

certain kinds of leadership only America can contribute.

Fortunately, we are not in this alone. The huge progress we have won in recent years against ISIS and the Taliban has come by partnering with local forces, with support from a broad international coalition. America has only provided limited specialized capabilities to reinforce the local partners that do the heaviest lifting. This approach is sustainable.

Unfortunately, we know exactly what happens when America forgets these lessons and simply decides we are tired of sustaining the fight. Abandoning Afghanistan in the 1990s helped create the conditions for al-Qaida's ability to grow and plan the September 11 attacks from a safe haven far from our shores. President Obama's retreat from Iraq allowed ISIS to rise from the still-warm ashes of al-Qaida in Iraq.

If not arrested, withdrawing from Syria will invite more of the chaos that breeds terrorism and creates a vacuum our adversaries will certainly fill.

It will invite the brutal Assad regime to reassert its oppressive control over northeastern Syria, repressing Sunni Arab communities and creating the same conditions that led to ISIS's growth in the first place.

Russia will gain more leverage to amass power and influence throughout the Middle East, project power into the Mediterranean, and even promote its interests in Africa.

Iran-backed forces could have access to a strategic corridor that runs all the way from Tehran to the very doorstep of Israel.

So where do we go from here? Many of us in the Senate were ahead of the game on the need to reaffirm American global leadership in the ongoing fight against radical terror. At the beginning of this year, a bipartisan supermajority of Senators warned about exactly this course of events. The McConnell amendment to S. 1 earned 70 votes back in February. We specifically warned against a precipitous withdrawal from either Afghanistan or Syria and noted the need for an American presence. Congress should affirm—actually, reaffirm—the same truths today, and we should do so strongly.

Unfortunately, the resolution crafted by House Democrats is simply not sufficient. It is not so much wrong as it is badly insufficient. It focuses solely on the Kurds, ignoring the critical Sunni-Arab community that suffered under both Assad's regime and ISIS and vulnerable minority communities like the Christian Arabs of Syria. The House was silent on the key matter of maintaining an actual physical U.S. military presence in Syria.

Perhaps the goal was to paper over disagreements within the Democratic Party. After all, our colleague, the senior Senator from Massachusetts, recently told a national television audience—this is the senior Senator from Massachusetts—"I think that we ought

to get out of the Middle East." "I think we ought to get out of the Middle East," said the senior Senator from Massachusetts, and almost all of our Democratic colleagues currently running for President refused to sign on to the McConnell amendment that earned 70 votes earlier this year.

We can't afford to dance around the critical question of a U.S. presence in Syria and the Middle East for the sake of Democratic Presidential primary politics. The Senate needs to speak up. We cannot effectively support our partners on the ground without a military presence. Senators who thought we should withdraw from Syria and Afghanistan in February do not get to criticize President Trump for withdrawing from Syria today unless they go on the record, admit they changed their minds, and say it is too dangerous to quit.

So, today, along with Chairman INHOFE, Chairman RISCH, Chairman BURR, and Senator GRAHAM, I am introducing a stronger resolution that acknowledges hard truths and focuses on our strategic interests in the Middle East.

Our resolution acknowledges the vital role our Kurdish and Arab Syrian partners have played in rooting out and destroying the ISIS caliphate. It condemns Turkey's decision to escalate hostilities in Syria, warns against the abandonment of our allies and partners in Syria, and urges President Trump to rethink his invitation for President Erdogan to visit the White House.

It also acknowledges Turkey's legitimate national security concerns emanating from the conflict in Syria and the significant risks to the United States if such a strategically consequential ally were to fall further into Moscow's orbit. It recognizes the grave consequences of U.S. withdrawal: the rising influence of Russia, Iran, and the Assad regime and the escape of more than 100 ISIS-affiliated fighters detained in the region.

We specifically urge the President to end—and the drawdown, something that, fortunately, appears to be underway. We urge a reengagement with our partners in this region. We highlight the need for international diplomatic efforts to end the underlying civil wars in Syria and Afghanistan on terms that address the conditions that have allowed al-Qaida and ISIS to thrive. We cannot repeat this mistake in Afghanistan.

I am aware there is some appetite on both sides of the aisle to quickly reach for the toolbox of sanctions. I myself played a critical role in creating sanction regimes in the past, but I caution us against developing a reflex to use sanctions as our tool of first, last, and only resort in implementing our foreign policy. Sanctions may play an important role in this process, and I am open to the Senate considering them, but we need to think extremely carefully before we employ the same tools

against a democratic NATO ally that we would against the worst rogue state.

Do we know what political impacts such sanctions will have inside Turkey? Will they weaken President Erdogan or rally the country to his cause? Do we know the impact sanctions will have on U.S. companies or on the economies of our closest allies that have deeply integrated their economies with Turkey?

If we are going to use sanctions against a democratic ally, we are going to have to be careful. We are going to have to be smart. We are going to have to be thoughtful and deliberate. We don't want to further drive a NATO ally into the arms of the Russians.

Serious conversations about the use of sanctions must involve our colleagues on the Foreign Relations, Banking, and Finance Committees to ensure that this tool is used correctly.

The most important thing the Senate can do right now is speak clearly and reaffirm the core principles that unite most of us, Republicans and Democrats, about the proper role for American leadership in Syria, in the Middle East, and, for that matter, in the world.

We hope the damage in Syria can be undone, but perhaps, even more importantly, we absolutely must take steps so the same mistakes—the same mistakes are not repeated in Iraq or Afghanistan.

I feel confident that my resolution is a strong and sorely needed step. I feel confident my colleagues will agree, and I urge them to join me.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

PROTOCOL TO THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY OF 1949 ON THE ACCESSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following treaty, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Calendar No. 5, Treaty document No. 116-1, Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Pending:

McConnell amendment No. 946, to change the enactment date.