceptionally challenging, and the right balance must be struck to keep the world from dividing further into antagonistic “blocks” of nations.

We must also recognize that this is an era of geo-technological competition—a competition to set the standards and norms for the use and application of advanced technologies. We are already entering the age of machine learning, artificial intelligence, 5G networks, quantum computing, self-driving cars and more. If we fail to ensure that these tools are developed and implemented according to our values, we can be sure that China will bend these capabilities to their own ends. This competition will require that the U.S. government develop a closer and deeper partnership with the private sector, going far beyond mere public-private partnerships. Rather, we must align these tools of national power so they can pull in the same direction and advance the interests of free nations, not authoritarian hegemons.

In Russia, we find a regime that is undertaking increasingly hostile actions in accordance with President Vladimir Putin’s misguided belief that the West is fundamentally hostile to Moscow. While not an economic superpower, Russia remains a major military and nuclear weapons power, and coupled with the Putin Regime’s destabilizing activities that will ensure that the country re-
mains on the U.S. threat radar for the foreseeable future. Putin’s military aggression in Georgia, Crimea, Ukraine, Syria and Libya, coupled with its hybrid warfare waged against Europe and the United States, are also direct challenges to the liberal, rules-based international order. While not posing the same magnitude of long-term threat as China, Moscow’s power to disrupt and destabilize means that the White House cannot afford to ignore Russia as the United States pivots to the Indo-Pacific.

Space is a domain where we increasingly find this major power competition graphically on display. This past year China launched an advanced hypersonic weapons system that surprised the U.S. intelligence community, and Russia destroyed one of its own satellites with a direct ascent weapon that created a field of dangerous space junk. Beijing’s test shows just how fast China is catching up with our own capabilities, even while it is aggressively modernizing and expanding its own nuclear arsenal. Moscow’s reckless anti-satellite weapons test vividly illustrates just how much of a spoiler the Kremlin can be. Competing in space means developing better and closer partnerships with our private sector, and getting the U.S. government to match the speed of acquisition of space systems and launches with the speed of innovation—a central theme of the CSPC’s National Security Space Program.

To succeed in this era of strategic competition, we must first and foremost be strong at home. I believe this means reinvigorating our democratic institutions and habits. Right now we seem more divided than ever as a people, unsure of ourselves and our neighbors, and less confident in our democratic experiment. The nation thus finds itself in a dangerous position. This is not about diversity. Our country’s strength can be found in its diversity because so many people from around the world want to come to this country and realize their American dream. They bring with them hopes and passions and a drive to prosper, and in so doing they renew the idea of America, making our country stronger. When you stop to think about it, for all of the challenges we face the very fact that so many people are still willing to risk so much to become Americans should fill us with confidence and a sense of renewed purpose.

Instead, too often our political discourse seeks to highlight and exploit our differences, and to affix blame for this or that grievance. The result of this downward spiral in our national political discourse was on display for all the country and the world to see on January 6, 2021. The outrage of that attack on the citadel of our democracy cannot be swept under a rug or somehow normalized. That behavior was seditious, and it should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. What the nation witnessed that day should also recommit each of us to the habits of civility, mutual respect and consensus-building necessary to make our democratic republic work.

We cannot give up on those values and traditions that make America truly great—not politics or political parties, but principles and ideals. Throughout this year, this emphasis on fundamentals has been a consistent theme of CSPC’s discussions and events. Expert after expert, author after author, all echoed a similar sentiment—the challenges of strategic competition are manageable, but only if we can rise above petty partisan divisions, and only if an engaged and educated American citizenry is provided the tools and the enlightened leadership necessary to overcome. Only if we are united.

I believe that we can do all of these things and more. I believe our country is an irreplaceable force for good in the world, and that we can meet any challenge. I believe in America and our democracy, and together we can ensure a brighter future for our country and the world. □

“The challenges of strategic competition are manageable, but only if we can rise above petty partisan divisions, and only if an engaged and educated American citizenry is provided the tools and the enlightened leadership necessary to overcome.”

—Congressman Mike Rogers, (ret.)
CSPC David M. Abshire Chair
Friday News Roundups

During another historic year the Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress (CSPC) offered cogent analysis of each week’s news in our “Friday News Roundups,” which gave our experts and researchers an opportunity to dig deep behind the headlines to provide insight and historical context. The up-to-the-minute commentary complements our longer-term work by allowing us to connect current news to deeper trends. The topics we have covered in the last year range far and wide, including the challenge authoritarian regimes are increasingly posing for democracy, the weight of “survivor’s guilt” carried by combat veterans, how the accumulation of digital data is shaping our lives, and Russian covert operations in Europe.

Global Crises & Democracy’s Response
Building these coalitions of democracies to address global challenges can provide a clear response to Xi Jinping’s claims of democracy’s demise and its inability to deliver solutions. This challenge should resonate not only in our efforts to tackle these challenges, but also to break through the false incentives and hyper politicization of our current politics — both in the United States and other democracies.

Dan Mahaffee, CSPC Vice President — October 29, 2021

Russia Recalls Its Ambassador
Russian diplomatic behavior is often characterized by over-the-top, hyperbolic responses to perceived slights, and on encountering some resistance it is typically followed by some measure of conciliation. Moscow may flip the table and walk away, but will return to the room with a cup of tea and act as if they are mollifying the situation.

Joshua C. Huminski, Director, Mike Rogers Center for Intelligence and Global Affairs — March 19, 2021

Blood & Treasure in the Graveyard
There is something to be said here about survivor’s guilt, which is most certainly a challenge that veterans of the Afghan war will face now and in the future — a cancerous weight that is nearly as heavy as the cof-fins that many of us helped load onto the heritage flights home. Blood, sweat, tears and treasure, and those of us who made it through the other side ask “why”? What was that precious human capital spent for?

Ethan Brown, CSPC Policy Analyst — August 27, 2021

Dispatches from the Data Panopticon
These stories demonstrate the growing power of the data we generate throughout our digital lives — data points that can give away state secrets as well as secrets of the heart. With the convenience of many of these services — and the future networking of internet-of-things technologies — the data driven economy can grant many wishes. The more we learn about it, however, the less clear it is whether the wishes are granted by a kindly genie or a cursed monkey’s paw.

Dan Mahaffee, CSPC Vice President — July 23, 2021

Russian Covert Operation Exposed in the Czech Republic
This is naturally more complex than the quote attributed to...
Lenin, “probe with bayonets — If you encounter mush, proceed; if you encounter steel, withdraw.” War is about moves and countermoves. If you act and your adversary does not, you continue to press the attack. Russia is unlikely to use overwhelming force — such an act would certainly mean war — but until it finds some resistance or push back, it’s unlikely to change its behavior.

Joshua C. Huminski, Director, Mike Rogers Center for Intelligence and Global Affairs — April 23, 2021

Iraq Needs Basic Services, Not Thoughts & Prayers

It is undoubtedly true that religion is a powerful force for Iraqis, with good and evil applications. The papal visit is an opportunity to embrace the peaceful elements of religion that advocate for love and inclusion through divinely granted human rights, and delegitimize the ways that religious extremists exploit group vulnerabilities to establish regimes of fear.

Mariam Hassoun, Founder of Baraka English School in Baghdad — March 5, 2021

CIA Announces Restructuring for Strategic Competition

Pivoting the Agency towards strategic competition is certainly a critical undertaking. Dilbert-esque bureaucratic restructuring for the sake of bureaucratic restructuring will be more damaging than any problem it is attempting to alleviate, however, and there is danger in making changes that do not fit with the current operational dynamic.

Joshua C. Huminski, Director, Mike Rogers Center for Intelligence and Global Affairs — October 15, 2021

The AUMF & Presidential War Powers

The AUMF was designed specifically to tie the warfighting capabilities of the United States to the pursuit of violent extremist forces responsible for those attacks nearly two decades ago. It was crafted to avoid a congressional declaration of a broad and unlimited “war on terror.” Where these recent Biden authorizations fail the acid test echo the same question raised when former President Trump authorized the airstrikes that dispatched General Qasim Soleimani: what legal authority grants the president powers to engage in lethal activities targeting Iran in the absence of direct attacks?

Ethan Brown, CSPC Policy Analyst — March 5, 2021

Lessons from Nagorno-Karabakh: Loitering Munitions

Loitering munitions are equipped with smart-technology and augmented targeting parameters to only find/fix/finish profiles that match very restricted and specific inputs — typified by “known, likely, or suspected” enemy activity. In short, as exhibited by Azerbaijan’s absolutely flawless execution with UCAVs, these semi-autonomous and ridiculously cheap weapons can be sortied at the edge of a battlefield, tilted towards known enemy lines of advance, and launched with confidence that they will either find and finish adversary targets, or terminate themselves in open terrain, reducing any potential for civilian casualties.

Ethan Brown, CSPC Policy Analyst — July 23, 2021

Biden Immigration Policies Face Legislative, Judicial Challenges

It is hard to suggest a prognosis for how immigration policy will impact the legacy of this administration. On one hand, by picking and choosing which Trump-era policies to continue, the Biden administration is treating executive power as a light switch. On the other, there is an effort to separate itself from the previous administration, whose immigration policy Biden characterized as inhumane. That becomes a hard task to accomplish when the judicial branch intervenes on behalf of Trump-era policies.

Stella Delgado — October 22, 2021
Timely Commentary on National Challenges

“The irony, in a war full of them, is that in General Scott Miller the United States found a commander almost uniquely qualified to fight this conflict. Instead he was ordered to walk America off the battlefield for good.”

James Kitfield, CSPC Senior Fellow

“DoD and Congress must push harder to reform space acquisition or the new Space Force may well fall back into the tired — and ever more risky — old and slow ways, says a new CSPC report. ‘We understand that with the creation of a new bureaucracy comes some turf battling, but we also feel like there are also new opportunities,’ said CSPC President Glenn Nye.”

CSPC President Glenn Nye

“The good news is that the 5G race is afoot, and the United States is now in it to win it. Once unleashed the American free enterprise system is more than a match for China’s centralized planning model and insistence on iron-gripped government control of the private sector.”

Dan Mahaffee, CSPC Vice President and James Kitfield, CSPC Senior Fellow

“I call on my former Republican colleagues to return to the business of governing. That’s why they were elected. Our country is facing issues that demand solutions and cooperation, not more division, rhetoric and condescension. The election is over.”

CSPC Abshire Chair Mike Rogers

“During the past year, the United States has shown itself largely impotent in trying to deter a Russian cyber offensive of escalating brazenness and sophistication, to include interference in elections, the largest-ever infiltration of U.S. government computer systems, and recent ransomware attacks. We need a strategic defense initiative for cyber.”

CSPC President Glenn Nye & Senior Fellow James Kitfield
“Culture is the most critical and longest lasting element of the new Space Force. If leaders get it right, we will witness a renaissance in space capabilities. If they get it wrong, we will find ourselves stuck in a morass of slow moving bureaucracy and Byzantine acquisition processes, ceding the metaphorical highest ground to China and Russia.”
CSPC President Glenn Nye and Abshire Chair Mike Rogers
*The Hill, April 30, 2021*

“邻里关系是新太空部队最核心和持续时间最长的元素。如果领导人做对了，我们将见证太空能力的复兴。如果他们做错了，我们将发现自己陷入缓慢的官僚主义和复杂的收购程序中，将最高地利拱手让给了中国和俄罗斯。”
CSPC President Glenn Nye and Abshire Chair Mike Rogers
*The Hill, April 30, 2021*

“The single greatest strategic challenge to the United States in this century is to counter an authoritarian and aggressive China, which hopes to dominate by any means necessary the technologies that will define future economic and military power. This geo-technology competition with China may determine if the international order of the future reflects the values of democracies or autocracies.”
CSPC President Glenn Nye and Abshire Chair Mike Rogers
*The Hill, March 24, 2021*

“Our position needs to consider the nature and reality of the threats to a cooperative world order, an order ideally led by the example of the United States, that is being relentlessly encroached upon by bad actors employing increasingly complex destabilizing efforts.”
Ethan Brown, CSPC Policy Analyst
*The Diplomatic Courier, October 21, 2021*

“If anything of substance is to come out of the forthcoming summit, the White House needs to understand what it wants the relationship to be, what tools it has at its disposal, and just as important, the limitations of its power. It also needs to understand [Russian President Vladimir] Putin.”
Joshua Huminski, Director
Mike Rogers Center for Intelligence & Global Affairs
*The Hill, June 11, 2021*

“If anything of substance is to come out of the summit, the White House needs to understand what it wants the relationship to be, what tools it has at its disposal, and just as important, the limitations of its power. It also needs to understand [Russian President Vladimir] Putin.”
Joshua Huminski, Director
Mike Rogers Center for Intelligence & Global Affairs
*The Hill, June 11, 2021*
“Over the last year CSPC has convened experts in arms control and current relations with Russia, to apply lessons learned and gather vital insights for our leaders to navigate this perilous era. There is a general consensus that America confronts the worst global tensions since early in the Cold War, when escalating crises propelled major powers to the brink.”

CSPC President Glenn Nye and Abshire Chair Mike Rogers
The Hill, February 19, 2021

“No one wins if earth’s orbital backyard becomes a junkyard. The more debris that is created and left orbiting, the greater the risk that something invaluable gets hit and jeopardizes the way we live and work. Russia’s [anti-satellite weapon] test thus presents opportunities for the Space Force to demonstrate its thought leadership.”

Joshua Huminski, Director
Mike Rogers Center for Intelligence & Global Affairs
Breaking Defense, December 3, 2021

“A true warming of U.S-Russian relations is beyond the reach of diplomacy, given today’s levels of tension and distrust and continued ‘hybrid war’ provocations. The most that can be hoped for is modest progress in areas of mutual interest, and none is more strategically imperative than keeping the genie of nuclear weapons tightly bottled up.”

CSPC President Glenn Nye & Senior Fellow James Kitfield
Defense One, June 15, 2021

“What Russians today want more than anything else is a better Russia for Russians — economic opportunity, upward mobility, security and stability at home—all of the things that Americans want. This does not mean being ‘American,’ and it is strategic arrogance to assume the contrary.”

Joshua Huminski, Director
Mike Rogers Center for Intelligence & Global Affairs
The Hill, October 27, 2021

“Our allies, bullied by China and exhausted by a global pandemic fueled by Communist Party distortions, seem open to the calls of the Biden administration for a common front. Therein lies an opportunity. The actions of Beijing are unifying opposition to its unchecked behavior.”

CSPC President Glenn Nye and CSPC Abshire Chair Mike Rogers
The Hill, March 24, 2021

“The new governing coalition in Israel is inherently fragile, with members of the hard right and the center left that used to be so strong in Israel, but which has all but disappeared during the long reign of [Benjamin “Bibi”] Netanyahu. What unites them and holds them together is Bibi fatigue.”

James Kitfield, CSPC Senior Fellow
NPR’s “1A” Program, June 4, 2021
“Different world views should align the United States and its democratic allies closely as they confront Beijing’s authoritarianism and increasingly brazen challenges to the rules-based international order in Hong Kong, the Taiwan Straits and the South China Sea. Put simply, the stakes in the current ‘geotech’ competition could not be higher.”

Dan Mahaffee, CSPC Vice President, and James Kitfield, CSPC Senior Fellow
*The Hill*, July 29, 2021

“[The Iran nuclear deal] rewarded Tehran by unfreezing assets and removing sanctions, only to get half-hearted promises that they would not pursue nuclear weapons further, all the while their irregular warfare campaign remained unaddressed.”

CSPC Abshire Chair Mike Rogers
*Breaking Defense*, April 22, 2021

“U.S. policymakers need to not only invest in more secure supply chains and homegrown technological innovation, but they must also anticipate the threat likely Chinese retaliation poses to our private sector. China’s playbook demonstrates this threat.”

CSPC President Glenn Nye & Vice President Dan Mahaffee
*Nikkei Asia*, July 30, 2021
In 2022 the Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress (CSPC) will continue its long history of operating at the intersection of strategy and national security. Our continuing focus on national security issues includes regular analysis and media commentary by CSPC’s experts, including President and former Congressman Glenn Nye III; David M. Abshire Chair Mike Rogers, former chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; Dan Mahaffee, Senior Vice President and Director of Policy and lead on CSPC’s “Geotech” project; Joshua Huminski, Director of the Mike Rogers Center for Intelligence and Global Affairs and lead on CSPC’s National Security Space Program; CSPC Senior Fellow and national security correspondent James Kitfield, a three-time recipient of the Gerald R. Ford Award for Distinguished Reporting on National Defense; and Ethan Brown, CSPC Policy Analyst and Senior Military Fellow.

“Over the last year, our institution has convened figures from earlier arms control efforts, as well as experts in current relations with Russia, to apply lessons learned and gather vital insights for our leaders to navigate this perilous era. There is a general consensus that America confronts the worst global tensions since early in the Cold War when escalating crises like the Berlin Blockade, Korean War, and Cuban Missile Crisis pushed major powers to the brink.”

—CSPC Abshire Chair Mike Rogers and CSPC President Glenn Nye
The Hill, February 19, 2021

“When Beijing first released its audacious ‘Made in China 2025’ strategy for dominating global markets in critical technologies of the future, it was a shot directly across the bow of the United States. The Chinese Communist Party followed through with massive government subsidies and support for Chinese companies in sectors such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, semiconductors, electric vehicles and 5G networks.”

—Dan Mahaffee, CSPC Vice President
The Hill, June 14, 2021

“Perhaps more than anything, Washington needs to realistically reflect on its geopolitical power and adapt accordingly by adopting a measure of humility. For too long the United States has operated without making true trade-offs by merely assuming it can do everything, everywhere, that its power and prestige are enough and the world has not changed.”

—Joshua Huminski, Director
Mike Rogers Center for Intelligence & Global Affairs
The Hill, December 5, 2021

“Repealing the Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) is a bipartisan opportunity that Congress must seize upon, to bolster American credibility on the world stage. Regaining the most solemn of Congressional duties, the exercise of war powers, is arguably the most impactful limit of executive power that lawmakers face.”

—Ethan Brown, CSPC Policy Analyst
The Hill, June 29, 2021

“History shows that when extremist movements coalesce around a charismatic leader who focuses their anger and amplifies their narrative [as happened on January 6 at the Capitol], a tipping point is reached where extreme rhetoric is often turned into violent action. Beyond that tipping point, the violence tends to escalate.”

—James Kitfield, CSPC Senior Fellow
Yahoo News, January 16, 2021
AS WE CONTEMPLATE THE YEAR ahead, a new Omicron coronavirus variant is threatening another spike in disease, even as some political leaders continue to politicize the government’s response to a pandemic that has already claimed the lives of more than 800,000 fellow citizens. Overseas, authoritarian regimes in Moscow and Beijing are militarily threatening their democratic neighbors Ukraine and Taiwan, respectively, and after a chaotic and tragic withdrawal of U.S. troops last summer, the Taliban extremists are tightening their hold on Afghanistan. At home, many states are passing laws designed to restrict voting and increase partisan influence in our electoral system.

The downward spiral in our political discourse that exacerbated these compounding crises has been many years in the making, and its origins are primarily structural. The American people are fed a steady diet of disinformation and divisive rhetoric, and they constantly read stories even in reliable media of a political system awash in dark money, pay-to-play politics, and gerrymandered electoral maps designed to favor one party over the other.

The hallmark of the American political experiment, however, is an instinct for continual self-improvement and national renewal, which are core values at the Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress (CSPC). To address our current challenges, CSPC has teamed with like-minded reform groups to form a “Fix the System” coalition driven not by partisan rancor, but rather by a bipartisan spirit of election reform. With a tradition of deep analysis of national security trends, CSPC also continues to bring historical context and innovative solutions to the emerging era of great power competition, and to seek lessons learned from the end of America’s longest wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.
As our national security and foreign policy establishments increasingly focus on strategic competition with Beijing and Moscow, the times call for new and innovative thinking on how we optimize tools of national power, from military might to soft power to the U.S. corporate sector. While the disruptive activities of Russia requires careful geopolitical handling on our part, China is the one nation that challenges U.S. power and influence across military, political, and economic domains.

U.S.-China competition is playing out in the economic, diplomatic, political, and military spheres. More attention certainly needs to be paid to each of these areas. As Chinese capabilities across the spectrum continue to grow dramatically, the position the United States finds itself in is no longer one of seeking to contain or shape China’s rise. Rather, we and our allies have no choice but to outcompete China in each of these spheres of influence. The onus falls on us to ensure that our institutions and societies can rise to the challenge.

Certainly the threat posed by China’s military advances is clear. From hypersonic weapons tests and a dramatic expansion of its nuclear weapons arsenal, to rapid growth in its navy and overall force modernization, China is a pacing threat at the strategic and operational levels of war. Beijing’s goal is to match, and where possible exceed, U.S. military capabilities in order to prevail in the types of conflict that Beijing foresees with the United States.

While not yet a global superpower able to project military power anywhere in the world, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) branches are focused more narrowly on constraining U.S. freedom of action in the Indo-Pacific, and degrading our ability to prevail in conflicts over Taiwan and in the East and South China Seas. In these potential conflict zones China aims to combine advantages of size and geography—i.e. in certain areas like naval forces and medium-range missiles China already has an advantage in sheer numbers, and they are closer to the theater of combat. The PLA is also making rapid advances and acquiring asymmetric capabilities in domains like space and cyber.
the better to blunt U.S. technological advantages.

The Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress (CSPC) continues to do extensive work in areas impacting this strategic competition like the creation of the Space Force. The biggest determinant of whether we can meet this military competition, however, will be the will necessary to fix outdated, inefficient, and wasteful practices in the execution of our defense programs. Overly risk-averse thinking is stifling technical and tactical innovation. Our bureaucratic acquisition process continues to underdeliver in terms of capabilities, and overspend in terms of wasting taxpayer dollars on red tape.

At the same time, our hyper-partisan politics are working against innovation and efficiency in our defense programs. The annual National Defense Authorization Act, for instance, used to be considered a bipartisan, “must-pass” piece of legislation. Recently it has become just another tool to be wielded on behalf of political brinksmanship. The practice of relying on repeated continuing resolutions as a substitute for the work of producing a real defense budget likewise creates uncertainty about the resources available for our defense enterprise and works against careful strategic planning and efficient program execution.

In terms of political and diplomatic competition, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) may not focus on exporting their governing ideology per se, but it is determined to reshape the rules-based international order into one that makes the world safer and more conducive for authoritarian regimes. The “red lines” against political expression and the free flow of information that Beijing enforces at home are increasingly being applied to foreign companies that want to do business in China, for instance, and against other countries that dare criticize China on its abysmal human rights record, bullying behavior or mercantilist trade policies.

President Xi Jinping’s consolidation of power at home, and the CCP’s relentless propaganda extolling “Xi Jinping Thought,” are meant to facilitate Beijing exporting its autocratic model. The challenge for the United States is to ensure that our institutions and leaders put forth democratically-derived solutions to international challenges that can prevail in the global marketplace of ideas.

Finally, unlike the Cold War playbook designed for a time when Washington and Moscow led largely separate economic blocs, the U.S.-China competition is taking place in an era of globalization, with its intricate networks of global supply chains. Simply cutting off China or rapidly decoupling from global supply chains would be equally damaging to our economy, as well as those of our allies. Many of our greatest companies continue to depend on China for their operations and revenues. Economic interdependence could even serve as a brake against speeding towards conflict with China.

When considering the degree and shape of any decoupling with China, we must be clear that it is already underway in certain sectors. Beijing is already working with its key technology companies, for instance, to build an IT and digital supply chain that does not rely on the United States. While there will continue to be areas where we need to do business with China, we must be far less sanguine about the vulnerabilities those economic ties create. Our focus should be stability in basic supply chains and trade, even as we look elsewhere—onshore, nearshore, or “friendly-shore”—for critical supply chains. We also need to place greater emphasis on convincing our corporate leaders to compete with Chinese companies on the global stage, rather than surrendering intellectual property and technological secrets to China as the entry fee for accessing its vast market.

Succeeding in this era of burgeoning great power competition will require a clear assessment of the challenges, and an adoption of new paradigms of competition in the economic, military and diplomatic arenas. Simply dusting off the Cold War playbook will not work in an era that more closely resembles pre-World War I European politics, with nationalist rivalries and cutthroat diplomacy expanded to a global stage, and new technologies like hypersonic nuclear weapons and offensive cyberattacks greatly increasing the potential for miscalculation and misunderstanding. Welcome to the new world disorder, same as it ever was. ◼
Lessons from Afghanistan

Twenty years of blood and treasure. As the Afghan chapter in America’s post-9/11 foreign policy finally came to a chaotic and tragic close in 2021, this is what members of the policy community will look back on: twenty years, $1 trillion, 2,545 U.S. service members’ lives lost, more than 20,000 injured, four Presidential administrations, and a host of questionable policy decisions. Regardless of the ugliness of the final U.S. withdrawal and Taliban victory in Afghanistan, there is an obligation to examine the critical lessons to be taken from the experience, and apply them to future conflicts. The United States largely failed to conduct such an examination after the Vietnam War, and arguably many valuable lessons in counterinsurgency warfare were lost that might have been useful after September 11th, 2001.

From the policy perspective, one lesson we learned the hard way in Afghanistan is that inordinate amounts of money are not a substitute for constructive policy, or the inability of decision makers to choose between a long-term commitment and cutting their losses. We were endlessly just a year or two away from the exit door in Afghanistan, and that fact factored into the thinking of both our enemies and Afghan allies in unhelpful ways. If we as a nation do not have the strategic patience to stay engaged and committed in order to consolidate gains, as we arguably did after fighting in Germany, Japan and South Korea, where we maintain tens of thousands of troops to this day, then policymakers should think long and hard about future operations of “regime change.”

In the end the U.S. military’s attempt to honor a long tradition—leaving a land of tyranny sanctified by the loss of American blood and treasure a little better and more democratic—was eclipsed by the passage of too much time, and the lack of a champion in the White House willing to make the case for patience. After two decades, war-weary opponents of a continued U.S. military presence on both the right and left had successfully labeled those efforts a “forever war.” Both Presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden embraced that narrative in deciding to withdraw troops on an expedited timeline, despite the fact that the U.S. military effort had dwindled to a few thousand U.S. troops and their NATO allies working mostly in the background to advise and assist Afghan soldiers willing to fight and risk death for their country, while the U.S. military suffered far fewer casualties in Afghanistan in recent years than were lost in training accidents.

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In both Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. military learned that it takes decades to build and sustain functioning local military forces.
Iraq in 2003, we also learned that there are opportunity costs associated with starting a two-front war, and in many ways those costs accrued into the tragic spectacle the nation witnessed in August 2021.

We also learned that culture, identity and tribalism are powerful motivators of behavior. In the case of overwhelmingly Muslim Afghanistan, that meant Western forces faced an uphill battle trying to extend the writ of a central government into the countryside, where the local tribal elder and imam have a more direct influence on people’s lives than the president in his Kabul palace. That climb was made far more difficult by extreme poverty and illiteracy. We learned that even an “Afghan good enough” type of democracy is not easily established in a country with rampant corruption and little experience in that form of governance, and nurturing it until democracy takes root is the work of generations.

We relearned the lesson that geography matters. The mountains of the Hindu Kush provide some of the most remote and inaccessible terrain on earth, ideal for a determined insurgency fighting on its home turf. Despite efforts to coerce Pakistan with threats and cajole it with billions of dollars of aid, we were also unable to persuade it to deny sanctuary to the Taliban or Al Qaeda. Such nearby sanctuary allowed the extremists to regroup and reset after each fighting season, denying the U.S.-led coalition a decisive victory.

In the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, we also built the most efficient and lethal man-hunting network in history, and we relearned lessons in counterinsurgency forgotten after Vietnam that allowed U.S. and allied troop “surges” in both Iraq and Afghanistan to largely pacify those countries, at least for a time. We also learned that if you withdraw those forces based not on conditions on the ground but rather an artificial timeline for retreat, then, as the Taliban always warned, “You have the watches, but we have the time.”

In an exclusive interview with CSPC Senior Fellow James Kitfield, General David Petraeus, (Army-ret.), who commanded the troop surges at the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, noted a final lesson from America’s longest wars: the threat doesn’t disappear just because U.S. forces withdraw from the field of battle.

“I do think we need to remind ourselves of key lessons that we should have learned from the past 20 years of war with Islamist extremist groups. First and foremost, they will exploit ungoverned spaces or spaces governed by friendly regimes and fellow Islamist fundamentalists like the Taliban,” said Petraeus. “Second, you cannot just study the threat posed by Islamist extremists in hopes that it will go away. It won’t. And in the meantime, such situations tend to spew violence, extremism, instability, and a tsunami of refugees. We made that mistake in Syria for a number of years, and the result was the creation of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). And ultimately, the threat posed by ISIS forced us to return U.S. troops to Iraq by the same administration that had removed them just a few years prior.”

The chaotic and deadly withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, and the Taliban sweep into power, provided a tragic and demoralizing end to America’s longest war.
A Shadow Over Our Democracy

The past year began ignominiously with an American president urging a mob to attack the U.S. Capitol in an effort to prevent the certification of a free and fair election, thus depriving the nation of a fundamental bedrock of our democracy—the peaceful transfer of presidential power. Even more troubling, too many of our fellow citizens failed to rally together in defense of our sacred democratic rules and traditions, choosing instead to prioritize allegiance to party and political personalities. These troubling times harken back to George Washington’s farewell address in 1796, in which our founding father warned that excessive political party spirit could put at risk the future of the republic.

This year begins with many Americans deeply mistrustful of political institutions, and with record numbers of younger citizens losing faith in our democracy. With division and mistrust on the rise, we must consider and address the root causes of our deep national discord, beginning with an electoral system that incentivizes extreme partisanship and rewards politicians for rejecting compromise and engaging in demonization of their political opponents.

As the symptoms have worsened for all to see, however, there has been increased attention to this rot in our body politic. Voices have begun to unite in demanding a better way. Former members of Congress of all political stripes have called on current members to work together to rebuild faith in our institutions. Corporate CEOs have also begun raising their voices in new ways. Absent critical reforms to our electoral system, however, these voices will not be enough to steer the nation away from its current, dangerous course.

Trusted Voices

Breaking through this polarized landscape to find common ground is increasingly hard for even those political actors with the best intentions. Among trusted institutions...
the U.S. military remains pre-eminent, but that very trust flows from its nonpartisan nature and strict rules against taking part in political activities. On the other hand corporate CEOs generally enjoy a significant degree of trust, and many have been increasingly willing to advocate for political reforms, especially when the health of our democracy is at stake. Numerous CEOs spoke out after the January 6th insurrection, for instance, and threatened to withhold financial support from members of Congress who tried to discredit the presidential election by voting to object to certification. Though many of those efforts have since been reversed, the door has opened for principled action by CEOs to defend the democratic system. Business leaders could be highly influential in helping the country navigate beyond the scorched earth warfare between the parties over how elections are conducted.

Ideally, business leaders could focus their energies on brokering a bipartisan compromise on electoral reforms that would incentivize more cooperation from elected officials. Such an outcome would reduce political tension and reward politicians for appealing to a broader base of voters across the middle of the political spectrum, rather than continue playing to the political fringes. CEOs could be particularly useful in encouraging political leaders in both parties to engage in good-faith negotiations over a fairer election system that is not preferential to either side, but rather encourages cooperation.

A Developing Roadmap

As 2022 began, Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) led a dialogue promoting bipartisan compromise on a set of electoral reforms that would help lower the temperature in our politics, and encourage more cooperation. Discussions to shape the “Freedom to Vote Act” reflected a sincere effort to bridge the divide over voting rules, and set us on a better path. The proposal importantly includes a methodology to limit the practice of partisan gerrymandering which tends to insulate members of Congress from voter choice in general elections. Gerrymandering creates a large number of “safe” districts where the primary election determines the outcome of the race, incentivizing politicians to cater to the whims of a very small and passionate fringe of the electorate that dominates primaries.

Gerrymandering reform is one of the keys identified by CSPC’s bipartisan Commission on Civility and Effective Governance as critical to a more cooperative and consensus-focused politics. The timing of gerrymandering reform now being discussed is ideal because Congressional maps that will define districts for the coming decade are currently being drawn across the country. Once again early evidence reveals a strong tendency of legislatures in a majority of states to draw highly partisan maps, especially when one party controls the pro-
The predictable result will be uncompetitive districts that benefit one party over the other, and do not accurately reflect the will of the voters.

Despite gerrymandering underway in some states to bake in rules that benefit one party over the other, there is momentum building in other states among both voters and politicians to change the system in ways that will benefit the country’s politics. Maine and Alaska have both opted to implement open primaries, for instance, with ranked-choice (instant runoff) selection methods. These systems open the process to more voters, including political independents, thus incentivizing candidates to appeal to a broader group of voters with more moderate policies and more civil attitudes. They reward candidates who can persuade more voters to support them, even if they are not the voters’ first choice.

This elimination of plurality voting where a candidate can win even though a majority of voters did not support them is a very useful step. It encourages elected officials to adopt a much wider prism and appeal to a broader array of political points of view, rather than focusing on a narrow primary base of the most partisan voters. In 2020 these voting reforms and methods were used in party primaries in Virginia and New York City, and as the advantages become clear and the process demystified, they will hopefully be adopted in more state and federal races. Such reforms are a silver lining in the dark clouds that increasingly gather over our public discourse, and over our democracy.

**CSPEC will continue to convene U.S. leaders to focus on practical reforms that are achievable in our electoral system.**

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**A Clarion Call**

CSPEC will continue to convene leaders from government, business, and civil society to focus the conversation on the practical changes that are achievable in our political system. Our Constitution lays out some of the basic frameworks for our elections, but leaves open to politicians and political parties to shape the rules. Partisans on both sides have done this in ways that protect their duopoly, and in their efforts to win majorities at all costs they have skewed electoral incentives in ways that damage the fabric of our democracy. This abuse of power is anathema to the spirit of our Constitution, and there is an urgent need to return the system to a balance that can promote good policymaking, and win back the trust of Americans. □
SHORTLY AFTER HIS ELECTION as President in 1952, Dwight D. Eisenhower embarked on what became known as “Project Solarium”— a strategic review to evaluate policy options in the early days of the Cold War. From that exercise, Eisenhower developed the “Long Haul” strategy that balanced the threats the United States faced from abroad with the need for policies that emphasized strength and prosperity at home, culminating in America’s post-World War II ascendance as a global superpower and standard bearer for democracies and free peoples around the world.

Because the Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress (CSPC) was originally established more than 50 years ago at President Eisenhower’s behest, the spirit that animated “Project Solarium” is embedded deep in our institutional DNA. Through our Project Solarium programs, CSPC encourages “out of the box” thinking in addressing major national challenges and looks to bridge the gaps between government policymakers and lawmakers on the one side, and leaders in the private sector and academia on the other. In each of our projects we convene stakeholders and influential thought leaders and engage them in respectful dialogue that seeks to leverage emerging technologies and find novel solutions to the complex challenges facing the nation.
America Challenged in Space

December 2021 marked the second anniversary of the establishment of the Space Force. In that short time America’s newest armed service worked aggressively to define its culture, educate the public on its mission, and mark out its territory in the national security arena. Not surprisingly, this process was not without hiccoughs and challenges.

Indeed, the Space Force initially became more known for its social media and sartorial missteps than its operational successes or the critical steps taken to establish a foundation for the future force.

At the same time, the importance of space to national security and geopolitics was brought vividly to the forefront of many Americans’ thinking with two events near the close of the year: China’s test of an unexpectedly advanced hypersonic weapons system, and Russia’s kinetic destruction of an aging satellite in orbit.

China’s hypersonic test, described as a fractional orbital bombardment system (FOBS), marked a significant if unexpected leap in Beijing’s technological prowess, surprising many defense analysts. While the test apparently missed its target by nearly two dozen miles, it was nonetheless impressive. Less impressive but equally alarming, Russia in November 2021 decided to destroy an aging satellite via a direct-ascent anti-satellite (DA-ASAT) weapon. The no-notice test prompted international condemnation and necessitated the movement of the International Space Station (ISS) to a new orbit to avoid the debris created as a result of the test.

Both tests highlight the critical importance of space to America’s national and economic security, and reinforce the need for a robust partnership with the commercial space industry.

Rather than the leaps and bounds of years past in commercial space endeavors, this past year saw the normalization of the industry. Indeed, SpaceX’s launches and recoveries of its Falcon 9 booster have become routine, so much so that it is more news when one is not recovered. Blue Origin’s New Shepard is now taking commercial passengers on sub-orbital flights with increasing regularity—Captain Kirk himself, William Shatner, became the oldest man to fly to the edge of space. Virgin Orbit, for its part, also flew several passengers on its Starship One. At the same time, large satellite constellations are becoming increasingly common, and
SpaceX’s “Starlink” began shipping its ground-terminals to customers, delivering broadband internet in some of the remotest parts of the United States.

Concurrently, the Space Force continued re-designating its “wings” as “deltas,” continued the transition of Air Force and other military space personnel to the new service, recruited the latest batches of “Guardians,” and worked to define the service in the eyes of the American public. Less well known, but equally as important, has been the service’s engagement with international allies and partners. NATO established a Space Operations Center this year, and the Space Force inked a number of agreements to coordinate and expand cooperation on space issues such as debris mitigation and norms of behavior on orbit.

In the U.S. space arena the metaphorical elephant in the room remains the question of acquisition and its reform. While there have been appreciable changes in the way Space Force does business, these have been and remain largely restricted to the periphery of what things are bought and how they are purchased. The speed of acquisition has yet to match the speed of innovation, with the former clearly lagging behind the latter.

Without question this is the biggest issue affecting the Space Force, and it continues to draw the most ire from Congress and criticism from the commercial space sector. Shaving a few months off a multi-year contracting pipeline is progress, but not when compared to China’s accelerating innovation in space. Worthy of praise are the impressive achievements of SpaceWERX, which seeks to expand the space industrial base by forming collaborative partnerships between the U.S. military and top innovators in industry, and the Space Enterprise Consortium (SpEC), which was created to bridge the cultural gap between military buyers and commercial space startups. Yet these endeavors pale in comparison to the multi-billion-dollar U.S. space programs of record.

The main problem appears to be a consistent disconnect between the sense of urgency expressed at the top-level, and the lack of drive at the low-level to go faster in space. The middle “clay layer” of program and contract management seems content to continue business as usual.

If the United States is truly in strategic competition with Russia and China—Moscow and Beijing certainly seem to think so—then it is incumbent on the defense establishment to act with more urgency. This is not an issue limited to the space enterprise, but one that affects the entirety of the Department of Defense: the application of industrial-era models and ways of doing business to an information-age era.

In space this is arguably seen most prevalently in the National Security Space Launch (NSSL) program. Approaching its third phase, the program risks locking in technology for a ten-year development cycle, fixing satellite size and capabilities based on present and arguably outdated modes of operation. At a time when commercial launch was largely non-existent, this made sense—the government had unique needs that could not be serviced by any other provider. However, today the panoply of commercial space capabilities has far outpaced the government’s ability to appreciate or incorporate these new innovations. Reusable rockets, ride-sharing payloads, on-orbit parking and deployment options, air-launched platforms, global launch sites, and more, are all either active or soon-to-be fielded.

Government involvement does not necessarily mean massive investments and risk on the part of the Department of Defense, but rather a smart spread of investments in new and emerging technologies. These new technologies mean new ways of doing business. Distributed architectures with disaggregated payloads offer up more responsiveness and resiliency, for instance, all the more important in an era when America’s adversaries are demonstrating their own space-denial capabilities. The risks associated with trying and testing new capabilities are demonstrably smaller than ten or even five years ago. While one large payload failing could be a billion-dollar mistake, an experimental payload on a new launch platform could be a $100,000 mistake—but a learning experience nonetheless.

There are signs that the Space Force and Space Systems Command are moving in this direction. But the sense of urgency must increase particularly as the United States’ adversaries are demonstrating that they possess both the capability and the intent to challenge America in space. The year ahead will be critical to ensuring our nation’s position on orbit and reorienting the national security establishment for strategic competition. Washington can ill-afford to continue business as usual. □
For the last 20 years, the United States focused its energies on prosecuting the post-9/11 Global War on Terror, manifested most prominently by operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This counterterror mission required an often painful evolution of U.S. military and intelligence communities as they focused on waging low-intensity and counterinsurgent campaigns.

Through fits and starts the Intelligence Community shifted its attention predominantly toward finding, fixing, and finishing terrorist and insurgent targets. The CIA shifted much of its attention from strategic and over-the-horizon threats to providing operational and tactical-level intelligence for both the military and the Agency’s own clandestine counterterrorism program, which is largely conducted by drone pilots and paramilitary operations officers. While not the exclusive focus of the CIA, that count-

terrorism mission consumed the preponderance of time, energy, and resources at the agency.

While the successes of these efforts are to be lauded, the Intelligence Community and the entire national security enterprise now find themselves needing to pivot yet again and reorient towards the growing challenge of strategic competition among major powers. While Washington was fixated on the threat of another 9/11 and insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, both Russia and China sought to increase their relative strength, undermine U.S. global leadership, and exploit the opportunities created by a distracted U.S. superpower. In this, Moscow and Beijing were arguably successful.

This pivot also occurs at a time when the challenges of operating in denied or hostile areas are, arguably, greater than ever before. The ubiquity of direct and indirect surveillance, facial recognition, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and near constant digital connectivity, make meeting with potential agents more challenging than in previous generations.

This nexus of strategic competition and technological innovation presents new challenges for the U.S. Intelligence Community. The skills needed to identify and recruit a long-term agent are different than those needed to find, fix, and target a terrorist. In the former case it is very much about putting the human back inside of human intelligence.

This is not to say that the threat of terrorism will disappear, or that Afghanistan and the Middle East will not occupy some portion of the Intelligence Community’s attention. But divining what the Central Committee in Beijing is considering, or what oligarch is falling in or out of favor in the Kremlin, is a long game requiring a great deal more patience and finesse than eliminating a high-value terrorist target. A low-ranking asset recruited at an embassy in Africa will require a great deal of time, care and feeding, and careful management as he or she returns to their capital and rises to become an agent with unique and critical access.

Throughout the year, CSPC convened intelligence experts to discuss their thoughts on the emerging challenges America’s Intelligence Community (IC) will face in the new era of strategic competition. One consistent theme was that the IC will need to change, but it has done so in the past and will do so again. As former Operations Officer Marc Polymeropoulos recently wrote, “Despite the challenges of technology, such as biometrics and smart cities, the CIA can still today meet agents anywhere, anytime, with proper planning and smart execution.” Human intelligence has always been and remains difficult, but it is absolutely doable and necessary.
The Agency is already in the process of reorganizing itself for these new challenges. In early October 2021, William Burns, the CIA Director, announced the creation of new mission centers to address China as well as transnational threats such as pandemics and climate change. The changes announced by Burns follow just six years after his predecessor, John Brennan, announced a similar reorganization of the Agency into 10 mission centers, and just four years after Director Mike Pompeo announced the creation of Iran and Korea mission centers, both of which will be absorbed by larger Near East and East Asia centers, according to reports. The goal of these organizational changes is to bring operational officers and analysts closer together, and to streamline the Agency’s activities.

The CIA must also adapt to new and dynamic threats that require a wholly different understanding of the global environment, such as pandemic disease and climate change. These threats in particular will exacerbate existing geo-political tensions and create conditions for additional conflict and political stress. Here too the Agency is working to attract the next generation of intelligence professionals through aggressive social media outreach, the streamlining of recruiting and vetting processes, and by creating a more inclusive and diverse culture.

Naturally an adversary has a say in intelligence competition. Recent reporting suggests that the Agency is increasingly challenged in recruiting and retaining agents, particularly in China. Beijing’s use of ubiquitous surveillance, constant monitoring, and financial disclosure rules make it considerably harder to run agents within the Chinese Communist Party and the People’s Liberation Army. At the same time, Russia’s expansion of its political warfare efforts means that Moscow is competing on multiple fronts across the globe, necessitating a new asymmetrical approach to push back against the Kremlin’s efforts.

While there was once a set of rules or a “gentleman’s agreement” of sorts between the CIA and the then Soviet KGB, this appears to no longer be the case. Under the previous set of rules, intelligence competition was permissible, but targeting each other’s officers, diplomats or their families was off-limits. The emergence of anomalous health incidents (AHI, more commonly known as “Havana Syndrome”) suggests this is no longer the case.

Regardless, human intelligence will remain a centerpiece of policymaking. It will certainly become more challenging, especially with the advent and use of new technologies. While technology, hacking, and other emerging intelligence tools will become increasingly central to informing policymakers, human agents will never be replaceable.

After focusing on counterterrorism for two decades, the U.S. Intelligence Community is pivoting towards the growing challenge of strategic competition among major powers.
Webinar Series

Virtual Roundtables with Noted Experts

The past year saw a continuation of CSPC’s successful experts webinar series. This series first began at the outset of the pandemic, and offered a way for CSPC, its network of experts, and the public to engage with authors and experts on critical issues facing the United States. With a particular focus on the emergence of strategic competition, CSPC hosted authors exploring the rise and challenge of China, Russia’s power and purpose, the intelligence community’s challenge in this new era, and other salient topics.

As with 2020’s webinar series, book events over the past year grew out of Mike Rogers Center for Intelligence & Global Affairs Director Joshua C. Huminski’s book reviews for the Diplomatic Courier. Penning reviews for the Courier as well as George Mason University’s National Security Institute blog, the SCIF, Huminski reviewed over 50 books over the course of 2021, all with a deep focus on strategic competition between major powers and related issues.

Over the past year CSPC hosted discussions with notable experts and authors who explored the rise and challenge of China, Russia’s threats and destabilizing activities, and the pivot of U.S. national security and intelligence agencies towards a new era of great power competition.
While predominantly focused on non-fiction, these events and reviews also touched on fictional takes on the growing challenges facing the United States. Admiral James Stavridis and Elliot Ackerman’s book “2034” explored a possible conflict between China and the United States, for instance, focusing more on the human dimension of the escalation dynamic. While this book looked at a conflict of the future, David McCloskey’s “Damascus Station” looked at the challenges of human intelligence in the middle of the Syrian Civil War.

Perhaps one of the most fun, if eclectic, discussions was on the book “To Boldly Go,” which explored the sci-fi universes of Star Trek, Star Wars, the Expanse, and others fictional realms, to divine lessons of leadership, strategy, and national security. Five of the authors joined Huminski for a wide-ranging webinar that was both thought-provoking and entertaining.

As noted in a separate section, the need for the Intelligence Community to adapt and adjust to the challenges of both strategic competition and new technology was a consistent theme. CSPC hosted the former head of the United Kingdom’s Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) Sir David Omand, to discuss his book “How Spies Think” as well as former CIA Operations Officers Marc Polymeropolous and David London, to discuss their respective books “Clarity in Crisis” and “The Recruiter.” The authors collectively agreed that while new technology will present new challenges, human intelligence will remain a priority.

Elbridge Colby and Josh Rogin explored two sides of the China challenge. Colby’s book, “The Strategy of Denial” explored how Washington should craft a defense strategy to deny China the ability to take and hold Taiwan, while Rogin’s book “Chaos Under Heaven” discussed the multidimensional non-military challenge that the Chinese Communist Party represents. Rogin vividly illustrated China’s influence in American institutions, businesses, and politics, offering up an alarming look at a largely overlooked challenge.

While the United States ended its involvement in Afghanistan and is winding down operations in Iraq, both were featured in CSPC’s discussions. Author Margaret Coker shared a thrilling story of the Iraqi intelligence unit, the Falcons, which successfully penetrated an Islamic State cell. Wes Morgan, in his book “The Hardest Place” looked at the country’s 20-year involvement in Afghanistan through the lens of the Pech Valley from the earliest days of the war through to nearly its end.

With the world returning to the office and more in-person events taking place, CSPC will nonetheless seek to continue these unique engagements both virtually and in-person. We hope you’ll tune in. ☑
A second year of a global pandemic drew to a close, evidence continued to mount that a period of historic global instability and economic disruption had exacerbated major power tensions that continue to veer dangerously towards confrontation and potential conflict. At year’s end Russia was massing nearly 100,000 troops on its border with Ukraine, raising alarms about a possible invasion. In a move U.S. officials characterized as “dangerous and irresponsible,” Moscow also launched an anti-satellite weapon (ASAT) at one of its own outdated satellites, creating an orbiting debris field of at least 1,500 pieces of space junk that threatened the International Space Station, forcing its crew to scramble into escape capsules.

Restoring Strategic Stability

Nuclear Arms Control

Rising U.S.-Russian tensions come as the architecture of nuclear arms control is near collapse.

Indeed growing tensions in U.S.-Russia-China relations have prompted many experts and historians to draw parallels with the Cold War. Unfortunately, these rising tensions come at a time when the carefully constructed Cold War architecture of nuclear arms control and verification treaties, de-confliction agreements and open communications channels is near collapse. As military provocations increase dramatically, the current era of major power competition starts to bear an alarming resemblance to the darkest early years of the Cold War, when missteps and miscalculations created existential crises like the Berlin Blockade, the Korean War and the Cuban Missile Crisis, all of which pushed the major nuclear weapons powers to the brink of Armageddon.

Rebuilding Strategic Stability

To its credit the Biden administration has taken steps to try and stabilize a roiling geopolitical landscape. Confronted with the imminent sunset of the New START Treaty – the last treaty limiting the size of the nuclear arsenals of the United States and Russia, which possess 90 percent of the world’s nuclear weapons – Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin extended the treaty for the maximum of five years. The extension gives U.S. and Russian negotiators critical time and breathing room to begin discussing a host of thorny issues that must be addressed in a follow-on agreement, and in broader strategic stability discussions.

The Biden-Putin Summit in Geneva in June 2021 was another critical first step towards lowering the tempera-
ture of the rhetoric between the two strategic rivals. While some news accounts were critical of the summit for failing to achieve more substantive “deliverables,” the two leaders agreed to launch an ongoing, bilateral “Strategic Stability Dialogue” to lay the groundwork for future arms control treaties and confidence-building agreements.

In November 2021, Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping similarly conducted a virtual summit that featured no substantive breakthroughs on sensitive issues such as Taiwan, arms control, human rights and trade. As with Russia, however, Biden stressed the need for more regular strategic stability conversations and more “guardrails” to help Washington and Beijing manage an increasingly adversarial and acrimonious relationship between the world’s status quo and rising superpowers.

Certainly new guardrails and action are urgently needed to avoid adding a runaway nuclear arms race to an already volatile geopolitical competition. As part of its nuclear weapons modernization, Russia has introduced 6 new nuclear weapons delivery systems, including a long-range hypersonic glide vehicle. After China successfully tested its own hypersonic missile and satellite images revealed that Beijing is constructing more than 200 ICBM silos, the Pentagon warned that China is on track to triple or even quadruple its arsenal by decade’s end. For its part the United States is also modernizing its nuclear triad of submarine-launched ballistic missiles, nuclear-capable aircraft, and intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The world is currently living through a period of great instability as it copes with the worst global pandemic since 1918, one of the worst economic shocks since the Great Depression, and the worst tensions in major power relations since the early days of the Cold War. These crises come at a time when the treaties and multilateral institutions that are the foundation of the international order and strategic stability are visibly weakening, and in danger of collapse. In the past such periods of deep economic distress and geopolitical tensions have given rise to dark political forces, and are ripe for confrontation among nation-states. History will not judge kindly American political leaders who stood complacent while a runaway nuclear arms race was added to that already volatile mix.
Great Power Competition

The Race for “Geotech” Superiority

Over the past two years, the CSPC Geotech project has explored the growing competition between open societies and authoritarian regimes for leadership in advanced technologies vital both for economic prosperity and national security. Unlike during the Cold War, this competition is complicated by the economic interdependence of a global economy and global supply chains. In contrast to the Cold War, there is also no longer an easy assumption that the United States and its allies will maintain their technological edge. In the era of great power competition to come, commercial, security, and values-based considerations will shape our approach to competitors and even allies.
The Biden administration has moved quickly to address these “Geotech” issues in the broader framework of great power competition by proposing investments in U.S. technology and innovation sectors. There is also a growing bipartisan consensus on Capitol Hill that the Geotech competition for technological superiority could well determine the outcome of the broader geopolitical competition. Now the emphasis needs to shift to building the structures, lines of authority, and institutional capacity to craft and execute Geotech strategies. That effort will be complicated by the fact that the tech industry has found itself too often in the crosshairs in our hyper-partisan politics. The U.S. government and the private sector must work together to balance the goals of securing key technologies, growing our economy and jobs, and ensuring that U.S. and allied values are reflected in our technology standards.

The Competitors
As Geotech competition increases no competitor looms larger than China. During the Trump administration a range of measures were outlined in the 2018 National Defense Strategy to secure advanced technologies and restrict Chinese suppliers. These steps were informed by the recognition that our future security and economic well-being will increasingly be challenged by great power competitors.

China already presents clear and present dangers in the military and technological domains, while its actions speak for themselves in terms of its abysmal record in terms of human rights, free expression, and other liberal values shared by the United States and fellow democracies. Economic interdependence and commercial interests will complicate our efforts to address these threats. Yet recognition of supply chain vulnerabilities and our over reliance on China is growing, clarified by President Xi Jinping’s heavy-handed effort to crush dissent at home with a genocide in Xinjiang and an increasingly iron grip on Hong Kong, and to punish criticism from abroad with trade embargoes and threats.

The threat from Russia comes from its form of authoritarian capitalism, perhaps best described as a kleptocracy. Putin is motivated by a set of “orthodox, illiberal, antidemocratic, anti-Western” ideas, in the words of former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul, and he gravitates towards other authoritarian leaders who embrace this worldview. Russia does not aim to define a new international order so much as it seeks to reclaim its great power status and sphere of privileged influence in its near abroad, thus undermining the post-Cold War order led by the United States. The more he can split Washington from its European allies, sow discord within U.S. domestic politics, and coerce and bully Eastern European countries with threats and hybrid war, the better Putin seems to feel about Russia’s strategic position.

Given those goals, Moscow has shown a strong preference for cyber warfare and hybrid conflict, namely because this type of conflict is comparably cheap (when set against conventional and nuclear military forces), plausibly deniable to a certain degree, and hugely impactful. The structure of Russia’s security services also encourages competition and infighting, guaranteeing that each service will work to one-up the other with ever more reckless moves to undermine the “main enemy” that Putin has identified, namely the United States and the Western alliance.

Securing Supply Chains
A key outcome of the pandemic and rising Geotech tensions is greater recognition of our overreliance on foreign supply chains. We have seen that many critical goods and resources—from semiconductors, to pharmaceuticals to critical rare earth metals —can be threatened by Chinese actions such as embargoes, or even a threatened invasion of Taiwan as a major semiconductor producer. The attention to semiconductors is grounded in their strategic importance. The current semiconductor shortage has slowed goods ranging from Ford F-150 trucks to PlayStation 5s, but they are an essential building block in our military arsenal as well. A range of issues related to the pandemic has re-
sulted in this shortage, but as the CSPC Geotech Report notes, a key problem is that the lead time for building new semiconductor fabrication facilities is years, not months or weeks. Similarly, concerns about rare earths and their importance in making batteries reflect both the strategic importance of certain minerals, and China’s powerful position in their supply chains.

CSPC’s Geotech efforts over the past year included an in-depth analysis of domestic and global factors related to this critical supply chain, as well as recommendations that can ensure that U.S. innovation leadership in this field is not lost due to transfer of our cutting-edge technology to the Chinese government and Chinese companies.

5G and Beyond
For the public at large the 5G story has just begun, as new handsets and network upgrades roll out. However, behind the scenes the race for leadership in 6G network technologies is already underway. With a timeline focused on achieving widespread 6G technology capability by 2030, the next decade will feature a fierce competition for 6G leadership with many of the same themes we witnessed in the race for 5G. If anything, the tempo and stakes involved in this race will only grow.

The lessons from past generations of wireless communication technology illustrate the need to move more quickly on 5G deployment and facilitate future 5G innovations, while taking necessary early steps to secure future 6G leadership. Important near-term measures that are needed would encourage 5G testing, deploy advanced wireless equipment faster, and ensure software vendor interoperability.

Many outstanding questions about 6G remain unresolved, and it is premature to consider the race to 5G settled. It will be some time before 6G technologies are ready—2030 and beyond by most estimates—but CSPC’s Geotech program and related 5G & 6G policy work will continue to identify areas that both encourage 5G deployment and innovation, while educating lawmakers about a sound foundation for future 6G innovation leadership. □

CSPC’s “Geotech” efforts over the past year included recommendations on safeguarding U.S. cutting-edge technologies from being transferred to potential adversaries.
Partners in Strategic Technologies

While continuing approaches towards Beijing adopted by its predecessor, the Biden administration has placed greater emphasis on the role that U.S. allies and partners can have in the Geotech competition. As past Geotech reports by the Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress (CSPC) have stressed, allies and partners are a strategic advantage that the United States enjoys compared to China. At the same time those allies and partners cannot be taken for granted, nor can we automatically assume that their Geotech interests will automatically align with the United States. The Trump administration’s “America First” foreign policy also raised questions and concerns about U.S. reliability that continue to this day, though the Biden administration has taken positive steps to reassure our allies and realign our partnerships to reflect new technology challenges.

The United States and its partners in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) —Australia, India, and Japan— continued to deepen their cooperation on Geotech issues and strategic supply chains throughout 2021. Into 2022, it will be critical to further implement agreements and continue to emphasize both the economic and military benefits of the Quad relationship. Within the Quad, Japan has served as an especially important Geotech partner and player. The Tokyo government has supported 5G test beds, called for new data management agreements like former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s proposal for “Data Free Flow, with Trust,” and embraced digital diplomacy efforts in major international forums.

The critical importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance was highlighted last April when Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga visited the White House, becoming the first foreign leader to hold face-to-face
eration on advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing, and outlined opportunities for further defense industrial cooperation.

India is traditionally a more arm’s length and complicated ally. On the issue of China’s aggressive export of its 5G technology, for instance, the U.S.-Japan-Australia position has clearly been to block 5G systems produced by the Chinese tech conglomerate Huawei. India has taken a tough stance on the firm, though its position falls short of an outright ban. India is nevertheless vital to the success of the Quad, and continued engagement with Delhi on shared military, economic, and technology interests is important for policymakers in the other Quad capitals.

CSPC also continues to track the Biden administration’s approach to Geotech cooperation with Europe. Geotech cooperation with Europe vis-à-vis China is complicated by individual governments’ bilateral relationships with Beijing, which do not always align cleanly with the broader approach adopted by the European Union. The range of business and economic interests that European countries share with China also understandably loom large in these discussions. U.S.-EU cooperation also faces headwinds due to very different transatlantic attitudes towards digital matters such as privacy, competition, and regulatory frameworks. That said the Group of Seven (G-7) forum of major democracies (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States) continues to deepen its cooperation on technology and security issues, and the U.S.-E.U. Trade and Tech Council offers a further avenue for transatlantic tech cooperation.

While it is important to establish cooperation and set standards with our closest allies, in the future this Geotech competition will increasingly focus on the developing world and bringing technology and digital capabilities to under-served regions like Latin America, Africa, and the rest of Asia-Oceania. Working with our allies and partners to create a viable alternative to China’s digital authoritarian model is the key to reaching regions that will drive future growth.

The global pandemic has exposed U.S. overreliance on foreign supply chains for critical goods such as semiconductors, which are vulnerable to disruptions and threats.
SUCCESS IN BUILDING the liberal world order as the foundation for “The American Century,” let alone victory in the Cold War and development of the world’s most productive economy, required enlightened leadership in both the White House and Congress, and the support of an informed citizenry. We are this country because presidents and Congressional leaders united to construct the interstate highway system; launch the modern space program by putting a man on the moon; advance the civil rights movement and strengthen social safety net programs; pass the Clean Air and Water Acts and other major pieces of environmental legislation; and lay the groundwork for the internet, giving America a head start on the Information Age.

At the Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress (CSPC) we have always viewed as a core mission the recognition and celebration of enlightened leadership and the development of the next generation of national leaders of character. We do that each year through our Presidential Fellows Program of gifted students, which last year celebrated its 50th Anniversary, and with our annual awards dinner honoring public servants who have shown the traits we believe exemplify our best leaders: strategic vision, civility, and a passion for reform and national renewal.
Honoring Leadership & Public Service

Because recognizing and celebrating enlightened leadership is one of our core missions at the Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress, each year we honor leading public servants of character and integrity with one of our four awards: the Publius Award for leadership and bipartisanship in government; the Eisenhower Award for leadership in national security affairs; the Hamilton Award for economic or fiscal leadership; and the Thurgood Marshall Award honoring champions of equality and justice. Last year we honored the late Congressman John Lewis and the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, two iconic champions of equality that we recently lost. Each of them reminded us that America is only as strong as the hearts of its people, and theirs never flagged in the pursuit of a fairer and more just union.

The late Congressman John Lewis receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom—the nation’s highest civilian honor—from President Barack Obama (above).

Defense Secretary Ash Carter receiving CSPC’s Eisenhower Award for national security leadership (above).

Senators Bob Corker, R-TN, and Senator Mark Warner, D-VA, accepting CSPC’s Publius Award for bipartisan leadership.
CSPC Trustee Edwin Meese III receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom—the nation’s highest civilian honor—for his distinguished leadership while serving as attorney general under President Ronald Reagan (left).

Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, receiving CSPC’s Eisenhower Award (below).

After her death in 2020, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg posthumously received CSPC’s inaugural Thurgood Marshall Award (above).

Senators Susan Collins, R-ME, and Joe Manchin, D-WV, receiving CSPC’s Publius Award for bipartisan leadership (above left).

CSPC Trustee Paula Dobriansky speaks with Eisenhower Award recipients Heather Wilson, former Secretary of the Air Force, and Gwynne Shotwell, President and COO of SpaceX (left).
Empowering Future Leaders

In September, 2021, the Presidential Fellows Program welcomed its 51st class of Fellows. As we embark on a new era for the program, we are focused on providing our Fellows with the tools to seize new opportunities and help meet the myriad challenges facing our society. Just over the past year the downward spiral of our political system has reached new lows, resulting in a violent attack on the U.S. Capitol, politicization of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic that has claimed the lives of more than 800,000 fellow citizens, and efforts to sow widespread mistrust in our electoral system, the foundation of our democracy. In this trying period, the investments we make in the next generation of American leaders are more critical than ever. We are proud to work with these outstanding

Each year in the Fellows Review, CSPC publishes the most insightful and well-reasoned analytical papers from our Presidential Fellows (above).

Alex Johnson, the Director for Global Partnerships at the Open Society Foundations, and Dr. Joshua Walker, President and CEO of the Japan Society, lead a discussion on how the COVID-19 pandemic is reshaping geopolitics with the 2020-2021 Presidential Fellows class (left).
students to instill a commitment to civility, impart the
habits of an informed and engaged public, and celebrate
principled leadership.

With that driving purpose in mind we are thrilled
to have added new schools to the Presidential Fel-
loows Program. This year we welcomed Simmons Col-
lege of Kentucky (with the support of Christina Lee
Brown and Ambassador Tod Sedgwick), the Univer-
sity of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Colorado
State University Pueblo (thanks to contributions from
Dr. Malik and Seeme Hassan) as partner schools. We
also established an At-Large Fellowship, which for the
first time allows students who do not attend partner
schools to apply for the program. Thanks to this initia-
tive, we welcomed Makaila Ranges, a Truman Scholar
and student body president at Franklin and Marshall
College, and Maria Staszkiewicz, a junior at the Uni-
versity of Pennsylvania, to this year’s class.

As we look ahead, we are grateful for sustainable in-
vestments in our work by long-time supporters. Fellows
Alum and CSPC Trustee Nate Morris endowed Fellow-
ships at George Washington University and the Prince-
ton School of Public and International Affairs this year,
building on his previous endowment of the Nate Mor-
ris Fellowship at the University of Kentucky’s Gatton
College of Business and Economics. Brad Freeman, a
fellow Trustee, also endowed two Fellowships this year
at Harvard College and Stanford University. Finally, the
Dr. Scholl Foundation endowed the Jack E. Scholl Fel-
lowship at the United States Naval Academy.

These long term investments are critical to sustain-
ing the success of our Presidential Fellows Program.
While the ongoing pandemic unfortunately precluded
us from convening in person this year, we hosted a se-
ries of engaging virtual events, from a panel discus-
sion on how the pandemic is reshaping geopolitics to
a deep dive on how to run for public office. These con-
vosations, as well as the original research produced
by our Fellows and featured in the 2020-2021 Fellows
Review, help illuminate the domestic and internation-
al challenges that lie ahead for our nation. They also
reveal important opportunities to build a better, safer,
and more equitable future. We are proud to play our
part in making that vision a reality.

CSPC President Glenn Nye, State Representative John Damoose, a member of the Michigan House
of Representatives, and Layla Zaidane, President and CEO of the Millennial Action Project, explore
the ins and outs of running for public office with the 2021-2022 class of Presidential Fellows.
Section Five

Capturing the Lessons of History

The Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress (CSPC) originally grew out of President Dwight Eisenhower’s expressed wish for an institution dedicated to capturing the historical lessons of governance and applying them creatively to the challenges confronted by the modern presidency and Congress. CSPC’s books, publications and reports are in keeping with that mission and tradition.

In our anthologies of case studies in modern governance, *Triumph and Tragedies of the Modern Presidency*, and *Triumph and Tragedies of the Modern Congress* (Praeger) some of the leading historians, political scientists, and journalists in the country examine major milestones in domestic and foreign policy that have made us the country we are today.

In his new book *In the Company of Heroes: The Inspiring Stories of Medal of Honor Recipients from America’s Longest Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq* (Center Street), CSPC Senior Fellow and award-winning national security correspondent James Kitfield examines what the nation’s longest wars looked like to the brave troops at the tip of America’s spear, revealing why many senior military leaders consider these post-9/11 volunteers the nation’s “New Greatest Generation.” In his recent book *Twilight Warriors* (Basic Books), Kitfield analyzes the lessons that U.S. soldiers, spies and special agents learned after nearly two decades fighting a global war against terrorist and insurgents.

*In The Statesman* (Rowman & Littlefield), the late David M. Abshire, former CSPC President and adviser to presidents, imparts the lessons learned from a rich career and life spent in public service. CSPC Reports offer creative solutions and specific recommendations to address complex challenges facing the nation. CSPC’s *Presidential Studies Quarterly* is the only scholarly journal that focuses entirely on the most powerful political figure in the world—the President of the United States.
The Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress (CSPC) publishes two anthologies on the subject of presidential and Congressional leadership: *Triumphs & Tragedies of the Modern Presidency*, and *Triumphs and Tragedies of the Modern Congress*. Through case studies we ask some of the top historians, journalists and political scientists in the country to identify the lessons learned from past presidents and Congresses, the better to understand current events. Our writers examine the first one hundred days of every post-World War II president and look at their domestic and foreign policy milestones that laid the foundation for the “American Century.”

These anthologies offer important lessons on leadership, as well as the pitfalls that any administration or Congress would do well to avoid. Historians will long note, for instance, the monumental crises that welcomed President Joe Biden on his first day in the Oval Office: the worst global pandemic in more than a century that has claimed the lives of more than 800,000 Americans; the commensurate economic disruption that is the worst since the Great Depression; and the first violent transfer of presidential power since the Civil War. Add in the worst international tensions in major power relations since the Cold War and extreme partisanship in Washington, D.C., and the headwinds that faced the Biden presidency in its first year were hurricane strength.

And yet the crises and challenges that Biden has confronted are not altogether ahistorical. The same powerful forces that both empowered and constrained his modern predecessors shaped Biden’s first year in the Oval Office, for good and ill. In that sense Biden’s triumphs revealed familiar alignments of political actors and motivations, just as his tragedies followed a recognizable script. As Mark Twain reputedly mused, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it rhymes.”

The administration fell into a common trap, for instance, of trying too hard to reverse the previous administration’s legacy too fast. While its attempt to enact a more humane immigration policy is to be commended, for instance, the Biden administration arguably moved too quickly to roll back its predecessors policies in its critical first months—when election winds are strongest—resulting in a preliminary injunction by a federal court halting Biden’s proposed changes, and an immigration crisis on the southern border with Mexico.

Like FDR, LBJ, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump, Biden’s party initially enjoyed majority control in Congress, though its margins were razor thin in both the House and the Senate. That meant a united Republican opposition was able to use the filibuster requiring a 60 vote majority to thwart major policy initiatives such as voting rights and criminal justice legislation.

However, like LBJ before him, Biden used his decades of experience in the U.S. Congress to notch major legislative achievements. Impressively, he used his good relations with key Members of Congress to sign and pass a bipartisan, $1 trillion infrastructure bill, enacting a key piece of his domestic agenda that will funnel billions to states and local governments to upgrade outdated roads, bridges, and transit systems. In achieving legislation to upgrade America’s aging and fraying infrastructure, Biden succeeded where his recent predecessors had failed, making good on his promise to seek bipartisan solutions when possible. □
Chronicling America’s “New Greatest Generation”

While they collectively represent less than one percent of the population, America’s military personnel disproportionately shouldered the burden of our nation’s longest wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unlike their forebears, they are members of an all-volunteer military that was created after Vietnam with the abolishment of the draft. Many of those troops volunteered after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks—the most devastating blow to the homeland since Pearl Harbor—knowing they were signing up for combat. As socially engineered and self-selected over many years, the force they represent is unlike any that the United States has fielded in the past, let alone during the longest period of extended war in the nation’s history.

CSPC Senior Fellow James Kitfield tells their stories in In the Company of Heroes: The Inspiring Stories of Medal of Honor Recipients from America’s Longest Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (Center Street Books). The book features in-depth narrative profiles of the twenty-five post-9/11 recipients of the Medal of Honor, the nation’s highest award for valor. These are stories of never surrendering despite harrowing odds, of facing death and finding the courage and faith not to be cowed, of wearing their scars like badges of honor. There is wisdom and warrior fierceness in these narratives, but also acts of profound tenderness. The common theme running throughout is men caught in a brush with eternity, and choosing to risk and even forfeit their own lives to save their brothers in arms.

Men like Navy SEAL team leader Britt Slabinski and Air Force commando John Chapman who, after being ambushed on a mountaintop in the Hindu Kush and forced to retreat, returned against monumental odds in order to try and save one of their team who was lost in the fight; of Marine Corps Corporal William “Kyle” Carpenter and Army Captain Flo Groberg, who jumped on a grenade and a suicide vest, respectively, and miraculously survived to endure excruciating rehabilitations; of Marine Corps Corporal Jason Dunham and Navy SEAL Michael Monsoor, who made similar decisions to sacrifice their own lives for their brothers in arms by jumping on grenades, and tragically did not survive; of Army Green Beret Robert Miller, who charged into the teeth of an ambush in a snowy forest at night, sacrificing his life so his wounded teammates could retreat; of Army Ranger Thomas Patrick Payne, who entered a burning prison building under enemy fire three times to rescue hostages held by would-be ISIS executioners.

For a generation of Americans who have come of age in the all-volunteer era, war has become an abstraction, something best left to the professionals. In airports and train stations we politely tell those in uniform, “Thank you for your service,” knowing that their sacrifice and that of their families makes it possible for the vast majority of us not to serve. The stories of these remarkable individuals reminds readers that war is never an abstraction, and we owe it to all the men and women who fight on our behalf to acknowledge and honor their sacrifice.

General Martin Dempsey (Army-ret.), the 18th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said of In the Company of Heroes, “If you’ve ever wanted to truly understand bravery, explore the real meaning of sacrifice, or deeply appreciate the cost of our freedom, then you must read this book.” General David Petraeus (Army-ret.), former commander in both Iraq and Afghanistan, said “This important book describes brilliantly why those of us privileged to lead our men and women in combat truly consider them ‘America’s New Greatest Generation.’”

PHOTO: ROB BAKER
On January 3, 2020, Iranian Quds Force commander Qasem Suleimani arrived at the Baghdad International Airport and his convoy of vehicles soon departed for the city center. Though considered the second most powerful man in Iran and thus apparently in his own mind untouchable, Major General Suleimani was chief of a U.S. designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, and he and his closely allied Shiite militias throughout the Middle East had the blood of hundreds of Americans on their hands. So after his convoy cleared the airport, a U.S. drone flying overhead fired a Hellfire missile that killed Suleimani and nine companions. In the end, the Iranian arch terrorist met the same fate as other terrorists chiefs on the classified U.S. “most wanted terrorists” list, to include Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (killed in 2019), Al Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden (killed in 2011), and Al Qaeda in Iraq chief Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (killed in 2006).

Each of those deaths underscores how U.S. military, intelligence and law enforcement agencies have learned and adapted during nearly two decades of fighting a global terrorist movement. CSPC Senior Fellow James Kitfield’s *Twilight Warriors: The Soldiers, Spies and Special Agents Who Are Revolutionizing the American Way of War* (Basic Books), chronicles that fight against a determined and adaptive enemy, drawing on Mr. Kitfield’s extensive reporting from the frontlines, and distilling “lessons learned” from America’s longest wars.

Lessons like it takes a network to defeat a network. Under the pioneering leadership of General Stanley McChrystal, Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), the secretive war-fighting subcomponent of U.S. Special Operations Command, adapted to Al Qaeda’s global network by incubating its own network-centric model of military operations. That model relies on an unprecedented synergy that developed in the war zones between Special Operations Forces, intelligence and law enforcement agencies, and conventional military forces.

Another hard lesson U.S. commanders learned was the difference between counterterrorism versus counterinsurgency. At some tipping point a campaign of terrorism can transform into a much larger and more widely-supported insurgency powerful enough to compete with government forces for control of territory. Beyond that inflection point a strictly counterterrorism campaign of targeted strikes on terrorist leaders is ineffective. Just as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State survived the death of Osama bin Laden and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, respectively, the Quds Force will continue as a significant terrorist threat despite the demise of Suleimani.

After President Trump campaigned on a promise that “torture works” and promised to bring back waterboarding and “a hell of a lot worse,” it was inevitable that a debate would ensue over whether to bring back the CIA’s discarded program of “enhanced interrogation techniques” that much of the world views as torture. For their part, the U.S. military and most counterterrorism officials have never forgotten where that detour into darkness led—unreliable intelligence, demoralized interrogators, and guilty terrorists like 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed who still cannot be tried in a court of law because they were tortured.

*The Wall Street Journal* lauded *Twilight Warriors* for providing “an enlightening tour of 21st century counterterrorism—its success and failures, its evolving technologies, and its ever-festering rivalries among national security agencies.” General Dennis Reimer, former Army Chief of Staff, calls it “undoubtedly one of the best books I have ever read—a brilliantly written narrative and real world adventure that draws the reader in.”

James Kitfield is a Senior Fellow at the Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress.
Lessons in Statesmanship

The Bitter Fruit of Incivility

The Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress (CSPC) has published “The Statesman” (Rowan and Littlefield), the posthumous memoirs of the late David M. Abshire, the former Chairman and President of CSPC, co-founder of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the U.S. Ambassador to NATO. Among his many government positions, Abshire was special counselor to President Ronald Reagan during the Iran-Contra controversy. In this excerpt from “The Statesman,” Abshire presciently warned how a marked increase in incivility in our political discourse was threatening the long term health and security of our democracy.

As I write this at the end of my career, our country has lost its sense of strategic direction and common purpose. Our politics have entered a period of hyper-partisanship and gridlock. Overseas we are transitioning from a unipolar world of uncontested American power to a multipolar world where we face challenges to our interests and security from multiple directions. Dangers gather on every front. Put simply, our country is in deep trouble.

We are in danger of becoming a nation so absorbed by our divisions and bitter internal squabbles that we no longer attempt great deeds, nor dare lead free peoples.

We have come to this impasse in large part because of a great deterioration of civility over the past decade and a half. Today, too many in Congress claim to revere the Constitution, and yet they reject the spirit of consensus-building and compromise that created it in the first place. Today, too many politicians seem utterly opposed to any of the compromises required for our Constitutional system of republican federalism to function at all. It must be their way, or no way. That fundamental lack of civility and respect among political partisans has in turn produced a profound deficit of trust. And just as civility is the springboard for trust, so too is trust the springboard for compromise and cooperation, the essential ingredients of democratic governance. Without them our leaders lack the political consensus required to take the country to higher ground. So on top of this deficit in civility and trust, we also confront a leadership deficit.

We as a people are living with the bitter fruits of this dysfunction. We can see it in the political gridlock that led to the downgrading of the United States’ credit rating for the first time in history. It’s evident in the routine budgetary impasses that diminish the strength of an already stressed U.S. military even as dangers gather, and in domestic infrastructure that was once the envy of the world, now crumbling into disrepair and obsolescence. It’s there for all the world to see in a political discourse of embarrassing crudeness and banality. We are in danger of becoming a nation so absorbed by our divisions and bitter internal squabbles that we no longer attempt great deeds, nor dare lead free peoples.

The late David M. Abshire was formerly the Chairman and President of the Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress. This essay is excerpted from his memoir, “Statesman: Reflections on a Life Guided by Civility, Strategic Leadership, and the Lessons of History” (Rowan and Littlefield).
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The United States and its partners are in a heated competition with authoritarian societies to set the technological standards for the future. Leadership in the field of Geotech—the linkage of geopolitics and technology—will determine the 21st century balance of power. To meet this challenge, America must develop a Geotech strategy that recognizes the existential stakes involved and leverages allies and partners.

**Owning the “Geotech” Future**

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**Winning the Space Race**

U.S. space superiority is being challenged to a degree not seen since the height of the Cold War. China and Russia, among others, are developing and fielding significant counter-space capabilities and rapidly expanding their own space capabilities. To outpace these potential adversaries the United States must leverage a revolution in commercial space launch and radically rethink the way it approaches national security space.

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**Dominating Future Networks**

In the past two years, the CSPC Geotech project has explored the growing competition between open societies and authoritarian regimes for leadership in advanced technologies vital both for economic prosperity and national security. Few technologies are more important in that regard than development of “5G” and “6G” (for 5th & 6th generation) broadband cellular networks. These advanced networks will connect cellphones, and provide the essential infrastructure for a wired future in which virtually everything is connected to the “internet of things.”

**Averting a Nuclear Arms Race**

The need to halt a dangerous spiral in major power relations, and an emerging nuclear arms race, weighs heavily on the Biden administration and Congress. Both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue will need to make rebuilding a foundation for strategic stability a top priority. Achieving such a bipartisan consensus in this hyper-partisan moment will undoubtedly prove difficult, but absolutely necessary.

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