



WWW.VANDENBERGCOALITION.ORG



2025

Annual Report



Promoting unapologetic American security and leadership that stops wars before they begin and wins wars after they start.



The United States faces an increasingly dangerous and complex threat landscape. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is committed to creating a new global order where the American people are subservient to Beijing, and China is working with other American adversaries like Russia, Iran, and Venezuela to harm and undermine American interests and freedoms. Far from remaining overseas, their power is regularly used to sow division, undermine American unity, spread disinformation, and collapse the American will to even compete, let alone be victorious.

The stakes are existential. In today's interconnected world, the preferences of the strongest military and economic world power — whether that be the United States, China, or someone else — will determine our national fate. Rather than retreating into the background and letting other nations determine our future, it should be the American people determining what we want for our security, freedom, and prosperity.

The means a foreign policy that is updated to meet today's geopolitical challenges, rooted in the best principles of the past but also realistic about the lessons we have learned over the last few decades about what has not worked. It is a foreign policy that is neither naïve restraint nor unnecessary intervention. Instead, it is that pragmatic, principled “middle ground” that our namesake, Senator Arthur Vandenberg, articulated.

Senator Vandenberg believed in a foreign policy grounded in prudent “insulationism,” which he defined as one that could “preserve all of the isolation which modern circumstances permit.” What he came to realize after Pearl Harbor, and what we must remember today, was that modern circumstances no longer allowed the type of restraint he had originally proposed for the country. From then on, Vandenberg spent his time working to protect America from external threats by creating more insulating layers — maintaining a robust American military, building powerful security alliances, and establishing productive economic partnerships.

This was how Vandenberg conceptualized some of his signature policy achievements like NATO and the Marshall Plan. They were not about charity or advancing an imagined liberal internationalist utopia. They were additional insulating layers to safeguard U.S. sovereignty, secure America's enlightened self-interest, and ensure the preferences of American citizens shaped our nation's future, not the preferences of our adversaries.

We share a similar task today. We do not have to invent enemies — they have already announced themselves. China has no interests in striking the perfect trade deal or sharing the world in a sphere of influence arrangement. Instead, it wants to dictate to us what we can and cannot do. Russia, Iran, and Venezuela are doing whatever they can to harm us and our allies. As Vandenberg knew, effectively insulating the United States from these threats requires a principled, pragmatic foreign policy that builds effective layers through maintaining the strongest military, strengthening our security partnerships, and protecting free and open international spaces in line with our founding principles. It is unapologetic American security and leadership capable of stopping wars before they begin and winning wars after they start. Above all, it is about preserving American sovereignty and protecting our enlightened self-interest.



“I am hunting for the middle ground between those extremists at one end of the line who would cheerfully give America away and those extremists at the other end of the line who would attempt a total isolation which has come to be an impossibility.”

– Senator Arthur Vandenberg

The world is safer when America leads.

At The Vandenberg Coalition, we arm elected leaders, political candidates, the media, and the American people with expert insights to protect our prosperity, security, and freedom.

We have three objectives – to build a foreign policy that serves the enlightened self interests of the American people, to train up-and-coming national security leaders in that policy, and to educate current officials with the tools they need to preserve American freedoms.

The Vandenberg Coalition operates at the nexus between Congress, the media, and the top conservative national security experts at all leading think tanks and universities. Consequently, we have unmatched convening power in the national security community, making us a force multiplier across all sectors. With experts and staff with diverse experience from multiple administrations — Reagan, George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush, and Trump — the Coalition has a depth of expertise across the breadth of the conservative movement. We are trusted across the community, allowing us to achieve results where others cannot, and we are nimble enough to adjust and take action to advance our supporters’ priorities.

Our Policy Priorities for 2025 focused on:

Countering the CCP’s United Front efforts at the state and federal level



Supporting Israel and U.S. allies in the Middle East



Educating the public on Russia’s threats to the United States



Expanding support for adequately funding the defense budget



Simultaneously, we aim to identify, educate, and train future national security leaders — including congressional candidates, Members of Congress, their staff, administration officials, and young professionals — to support a strong, updated conservative foreign policy that addresses the challenges and opportunities of the present and future.

2025 by the Numbers

1.4+

Million social media impressions on our Americans First Polling results

500+

Points of Engagement with the 119th Congress

28

Points of Engagement with freshmen Members of Congress

50+

Points of Engagement in the U.S. States

3

New Congressional features for our Future of Conservative Foreign Policy series

8,000+

Weekly subscribers to our newsletter, Beyond the Water’s Edge

18

New Episodes of our flagship podcast, Vandenberg Flash Focus

120

Members of our Advisory Board — our core network of foreign policy experts and practitioners

40+

Advisory Board Emeritus members, friends, and allies serving in the Trump administration

Countering the CCP's Malign, anti-American Propaganda

There is no greater national security threat than the CCP, whose threats against Taiwan, weaponization of American supply chains, and active efforts of espionage against the United States are well documented. Over the course of this year, our work focused on increasing understanding of these threats, exposing United Front activities at the state level, and advancing policies to defend America's sovereignty and security.

Educating Congress on the China Threat

In 2025, our Advisory Board members gave testimony related to China **15 times** in congressional hearings for **8 different critical committees**, where topics ranged from CCP activity in the Western Hemisphere to opportunities for U.S. engagement in East Asia to preventing CCP aggression against Taiwan to breaking China's chokehold on critical mineral supply chains. Notably as the result of our work, Representative Gabe Evans (R-CO) delivered a [floor speech](#) on the dangers of Confucius Institutes.

- **Senate Foreign Relations Committee** ([Victor Cha](#))
- **Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee East Asia, The Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Policy** ([Craig Singleton](#))
- **House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific** ([Zack Cooper](#), [Richard Fontaine](#), and [Craig Singleton](#)) ([Frank Fannon](#)) ([Amb. Kelley Currie](#))
- **House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Europe** ([Craig Singleton](#))
- **House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on South and Central Asia** ([Lisa Curtis](#))
- **House Homeland Security Committee** ([Michael Pillsbury](#) and [Craig Singleton](#))
- **House Homeland Security Committee's Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security** ([Matt Kroenig](#) and [Ryan Berg](#)) ([Ryan Berg](#))
- **House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party** ([Mark Montgomery](#))

Combatting China's Threats to the American Homeland



"The Chinese Communist Party is already working to infiltrate, divide, and destabilize us in the United States."

– **Advisory Board member Michael Sobolik, Hudson Institute**

China is not just a foreign policy problem — it is a direct homeland security threat. From purchasing thousands of acres of American farmland to waging information warfare through TikTok, the CCP is diminishing the freedom and independence of every American here at home. To better educate Congress and state leaders on the CCP's subnational influence, we ramped up our efforts at the state level to bridge the divide between the foreign policy community in Washington to the American people. From hiring our State and Campaign Engagement Manager to spearhead these efforts to publishing a primer, "[China's Threats to the American Homeland](#)," outlining the myriad of ways that the CCP is threatening the American states, we've been able to amplify our outreach, build relationships with many new on-the-ground partners, and kickstart initiatives to bring our experts and briefings to state houses across the country. A few highlights:

- We brought our work to Michigan — Senator Vandenberg's home state — where Advisory Board member Michael Sobolik [testified](#) before the State House Oversight Subcommittee on Homeland Security and Foreign Influence regarding the threat posed by the CCP's United Front strategy.
- We provided testimony to the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)'s Federalism, Homeland Security and International Relations Subcommittee at their Annual Meeting on the threats posed by allowing foreign adversaries to purchase land in the United States.

Closing Out of TikTok for Good

The CCP is deliberately weaponizing TikTok against the American people. Congress rightly passed the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act, requiring CCP-controlled ByteDance to sell TikTok to a U.S. company or cease operations in the United States. Enforcing the law on TikTok is critical for countering the CCP's malign information warfare, and we have made it one of our top policy priorities to educate lawmakers, the policy community, and the public on this national security threat.

Legal Advocacy

At the beginning of the year, we commissioned an amicus [brief](#) of former high-ranking government officials who oversaw federal regulatory programs in support of the U.S. government in *TikTok Inc., et al. v. Merrick B. Garland* (No. 24-656). We were pleased that the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed that the CCP and other U.S. adversaries do not have a First Amendment right to conduct espionage and influence operations on American citizens.

Publications

To educate the public on the ominous nature of the app, we published a primer, "[The Ticking Time Bomb of TikTok](#)," outlining the national security risks of TikTok remaining under CCP control and that any deal allowing the CCP to retain access to the app's data or algorithm is no deal the United States should accept. We circulated the document on Capitol Hill and used the research for the basis of a [messaging campaign](#) that amassed **over 26,000 impressions** on social media.

Polling

We conducted polling with award-winning polling company [J.L. Partners](#) to survey a nationally representative sample of 1,017 registered voters online from February 7 to February 9, 2025. As we predicted, despite the popularity of TikTok, the American people were aware of the threats and supportive of the law. We hosted an exclusive briefing on the [results](#) for friends and allies to assist in their messaging, and the [New York Post](#), [19fortyfive](#), and the [Washington Examiner](#) covered our findings.



88% of registered voters are concerned about what TikTok's Chinese ownership means for U.S. user data.

(February 2025 Poll)

Congressional Education

We briefed over 20 Congressional offices on our polling and the dangers of TikTok to ensure a deal comes forward that adequately protects the American people from the threats posed by CCP control over the algorithm and app. Our work resulted in [statements](#) from Senators Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Josh Hawley (R-MO), and we were pleased to see Senator Hawley [speak out](#) against a TikTok deal extension, along with several other Senators who received our primer.

Ep. 38 | Americans Reject The TikTok Trojan Horse and Big Brother ByteDance (feat. James Johnson, JL Partners)

Ep. 40 | Taiwan on the Line (feat. Joe Wang, Special Competitive Studies Project)

Ep. 42 | After Rising Lion and Spiderweb: U.S. Vulnerabilities and CCP Sabotage (feat. Jacqueline Deal, American Academy of Strategic Education, and Michael Sobolik, Hudson Institute)

Ep. 46 | TikTok: China's Digital Fentanyl! (feat. Clare Morell, Ethics and Public Policy Center, and Bethany Mandel, Mom Wars Podcast)

Ep. 47 | The Report of the Commission on Unalienable Rights at Five Years (feat. Peter Berkowitz, Hoover Institution)

"The CCP deliberately created TikTok as a weapon designed to control how young people in America think, consume information, and engage with the world."

– **Policy Associate Ethan Minkoff**
[19fortyfive.com](#)

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"...enforcing the law on TikTok is critical to heading off a military confrontation with China and, if necessary, winning one."

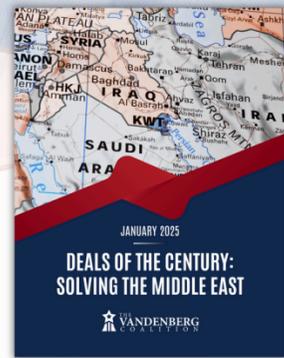
The Washington Post

– **Executive Director Carrie Filippetti**
[The Washington Post](#)

07 Driving Support for U.S. Allies in the Middle East

Ensuring continued American support for Israel and other U.S. allies in the Middle East remained a steadfast policy priority for The Vandenberg Coalition, made even more necessary after the horrific Hamas terrorist attack on October 7th, 2023. Our priority in 2025 was ensuring U.S. policymakers and the broader American public understand why Israel is an exemplary ally who provides significant strategic benefit to the United States. We made the case that American interests are served by the United States and Israel working together to counter our shared adversaries. We plan to continue to host and partner on events to raise awareness on the broader threats in the Middle East and to convene the sharpest Middle East policy minds to outline creative and realistic recommendations for U.S. policy in the region.

Deals of the Century: Solving the Middle East



As part of our efforts to shape policy for the administration, we assembled a working group of Middle East experts in 2024 to identify critical policy recommendations that advance American interests in the region. The working group's report, titled "Deals of the Century: Solving the Middle East," was rolled out early in 2025 and covered in *National Review*, *Washington Examiner*, *Mosaic*, *Responsible Statecraft*, and *The Editors*.

We convened the working group in response to the dismal failures of the previous administration's Middle East policy, recognizing that the United States needed to rapidly pivot from the naïve appeasement of Iran which characterized both the Obama and Biden approaches. The report offered a pragmatic, clear-eyed approach to advance U.S. security and prosperity, featuring policy recommendations geared towards curbing the influence of America's adversaries in the Middle East, ensuring Israel has the necessary support to defend itself against our shared adversaries, preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, and managing alliances and partnerships in America's favor.

We were pleased to see the Trump administration embrace several of the report's recommendations. President Trump issued a National Security Presidential Memorandum that outlined policies towards Iran aligned with our recommendations, including: imposing a maximum pressure campaign on the Iranian regime; denying Iran all paths to a nuclear weapon; neutralizing Iran's network and campaign of regional aggression; enforcing U.S. oil sanctions; ensuring the Iraqi financial system is not utilized by Iran for sanctions evasion; and working with allies to complete the snapback of international sanctions and restrictions.

Spearheading Support for Israel

We recognize that Israel is a key ally for the United States. We also recognize that there is an increasingly urgent need to make this case to policymakers and the American public, and have spearheaded coordination amongst our partner organizations and like-minded groups to develop and amplify messaging arguing that supporting Israel furthers U.S. interests. Our Advisory Board members and experts within our network also appear regularly on ABC, FOX, Forbes, NewsMax, and other media platforms to double-down on the need to counter Iran and ensure Israel is afforded the tools and flexibility to succeed. Additionally, our Executive Director Carrie Filippetti spoke at numerous American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) events over the course of the year, including in Washington, DC, Los Angeles, CA, and Little Rock, AR, to strengthen our partnership with this important ally and bring Vandenberg's work to new audiences.

Holding International Organizations Accountable

We aim to hold international organizations accountable for their antisemitic actions by applying pressure on the administration to defund the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and to dismiss appointees who are anti-American or antisemitic. Early in the new administration, we were pleased to see some of our policy recommendations set as the course of action for U.S. policy in the Middle East, including President Trump's Executive Order ending funding to certain United Nations Organizations, including UNRWA.

FLASH FOCUS

Ep. 36 | The Unholy Alliance Between UNRWA, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad
(feat. Hillel Neuer, UN Watch)

Ep. 37 | Solving the Middle East: Policy Recommendations for the New Administration (feat. Gabriel Scheinmann, Alexander Hamilton Society)

Ep. 39 | Iran's Puppets Playing Pirates
(feat. Mark Montgomery, Foundation for Defense of Democracies)

Ep. 41 | Trump's Magical Mystery Middle East Tour (feat. Elizabeth Dent, The Washington Institute)

Ep. 51 | Gaza Ceasefire and Palestinian Statehood (feat. Elliott Abrams, Council on Foreign Relations)

"...Israeli and American efforts to degrade the military, nuclear, and oppressive capabilities of Iranian regime demonstrate solidarity with the nation's oppressed women."

— Director of Government Affairs
Anne Lord,
National Review

NATIONAL
REVIEW

"Israel's Operation Rising Lion is a defensive action against a bellicose regime responsible for starting the conflict."

— Director of Government Affairs
Anne Lord,
19fortyfive.com

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Educating Congress

08

Governance Board member Michael Singh testified in a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on Syria policy after-Assad and our Advisory Board members briefed the office of Senator John Curtis (R-UT), the Senate Republican Policy Committee (RPC) staff, the Senate Appropriations Committee Defense Subcommittee staff, the office of Representative Tom Barrett (R-MI), and groups of National Security Advisors and Legislative Directors on topics ranging from the importance of destroying Iran's nuclear program to the ongoing situation in Gaza.

Policy Primers

A Brief History of Iranian Nuclear Deception

At the outset of Israel's Operation Rising Lion, we drafted and circulated a primer enumerating the ways that the Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently lied, cheated, and deceived the United States and other international powers about its nuclear program. The primer was used by the House Republican Study Committee to draft and circulate talking points about the threat Iran's nuclear program poses to Israel and the United States.

Avoiding The Seven Deadly Sins Of A Bad Iran Nuclear Deal

In partnership with FDD Action, National Union for Democracy in Iran (NUFDI), Veterans on Duty, and Advancing American Freedom, we put together a primer to educate policymakers and the public about the most critical lessons from the failures of President Obama's Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Our primer subsequently influenced 51 Republican Senators to draft and send a letter calling on the Trump administration to secure a deal that results in the full dismantlement of the Iranian nuclear program, including permanently ending the regime's capacity to enrich uranium.

Kazakhstan as a Model for Abraham Accords Expansion Among Central Asian States

Following Kazakhstan joining the Abraham Accords in November, we drafted and circulated a primer on lessons for policymakers. As the Trump administration considers additional countries to bring into the Abraham Accords, we believe Kazakhstan serves as a helpful model: a country with preexisting diplomatic relations with Israel, a strategic location with critical resources, and an education system that promotes religious tolerance and multiculturalism towards Israel and the Jewish people.

09 Educating on the Threats Posed by Russia and Defending Support for Ukraine.

We continued to make the case in 2025 that Russia remains a threat to the United States at home and to U.S. interests abroad. We worked to educate the general public and Members of Congress that Russia continues to be an adversary, along with the dangers posed by Russia's partnership with China, Iran, and North Korea. We argued that it continues to be in America's interests to deter Russian aggression, including through maintaining support for Ukraine and pressing NATO allies to honor their commitments and boost their own defense spending.

Educating Congress

Our Advisory Board members and staff briefed Representative John McGuire (R-VA), Representative Young Kim (R-CA), the House Republican Policy Committee, House Republican staff members, and Representative Don Bacon (R-NE)'s office on the status of the conflict in Ukraine, the U.S.-NATO relationship, and critical minerals, among other topics. We also prepared questions for Representative Austin Scott (R-GA) about the importance of Ukraine to ask during the House Armed Services Committee hearing on "U.S. Military Posture and National Security Challenges in Europe," and Advisory Board members [Seth Jones](#) and [Peter Rough](#) testified before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe U.S. Helsinki Commission on Deterrence on NATO's Eastern flank.

Policy Primers

Peace Through Sanctions

We published a [primer](#) articulating the case for expanding and enforcing U.S. sanctions against Russian energy exports, arguing that the United States can impose real and meaningful financial costs for Vladimir Putin's intransigence and force Russia to take peace negotiations seriously.

U.S. Takeaways from Operation Spiderweb

Demonstrating a keen ability to innovate in their June 2025 strike against Russia, the Ukrainians make clear that the United States must make critical changes to adapt for warfare in the 21st century. We drafted a [primer](#) on the lessons the United States can glean from Ukraine's strategically bold "Operation Spiderweb," which we circulated on Capitol Hill.

Engaging Allies

This year we ramped up efforts to coordinate with allied embassies in Europe, engaging with our polling, events, and written work, and hosting private discussions with leaders. We were pleased to host Ukrainian Deputy Head of Mission Denys Sienik for an off-the-record roundtable on the June 2025 NATO Summit, what can be done to support Ukraine, and what lessons can be learned from conflicts in other theaters with seven other Deputy Chiefs of Mission from allied countries in Europe and the Indo-Pacific.

"Trump voters have no doubt that America's strong, principled leadership in the world is needed, that Russia does pose a threat to America's interests, and that Russia's refusal to pursue good-faith peace negotiations merits a strong response."

THE NATIONAL INTEREST

— Senior Policy Director
Corban Teague,
The National Interest

10 Combatting The Other Superpower



The United States is navigating a great power clash not against just one nation, but instead bloc of adversaries led by China and its partners Russia and Iran — The Other Superpower. To draw public attention to the threats we are facing and to better educate on how our adversaries are working together, we launched a new limited series, "[The Other Superpower](#)," and a complementary [report](#) highlighting how our adversaries are collaborating to harm American interests. In each episode, leading national security experts dived into a specific connection between American adversaries and examined its harmful effects on Americans both at home and overseas. They also provided clear, actionable strategies for how the United States and our allies can respond. We circulated the series and report in our newsletter, Beyond the Water's Edge, and directly to our allies on Capitol Hill, receiving nearly **500 downloads** and over **26,000 impressions** on our content.

Episode 1: Iran-Russia — The Kremlin & The Clerics

In the debut [episode](#), Advisory Board member Behnam Ben Taleblu (Foundation for Defense of Democracies) and Kateryna Stepanenko (Institute for the Study of War) shed light on why the Iran-Russia partnership should concern Americans and how the United States can effectively respond.

Episode 2: China-Iran — Looking (to the Middle) East

In the second [episode](#), we analyzed the complex and evolving relationship between China and the Islamic Republic of Iran, highlighting their 25-year strategic accord signed in 2021. Advisory Board member Craig Singleton (Foundation for Defense of Democracies) and Advisory Board member Ray Takeyh (Council on Foreign Relations) joined us to explore this partnership.

Episode 3: China-Russia — The "No-Limits Friendship"

On the third [episode](#), we dissected one of the most consequential partnerships between our adversaries to emerge in recent years: the relationship between China and Russia. Advisory Board member Rebekah Heinrichs (Hudson Institute) and Mary Kissel (Stephens) discussed its implications and offer policy directions for the United States.

Episode 4: North Korea — The Agent of Chaos

In this [episode](#), we turned our focus to North Korea, the "agent of chaos" within the anti-American coalition. Advisory Board member Victor Cha (Center for Strategic and International Studies) joined us to discuss the current state and evolution of North Korea's relationships with America's other adversaries and how U.S. policymakers can effectively respond.

Episode 5: The Other Superpower In Our Backyard

In the fifth [episode](#), we discussed how China, Russia, and Iran are actively deepening their ties with local regimes in the Western Hemisphere, building a hostile network just beyond our borders that directly threatens American interests. Advisory Board members Ryan Berg (Center for Strategic and International Studies) and Evan Ellis (U.S. Army War College) joined to illustrate how The Other Superpower is metastasizing in our hemisphere and steps we can take to thwart these treats.

Episode 6: The Other Superpower in Africa

In the final [episode](#), we discussed how China, Russia, and Iran are working with local governments in Africa to advance their revisionist agendas and displace Western influence whenever possible. Advisory Board member Aleksandra Gadzala Tirziu (Atlantic Council) and Joshua Meservey (Hudson Institute) examined The Other Superpower's strategy in Africa and how the United States might best respond.

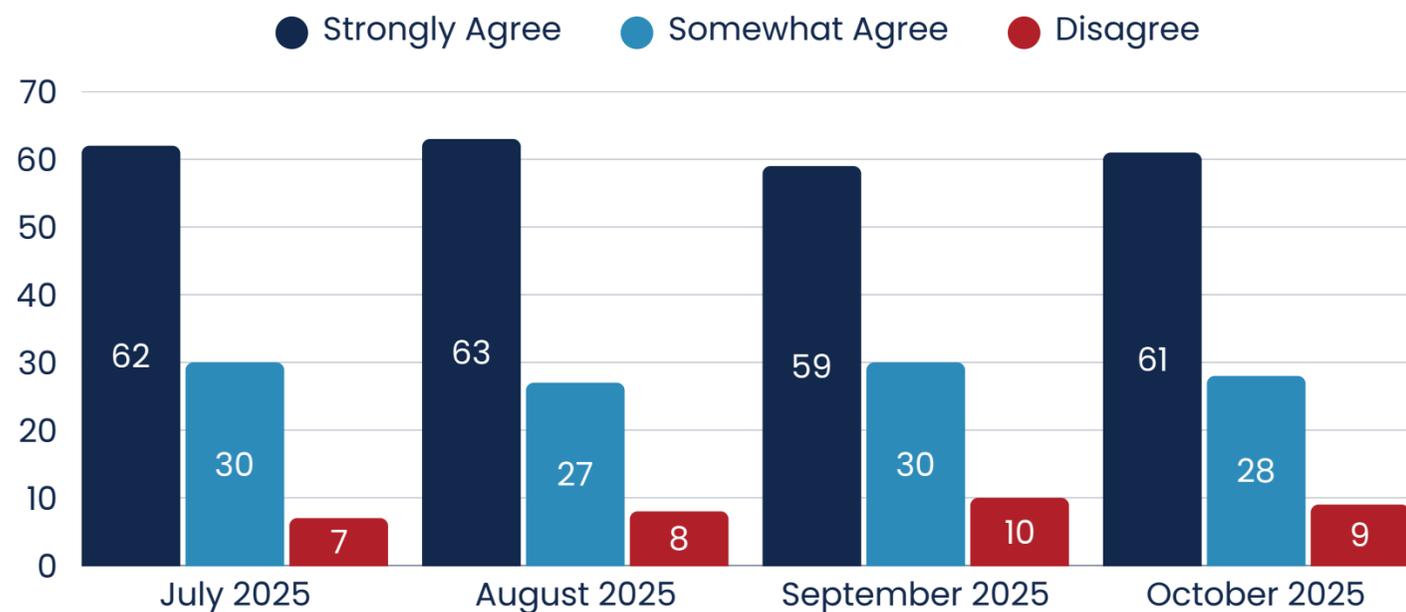
Americans First: Polling the People



We believe that American Foreign Policy should be of, by, and for the American people. Many isolationist pundits have sought to describe their personal worldview as that of Trump’s supporters, but is it really? To answer that question, we decided rather than trusting elite commentators, we should trust the voters themselves. We embarked on a six-month polling project, “Americans First: Polling the People,” with well-known GOP polling firm TargetPoint Consulting to survey Trump voters’ attitudes toward foreign policy throughout the latter half of 2025 — the only monthly poll of its kind. Over the course of this project, we assessed how different policy actions affect perceptions of American power to see where the actions of the Trump administration align with its voter base, and where they fall short. We released the first five iterations of the survey from July through November 2025, receiving over 1.4 million impressions on our results through social media and our network-wide outreach, and garnering media coverage in 20+ articles in outlets such as the *New York Post*, *Daily Wire*, *The Free Press*, *The Washington Free Beacon*, *The Washington Examiner*, and *National Review*, among others.

Time and time again, we confirmed what we already knew: “Peace Through Strength” is alive and well.

An average of **91 percent of Trump voters** across five surveys believe a strong American presence makes the world safer, **90 percent** believe the U.S. should be the strongest country in the world, and self-identified **MAGA voters were consistently more hawkish** than other Republicans on questions of China, Iran, and defense spending.



“The United States is safer and stronger when America takes a leadership role in the world.”

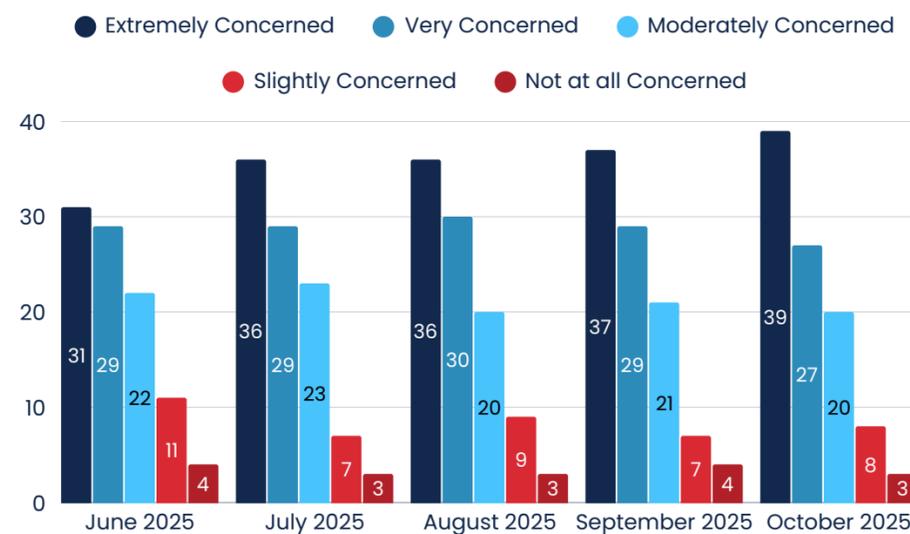


Messaging on Capitol Hill

We disseminated the results to our contacts on Capitol Hill, including 134 U.S. House offices, 56 U.S. Senate offices, 13 U.S. House Committees, and 11 U.S. Senate Committees. We also sent the results directly to Senators Jim Banks (R-IN) and Bernie Moreno (R-OH), and Representatives Craig Goldman (R-TX), John McGuire (R-VA), Erin Houchin (R-IN), Max Miller (R-OH), Troy Downing (R-MT), and Rob Bresnahan (R-PA). The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Senate Republican Policy Committee, and the offices of Representatives Darrell Issa (R-CA) and Don Bacon (R-NE) noted that the results were incredibly helpful and that Vandenberg’s data was used to help shape their messaging. The House Select Committee on Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party separately expressed interest in collaborating on future surveys and promoted the results on their X account, which were retweeted by Representatives Pat Fallon (R-TX) and John Moolenaar (R-MI), and Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY) shared TargetPoint’s analysis on his account to support his argument for sanctions on Russia and support for Ukraine.

Amplifying our Reach

In addition to serving as a useful insight into voters’ assessments of U.S. foreign policy, our poll data has served as ammunition for many of our institutional partners for their own policy messaging. Each month, we sent tailored talking points to **350+ allies and partners**, hosted several briefings on our findings, and presented the results for both on- and off-the-record events and roundtable discussions. We were pleased to see several of our partners, including **AIPAC**, the **Paul E. Singer Foundation**, the **Republican Jewish Coalition**, **Consumers Defense**, the **Coalition for Military Excellence**, the **James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal**, and the **National Security Congressional Coalition** sharing our results in their newsletters, and others, such as the **American Enterprise Institute (AEI)**, **Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD)**, **Hudson Institute**, **Veterans on Duty**, the **Pompeo Foundation**, **RAZOM**, **America First Post**, and **POLARIS National Security** promoting the survey on their social media, leading to over **700,000 impressions** on X.



“How concerned are you about increased cooperation between China, Iran, Russia, and North Korea?”

Promoting American Strength

Advocating for Increasing the Defense Budget and DoD Budgetary Reform

To America's detriment, policymakers have neglected the challenges facing the U.S. Department of Defense. From the military recruitment crisis to persistently inadequate defense budgets, the Pentagon finds itself without the hard power tools and capabilities necessary to keep America safe in a global threat environment dominated by great power competition. This year, we worked behind the scenes to expand support for adequately funding the defense budget and for Department of Defense budgetary reform. We published and circulated a [report](#) based on our 2024 "[How to Win](#)" series, outlining key policy recommendations to ensure America is strong enough to stop wars before they begin — and equally importantly, to win wars after they start.

Reorienting America's State Department toward its core diplomatic mission

For decades, the U.S. Department of State has suffered from bloat, mismanagement, and a culture that disincentivizes both creativity and achievement. This year, we released a [report](#) with recommendations to address institutional challenges to the Department's effectiveness, and we briefed key State Department officials on the findings, including the Deputy Secretary of State, the Acting Under Secretary of State for Management, the Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources, and the Chief Human Capitol Officer in the State Department's Bureau of Personnel and Training. We also briefed Representative Jefferson Shreve (R-IN), staff members for Senator Bill Hagerty (R-TN) and Representatives Darrell Issa (R-CA) and Brian Mast (R-FL), and the House Foreign Affairs Committee on the report and provided questions for the record for a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing.

"Every individual in every entity in every state can play a part in closing the gaps in America's national defense."

— State and Campaign Engagement Manager
Thor Mortensen,
[Fox News](#)



"As we send a clear demand signal to industry, we are also signaling to our adversaries that we are able to face their challenge."

— Director of Government Affairs
Anne Lord,
[RealClearDefense](#)



Securing an American Advantage in the Western Hemisphere

We continued to make the case that the United States needs to do more to rid the Western Hemisphere of malign actors, including those from the region like Venezuelan dictator Nicolas Maduro and adversaries like China and Russia, who have established footholds here. As President Trump increased pressure this year on Maduro's illegitimate regime, our Executive Director Carrie Filipetti frequently provided analysis in interviews and writing about the rapidly evolving situation, including being one of the first experts to [correctly predict](#) a "Trump Corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine.



"One could argue [regime change in Venezuela] is less about regime change in the sense of moving from dictatorship to democracy than it is about eliminating a regime that is in league with countries that are hostile to the United States."

— Chairman Elliott Abrams,
Council on Foreign Relations,
[School of War Podcast](#)

Leaders cannot keep us safe without being informed.

In 2025, we had over 509 points of engagement on Capitol Hill, including in 21 freshmen U.S. House of Representatives offices and 7 freshmen U.S. Senate offices, and have relationships with or have provided resources to 20 U.S. Senate committees and 13 U.S. House committees.

While pushing back against the CCP, driving U.S. support for Israel, and supporting Ukraine in their fight against Russia were our top policy priorities, our experts continued to serve as a resource on Capitol Hill in a range of policy areas. Notably:

- Advisory Board member Juan Cruz briefed 119th Congress Freshman Class President Representative Brandon Gill (R-TX) on the strategic importance of the Panama Canal and other Western Hemisphere threats to the United States;
- Advisory Board member Amb. Peter Pham briefed Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX)'s staff on Africa policy as the Africa Subcommittee Chairman sought to build out a more robust strategy for interacting with Africa, especially in light of our adversaries' activities on the continent; and
- Advisory Board member Mark Montgomery briefed the Republican Study Committee on how Russia, China, and Iran are collaborating militarily and how that collaboration influences America's military hegemony and power.

Several also provided congressional testimony for various committees, including:

- [Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control](#) (Amb. Nathan Sales and Marshall Billingslea)
- [House Energy and Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Communications and Technology](#) (Jamil Jaffer)
- [House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Europe](#) (Mark Montgomery)
- [House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa](#) (Amb. Nathan Sales)
- [House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere](#) (Patrick Quirk)



"The Trump administration has been right to call out European lethargy, but the answer to the challenge from Russia is not that America should do less, but rather Europe should do more."

— Advisory Board member Mark Montgomery,
[Foundation for Defense of Democracies](#)

FLASH FOCUS

Special Episode: 80 Years Since V-E Day
(feat. Thomas Spoehr, American Battle Monuments Commission)

Ep. 43 | A United Nations for the United States
(feat. Brett Schaefer, American Enterprise Institute)

Ep. 44 | The Right's 1939 Project
(feat. Rebecca Heinrichs, Hudson Institute)

Ep. 45 | Global Swing States and the New Great Power Competition
(feat. Richard Fontaine, Center for a New American Security)

Ep. 48 | The Super Bowl of Foreign Policy Speeches
(feat. Amanda Rothschild)

Ep. 49 | The Soft Power Battleground
(feat. Dan Twining, International Republican Institute)

Ep. 50 | Strikes in the Caribbean
(feat. Ryan Berg, Center for Strategic and International Studies)

Ep. 52 | A Playbook for Winning the Cyber War
(feat. Emily Harding, Center for Strategic and International Studies)

Ep. 53 | Time to Go, Maduro
(feat. Ambassador James Story)

BEYOND

THE WATER'S EDGE

We disseminated our weekly newsletter Beyond the Water's Edge, which features foreign policy analysis, vigorous debate and exchange, and key announcements. The must-read newsletter has a distribution of about 8,000 readers.

Educating Emerging Leaders

Our mission to promote a strong and proud U.S. foreign policy hinges on having strong American leaders. A critical part of this involves engaging and educating the leaders of tomorrow. We identify and train future administration officials, candidates for Congress, up-and-coming journalists, and budding policy experts not just on important policy options, but on how to be effective in government.

National Security Media Fellowship

To develop these leaders, we launched our inaugural National Security Media Fellowship in the spring of 2023, identifying emerging leaders in American journalism and working with them to provide strong policy ideas and resources for them over the course of their careers. This year, our fellowship class convened in downtown Washington, DC for a day-and-a-half long series of private, on-the-record briefings from some of the nation’s foremost experts on a range of issues tailored to both the present and future of U.S. foreign policy and national security. Our 2025 fellowship cohort came from a variety of publications with a range of experience from those recently joining the foreign policy beat to those who are a little more seasoned, having reported from across the globe. All were identified as thoughtful, unbiased, and fundamentally curious journalists who are committed to the American public, civic discourse, and sharing facts.



2025 National Security Media Fellows

- Andrew Bernard**, *Jewish News Syndicate*
- Jessica Costescu**, *Washington Free Beacon*
- James Desio**, *The Washington Post*
- Caitlin Doornbos**, *New York Post*
- Jasmyn Jordan**, *Breitbart*
- Grayson Logue**, *The Dispatch*
- Michael Lucchese**, *Providence*
- Sierra McClain**, *Wall Street Journal*
- Timothy Nerozzi**, *Washington Examiner*
- JP Villasmil**, *The Spectator*
- Wallace White**, *Daily Caller News Foundation*
- Katie Zehnder**, *Carolina Journal*



Valiant Women Series

Inspired by Dr. Lena Andrews’s 2023 book, *Valiant Women: The Extraordinary American Servicewomen Who Helped Win World War II*, our Valiant Women Series brings together up-and-coming female professionals to interact with leading women in the national security space. Our distinguished speakers discuss U.S. foreign policy challenges as well as their unique experiences navigating careers in Washington, DC. This year, we were pleased to host Advisory Board member and former four-star General Laura Richardson, Dr. Alina Chan — a molecular biologist whose work contributed to the global research efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and who heroically sounded the alarm about the origins of the virus, and Dr. Hanna Hopko, former Chairwoman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Ukrainian Parliament (2014-2019) and co-founder of the International Center for Ukrainian Victory.

Dinner & Discussion Series

Our Dinner & Discussion Series was designed to expose young professionals working in the foreign policy space to seasoned experts in our network in an intimate setting. This year, we hosted former Deputy National Security Advisor Victoria Coates, former Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs Roger Carstens, former Chief of Staff to U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Nikki R. Haley Morgan Viña, Former Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism Chris Harnisch, Director of Domestic Policy Studies at the American Enterprise Institute Matthew Continetti, former Permanent Representative of the United Nations in Geneva Andrew Bremberg, and former Assistant Secretary of State Stephen Rademaker — all of which shared insights from their careers and shed light on U.S. adversaries’ motivations, challenges to U.S. interests, and ways to support our allies

Promoting the Future of Conservative Foreign Policy

The conservative movement is currently in a battle for its future and its soul. With 2026 midterm elections looming, conflict from rising anti-Semitism, and questions over who will succeed President Trump, now is a critical time to make the case for principled American strength. In 2025, our goal was ensuring the President adhered to a strong, principled foreign policy. Due in part to our work, President Trump has largely advanced a “peace through strength” agenda. However, President Trump’s foreign policy remains unpredictable, as does the future of conservative foreign policy once he leaves office, and the conservative movement needs principled internationalist leadership to define precisely what it is we believe and develop policies upon which we can successfully stand. Through our Future of Conservative Foreign Policy series, we continued to explore the varied approaches to foreign policy among the conservative national security community, examining the fault lines and creating a space for serious debate and discussion on challenges facing the United States today. This year, we were honored to host Senator Jim Banks (R-IN), Senator Rick Scott (R-FL), and Representative John Moolenaar (R-MI) to hear their vision for keeping America safe, strong, and free.



Senator Jim Banks (R-IN)



Senator Rick Scott (R-FL)



Representative John Moolenaar (R-MI)

The work we do is powered by Our Experts Network

Among its ranks are former officials from the Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Treasury, Homeland Security, USAID, and Commerce; former senior officials from USTR, the U.S. International Trade Commission, the National Economic Council, the National Security Council, and NASA; and former Members of Congress and senior Hill staff. In only four years of operations, we've already caused a stir with America's enemies — the Venezuelan regime targeted our Executive Director by name and Russia, China, and Iran have sanctioned over a dozen of our Advisory Board members.

We were pleased to welcome several new Advisory Board members in 2025:



Behnam Ben Taleblu
Senior Director of the
Foundation for Defense of
Democracies Iran
Program



Mark Montgomery
Senior Director of the
Foundation for Defense of
Democracies Center on
Cyber and Technology
Innovation



General (ret.) Laura Richardson
Four-star general and former
Commander of U.S. Southern
Command



Dr. William Steiger
Advisor on Global Health
at the George W. Bush
Institute



Michael Sobolik
Senior Fellow at Hudson
Institute



Jon "Ty" Thomas
former Deputy
Commander of Pacific Air
Forces

Our Governance Board

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Elliott Abrams | Paula Dobriansky | Mark Dubowitz | John Hillen |
| Matthew Pottinger | Kristen Silverberg | Michael Singh | Katie Wheelbarger |

Our Advisory Board

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Michael Allen | Christopher Ford | Jon Lerner | Nathan Sales |
| Michael Auslin | Aaron Friedberg | Paul Lettow | Randy Scheunemann |
| Ryan Berg | Reuel Marc Gerecht | Lewis "Scooter" Libby | Vance Serchuk |
| Peter Berkowitz | Bonnie Glick | Mary Beth Long | Kelly Ann Shaw |
| Marshall Billingslea | Richard Goldberg | Mario Mancuso | David Shedd |
| Kari Bingen | Emilio Gonzalez | Clifford May | Nate Sibley |
| Joseph Bosco | Colleen Graffy | Franklin Miller | Craig Singleton |
| Chris Brose | Mark Green | Sarah Mineiro | Michael Sobolik |
| Bill Brownfield | Michael Green | Amy Mitchell | Thomas Spoehr |
| Jonathan Burks | Scott Greytak | Mark Montgomery | William Steiger |
| Scott Carpenter | John Hannah | Tim Morrison | David Stilwell |
| Victor Cha | Emily Harding | Mick Mulroy | Tom Storch |
| Todd Chapman | Christopher Harnisch | Henry R. Nau | Robert Strayer |
| Zack Cooper | Rebecca Heinrichs | Heather Nauert | John Sullivan |
| Juan Cruz | Rachel Hoff | Joan O'Hara | Ray Takeyh |
| Kelley Currie | Kim Holmes | Sean O'Keefe | Behnam Ben Taleblu |
| Lisa Curtis | Will Inboden | Richard Outzen | Rep. "Mac" Thornberry |
| Jacqueline Deal | Lolita Jackson | J. Peter Pham | Jon "Ty" Thomas |
| Colin Dueck | Jamil Jaffer | Michael Pillsbury | Aleksandra Tirziu |
| Mackenzie Eaglen | Seth Jones | Danielle Pletka | William Todd |
| Eric Edelman | Fred Kagan | Patrick Quirk | Jay Truesdale |
| Evan Ellis | Kimberly Kagan | Stephen Rademaker | Daniel Twining |
| Frank Fannon | F. Scott Kieff | Joel Rayburn | Morgan Vina |
| Doug Fears | Klon Kitchen | Gen. Laura Richardson | Robert Wilkie |
| Peter Feaver | Keith Krach | John Richmond | Clete Willems |
| David Feith | David Kramer | Peter Rough | Matthew Zais |
| Dan Fisk | Matthew Kroening | Daniel Runde | Roger Zakheim |
| Richard Fontaine | Sen. Jon Kyl | Speaker Paul Ryan | Juan Zarate |

Over forty of our Advisory Board members, allies, and young professionals in our network heeded the call to public service in 2025, joining the Trump Administration to further the president’s Peace Through Strength agenda. Our Advisory Board Emeritus members include:

- **Ryan Arant** is serving as Chief of Staff to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
- **Brian Cavanaugh** is serving as Associate Director for Homeland Security in the Office of Management and Budget
- **David Feith** served as Senior Director for Technology on the National Security Council until April 2025
- **Rich Goldberg** served as Senior Counselor to the National Energy Dominance Council from April–August 2025
- **Jamieson Greer** is serving as U.S. Trade Representative
- **Wells Griffith** is serving as Under Secretary of Energy
- **Paul Kapur** is serving as Assistant Secretary for State for South and Central Asian Affairs
- **Earl Matthews** is serving as General Counsel of the U.S. Department of War
- **David Milstein** is serving as Senior Advisor to U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee
- **Sean O’Keefe** is serving as Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
- **Morgan Ortagus** served as Deputy Special Presidential Envoy for Middle East Peace and is now serving as Counselor to the U.S. Mission to the United Nations and Special Representative for Lebanon
- **David Rader** is serving as Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Analysis
- **Joel Rayburn** was nominated to serve as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. His nomination was withdrawn in October 2025.
- **Gabriel Scheinmann** is serving as Chief of Staff to U.S. Ambassador to France Charles Kushner

Our team is small, nimble, and relentless about getting results. This year, we expanded to welcome Senior Policy Director **Corban Teague** to spearhead our policy efforts, State and Campaign Engagement Manager **Thor Mortensen**, who supports our state-level engagement with local leaders across the country, and Policy Fellow **Eliana Aiken**, who will assist our policy shop through August 2026 in a one-year fellowship placement.



Carrie Filipetti
Executive Director



Corban Teague
Senior Policy Director



Sydney Novak
Chief of Staff



Anne Lord
Director of Government Affairs



Jessica Farrell
Director of Operations



Thor Mortensen
State and Campaign
Engagement Manager



Ethan Minkoff
Policy Associate



Eliana Aiken
Policy Fellow



As our enemies rise, we are pushing back. American security and prosperity depends on American leadership. Help keep America strong, safe, prosperous, and free by supporting The Vandenberg Coalition’s vital work.

The Vandenberg Coalition is a 501(c)(3), non-partisan network of foreign policy leaders, both experts and practitioners, that prepares current and future national security leaders with the context, network, and vision that harnesses principled American leadership to overcome the most significant national security challenges of our time. Our latest 990 information is available upon request.

To donate, please contact Executive Director Carrie Filipetti at carrie@vandenbergcoalition.org or visit www.vandenbergcoalition.org/contribute.