

“promise fatigue” that we have here—or continuing to call itself a developing country, when it is not, or continuing its attempts to dominate the South China Sea with the militarization of that important strategic sea lane, or continuation of intellectual property theft, or all the challenges that we have with China. The idea that we are going to have strategic patience, I think, sends a signal to the Chinese that we don’t take these issues urgently, and that is the wrong message. These are urgent issues.

In my discussions during the confirmation process and in hearings with now-Secretary of Defense Austin and Secretary of State Blinken, I sensed they had a sense of urgency. As a matter of fact, they both acknowledged that the previous administration—the Trump administration’s national security strategy, national defense strategy that says we need to turn to great power competition, with China as the pacing threat for the United States, they agreed with.

Even in General Austin’s—now-Secretary Austin’s—confirmation hearing, one of my colleagues, Senator BLACKBURN, actually said this term, “strategic patience,” doesn’t seem to be the right term and pressed him on it.

So here is some continued advice. In the Senate’s role, in terms of our constitutional role of advice and consent, words matter, especially from the White House podium. We need a strong, bipartisan, and lasting China policy from the United States of America. This is the biggest geostrategic issue we will be facing as a country for the next 50 to 100 years, but it is also a challenge that is here and now, a challenge that needs immediate action. So here is my advice: Ditch the “strategic patience” phrase.

The vast majority of the Senators in this body, Democrats and Republicans, want to know the Biden administration is focused on this challenge now. It is a serious challenge that China poses to the United States now, and “strategic patience” sends the wrong message to the Senate, to the American people, and to China’s leadership. So they need to do better.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, let me express my gratitude to the Senator from Alaska for his words. I could not have said it better than he did, and I am grateful to him for coming and articulating that important message so clearly and emphatically.

Chris Wray, the FBI Director, is a pretty laid-back guy. As a matter of fact, I frequently tell people he reminds me of the typical G-man—you know, not a lot of emotion, not a lot of animation. But the FBI Director, who I think is doing an outstanding job and has been doing an outstanding job, gets positively animated when it comes to China and the threats presented there. Of course, the FBI is principally in

charge of the counterintelligence mission against foreign countries like China that try to steal our intellectual property, spy on our country using a number unconventional means. I just want to say to our friend from Alaska: Thank you for making that point. It is really, really important.

NOMINATION OF ANTONY JOHN BLINKEN

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, yesterday afternoon we confirmed another one of President Biden’s Cabinet nominees. Antony Blinken has led an impressive career in the public sector and is well versed in both the vast responsibilities of the State Department, as well as the diplomatic challenges we will face in the months and years ahead, the most important of which is China, but it is not China alone.

While Mr. Blinken and I have policy differences—some of them very serious—I have confidence in his ability to represent our Nation on the global stage. It is important for a new President, whether they be a Republican or a Democrat, to have qualified, Senate-confirmed officials in their Cabinet without delay.

Over the past week, we have worked to confirm nominees for some of the most critical Federal Departments and Agencies. The Secretaries of State, Defense, Treasury, as well as the Director of National Intelligence, have each been confirmed by the Senate with broad bipartisan support. And we will continue to process more of the President’s nominees in the days ahead.

Four years ago, our Democratic colleagues approached President Trump’s nominees with a grab bag of antics, including everything from intentional delays to brazen theatrics. In most cases, this behavior wasn’t a reflection on the nominee or their qualifications, but of our colleagues’ antipathy toward President Trump.

Clearly we are adopting a different approach, and I hope it is one that will deescalate these battles and one that will serve the national interest rather than harm it.

Throughout my time in the Senate, I have tried to evaluate nominees based on their qualifications, their integrity, and their ability to carry out the responsibilities for the job they have been nominated for, and I will continue to either support or oppose nominees based on those merits and those criteria, not based on the party of the President.

NEW START

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, we know it has been the tradition of the Senate to prioritize nominees for national security positions, and there has never been a more critical time to ensure that President Biden is surrounded by an experienced and capable team. From the threats posed by an increasingly hostile Iran to those by an

unpredictable North Korea, there are many, many challenges on the horizon.

One of the first the administration must confront is the expiration of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, also known as New START. This is the only remaining bilateral strategic arms agreement between the United States and Russia, which are the world’s most powerful nuclear states, and it is set to expire in a matter of days.

Last fall, the Trump administration advocated for a 1-year extension of New START, with the condition that both countries would cap nuclear weapons—nuclear warheads during that period.

Unsurprisingly, Russia preferred a clean, 5-year extension with no warhead limitations. President Putin delayed the final stages of talks in the hopes that the potential Biden administration would strike a deal more favorable to Russia. And it appears now, at least as things stand today, that President Putin has hedged his bets correctly.

Following a call yesterday between President Biden and President Putin, the White House announced that the United States and Russia are set to extend New START for 5 years, with no conditions attached. This was President Biden’s first major foreign policy test, and, unfortunately, he played right into Russia’s hand.

For starters, it is no secret that New START was deeply flawed from the beginning. And it is no secret that Russia cheats, which is why verification is so essential.

The counting mechanisms in New START don’t effectively keep our countries on a level playing field, which is the primary goal of any arms treaty because it promotes mutual deterrents. The treaty limits the number of bombers each nation could possess but places no limit on the number of warheads each bomber can support. Making matters worse, the limits only apply to strategic, not tactical, nuclear weapons. Russia has taken advantage of this loophole in New START, amassing some 2,000 tactical nuclear weapons compared to only 500 for the United States.

Russia’s nuclear doctrine signals its increasing willingness to use those tactical nuclear weapons in a conflict, particularly in Europe, as it warily eyes NATO. Another 5 years under New START will allow Russia to continue growing its arsenal of tactical weapons and cement its advantage over the United States, perhaps permanently.

Once that happens, the likelihood of Russia deploying and ultimately using these weapons goes higher. These treaties ought to make the world safer, not a more dangerous place due to imbalances, the potential for mistakes, or miscalculation.

Beyond sheer numbers, there is also the question of trust or, I should say, of verification, because it is hardly controversial to say Russia isn’t the most trustworthy partner. Last fall,