

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

Supporting Israel and Ukraine Against Terror

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Chairman Wilson, Co-Chairman Cardin, Ranking Members Cohen and Wicker, and the members of the Helsinki Commission, on behalf of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, thank you for the opportunity to testify. Israel just suffered the worst terrorist attack in its history, Ukraine is struggling to evict Russian forces from its territory, and Taiwan watches ominously as China threatens to invade.

Israel's War Against Iran and Its Proxies

The world woke up on October 7 to learn of a surprise attack by the Iran-backed Hamas terrorist organization. Hamas entered Israel from its base of operations in the Gaza Strip and killed more than 1,300 people, injured around 2,000, and kidnapped nearly 200, including more than a dozen Americans.

The Gaza Strip has been the source of horrific violence ever since Hamas took the coastal enclave by force in the Palestinian civil war of 2007. Hamas rule has led to periodic battles between Israel and Hamas, notably in 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021, with sporadic flare-ups in between. The Israelis have restrained themselves in previous rounds of fighting. This will not be the case now, as the country prepares to respond to the worst terrorist attack in its 75 years of existence.

However, there is still the very real possibility that this could be the beginning of a regional war. The Islamic Republic of Iran has been fighting a proxy war against Israel for years. It has armed and funded groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in the West Bank and Gaza, in addition to Hamas. Together, these groups possess more than 180,000 rockets and other foreboding military capabilities that could be unleashed in concert against Israel. This is what Israel, with help from the Biden administration, is endeavoring to prevent.

The Iranian-led axis has prepared for this moment, however. For several years, sporadic reports have pointed to the existence of a “nerve center” in Beirut designed to coordinate the activities of the Iran-backed terrorist groups and target Israel more efficiently.¹

The groups have not been shy about it. On April 9, 2023, after Hamas fired 30 rockets at Israel, the leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah met in Beirut to discuss their joint strategy against Israel.² They released photos depicting their conversations beneath photos of former Iranian supreme leader Ruhollah Khomeini and current supreme leader Ali Khamenei. The message was unmistakable: the Iran-led axis was preparing for a coordinated war.

Hints of this nerve center's existence were first apparent during the 2021 rocket war between Israel and Hamas. Violence simultaneously erupted in several Arab-Israeli towns, suggesting a

¹ “Misfired Islamic Jihad Rockets Kill Palestinian Children,” *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, May 11, 2023. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/05/11/misfired-islamic-jihad-rockets-kill-palestinian-children>); Bradley Bowman and Ryan Brobst, “Iran Increases Funding for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps,” *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, April 29, 2022. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2022/04/29/iran-increases-funding-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>); Jonathan Schanzer, “Iran-Hezbollah Intelligence Center May Help Hamas Target Israel,” *Foreign Policy*, September 13, 2022. (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/13/iran-hezbollah-hamas-israel-beirut-lebanon-intelligence-sharing-center>)

² Fadi Amun, “Hezbollah's Nasrallah Meets Hamas Chief Haniyeh in Lebanon Following Rocket Barrage on Israel,” *Haaretz* (Israel), April 9, 2023. (<https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/2023-04-09/ty-article/premium/hezbollahs-nasrallah-meets-hamas-chief-haniyeh-in-lebanon-after-rocket-barrage-on-israel/00000187-652a-dde0-afb7-7f3b5a210000>)

modicum of coordination. After the war's end, Israeli officials began noting an uptick in West Bank violence.³ Israeli security services believe that Hezbollah (by way of Iran) is the primary source for the weapons flooding the West Bank.

To Israel's alarm, the Biden administration has consistently pursued policies that increase the resources available to Tehran for its aggression. Through its dogged and determined efforts to reach a nuclear deal with the regime, the White House was prepared to offer significant sanctions relief that would only help the Islamic Republic replenish its coffers to arm its proxies. The recent transfer of \$6 billion in a prisoner swap, along with \$10 billion in other sanctions relief, is a disappointing example of how this misguided policy has contributed to the current crisis.⁴ One gets a sense that the Biden administration will need to reassess its Iran policy when this crisis concludes.

Israel, Syria, and the Russian Bear

In recent years, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has thwarted Iranian designs to create a new Hezbollah-like terror proxy on the Golan Heights.⁵ The Iranian regime has repeatedly tried to move assets and personnel to the Syrian border with Israel. Israel has repeatedly destroyed most, if not all of it. Iran-backed militias still operate in Syria, but they are generally deterred.

The presence of Russian forces in Syria has complicated Israeli efforts to disrupt the pipeline that delivers Iranian weapons to Hezbollah. Russian missile defense systems in particular have forced Israel to take significant precautions in the ongoing effort to prevent the smuggling of advanced Iranian precision-guided munitions (PGMs) from Syria to Lebanon, where Hezbollah may be preparing to use them. Unlike the "dumb" or unguided rockets that Hezbollah and Hamas have fired at Israel in the past, these rockets are equipped with navigation systems. They can strike targets with a 10-meter margin of error.⁶

Fortunately, the Russian presence has not significantly hindered Israel's freedom of action in Syria. The Israeli strikes on these weapons transfers continue, often with Russian knowledge, and the number of PGMs in Hezbollah's possession is still manageable. Whether this continues to be the case during the current conflict remains to be seen.

As for Gaza, Russia has played a somewhat ambivalent role in the current fighting. Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and offered to broker calm. Days earlier, however, Hamas thanked Putin for his support, which included a Russian-proposed United Nations Security Council resolution hostile to Israel that did not even

³ "Israel Cracks Ring of Iran-Backed Bomb Smugglers," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, September 5, 2023. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/09/05/israel-cracks-ring-of-iran-backed-bomb-smugglers>)

⁴ The White House, "Remarks by President Biden on the Terrorist Attacks in Israel," October 10, 2023. (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/10/10/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-terrorist-attacks-in-israel-2>)

⁵ "U.S. Treasury Sanctions Latin America-Based Hezbollah Financial Network," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, September 13, 2023. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/09/13/u-s-treasury-sanctions-latin-america-based-hezbollah-financial-network>); "IDF Conducts Raid at House of Al-Aqsa Brigades Commander in Jenin," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, September 19, 2023. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/09/19/idf-conducts-raid-at-house-of-al-aqsa-brigades-commander-in-jenin>)

⁶ Jonathan Schanzer and Mark Dubowitz, "PGMs: Iran's Precision-Guided Munitions Project in the Shadow of a Nuclear Deal," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, September 12, 2022. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2022/09/12/pgms-irans-precision-guided-munitions-project-in-the-shadow-of-a-nuclear-deal>)

mention the Hamas slaughter of 10/7.⁷ In previous years, Moscow has fought alongside Iran and Hezbollah forces to protect the Assad regime during the Syrian civil war. Putin has also been complicit in Iranian sanctions-busting schemes that have supported Hamas and Hezbollah.⁸

Ukraine's War to Repel Russian Aggression

Putin launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. He believed Ukrainian resistance and Western resolve would be weak. However, Ukrainian troops and civilians alike met the Russian invaders with a fierce resistance. Moscow failed to quickly decapitate the government in Kyiv. Western materiel soon flowed in significant quantities, allowing the Ukrainians to stay in the fight and eventually regain some of their territory. And despite Russian efforts to divide the West, Ukraine's backers have remained committed.

Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine will not end anytime soon. Putin appears determined to fight on. He seems to believe that he can outlast Western resolve. Growing skepticism toward Ukraine aid, particularly within the GOP, reinforces this belief.

Fortunately, Western sanctions have eroded the Russian economy, although defense production continues despite these measures. Thus, if Western aid for Ukraine doesn't keep pace, Russian forces could eventually wear down Ukraine.

For the United States, this war's stakes are high. Failing to defeat Russia's aggression would only embolden Putin. This could negatively impact our ability to deter Iran right now, not to mention China at some point in the future, particularly as it weighs a Taiwan invasion.

Like the Israelis, the Ukrainians are not asking for American boots on the ground. They are, however, requesting the weapons they need to defend themselves. By acceding to their request, we do exceptional harm to one of America's three primary adversaries at the cost of roughly 3.5 percent of our defense budget.⁹

Russia and Iran Unite

Russian-Iranian relations have deepened and broadened considerably since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began. Moscow has doubled down on its partnership with Iran to counter Western pressure and to secure arms for its war against Ukraine. Russian support in return has rendered Tehran a more potent threat to America's interests in the Middle East.

⁷ Allison Quinn, "Hamas Gives a Shout-Out to Vladimir Putin," *The Daily Beast*, October 14, 2023. (<https://www.thedailybeast.com/hamas-gives-a-shout-out-to-vladimir-putin>); Edith M. Lederer, "UN Security Council rejects Russia's resolution on Gaza that fails to mention Hamas," *Associated Press*, October 16, 2023. (<https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-un-resolutions-russia-brazil-c601d6aefe9d853428a485c9b6011830>)

⁸ U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Designates Illicit Russia-Iran Oil Network Supporting the Assad Regime, Hizballah, and HAMAS," November 20, 2018. (<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm553>); U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Targets Oil Smuggling Network Generating Hundreds of Millions of Dollars for Qods Force and Hizballah," May 25, 2022. (<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0799>); U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Sanctions Oil Shipping Network Supporting IRGC-QF and Hizballah," November 3, 2022. (<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1076>)

⁹ @FDD, X, September 25, 2023. (<https://twitter.com/FDD/status/1706357925319430409>)

Even before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Iran and Russia were pursuing ways to counter U.S. sanctions, such as boosting their use of dollar alternatives¹⁰ and establishing financial clearing mechanisms outside of the U.S.-led system.¹¹ In January 2023, Russia and Iran signed an agreement linking their respective alternatives to SWIFT, the Brussels-based interbank messaging systems on which most banks rely.¹²

Since the war in Ukraine's onset, Russia has received various unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) from Iran, most notably the Shahed-136 and Shahed-131 one-way attack drones, which help Russia deplete Ukraine's supply of interceptor missiles. Tehran even sent advisors to train Russian personnel in occupied Ukrainian territory.¹³ Russia has reportedly launched over 2,000 Shahed UAVs since late summer 2022.¹⁴

As part of a \$1 billion deal with Tehran, Moscow has sought to produce Shahed-136 UAVs domestically. Russia and Iran are reportedly cooperating to design a new engine that will increase the drone's range and speed.¹⁵

Iran has supplied various other types of materiel to Russia, most importantly artillery shells and rockets.¹⁶ According to an April 2023 *Wall Street Journal* report, Tehran provided Moscow with 300,000 artillery shells over the prior six months.¹⁷ Iranian supplies may have accounted for over 15 percent of Russia's artillery shell consumption during that period.¹⁸

In return for Iran's assistance, Moscow has stepped up its support for Tehran's military. As White House spokesman John Kirby said in December, Russia provides Iran "an unprecedented level of

¹⁰ "Торгпред рассказал о доле взаиморасчетов России и Ирана в национальных валютах [The trade representative spoke about the share of mutual settlements between Russia and Iran in national currencies]," *Ria Novosti* (Russia), December 26, 2019. (<https://ria.ru/20191226/1562862095.html>)

¹¹ "Эксперт: аутсорсинг сможет облегчить торговлю Ирана и России в условиях санкций [Expert: outsourcing can facilitate trade between Iran and Russia under sanctions]," *TASS* (Russia), July 15, 2020. (<https://tass.ru/ekonomika/8967785>); Russian Chamber Of Commerce And Industry Of The Russian Federation, "ИНТЕРВЬЮ: В России создана компания для ведения клиринговой торговли с Ираном - председатель РИДС (INTERVIEW: A company has been created in Russia to conduct clearing trade with Iran - Chairman of RIDS)," July 15, 2020. (https://rus-irn.tpprf.ru/ru/news/?CODE=intervyuvrossiisozdanakompaniyadlyavedeniyakliringovoytorgovlisiranompredsedatelrids_i369968); U.S.

Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Targets Oil Smuggling Network Generating Hundreds of Millions of Dollars for Qods Force and Hizballah," May 25, 2022. (<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0799>); U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Sanctions Oil Shipping Network Supporting IRGC-QF and Hizballah," November 3, 2022. (<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1076>); U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Targets Oil Smuggling Network Generating Hundreds of Millions of Dollars for Qods Force and Hizballah," May 25, 2022. (<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0799>); U.S. Department of the Treasury, Press Release, "Treasury Sanctions Oil Shipping Network Supporting IRGC-QF and Hizballah," November 3, 2022. (<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1076>)

¹² Cora Engelbrecht, "Iran and Russia move toward linking their banking systems helping both withstand Western sanctions." *The New York Times*, January 31, 2023. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/31/world/europe/iran-russia-banks.html>)

¹³ Julian E. Barnes, "Iran Sends Drone Trainers to Crimea to Aid Russian Military," *The New York Times*, October 18, 2022. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/us/politics/iran-drones-russia-ukraine.html>)

¹⁴ @FRHoffmann1, X, October 3, 2023. (<https://twitter.com/FRHoffmann1/status/1709191699103416748>)

¹⁵ Dion Nissenbaum and Warren P. Strobel, "Moscow, Tehran Advance Plans for Iranian-Designed Drone Facility in Russia," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 5, 2023. (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/moscow-tehran-advance-plans-for-iranian-designed-drone-facility-in-russia-11675609087>); Daniel Boffey, "Revealed: Europe's role in the making of Russia killer drones," *The Guardian* (UK), September 27, 2023. (<https://amp.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/27/revealed-europes-role-in-the-making-of-russia-killer-drones>)

¹⁶ John Hardie and Ryan Brobst, "How Much Can Iranian Artillery Ammo Help Russia," *FDD's Long War Journal*, March 16, 2023. (<https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2023/03/how-much-can-iranian-artillery-ammo-help-russia.php>); @JohnH105, X, August 17, 2023. (<https://twitter.com/JohnH105/status/1692358368889893143>)

¹⁷ Dion Nissenbaum and Benoit Faucon, "Iran Ships Ammunition to Russia by Caspian Sea to Aid Invasion of Ukraine," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 24, 2023. (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-ships-ammunition-to-russia-by-caspian-sea-to-aid-invasion-of-ukraine-e74e8585>)

¹⁸ "Iran Sends Russia Artillery Ammunition," *Foundation for the Defense of Democracies*, April 24, 2023. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/04/24/iran-sends-russia-artillery-ammunition>)

military and technical support that is transforming their relationship into a full-fledged defense partnership.”¹⁹

Tehran seeks to acquire Russian-made Su-35 fighter jets, attack helicopters, radars, and Yak-130 combat trainer aircraft, according to Kirby.²⁰ Iran has reportedly received at least two Yak-130 combat trainer aircraft already.²¹ Moscow has also sent Tehran some captured Western weapons from Ukraine. These reportedly include Javelin and NLAW anti-tank guided missiles and Stinger MANPADS.²²

In August 2022, a few weeks after Putin traveled to Iran in his first trip outside the former Soviet Union since Moscow’s full-scale invasion,²³ Russia launched a Khayyam remote-sensing satellite into orbit for Tehran.²⁴ Russia also provided Iran with cyber and other tools designed for espionage and repression.²⁵

Iran-Russia military cooperation also appears to include a coordinated effort to push U.S. forces out of Syria. Senior military and intelligence officials met in November 2022 and agreed to establish a “coordination center.” As part of this effort, Iran has attacked U.S. forces.²⁶ Russia has repeatedly harassed U.S. manned and unmanned aircraft over Syria. Pentagon officials have raised concerns about Russian aircraft collecting intelligence on U.S. bases in Syria, warning that Russia will likely transfer the intelligence to Iran.²⁷

The Looming Assault on Taiwan

Amidst this tumult, concerns are mounting about a Chinese war of aggression against Taiwan. The embattled democracy is already under intense pressure from China’s authoritarian regime.

¹⁹ Aamer Madhani, Edith M. Lederer, and Zeke Miller, “US: Russia, Iran moving toward full defense ‘partnership,’” *Associated Press*, December 9, 2022. (<https://apnews.com/article/putin-iran-government-and-politics-drones-933e27218934e7476d1a1524fc8ebf4c>)

²⁰ Matt Berg, “Russia may supply Iran with fighter jets, Kirby says,” *Politico*, February 24, 2023.

(<https://www.politico.com/news/2023/02/24/russia-iran-jets-kirby-00084362>); Laura Seligman and Alexander Ward, “New U.S. intelligence shows Russia’s deepening defense ties with Iran,” *Politico*, June 9, 2023. (<https://www.politico.com/news/2023/06/09/united-states-security-council-russia-iran-weapons-00101191>)

²¹ @imp_navigator, X, September 2, 2023. (https://twitter.com/imp_navigator/status/1697911547442385137); “Russian-made combat trainer aircraft joins Iran’s Air Force,” *Associated Press*, September 2, 2023. (<https://apnews.com/article/iran-russia-fighter-drone-495c0018a9af2443e767b8ccd39801e4>)

²² Natasha Bertrand, “Russia has been sending some US-provided weapons captured in Ukraine to Iran, sources say,” *CNN*, March 14, 2023. (<https://www.cnn.com/2023/03/10/politics/russia-iran-ukraine-weapons/index.html>); Deborah Haynes, “Russia flew €140m in cash and captured Western weapons to Iran in return for deadly drones, source claims,” *Sky News*, November 9, 2022. (<https://news.sky.com/story/russia-gave-eur140m-and-captured-western-weapons-to-iran-in-return-for-deadly-drones-source-claims-12741742>)

²³ Guy Faulconbridge, “Putin forges ties with Iran’s supreme leader in Tehran talks,” *Reuters*, July 19, 2022.

(<https://www.reuters.com/world/putin-visits-iran-first-trip-outside-former-ussr-since-ukraine-war-2022-07-18>)

²⁴ “Russia puts Iranian satellite into orbit,” *Reuters*, August 9, 2022. (<https://www.reuters.com/world/russia-launches-iranian-satellite-into-space-under-shadow-western-concerns-2022-08-09>). Joby Warrick and Ellen Nakashima, “Russia to launch spy satellite for Iran but use it first over Ukraine,” *The Washington Post*, August 4, 2023. (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/08/04/russia-iran-spy-satellite>). This was not the first time Russia and Iran had cooperated in space, however. In 2021, Moscow reportedly sent Tehran a Russian-made Kanopus-V imaging satellite and trained Iranian ground crews. See also: Joby Warrick, “Russia is preparing to supply Iran with an advanced satellite system that will boost Tehran’s ability to surveil military targets, officials say,” *The Washington Post*, June 10, 2021.

(https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/iran-russia-satellite/2021/06/10/d28978f0-c9ab-11eb-81b1-34796c7393af_story.html)

²⁵ Dov Lieber, Benoit Faucon, and Michael Amon, “Russia Supplies Iran With Cyber Weapons as Military Cooperation Grows,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 27, 2023. (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-supplies-iran-with-cyber-weapons-as-military-cooperation-grows-b14b94cd>)

²⁶ Joby Warrick and Evan Hill, “Iran plans to escalate attacks against U.S. troops in Syria, documents show,” *The Washington Post*, June 1, 2023. (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/06/01/discord-leaks-iran-russia-syria>)

²⁷ Haley Britzky and Oren Lieberman, “Russia flies surveillance flight over US base in Syria, official says,” *CNN*, July 14, 2023.

(<https://www.cnn.com/2023/07/14/politics/us-russia-syria-surveillance/index.html>); J.P. Lawrence, “Russian plans flying over US bases in Syria may be sharing intel, top general says,” *Stars and Stripes*, June 9, 2023. (https://www.stripes.com/theaters/middle_east/2023-06-09/russia-syria-base-surveillance-10383312.html)

Since becoming leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2012, Chinese leader Xi Jinping has ramped up the mainland's campaign against Taiwan, especially following President Tsai Ing-Wen's 2016 election. China's relentless maneuvering to diplomatically isolate Taiwan has pushed 10 nations to switch their allegiance from Taipei to Beijing. These and other successes, combined with the muted response from Western powers, have bolstered China's conviction that time and geopolitics are on its side.

China's campaign deploys all elements of its national power to systematically erode the island nation's standing on the global stage and its stability at home. Beijing's soft power strategy includes not merely isolating Taiwan but actively destabilizing it. In addition, China utilizes subversive tools like disinformation and electoral interference, seeking to corrode the political foundations of the state.

China rampantly employs disinformation campaigns to sow discord within Taiwan, attempting to manipulate public opinion, erode trust in the democratic process, and amplify pro-Beijing narratives.²⁸ These campaigns often portray reunification as inevitable and stoke fears about the implications of resisting China's advances. The blend of cyber warfare and disinformation paints a holistic picture of how Beijing uses the digital domain in its campaign against Taiwan.

Beijing is also waging economic warfare against Taiwan right now, owing to Taiwan's economic dependence on the mainland. In 2021, Taiwan exported \$188.91 billion in goods to mainland China and Hong Kong in 2021, accounting for 42 percent of Taiwan's total exports.²⁹ In comparison, U.S. trade accounts for 15 percent of Taiwanese exports. This has fostered deep ties between Taiwan's business elite and their mainland counterparts, making Taiwan susceptible to pressure from Beijing.³⁰ For example, under the pretense of pest concerns, China abruptly banned Taiwanese pineapples in 2021.³¹ The move was designed to hurt Taiwan's agricultural sector, jeopardizing the livelihood of farmers. These and other targeted bans signal Beijing's overriding intent: to utilize its significant market leverage to drive political outcomes, directly impact the livelihoods of Taiwan's citizens, and subsequently erode the foundations of Taiwan's democracy.

Beijing has also mounted increasingly brazen displays of military might to intimidate Taiwan. China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has escalated such displays since former U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's 2022 visit. Within a 24-hour span in mid-July, for example, 16 PLA warships approached Taiwan's territorial waters, accompanied by over 100 Chinese sorties.³² This heightened, regularized military activity demonstrates China's military capabilities and facilitates psychological warfare.

²⁸ "Report Exposes China-Linked Disinformation Targeting Taiwan's Presidential Election and COVID-19 Response," *International Republican Institute*, August 25, 2020. (<https://www.iri.org/news/report-exposes-china-linked-disinformation-targeting-taiwans-presidential-election-and-covid-19-response>); Sheryn Lee, "Disinformation and democratic resilience in Taiwan," *East Asia Forum*, March 28, 2023. (<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2023/03/28/disinformation-and-democratic-resilience-in-taiwan>)

²⁹ Evelyn Cheng, "Taiwan's trade with China is far bigger than its trade with the U.S.," *CNBC*, August 4, 2022. (<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/08/05/taiwans-trade-with-china-is-far-bigger-than-its-trade-with-the-us.html>)

³⁰ Shu Keng and Gunter Schubert, "Agents of Taiwan-China Unification? The Political Roles of Taiwanese Business People in the Process of Cross-Strait Integration," *Asian Survey*, March/April 2010. (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/as.2010.50.2.287?type=AccessWorkflow=login>)

³¹ Christina Thornell, "How China uses fruit to punish Taiwan," *Vox*, April 1, 2022. (<https://www.vox.com/23006359/china-taiwan-import-ban-fruit-pineapple-atemoya>)

³² Craig Singleton and Chase Moabery, "Beijing Mounts Record-Breaking Warship Deployments Around Taiwan as Island's Presidential Election Approaches," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, July 21, 2023. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/07/21/beijing-mounts-record-breaking-warship-deployments-around-taiwan-as-islands-presidential-election-approaches>)

Government entities offer differing time frames for a possible invasion of Taiwan. But the assessments only vary about when such an attack takes place, not if. This decision could be influenced heavily by the decisions made, and the deterrence gained or lost, by the United States in the Ukrainian and Israeli theaters.

Strategic Solidarity Emerges

In the broader geopolitical landscape, a disconcerting alliance among all three of these adversaries — China, Iran, and Russia — has emerged.

Russia and Iran have shown unwavering support for China’s ambitions concerning Taiwan. At a 2022 summit between Xi and Putin, the Russian president reaffirmed, “Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory.”³³ Iran also stated that Tehran intends to support China’s “core” territorial interests, a reference to China’s claims over Taiwan.³⁴

China and Russia continue to protect the Iranians at the United Nations³⁵ and to help the regime evade Western sanctions.³⁶ An appetite for Iranian oil in Moscow and Beijing helps to motivate this evasion effort, but it also clearly reflects a wider effort to weaken U.S. policy.³⁷ And Iran and China have given Vladimir Putin the military tools³⁸ and diplomatic cover he needs to wage war on Ukraine.³⁹

All three of these countries continue to challenge American allies and deepen their coordination. American policy must be to deny these countries the ability to work together in a way that challenges our friends or our interests.

Recommendations

Confronting U.S adversaries such as Iran, China, and Russia requires long term investments, planning, and strategy that spans the defense, intelligence, economic, and social spheres. The first step is fully funding and resourcing the Department of Defense (DoD). Through years of uncertain budgets, sequestration, and short-term spending bills, DoD has lacked the means to implement long-term plans to confront major U.S. adversaries. Timely and sufficient

³³ “Russia considers Taiwan inalienable part of China, opposes its independence — statement,” *TASS* (Russia), March 21, 2023. (<https://tass.com/world/1592503>)

³⁴ “China, Iran to support each other on core interests: Chinese FM,” *Xinhua* (China), August 20, 2023. (<https://english.news.cn/20230820/078929decffa44e89b33751fe39cc35e/c.html>)

³⁵ Michelle Nichols, “Russia, China build case at U.N. to protect Iran from U.S. sanctions threat,” *Reuters*, June 9, 2020. (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-iran-russia-china-idUSKBN23G2YR>)

³⁶ Jonathan Tirone and Golnar Motevalli, “Russia and Iran Are Building a Trade Route That Defies Sanctions,” *Bloomberg*, December 21, 2022. (<https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2022-russia-iran-trade-corridor/#xj4y7vzkg>)

³⁷ Michael Crowley, “U.S. Penalizes Chinese Companies for Aiding Iran’s Oil Exports,” *The New York Times*, September 29, 2022. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/29/us/politics/iran-sanctions-china-oil.html>)

³⁸ Karen DeYoung and Missy Ryan, “Russia says China agreed to secretly provide weapons, leaked documents show,” *The Washington Post*, April 13, 2023. (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/04/13/russia-china-weapons-leaked-documents-discord/>); “Iran’s Deepening Strategic Alliance with Russia,” *United States Institute of Peace, The Iran Primer*, April 25, 2023. (<https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2023/feb/24/iran%E2%80%99s-deepening-strategic-alliance-russia>)

³⁹ Michael Crowley, “Blinken Says Xi’s Visit to Moscow Offers ‘Diplomatic Cover’ for Putin’s War Crimes,” *The New York Times*, March 20, 2023. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/20/world/europe/blinken-xi-russia-war-crimes.html#:~:text=Blinken%20Says%20Xi's%20Visit%20to,accountable%20for%20atrocities%20in%20Ukraine.>)

appropriations from Congress are crucial to meet current challenges and properly invest in future capabilities and technologies.

Their absence forces DoD to find short term fixes to problems rather than allow for longer term planning and implementation. Congress needs to break this cycle of continuing resolutions and provide a more predictable stream of resources.

The United States and our key allies are also dealing with unsecure supply chains and challenging procurement pathways. Our adversaries understand this weakness and have invested heavily in consolidating supply chains they can manipulate. The United States needs a procurement strategy that addresses these vulnerabilities while enhancing U.S. and allied abilities to procure materials and technologies in high demand during conflicts.

The United States is currently supporting several allies in major military conflicts. U.S. support is critical but it is also stretching U.S. stockpiles and the domestic manufacturing base. Congress should be asking specific questions about what systems are critical right now and how Washington can provide the means for our allies to defend themselves. In the case of Israel, there are several key items Washington can provide without massive investments in new manufacturing. These include precision munitions, small-diameter bombs, Tamir interceptors used by Iron Dome batteries. The United States could also transfer its own Iron Dome batteries to Israel for the duration of the war.

To combat China's aggressive efforts to gain sway in developing nations, Congress should support transparent infrastructure financing initiatives as an alternative to cheap — and usually corrupt — Chinese infrastructure and financing programs. At the same time, Congress should continue to strengthen the screening of large investments in the United States through the CFIUS process to ensure Chinese companies are not gaining leverage over key sectors of the U.S. economy.

Finally, I recommend that Congress quickly pass a supplemental aid bill for Ukraine that provides enough funding to last through the 2024 election. The uncertainty caused by congressional inaction inhibits U.S. and Ukrainian planning and could force Ukraine to conserve munitions out of an abundance of caution.⁴⁰ This would only benefit Russia.

On behalf of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

⁴⁰ John Hardie and Bradley Bowman, "Congressional inaction damages both Ukrainian and US militaries," *Foundation for the Defense of Democracies*, October 6, 2023. (<https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/10/06/congressional-inaction-damages-both-ukrainian-and-us-militaries>)