

**Adm. Harry Harris, USN (Retired)**  
**24th Commander, U.S. Pacific Command (2105-2018)**  
**23rd U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea (2018-2021)**  
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Thank you, Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members. It's an honor for me to appear again before this committee. It's been almost 5 years since I last appeared here, at what I thought then would be my last testimony before you. Today, I'm honored to testify alongside former National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien, a strategic leader who understands well the challenges and threats that confront America in the 21st Century, and Dr. Melanie Sisson, a leading thinker on military applications of emerging technologies.

I want to start by thanking this committee. That your first hearing of the 118th Congress addresses the threat the United States faces from the People's Republic of China, or PRC, sends a powerful signal to the region. I'm also grateful for Congress' bipartisan passing of the FY 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, including the embedded Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act which increases military aid and security cooperation to that embattled island. Finally, the Congress' continued bipartisan actions to strengthen the technological backbone of the United States against the relentless challenge posed by the PRC through passage of the CHIPS and Science Act last year is significant.

I also want to thank the U.S. Naval Institute -- one of America's leading forums for debate on national security and sea power -- for supporting me logistically with this testimony.

In 2018, I underscored the fact that the United States has an enduring national interest in the Indo-Pacific. Today, more than ever, I believe America's security and economic prosperity are inextricably linked to this critical region, which remains at a precarious crossroad where tangible opportunity meets significant challenge. Here we face a security environment more complex and

volatile than any we have experienced in recent memory. To go further, I believe, in 2023, we're at an inflection point in history. We're certainly not near anything resembling the end of history. Freedom, justice, and the rules-based system hang in the balance. And the scale won't tip of its own accord simply because of wishful thinking.

President Reagan once said, 'We cannot play innocents abroad in a world that's not innocent.' This statement is as true today as it was in on December 7th...through the Cold War...on 9-11...and on 2-24 when Russia invaded Ukraine. The world remains a dangerous place. The unipolar moment following the Cold War is over.

We find ourselves, again, in peer competition with adversaries who are developing and deploying cutting-edge weaponry and information disorder to undermine democracy and defeat us. North Korea is building and testing nuclear weapons, the PRC seeks regional, even global, domination, Taiwan is under siege, and Ukraine is ablaze. We are in what I call the decisive decade. I'll be a bit more provocative this morning and observe that many seemingly disparate events are converging, with Ukraine as a nexus. In my opinion, destabilization itself has a tipping point. I believe we must do all we can to avoid such a global convergence in 2023.

In 2018 I talked about the challenges facing the United States, including the perception that the U.S. is a declining power facing unrelenting challenges posed by (1) a rogue North Korea; (2) a revisionist PRC; and (3) a revanchist Russia which increasingly conducts operations and engagements throughout the Indo-Pacific, and especially, the High North, to advance its own strategic interests while undermining ours. Over the past 5 years, the situation has worsened in almost every geo-strategic measure. However, in my comments today, in keeping with the intent of this hearing, I'll focus primarily on the PRC.

I want to compliment my successors at Indo-Pacific Command -- Admirals Phil Davidson and Chris Aquilino. They've cleaned up the mess I left them, they've been unstinting in their criticisms of the PRC, and they've improved the readiness of America's Joint Force to respond when called upon.

Last fall, the current Administration finally released its National Security Strategy. Though I would use the term "adversary" rather than "competitor", this strategy recognizes that the PRC is the only competitor with both the intent and, increasingly, the capability to reshape the international order. Let me also mention former Speaker Pelosi's recent visit to Taiwan, all the brouhaha that preceded it, and China's truculent behavior that followed it. To be clear: I supported her visit before she went, and doubly so after China threatened her, Taiwan, and the United States if she went. I look forward to Speaker McCarthy's own promised trip to Taiwan, whenever his schedule permits. As this committee knows far better than me, there are very few bipartisan issues in Washington these days, but our national concern about the PRC is one of them. Michele Flournoy recently said, "There is a strong bipartisan consensus in seeing China as the pacing threat, economically, technologically, diplomatically and militarily."

To be clear, the U.S. has partnered well with China on several important fronts. But Washington and Beijing fundamentally disagree on how to approach the current international order. The PRC doesn't keep its word, from its treaty with the British on Hong Kong, to its human rights abuses against Uyghurs and others, to its attempts at commercial espionage, and its quest to intimidate, isolate, and finally dominate Taiwan.

The PRC's aggression in the South China Sea continues unabated, despite the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration's tribunal ruling that invalidated China's ridiculous 9-dash line claim and unprecedented land reclamation. The PRC's actions are coordinated, methodical, and strategic, using its military and economic power to erode the free and open international seas.

The spy balloon drama -- playing out on the eve of the Secretary of State's planned visit to Beijing -- is illustrative of the PRC's bad behavior and disregard for international norms. That Beijing would claim that this incursion over sovereign American airspace was innocuous and unintended beggars the imagination.

China's considerable military buildup could soon challenge the U.S. across almost every domain. While some might say the PRC is already there, I am not one of them. However, the

PRC is making significant advancements in missile systems including hypersonics, 5th generation fighters, a blue-water navy with aircraft carriers, and the next wave of military technologies including artificial intelligence and advanced space and cyber capabilities. Geopolitically, the PRC seeks to supplant the United States as the security partner of choice for countries not only in the Indo-Pacific, but globally. As I testified before the Congress when I was in uniform, I believe Beijing seeks hegemony not only in East Asia, but greater Asia and beyond. The PRC wants to set the rules for the region...indeed the world.

The United States has made it clear that we reject foreign policy based on leverage and dominance. The United States won't weaponize debt. We encourage every country to work in its own interest to protect its own sovereignty. And we must work in our own enlightened self-interest to develop our own reliable sources of critical materials, including rare earths, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals essential for weaponeering, independent of the PRC. Former Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategy Nadia Schadlow wrote last year that the PRC is "the sole source or a primary supplier for a number of critical energetics materials." By "energetics" I'm referring to those materials that are used for explosives and propellants -- from bullets, to artillery, to missiles. I was stunned to learn about our reliance on the PRC for this critical capability.

We find ourselves sailing into rocks and shoals, to use a nautical analogy, and we must invest and innovate to right the errant course we're on. If the United States does not keep pace, the Joint Force will struggle to compete with the People's Liberation Army on future battlefields.

Now, I note that the current Administration's fundamental understanding of the PRC is consistent with its predecessor...as my esteemed colleagues know well.

Consider that the Secretary of State testified that the previous Administration's tougher approach is right...that what's happening in Xinjiang is genocide...and that democracy is being trampled in Hong Kong. The Secretary of Defense testified that he's focused on the threat posed by the PRC and he promised strong support for Taiwan.

Look, Taiwan is democratic, an idea factory, and a global force for good. Just last week the CATO Institute called Taiwan the freest country in East Asia. I've called for ending the almost 44-year U.S. policy of strategic ambiguity in favor of strategic clarity. I also believe we should ink a bilateral Free Trade Agreement with Taiwan as soon as possible. The new Indo-Pacific strategy specifically supports an environment in which Taiwan's future is determined peacefully by its people. My successor at Indo-Pacific Command testified before Congress in 2021 that the PRC could invade Taiwan in 6 years. That's 2027...we ignore Admiral Davidson's warning at our peril. The PRC's intent is crystal clear. I'm reminded of something that Maya Angelou once said: "When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time." Well, Xi Jinping has shown us his intent regarding Taiwan time and time again, and shame on us if we ignore him. We must not allow the PRC to dictate America's Taiwan policy.

Despite the economic calamity wrought by Beijing's Zero-Covid policy -- an "own goal" if there ever was one -- and the ongoing public health disaster due to Covid resurgence in China -- I'm worried about the trajectory of the PRC's body politic. As former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd recently wrote, last October's 20th party congress is likely to be, in his words, "an era-defining event...cementing Xi Jinping as China's paramount leader...solidifying the country's turn to the state and away from the market... and officially underscoring the primacy of Marxism-Leninism."

In other words, Deng Xiaoping is dead in more ways than one. If the first era of modern Chinese politics was Mao Tse Tung's, and the second Deng Xiaoping's, the third is unquestionable Xi Jinping's.

Mr. Chairman, since I was the Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, I would be remiss if I didn't spend a few brief moments on South Korea. The new National Security Strategy emphasizes that America's single greatest asymmetric strength is our network of security alliances and partnerships. It calls for modernizing our bilateral defense treaties with Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand while advancing our Major Defense Partnership with India.

In my opinion, the textbook case in point is the U.S.-South Korea Alliance -- which will be 70 years strong this year. Forged during a devastating conflict, it has stood the test of time. It's mind-boggling to consider how much has changed in the world in general, Northeast Asia in particular, and the Korean Peninsula especially, since 1953.

Some changes have been for the better, such as South Korea's miraculous growth into an economic and cultural powerhouse, a vibrant democracy, and a high-tech "innovation nation." Other changes have been for the worse. Why is North Korea, far away in Northeast Asia, a challenge for the entire world? The answer is simple: Kim Jong-Un's missiles point in every direction. Today, North Korea stands out as the only nation this century to test nuclear weapons. It is ruled with an iron fist, by a brutal dictator who values power over the prosperity and welfare of his own people. The North's unrelenting pursuit of nuclear weapons, the means to deliver them, and its unmitigated aggression towards the South and to the United States should concern us all.

Let me emphasize that the United States stands firmly with South Korea and is fully committed to the Alliance. This is important, because North Korea and the PRC will continuously test our resolve to seek ways to weaken our strong ties in order to divide us.

I believe KJU wants 4 things: sanctions relief, keep his nukes, split our Alliance, and dominate the peninsula. The IAEA is concerned about the trajectory of North Korea's nuclear program. The U.S. Intelligence Community assesses that KJU views nuclear weapons as the ultimate deterrent against foreign intervention. KJU declared last year that he'd be willing to employ nukes broadly in wartime.

Last September, he stated unequivocally that he'd never give up his nukes and that North Korea's status as a nuclear weapons state is irreversible. Finally, lest anyone still need convincing, at last month's Central Committee Plenum, KJU declared his intent to "exponentially increase" his country's nuclear arsenal and develop a new ICBM.

This doesn't sound to me like he's going to get rid of them anytime soon. In fact, he's telling us precisely the opposite. While we hope for diplomacy with North Korea to be successful, we

must recognize that hope alone is not a course of action. The quest for dialogue with the North must never be made at the expense of the ability to respond to threats from the North.

Last year alone, the North launched almost a hundred missiles of increasing complexity. Just last month, we saw multiple drone incursions across the DMZ. Now, should we be concerned about drones in 2023? Well, when you consider the devastating impact of drone warfare on the battlefield in Ukraine, we have to ask ourselves, are drones over the DMZ simply business as usual or is it the beginnings of high-tech, unmanned, and smart warfare on the Korean Peninsula?

Clearly, this is no path towards peace. Dialogue and military readiness must go hand-in-hand. Idealism must be rooted in realism. We must not relax sanctions or reduce joint military exercises just to get North Korea to come to the negotiating table...this is a fool's errand. Ladies and gentlemen, I believe our heretofore U.S. policy goal of negotiating away North Korea's nuclear program has reached its useful end. We must up our combined game. Deterrence by appeasement is not deterrence at all.

I'm encouraged by the new administrations of President Yoon Suk-yeol in Korea and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Japan. Their meeting, albeit short, in New York last September was both welcome and long-overdue. I'm encouraged by President Yoon's intent to make the U.S. - South Korea Alliance the centerpiece of his foreign policy. I'm pleased that he places a primacy on defending South Korea against the threat from the North...which means a return to joint military exercises...and an emphasis on combined readiness.

Mr. Chairman, while U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific are real and enduring, and challenges to our interests equally real and daunting, I believe America's resolve is powerful and durable. I thank you, this committee, and the Congress for your enduring support to the INDOPACOM team and to our armed forces and diplomatic corps. I look forward to your questions.