Mike Pence, Forty-Eighth Vice President of the United States

John P. Walters, President and CEO

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A video of the event is available: https://www.hudson.org/events/presidential-speech-series-mike-pence

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John Walters:

Good afternoon and welcome to the Betsy and Wally Stern Conference Center at Hudson Institute. It's my honor to introduce Vice President Michael R. Pence. He's been a friend of Hudson for many years. He's part of our roots in Indiana and he's a former colleague from the Bush Administration and I could not be happier to be able to introduce him today.

I'd like to acknowledge his brother, Congressman Greg Pence, who is with us. At Hudson, we know how important it is to have good people serve our country, so thank you for both being with us. Vice President Pence, I'm not going to do entirely justice to his distinguished resume in order to give him time for his remarks to us today. He has a distinguished career, as you know in public service. Beginning with his legal practice in Indiana Policy Review Foundation, he established the Mike Pence Show, a syndicated radio show and a weekly television public affairs program in Indiana. In '2000, he successfully entered the United States House of Representatives. Throughout his tenure in Congress, vice President Pence was reelected six times. His colleagues recognized his leadership qualities, unanimously elected him as chairman of the House Republican Study Committee and the House Republican Conference. In '2013, he was elected the 50th governor of Indiana and later became of course, the Vice President of the United States in '2016, serving alongside President Trump.

Today, Mike Pence is running for President of the United States in '2024. During his time as vice president, Mr. Pence played a pivotal role in strengthening ties with US allies, undertaking visits to Asia, Europe, Latin America, all to enhance critical partnerships with US allies. Vice President Pence was instrumental in shaping the Truman Administration's policies concerning Venezuela, and he has been an outspoken critic of the Chinese Communist Party delivering what I think is one of the finest addresses of the Trump Administration. A major policy address actually here at Hudson Institute on October 4th, '2018 on the Chinese communist relationship with the United States. We are very proud to host him today and he's the first presidential candidate giving a presidential speech here. We've invited on a bipartisan basis the presidential candidates to present their national security views here at Hudson, and we could not be happier that Vice President Pence is the inaugural speaker in that series. So without further ado, please help me welcome, Mike Pence.

Mike Pence:

Thank you, John Walters. Thank you for your hospitality, the hospitality and the great leadership you provided here at the Hudson Institute. You read that introduction just the way I wrote it. But all kidding aside, I'm truly grateful. Not only for your career, your career in public service and leading here at Hudson Institute, but I'm so grateful that for more than 60 years, Hudson Institute has shaped our public discourse in the minds of American thinkers and always, always stood for the principle that America leads the way. Join me in thanking John Walters and the Hudson Institute for their hospitality today.

And I want to thank you, especially all of you who are here today and those of you that are looking on for joining us for this very first installment of Hudson Institute's Presidential Speech series. It was back in October of '2018 that I came here to the Hudson Institute. When I was serving as Vice President of the United States, I had the honor of presenting our administration's first major foreign policy address on America's relationship with China. In that speech, I explained that our administration was taking a new and much tougher stance on China. I explained that for many years, leaders in both political parties had hoped for the best
with China. We've expanded economic trade, commerce, and exchange in the hopes that China itself would embrace greater political liberties and greater freedoms of respect for private property and free markets.

The truth is, China expanded its many abuses in trade. It used the prosperity that it secured largely on the basis of its exchange with the people of the United States of America for military expansionism and its record of human rights violation shocked the conscience of the world. In so many ways, the wider west turned a blind eye to China's many abuses. But that ended on that day in October ‘2018 when I gave the address here at the Hudson Institute. We saw the regime in Beijing for what it was, and I still do. China is the greatest strategic and economic threat to the United States of America in the 21st century, and we must meet that threat with American strength.

The truth is communist China is playing to win by any means necessary, and China is our rival. China is our economic adversary, but whether China becomes our enemy depends on choices the American people will make in leadership for our country over the next four years. Now, over the course of our administration, we changed the national consensus on China. Under our administration, we met China's military provocations in the Western Pacific with the largest increase in military spending since the days of Ronald Reagan. We were the first country to sanction Chinese leaders for building concentration camps in Xinjiang and for undermining democracy in Hong Kong. And in the wake of that address that I had the privilege of giving in this very place, we stood up to years of trade abuses by communist China and imposed historic tariffs that brought China to the negotiating table in the famous Phase One trade deal.

Now, I remember critics at the time said that we were being too tough on China, but over the course of our administration, we proved our critics wrong. And now the debate is settled and Americans of every political persuasion are awake to the fact that the Chinese Communist Party aspires not merely to join the community of economically developed nations, but to sit atop a new global order, created in its own image, a world in which freedom is constrained, but Beijing's power is not. Our tough stance on China typified our administration's approach to foreign policy. We stood with our allies and stood up to our enemies. We never hesitated to punish aggressors. We never stopped striving to turn adversaries into friends, and most importantly, we rebuild our military with more than $2 trillion in investment, created the United States Space Force knowing that peace only comes through strength on land, water, sea, and space.

But how times have changed. President Biden has replaced that American strength with weakness. The disastrous withdrawal in Afghanistan has emboldened the enemies of freedom around the world. And now, war rages in Eastern Europe and China increases its military provocations in the Asia Pacific. I think it's no coincidence that Russia waited until Biden became president to launch its unconscionable invasion of Ukraine. Once the war began, President Biden has done a terrible job explaining to the American people what our national interest is there. Constantly giving gauzy speeches about democracy rather than explaining the real threat to the United States and to freedom in the world. And frankly, the administration has been too slow in doling out military aid in Ukraine. It's actually slowed Ukrainian momentum and allowed Russia to dig in even deeper, ensuring that the war will be longer, costlier and claim more innocent lives as a result.

But meanwhile, Beijing watches the war in Ukraine with great interest, assessing how much aggression the west will tolerate as it maps out its own intentions, especially when it comes to
Taiwan. Just days after the Biden Administration announced its secretive deal with Iran, including releasing Iranian operatives and paying Tehran $6 billion, it was once again proven that it’s no real surprise that weakness arouses evil. Iran thumbed it’s nose at America by kicking UN nuclear inspectors out of the country, just a few days later.

It's truly remarkable to think as we gather here today, the Biden Administration just extended a visa to the president of Iran, a man responsible for genocide. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi who just arrived in New York to speak at the United Nations. Raisi is a butcher who has mercilessly slaughtered tens of thousands of his own countrymen. When I'm president, I won't give criminals like Raisi a visa to allow them to set foot on American soil and we will never, ever pay ransom to terrorists or terrorist states.

It's no wonder that the Secretary of Defense for the Obama/Biden Administration, Robert Gates actually said that Joe Biden was wrong about every foreign policy decision in the last 40 years. And I don't think he’s broken his streak. And there can be no doubt under Joe Biden’s leadership, America standing on the world stage is diminished. Whether it be the appeasement toward Iran, whether it be feckless and slow leadership with regard to Eastern Europe and Russian aggression, whether it be a message of capitulation to China, I believe the weak and feckless leadership of Joe Biden has made the world a much more dangerous place.

So for American strength, for American security and for American prosperity, we must decide here and now that Joe Biden will never be reelected President of the United States of America. As Americans face the choice in the upcoming presidential election, it’s important to note that the choice voters face in this election is actually more complicated than the typical choice between Republican and Democrat visions of foreign policy. That's because some Republican candidates, including my former running mate, are abandoning the traditional conservative position of American leadership on the world stage and embracing a new and dangerous form of isolationism.

I believe isolationism is just another word for appeasement on the world stage, and appeasement has never worked. The new appeasement Republicans say that America should retreat from her leadership position in the world, turn inward and focus solely on domestic concerns. But I say that anyone that says that America cannot solve the challenges facing our people in our economy, on our border, law and order on our streets, and also be leader of the free world has a pretty small view of the greatest nation on earth. We can do both. Just as we have for so many years before. And let's be clear, appeasement will not make America any safer.

In fact, appeasement would only make America and the world more dangerous. The reason is that power abhors a vacuum. If America were to step back from her leadership role on the world stage, it would create a vacuum that I have no doubt China and Russia and other hostile nations would be more than happy to fill. And those nations have plans to remake the world, to serve dictatorships, to make it more totalitarian and less prosperous, more antagonistic and less concerned with human rights, to remake a world in which all of us are less free.

Consider what would happen if the Republican isolationists are successful in pulling support from Ukraine. If we allow Putin to overrun Ukraine, I have no doubt that the day would come soon when Russian forces would cross a border of a NATO ally that would require our armed forces to go and fight under Article 5 of the NATO treaty. What would stop him from invading Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and drawing our armed forces into that fight? And what
message would it send to China except a giant flashing green light for the Chinese invasion of Taiwan? It would throw the Pacific into chaos for that to occur.

Look, you can either be tough on China or you can be an isolationist. You cannot be both. Simply put, history records that appeasement has never worked and it never will. Appeasement is not a foreign policy that has ever advanced freedom. Burying our head in the sand while our adversaries plot and scheme and inflict suffering on the world is a foolish and dangerous strategy. It's a strategy that cloaks herself in the promise of peace. But history teaches that when free nations withdraw, we inherit the whirlwind.

Now when I am president, we will not ignore gathering storms abroad in exchange for the illusion of security at home. We'll not allow the enemies of freedom to run rough shot around the world until their tyranny washes up on our shores. We will not abdicate our position as leader of the free world, not now, not ever. But peace through strength does not mean that we have to be the world's policeman. As John Quincy Adams said, "America must never go abroad in search of monsters to destroy but we must support other freedom loving nations in defending their sovereignty." By helping our friends defend themselves, we deter our enemies and secure our freedom.

The next President of the United States must ensure that America is prepared for the great power competition with China and a belligerent Russia, with a military fit to the task. So I came before you today to say that should I have the great honor of serving as your commander-in-chief, I will approach the task with these guiding principles.

After continued Chinese military provocations in the Asia Pacific, buzzing our aircraft and our ships in the South China Sea, and even sending a surveillance balloon over the continental United States, I will reverse the administration's efforts to cut military spending and build a military fitted to the widening challenges of the 21st century. Now for the record, lest there be any doubt, that balloon did not blow off course. It traversed critical national security installations in the United States. Had I been president, we would've shut that thing down before it got to Alaska. And instead of kowtowing of the Biden Administration sending the Secretary of State to beg for a meeting with President Xi, I would've sent an aircraft carrier, maybe two, with the message, "Don't ever try that again."

So my first principle as your commander in chief is simply this, America will always have the most powerful military on the face of the earth. Now, over the past decade, our adversaries have increased military spending at a rate that far outpaces the United States and the American people deserve to know that. China's military spending is up by 134%. Our defense spending is up by just 6.4%. Russia is expected to double its annual defense spending in '2023 alone. When I'm president, the American military will not be outpaced by communists and dictators. We will treat our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines as if they were our own family. And in my case, they are. My son's a captain in the United States Marine Corps, and my son-in-law flies F-18s for the Navy.

We will guarantee that the United States provides all of our service members the resources they need to accomplish their mission and to come home safe and we'll guarantee the United States spends a minimum of 3.5% of our GDP on defense. Now this floor would infuse an immediate $1.2 trillion in defense spending into our budget and it would be offset by other cuts. During times when eminent global threats present themselves, the level should be even higher.
Secondly, when I’m president, we will keep our nuclear capable bomber force ready. We will modernize our ICBMs, we will rebuild the Navy, expand our ballistic submarine fleet, and we will ensure that both have sufficient munition stockpiles to deter Russian aggression. And I will accelerate our hypersonic weapons program in the face of advances by China and Russia. We'll stop mothballing our bombers and keep them flying to remind Beijing that we have a means to meet any threat in the Taiwan Strait. Today, America also lacks the capacity to build the ships that we need to defend ourselves. While we create long-term shipyard capacity, we will work with existing civilian shipyards to meet the Navy’s stated goal of 355 ships by the end of the decade.

Third, we will end wasteful and woke military programs at the Department of Defense on day one. We want our service members to be the best equipped, best trained and best prepared in the world and that means they need to focus on what matters. Stop filling their heads with this woke nonsense. Make no mistake about it, political correctness is affecting recruitment in virtually every branch of our service today. So as commander-in-chief, I'll restore the ban on transgender service members in our armed forces. Our military must focus on preparedness, not pronouns to defend the greatest nation on earth.

Fourth, we will recognize the Chinese Communist Party for what it is, the greatest threat to our prosperity, security, and values on the face of the earth. China may not yet be an evil empire, but it's working hard to become one. We will meet the Chinese threat with American strength and resolve. That means we will stand with a free and democratic Taiwan and sell Taipei the weapons it needs to defend themselves. In addition to providing weapons, we will assist Taiwan conduct joint training and assist them in developing their own resident cyber capabilities to defend their nation. And let me be clear, we will place no timeline on our partnership in freedom with the people of Taiwan, as one of my competitors in this race has already said he would.

Thirdly, we will stop China from waging chemical warfare against the United States by shutting down the flow of fentanyl across the southern border of our country. As I travel across America, there is not a community, large or small where I haven't been told of literally weekly fatalities from fentanyl. Fentanyl literally takes the lives of tens of thousands of Americans every year. Under any administration I lead, we will impose deep and lasting financial pain on all actors in the fentanyl supply chain, including Chinese companies that make fentanyl precursor chemicals and the Chinese banks that handle their profits won't be safe, if I'm president.

In addition, we will repatriate high-tech supply chains and accelerate efforts to decouple the American economy from China in essential industries. And with global Chinese espionage on the rise, we will protect American intellectual property by prohibiting the issuance of H-1B visas to Chinese nationals employed by US technology companies. This is not because we don't trust individual Chinese citizens, but it's because we don't trust China's communist government. The truth is China often coerces its own citizens to participate in industrial espionage, assisting in the process of literally stealing billions of dollars every year in American intellectual property and they force them to hand them over as trade secrets against their will. Also, I will call on Congress on day one to ban the purchase of US farmland by communist Chinese businesses to protect our national security. And when I'm president, we will recognize that TikTok is a communist Chinese platform that collects data and compromises the privacy of Americans and we will ban TikTok from operating in the United States on day one.

Fifth, we will offer clear and unambiguous support of our allies, under any administration that I lead. We will use smart power to cultivate alliances and keep America safe. In a word, we will
pursue free trade with free nations around the world and limit access to our economy to China and other totalitarian regimes that take advantage of our freedom while trampling their own. We will work to increase trade with allies and free societies around the world while increasing economic pressure on China and other regimes until they cease their trade abuses, intellectual property theft, and trampling the human rights of their own citizens.

During my time as your vice president and I engaged in preliminary discussions with my counterpart in Japan to lay a foundation for a free trade agreement with Japan, that should have been well underway by now. We also made it clear that once the UK came out of Brexit that we would engage in immediate negotiations for a free trade agreement with the United Kingdom. But nothing has occurred. As we witness an administration begging Iran to come back into the Iran nuclear deal, sending emissaries to China, including economic leaders in the administration, we ought to have an administration in America that's reaching out to free nations. Free trade with free nations is the way we spread freedom in the world.

And finally, under any administration I lead, we'll recognize that America's not only the leader of the free world, but we're the arsenal of democracy. We will strengthen our allies and make it possible for them to confront their enemies. And if I'm President of the United States, we will give the people of Ukraine the resources they need to defeat and repel the Russian invasion and reclaim their sovereignty. And if the world knows nothing else, the world will know this, America stands with Israel.

Finally, the purpose of foreign policy is to advance American interests and keep our nation safe and we cannot keep America safe with Joe Biden's policy of open borders on the southern border of the United States. Ronald Reagan said it well, "A nation without borders is not a nation." Under our administration, we actually reduced illegal immigration and asylum abuse by 90%. But all of that's gone by the boards, under the open borders policies of Joe Biden who stopped construction of the wall, worked to dismantle the Remain in Mexico policy that I negotiated for the administration, undid Title 42. And now, millions of people have come across our border, putting an enormous burden on American families and American cities.

Under our administration, I will protect the southern border as a cornerstone of American foreign policy. As we say back in Indiana, good fences make good neighbors and we'll be better neighbors than ever before. We'll finish building the wall. We'll reinstate Remain in Mexico to end asylum fraud. We'll end, catch and release. We'll give states national guard units to end the wave of drugs and human smuggling crushing across the border. And make no mistake about it, the violation of the American border will end one way or another even if we have to demand that the Mexican government partner with American special forces to hunt down and destroy the cartels wherever they are.

I'm running for president because I believe in the promise and the potential of every American. And I believe our best days are ahead because I have faith. I have faith in the boundless capacity of the American people. And I have faith in the one that's ever guided this nation from its very beginning. God is not done with America yet. And more than ever, the world needs America to lead again, for freedom.

When it comes to foreign policy, I believe we must take the principled path blazed by our forebears. We must accept our responsibilities as leader of the free world, not shirking responsibility in order to secure our freedom and our prosperity here at home and to ensure prosperity across the world. And so as I close my remarks here at Hudson Institute in '2018, so I
close today, America must return to the path we forged under our administration and build on that path, when it comes to our relationship with China. Our approach to China should be simply this. We should have one hand extended in friendship and the other hand resting comfortably on the holster of the arsenal of democracy. America must stand strong in the face of China’s military provocations, its trade abuses. Resolute in defense of our interest and our values. Never hesitating to call out China’s acts of inhumanity against its own people and through it all, we have to have hope, that as we stand strong and still reach out, that China will reach back with deeds, not words. And on a foundation of respect for America, our interests and our values.

There's an ancient Chinese proverb that reads, men see only the present, but heaven sees the future. So as we go forward, let us pursue a future of peace and prosperity. With resolve and faith. Faith in America's ideals and in our place as a leader and a beacon of freedom in the world. Faith in the enduring strength of the American people to meet any moment, to meet any challenge and faith that heaven sees. And that by God's grace, that future will be a future in which America and those would be adversaries, move beyond our present differences. A future where our nation's forge a new relationship ground in fairness and respect and the rule of law. When a rising tide of prosperity truly will lift all nations and we'll be able to stand together proudly as partners and friends.

So let that be our prayer, for this land we call home and for the world. Let America be the leader of the free world. And as America leads, I know the world will follow and the best days for the greatest nation on earth are yet to come. So help us, God. Thank you. God bless you. And God bless America.