American National Security and the Russian-Iranian War on Ukraine: A Conversation with Senator Ted Cruz

TRANSCRIPT

Discussion

- Senator Ted Cruz, US Senator, Texas
- Mike Doran, Senior Fellow and Director, Center for Peace and Security in the Middle East

Disclaimer: This transcript is based off of a recorded video conference and breaks in the stream may have resulted in mistranscriptions in the text.

A video of the event is available: https://www.hudson.org/events/next-move-ukraine-conversation-michael-r-pompeo

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Mike Doran:

Good afternoon. I'm Mike Doran. I'm the Director of the Middle East Center here at Hudson. And it's our distinct honor to host Senator Ted Cruz, the Former Solicitor General of the State of Texas. He first came to the Senate in 2013 and immediately earned a reputation for defending the American interest abroad. Senator, welcome. Your accomplishments are too numerous to recount at length, but I will briefly note a few stances of yours that we here at Hudson particularly appreciate. First, you've played and continue to play an indispensable role in preventing the Islamic Republic of Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

Second, you have routinely thwarted the enemies of Israel from hijacking American foreign policy. And third, you deserve responsibility for preventing the Nord Stream 2 pipeline from making Europe even more dependent on Russian gas than it already is. To those three, I might also add that you have held the Chinese Communist Party responsible for spreading Covid-19, to say nothing of the espionage and information operations that it conducts here in the United States. The senator has graciously agreed to deliver some prepared remarks on the rising Russian Iranian alliance. Following his remarks, he will move to the stage to answer some questions. Thank you, Senator Cruz for being here. As I hand the podium to you, I ask the audience to join me in giving you a warm welcome.

Senator Ted Cruz:

Well, thank you, Michael. It is a privilege to be with you. Thank you for having me. Thank you for all the terrific work that Hudson is doing. These are challenging times. We have right now, the largest land war in Europe since 1945, since the end of World War II, launched and advanced by Russia. We have also a resurgent Islamic Republic flush with cash working closely with Russia to advance their mutual interests and within close reach of having nuclear weapons, which has also been sadly, a recurring theme across both the Obama and the Biden Administrations. It's worth examining why these things keep happening, how they're happening, and what utter catastrophes they have been for the national security interest of the United States. Today, I want to focus on one dynamic in particular, which is the close cooperation between Russia and Iran, specifically in the context of Russia's continued aggression in Ukraine, and Iran's critical role in sustaining Russia's aggression in Ukraine and beyond.

Let's rewind to the middle of last year. The Russian offensive had stalled, and we were a few months away from what would become a massive Ukrainian counter offensive. As everyone here knows, the Biden Administration denied Ukraine lethal aid, even as it became clear that Russia was prepared to launch their all out war. The Administration never expected the Ukrainians to fight, let alone survive the outset of the war we all remember when President Biden offered President Zelensky an avenue of escape from the country, and Zelensky famously said, "I don't need a ride. I need ammunition". The Biden Administration let it be known that they expected Kyiv to fall within a few days. Even after February 24th, the Biden Administration finally had to be shamed into supplying lethal aid by our European allies who did so first. Nevertheless, by the middle of the year, the Administration had supplied High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems or HIMARS, and the Ukrainians had with incredible bravery and sacrifice stalled the Russians.

Knowing that his attack was in danger, Putin turned to Iran to purchase loitering munitions, so-called kamikaze drones. The Iranians were only too happy to sell them. Meanwhile, the Biden Administration was exchanging last ditch offers with the Iranians to try to bribe the Ayatollah into
a new and even worse nuclear deal, talks that would dismantle whatever was left of the
International Arms Embargo against Iran, which the Administration had already badly
undermined, and would unlock hundreds of billions of dollars for the regime. The Russians
began to use the base in Crimea to launch the Iranian drones with utterly devastating results for
Ukrainian forces, civilians and infrastructure. The Ukrainians knew where that base was, but it
was out of range for the HIMARS we had given them. So the Ukrainian government asks the
Biden Administration for Army Tactical Missile Systems or ATACMS, which could hit that base.
They gave the Biden Administration a detailed plan on how they would use the ATACMS.

The Biden Administration refused. Why did they refuse? Well, according to what they said
publicly, they told journalists that, "The HIMARS had sufficient range for the Ukrainians." There
are many things to say about this excuse, but perhaps the most relevant is that it's easily
disprovable for anyone with access to Google Maps to discover that was a lie. What was the
real reason? I believe the real reason is that where there were Iranian drones, you could expect
there would be Iranian personnel, and it would've been politically inconvenient to the Biden
Administration to President Biden and Secretary Blinken to have dead IRGC forces littering
Crimea, just at the very instant that they were trying to ink another deal with the Ayatollah. And
this brings us to perhaps the most fundamental problem with the Biden Administration's strategy
regarding the Russian Iranian war being waged against Ukraine.

I don't doubt that many people in the Biden Administration want Ukraine to win this war. But
even more so, they want to enter another nuclear deal with Iran. Those two interests are in
direct conflict. And although Democrats now ostentatious wear their Ukrainian pins on their
lapels, the Administration repeatedly declined to provide the lethal weaponry to enable Ukraine
to prevail in the war, and simultaneously has been funding both sides of the war, has been
flooding billions of dollars into Iran that goes into drones that the Russians use to kill Ukrainians.
This is madness.

And before continuing, let's pause to reflect how we got here. What is most infuriating about the
war in Ukraine is how utterly and completely unnecessary it is. We did not have to have this
war, and this war was caused directly by the foreign policy mistakes of President Joe Biden.
Now to some, particularly to the Administration's echo chamber in the corporate media, that
might seem like an astonishing statement, but let's review the facts. Vladimir Putin didn't wake
up yesterday and decide that he wanted to invade Ukraine. He's wanted to invade Ukraine for a
long time. Why? Well, Putin's been very candid about it. He has stated that in his view, "The
greatest geopolitical disaster of the 20th century was the dissolution of the Soviet Union," and
his objective is to reassemble the Soviet Union.

He looks to days in the past of what he sees as Soviet greatness, and he yearns to restore that
greatness. Now, if you're going to reassemble the Soviet Union, the first and most important
piece is Ukraine. And for anyone with a memory longer than that of a fruit fly, you will remember
this is not the first time Vladimir Putin has invaded Ukraine. He did it the last time we had a
Democrat in the White House. In 2014, he invaded Crimea, the southern portion of Ukraine.
Now, in 2014, he stopped. Why? He stopped because Russia's principle source of revenue is
selling oil and natural gas, and the natural gas runs on pipelines right through the middle of
Ukraine.

And if Putin had continued to invade Ukraine, he risked damaging or destroying those pipelines,
which would put him in the untenable position of not being able to deliver his product to market.
So what happened next? 2015, the next year, Putin began construction of Nord Stream 2, the
undersea pipeline that runs directly from Russia to Germany, the entire purpose of which was to circumvent Ukraine, so that when Nord Stream 2 was completed and operational, Putin could invade Ukraine and not worry about the pipelines because he could get his natural gas to Europe through the pipeline.

Now, many in Washington recognize this was a terrible development, but conventional wisdom in Washington was there was nothing we could do about it. I didn't believe that. And so I joined together with the Democrat, Jeanne Shaheen from New Hampshire, and we authored bipartisan legislation, targeted sanctions designed to shut down Nord Stream 2. We introduced that legislation, we passed that bipartisan legislation. It passed the Senate, it passed the House, and Putin stopped construction of Nord Stream 2 the day that Donald Trump signed my sanctions legislation into law. In fact, the timing is even more acute. If I remember correctly, it was 7:00 PM on a Thursday night that Trump signed the sanctions legislation into law at 6:45 PM. Fifteen minutes before that legislation was signed, the company building Nord Stream 2 announced they had immediately suspended all operations.

Now, that was of course precisely the objective of the legislation. It was designed to be fatal to any company that continued operations after 7:01 PM. But the pipeline was dead for the next 13 months. The pipeline remained dormant. It remained a hunk of metal at the bottom of the sea. In December of 2020, I again authored bipartisan sanctions legislation which again passed the Senate, passed the House, and President Trump signed into law, ratcheting up the sanctions even tighter on Nord Stream 2.

Then what happened? Well, unfortunately, on January 20th, 2021, Joe Biden took the Oath of Office as President of the United States. Four days later, on January 24th, Putin resumed deep sea construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. You want to talk about cause and effect. It was not subtle, it was not hidden, it was not lost on anyone who was paying attention, and Putin did so because the Biden administration had foreshadowed weakness on Nord Stream 2 that they intended to give in to Putin what Russia wanted.

For the remainder of the year 2021, the Biden administration ostentatiously demonstrated they were tough on Russia. They would beat their chest. Meanwhile, Joe Biden would fly to Europe, drop to one knee, and obsequiously give Putin every single thing he wanted, and in particular, the number one thing he wanted was Nord Stream 2, and Biden's response was, "Sir, yes, sir." And he gave Vladimir Putin a multi-billion dollar gift, when later in 2021, he formally waived sanctions on Nord Stream 2.

Now, when that happened, I placed a hold on every State Department nominee in the Biden State Department. And you may recall more than a few people in this city lost their minds. Democrats began screaming and wailing about how burdensome it was that they couldn't get their nominees confirmed. And even some Republicans began whining about, "Well, don't actually fight like you mean it."

We got to the end of 2021, and there was a considerable backlog of nominees that were going to expire at the end of the year, and the White House was desperate to get them through. And I was more than happy to agree to a reasonable deal. I let a large tranche of nominees go through, in exchange for a vote in January of 2022 on reimposing sanctions on Nord Stream 2.

So what happened next? We came to the vote. On the eve of the vote, president Zelenskyy publicly begged the United States Senate to please pass the sanctions legislation. President
Zelenskyy said, "This is the last best hope to stop Russia from invading Ukraine." The government of Poland put out a formal statement calling on the United States Senate, "Pass Cruz' sanctions legislation. If you do not, Russia will invade Ukraine." Now, it is highly unusual that our allies engage in direct public advocacy of legislation pending before the United States Congress, but both Ukraine and Poland did. So I stood on the Senate floor and I said, "If we do not pass this sanctions legislation, we will see tanks in the streets of Kyiv."

The day of the vote, Joe Biden traveled 16 blocks down Pennsylvania Avenue to Capitol Hill. It was the first time in his Presidency he had come to Capitol Hill. He came to personally lobby the Democrat Senators. Again, the first time in his Presidency he had done so, to vote against sanctions on Russia, to vote against sanctions on Putin. Twice my sanctions legislation had passed the Senate. Twice every Senate Democrat had voted for them. And yet, at Joe Biden's personal entreaty, 44 Democrats flipped their vote. 44 Democrats said, "Partisan politics matters more to us than US national security. Partisan politics matters more to us than standing with our allies. Partisan politics matters more to us than standing up to Russia." And 44 Democrats said, "We will lift sanctions on Russia and Putin on the eve of a war." And within weeks of that vote, what President Zelenskyy said would happen, what Poland said would happen, what I said would happen, happened. And Russian tanks rolled across the border and into Ukraine and the war began.

I do not believe my claim is in any wit hyperbole when I say, "This war is the direct result of policy mistakes made by President Biden." Had he listened, had he put national security above partisan politics, this war would've been prevented. But the Biden White House always, always, always, prioritizes politics over national security.

Now, where are we now? The war is ongoing. And let me be clear about something. It is important now that this war has started that Putin loses. Vladimir Putin is our enemy. He desires to reassemble the Soviet Union. Doing so would be very bad for America. Now let me be clear as to why I believe that. It is not, as most Democrats and far too many Republicans say, because I have some abstract devotion to international norms. I don't know what the hell an international norm is. It's not because we must defend democracy wherever it is found on planet Earth. Our sons and daughter in the US military did not sign up to be the world's policeman. And democracy is a good thing. We should speak out for democracy. But I'm not willing to send our soldiers to bleed and die simply in defense of democracy.

Rather, we should want Putin to lose because Putin winning would be bad for America, it would endanger America, it would put Americans at greater risk, it would endanger American soldiers and sailors and airmen and Marines. We should want our enemies to be weaker, not stronger, because weaker enemies keep us safe and stronger enemies increase the likelihood that Americans will die. But we need to have a laser focus on the interest of the United States, and part of the interest of the United States is also standing with our allies. Why is it our interest to stand with our allies, to honor our treaty commitments? It's worth remembering Ukraine used to be the world's third largest nuclear power. Ukraine voluntarily handed over its nuclear weapons, at the urging of the United States, in exchange for the Budapest Memorandum where we committed to help protect the sovereign territorial integrity of Ukraine. I ask you, what nuclear power on Earth would ever make that same mistake?

If America wants our allies to believe us, if we want our allies to believe we will follow through on treaties, then we need to honor our commitments. And let me say also, a principle that the Biden administration does not understand is that the way you deal with bullies and tyrants is
from strength and not weakness. The Biden administration's approach to every enemy of America is to use weakness and appeasement to give them what they want. History is replete with examples that that is disastrous foreign policy. There is a reason no one signs up to study at the Neville Chamberlain School of Foreign Affairs. But I will say, were there such an institution, I am confident they would give their first honorary degree to Joseph Robinette Biden Jr.

Bullies respect strength. And let me say they're also some in Washington who say, "Well, maybe that's true, but we don't need to worry about Russia because China is the real threat." Now let me be clear. I've been saying for 11 years in the Senate that China is the single greatest geopolitical threat facing the United States over the next century. And I think we need a concerted, thorough, strategic strategy to prevail over Communist China much as we had to win the Cold War. When I began saying that 11 years ago, it was a bit like John the Baptist, although I ate less honey and locusts. But all the Democrats disagreed with that proposition and most of the Republicans disagreed with that proposition. They looked to China and they saw dollar signs as far as the eye could see.

So I will yield to no one in the vigor with which we should stand up to China. But I'm here to tell you what happens in Ukraine matters intensely for China, and in particular for Taiwan. First year of the Biden administration, we saw Biden's catastrophic surrender to the Taliban and disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, leaving Americans behind, leaving our allies behind, utter incompetence. And every enemy of America watched what happened there very closely. At the time, I said, "The chances of Russia invading Ukraine have just risen tenfold." At the time, I said, "The chances of China invading Taiwan have risen tenfold."

For those voices in Washington who say, "Well, we should focus on China and Taiwan and ignore Russia and Ukraine," I can tell you who doesn't believe that. Taiwan. Just this week I had dinner with the speaker of the Taiwanese Parliament and the Taiwanese Ambassador. I asked them both about this. "What do you think of the idea that we should not focus on Ukraine and instead focus only on China?" And I will tell you, they said unequivocally that Xi and China is watching what is happening in Ukraine. And every day it goes on, every Russian soldier that is lost, the worse it goes for Russia, the less likely China is to make the decision to invade Taiwan.

At the outset of this war. I remember sitting in classified briefings of the Biden administration with State and Defense and CIA and all the alphabet soup of Washington. And every one of the senior Biden administration leaders told the members of Congress, "This war will be over in a matter of days. Within a week, Russia will sweep into Ukraine, they will all surrender, and it will be over." I have a question for you. Who's lost their job over that? Every single defense and intelligence agency in Washington had it wildly catastrophically wrong on a question of national security, and to the best of my knowledge, not a single person has lost his job or even been held accountable. Why did they tell us all this war would be over in a week? I think part of it is because Joe Biden and the Democrats wanted the war to be over in a week.

And one of the reasons they wanted it to be over at a week is because the singular obsession of Biden foreign policy is a nuclear deal with Iran. If Joe Biden is Captain Ahab, Iran is their white whale, and they will pursue Iran to the depths of the oceans, even intertwined with the rope attached to the harpoon. In November, 2020, United States had been out of the catastrophic Obama Iran nuclear deal for two years. At that point, Iran had not even crossed the 5% enrichment threshold, and they weren't using advanced centrifuges. Then Biden came into office and immediately signaled weakness and surrender, just like he did on Nord Stream 2. It's
the same pattern. If you're an enemy of America, you can count on President Biden and Kamala Harris to genuflect to you. His team immediately said that it would dismantle pressure on the Iranian regime, which of course they did. What happened next? Iran installed advanced centrifuges. They enriched uranium to medium, and even highly enriched levels, all the way to potential weapons grade material.

They've allowed Iran to achieve zero nuclear breakout. Biden officials of course blame Republicans because you know Republicans, everything is Trump's fault. Administration officials, including Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, have repeatedly said the deal kept Iran's program "into a box." But let's be clear, the maximum pressure campaign kept Iran in a box. The Biden administration let the out and threw the box away.

The Biden administration also allowed Iran to stabilize their economy. Iran routinely violates energy sanctions by using its own tankers, as well as a ghost fleet of foreign flagships. The Biden administration has allowed that ghost fleet to grow dramatically. The Iranians were using 70 tankers when President Biden came into office. Today, they're using about 300, 70 tankers to 300. The Biden administration didn't sanction those tankers. Instead, they allowed Iran to restore its energy exports, getting now above 1 million barrels a day. This is fueling the despotic, theocratic, vicious regime. Their energy exports are higher today than any time since the Maximum pressure campaign. The administration even has this strange fantasy where they wish so much they were in a deal with Iran, or that the US just never withdrew from the terrible Obama deal, that they pretend they really are.

It's not just that they aren't enforcing oil sanctions as if they were in the deal, they are actively implementing parts of the joint comprehensive plan of action right now, even while Iran is openly violating the deal. Let me give you two more examples that are relevant to cooperation with Russia. Number one, the Biden administration has reissued civil nuclear waivers, which come out of Annex III of the joint comprehensive plan of action. The Trump administration canceled these waivers at my energetic urging, but Biden promptly restored them and just recently renewed them. Number two, the Biden administration is continuing to implement something called license J, a JCPOA license that allows for what's called temporary sojourn of US origin planes. In more simple terms, foreign airlines get to fly planes with American parts to Iran, which would otherwise be prohibited. Now, we can argue about what this means for Iran and how it is utterly insane from the perspective of US national security or from the perspective of our friend and ally, the state of Israel, but let's focus on the topic of these remarks. What does it mean for Ukraine?

What does the Biden administration's obsessive focus on an Iran deal to the expense of every other possible objective, what does it mean for Ukraine? The cooperation between Russia and Iran is vast, and its deepening. The Biden administration doesn't even try to deny this. In January of this year, Secretary Blinken admitted, "Iran has now become Russia's top military backer. That's not me saying that. That's Tony Blinken. Just a few weeks ago, Blinken acknowledged to me in testimony in front of the Senate forum relations committee, that there is, and I'll quote again, a symbiotic relationship that we're seeing emerge between Iran and Russia to include a provision by Iran of drone technology to Russia for use in Ukraine, and the provision by Russia to Iran or the threatened provision of weapon systems including planes. Further, in just the last few days, reports have emerged in Iranian media that the regime shortly will receive SU 35 war planes from Russia. And the cooperation goes far beyond weapons and oil tankers.
Russia also uses Iran's banks, airports, and airlines, ports and ships to facilitate weapons transfers and to circumvent sanctions aimed at countering those transfers. The Iran ghost fleet is a good example of this. While the Biden administration was looking the other way at Iran busting through sanctions, Iran took the opportunity to grow their fleet. Now, Russia is using dozens and dozens of those tankers to bust through energy sanctions related to Ukraine. Listen to that again. Joe Biden in his administration turns a blind eye to Iran evading sanctions, and Iran uses the fleet to help Russia evade sanctions, all of which enables Russia to kill more Ukrainian soldiers, which the Biden administration falsely claims it is their top priority to prevent.

The Biden administration can't do anything about those Iranian tankers. Because if they did, people would rightly ask why they didn't sanction the tankers back when they were helping Iran violate the sanctions, and the answer would be obvious. They wanted to appease Iran to get another deal, with catastrophic consequences for Ukraine, for Europe, and for global pressure on Russia. Now, let's talk briefly about the JCPOA waivers. And the licenses still bizarrely being implemented by the Biden administration. One set of waivers, the controversial civil nuclear waivers allows Russia to help Iran build its nuclear program. Who in their right mind could think this made sense? Who in their right mind could think this is good for America? Let's get Putin and the Ayatollah together building nukes. What's the relevance to Ukraine? Here's what President Zelensky has repeatedly said. "How does Russia pay Iran for this? Is Iran just interested in money? Probably not money at all, but Russian assistance to the Iranian nuclear program." In one of the countless Trump impeachments, we were all reintroduced to the Latin term quid pro quo.

Well, I'll tell you, there's quid and there's quo, and you got Iranian drones and you got Russian nuclear assistance. And both of them are terrible for America, terrible for Israel, and terrible for Ukraine. Zelensky said this in October of 2022. He said it again in February of this year. You know what the Biden administration did? They renewed the waivers. Oh, sounds good to us. Some Russians helping Iranians develop nukes, we don't see a problem at all. As for US origin planes, the Commerce Department has identified multiple US origin planes that Iran is used to ship weapons to Russia. Now, anyone who actually thinks sanctions law matters might think that's a problem. I practiced law for a lot of years. I can just imagine the owner of a US origin plane coming to me, saying, "Okay, so I got a plan to ship weapons illegally from Iran to Russia on my American planes.

Any problems with that?" After about six shots of tequila, I would tell my client, that's the most insane plan I'd ever heard in my life, but I would be wrong, because that legal advice would assume some modicum of competence and sanity in the administration that they would actually follow the law. And because an Iran deal is the holy grail, everything else falls in pursuit of that objective. Now, unfortunately, I believe that nothing will get better, not when it comes to Iran, not when it comes to Ukraine, until the Biden administration confronts or is forced to confront these areas of Russia-Iran cooperation. That's why I'm working to currently get support for legislation called The Sanctions Against Destabilizing Iranian Russian Aggressor Aggression or SADIRA, which would force the Biden administration to confront Russian-Iran cooperation in a number of ways. My legislation would mandate the implementation of existing Ukraine related sanctions on the banks, on the oil tankers, on the airplanes and airports, on the ships, and shipyards used by Russia and Iran to continue the war in Ukraine.

And it does one more thing, importantly. Critically, my bill would lock up the billions of dollars that Iran has overseas and that they'd get from another nuclear deal. Instead, the president would have to use that money to pay first American victims of Iranian aggression, and second to
compensate Ukraine for the damage done by the weapons of war that Iran has been illegally providing to Russia. We're in a precarious position right now when it comes to the war in Ukraine. The Biden administration, with the active complicity and energetic silence of the corporate media, is vigorously funding both sides of the war. The American people are losing faith that the battle is worth their time and treasure. And as long as the Biden administration fuels both sides of it, the American people can be understood to doubt why it is in America’s interest.

If you want to see Russia lose in Ukraine, if you want to see Putin lose in Ukraine, and I do, one of the most important steps we can take to do that is to stop, to eliminate the Russia-Iran cooperation that is producing the drones, that are murdering Ukrainian soldiers. We've got to stop Joe Biden from fighting and supporting both sides of the war in Ukraine. Thank you.

**Mike Doran:**

Well, thank you for those remarks. I found it entirely persuasive that the Iran nuclear deal is the holy grail and the white whale, and-

**Senator Ted Cruz:**

I apologize to my high school English teacher for mixing my metaphor so badly.

**Mike Doran:**

They rhymed at least. But I struggle with understanding why. I mean, we've seen so many things that have disproved the original thesis that we were going to have a kinder, gentler Iran, that we were going to be able to stabilize the Middle East. I mean, look, we have the, as you mentioned, the drones to Russia. We have the uprising in Iran. We have the complete contempt that the Iranians have shown for every American initiative, the open plots against American officials. Against all of that, there's been no motion in the administration's position. Why is it the Holy grail?

**Senator Ted Cruz:**

Look, I think it's a combination of three things. Number one, Joe Biden and just about every senior foreign policy official is hopelessly naive when it comes to foreign policy. They're all like refugees from a faculty lounge at one of our many universities that no longer live in the real world. They believe that enemies to America, if you're just nice to them, make love, not war, man, if you just put a daisy in a rifle barrel, the bad guys will be happy. Look, that naivete was reflected when Barack Obama became president and he traveled to the University of Cairo and he gave a speech where he said, "Iran has a right." He used that word "right" to nuclear technology. I got to say that's utterly imbecilic. I'm familiar with a right to life, with right to liberty, a right to pursuit of happiness. I'm not familiar with a right to nuclear weapons. And when you're dealing with a theocratic homicidal maniac who routinely leads chance of death to America and death to Israel, only a fool would want the Ayatollah to have nuclear weapons.

So that's number one, naivete. Number two sadly is incompetence. They're not very good at executing anything. Look at the debacle in Afghanistan. Look at even once they decided to withdraw where they knew they had to withdraw thousands of Americans and thousands of Afghan allies, we had Bagram Airfield, a secure airfield where we could have done so in safety
and security. So they abandoned Bagram before the evacuation, shift in the evacuation to the Kabul Airport in a dense urban area where it was vulnerable and tragically resulted in 13 service men and women being murdered by a suicide bomber. That's not ideology, that's incompetence. But the third point, look, today's Democrat party, in a very real sense, they don't have a foreign policy. Their foreign policy is domestic policy projected abroad. Today's Democrats divide the world into red countries and blue countries. And red countries are essentially anyone who wanted to be friends with America when Donald Trump was president. And blue countries are the countries that hated Donald Trump.

So red countries whom the Democrats despise include, in a principal position, Israel. And there is no country for whom their loathing is greater than the state of Israel and especially Prime Minister Netanyahu. But it also includes countries like Brazil, countries like India, countries like Columbia.

Mike Doran:

Saudi Arabia.

Senator Ted Cruz:

Saudi Arabia, countries that were friends with America, and today's Democrats look at all of those red countries with deep animosity so much so, let's take Brazil and Colombia. In both instances, we had leaders in those countries who were pro-America, who wanted to be friends with America, and what did the Biden administration do? They would undermine both Duque and Bolsonaro, undermine him, attack him, refuse to take phone calls. And now we have left-wing, Marxist, anti-American leaders who hate America, who've taken over in both countries.

When it comes to blue countries, those are countries that we had antagonistic relationships. And sadly, those include countries like North Korea, like Iran, and Iran is the principal blue country. And also in a very real sense, Russia and China. Everything the Biden administration thinks about in foreign policy is through this lens. Are you a blue country or a red country? I cannot tell you how many conversations I've had with our allies where they do not understand why the Biden administration is undermining them. And to be honest, they would be nicer to them if you just became an enemy of America. Then the Biden administration responds with appeasement, but is exactly backwards that they undermine our friends and allies.

By the way, the UK, you look at India, largest democracy in the face of the planet pivoting towards the United States, but Modi like Trump, that is a capital offense in Biden world. So you have the Biden administration talking about sanctioning India. We now have Saudi Arabia, we have much of the Arab world pivoting towards Russia and China. It would be difficult to describe a more spectacularly bad outcome for America and the world than driving the Middle East into the arms of Russia and China. That's exactly what the Biden administration has done.

Mike Doran:

Last week there was a little bit of excitement that maybe there was an Iran deal coming. There was a briefing on the Hill that was going to come, and I gathered that it was nothing burger. But what are you hearing behind the scenes about the... When the Biden team is sitting behind closed doors and explaining why they need to hold the course on Iran? What do you think they're saying to each other and what are they explaining to you guys?
**Senator Ted Cruz:**

What they say to each other, I have no idea. What they say to us are empty excuses. "Gosh, it's really hard to find the oil." It really is that lame an excuse. "We just don't know how to. Like those tankers, we just, we can't. We don't know how to do it. We're just..." They just plead incompetence, "It's too difficult." And it's so disingenuous that it makes you want to laugh out loud. They're not imposing the sanctions because they don't want to.

Look, we had an exchange. Tony Blinken was testifying in front of the Senate Formulations Committee, and I asked him at the time, I said, "Mr. Secretary, is it true that the State Department is currently spending $2 million a month on security for former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo because the government of Iran has taken out a contract and hired assassins to murder Secretary Pompeo?"

**Mike Doran:**

Hudson's Law Secretary Pompeo.

**Senator Ted Cruz:**

And Blinken said, "Yes. Yes, that's true. We're spending $2 million a month of taxpayer money." Not just Pompeo, but also John Bolton and Brian Hook, all three of them, but my question focused on Pompeo. And I said, "Is it also true that your negotiators just in the weeks that passed were sitting down with Iran negotiating with them while they're doing this?" "Yes, that's true too." "Is it true that you ask them, 'would you please stop trying to murder our former Secretary of State?'" "Yes. Yes, that's true too." "And is it true they said, 'no, we will not stop trying to murder your former Secretary of State.'" And there Blinken said, "Well, I can't answer that."

And I just looked at him and said, "What in the hell are you doing?" I said, "Mr. Secretary, would you agree, it's a pretty big deal to try to murder a U.S. Secretary of State?" And I have to admit, Blinken laughed out loud at that. Well, he did concede, "Yes, that's a big deal." Then how on earth are you sitting there sipping Chardonnay and negotiating with people who are actively trying to murder senior U.S. government officials? They have no good explanation other than they say, "We're just not competent enough to do it." But their real explanation is the obsession with an Iran deal supersedes any other possible concern in foreign policy, including winning the war in Ukraine.

**Mike Doran:**

You showed the connection between Russia and Iran, and I think you showed the continuity or the same mistakes being made in both arenas. But what about on China, do you give them higher marks on China or do you think that the same mindset is at work?

**Senator Ted Cruz:**

So unfortunately don't. One of the things to understand, today's Democrats in Washington are structurally pro China because the stakeholders that they listen to are all pro China. Today's Democrat party is funded by big business, big Hollywood, big tech, and big universities. All of them are thoroughly in bed with China. As a result, today's Democrat party follows the money
and will do nothing to offend China. Today’s Democrats feel some obligation occasionally to make a head nod of some rhetoric to stand up to China, but when it comes to actually doing anything, they’re terrified to do so. In the previous Congress, I forced to vote on the Senate floor to prohibit the federal government from purchasing electric vehicles or batteries manufactured using slave labor in concentration camps in China. Now, one might think this would be a pretty easy vote, should America be the principle customer for goods made using slave labor every single Democrat, but one, everyone but Joe Manchin voted no. They all voted in favor of importing goods made in concentration camps.

John Kerry, when he was asked about this, he said, “Well, that’s not my department.” And I’ve sadly joked that John Kerry should be named the concentration camp customer of the year. I’m going to say history is not going to be kind to an administration that is happy to fund over one million Uyghurs are in concentration camps right now where they’re subject to torture and murder and slavery, and the Biden administration is an active participant in that slavery because they’re funding it and they’re purchasing goods that are manufactured in those concentration camps.

Mike Doran:

Well, I’m afraid the powers that we have tell me that you have to be out of here. So I’m sorry we can’t continue this longer. It’s been very insightful. Thank you very much.

Senator Ted Cruz:

Thank you, Michael.

Mike Doran:

Thank you.