

Speaker 1: [01:05](#) [inaudible] split. [inaudible] here you are. Look at me. [inaudible] for women. [inaudible] yeah,

Peter Baker: [02:39](#) yeah. We're ready to go here, right? Hear me? All right. Okay. Hello everybody. All right. This is where I say, sure. Thank you guys for coming and, uh, thank you for joining us for this terrific sessions. We began the afternoon of, uh, assimilating talk and conversation here at the Aspen Forum we have with us today. I'm Peter Baker, by the way. I'm the moderator for this session. I'm the chief White House correspondent for the New York Times. Uh, you may have heard of us where the, uh, the failing New York Times, um, failing upwards as we like to say these days. We're really, really a privilege to have today with us these four insightful and experienced thinkers and practitioners, uh, all of whom I know are very familiar to all of you, but I'm going to introduce them anyway, real quickly. We'd have, uh, Jane Harmon, the director, president and CEO of the Wilson Center in Washington.

Peter Baker: [03:38](#) We're actually actually been privileged to have two fellowships for book projects over the years. Thank you very much, Jane. Uh, of course, every, everybody knows here. She served in Congress for nine terms representing California in the house and served in some of the most important national security, uh, committees. Uh, the house. She also served in President Carter's administration as the secretary of the cabinet. Uh, Joe Nye of course here, uh, to her left is the cochair of the Aspen Strategy Group. Everybody knows him. He's also university distinguished service professor emeritus and former dean of the Kennedy School at Harvard, uh, served in several capacities in the Carter and Clinton administrations, including Assistant Secretary of defense for international security share, the nic, the National Intelligence Council and Deputy Under Secretary of State for security assistance, science and technology. Uh, to Joe's left is Emory slaughter, who is the president and CEO of new America. And the Burt g curse. Coming back messes up Krista Kirsta, Chris deader university professor Marita Politics and international affairs at Princeton University where she was also at one point the dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public International Affairs. I follow in Joe's footsteps.

Peter Baker: [04:49](#) She also serves as director of policy planning at the State Department under President Obama. And as a contributing editor to the, uh, Financial Times. And of course, Bob Kagan here, uh, the runt of every litter. But, uh, we so happy to have him here. I'm trying to get him going. I want him to be our provocateur up here today. Um, we'll talk after. Bob was a great friend. He's the Steven and Barbara Freedman senior fellow

with the project under national order and strategy and the foreign policy program at Brookings Institution, the world's longest. It really is. Yeah. Uh, contributing colonists, the Washington Post, his latest book, the jungle grows back is a terrific book if you haven't read. I love it. It's, uh, it's a smart insight into the liberal world order and, uh, the need to, uh, to tend the garden, if you will. Uh, he served in the State Department under President Reagan, including us, principal speechwriter for secretary of State, George Schultz.

Peter Baker: [05:41](#)

So we're here to talk about great power competition. We're here to talk about basically, uh, I think brand strategy in the largest sense, and I can't help but start thinking about something. Joe Bolt and John Bolton said this week, John Bolton, of course, national creed advisor to President Trump, uh, say that the struggle with China these days has elements of us, of Samuel Huntington's class of civilizations. Uh, now we've heard that a couple times from people in the Trump administration is a very interesting and provocative thought. What do we think of that? Are we in a clash of civilizations these days with China? And if so, what does that mean for how we should approach it? I'm going to start with Bob here. Well, I,

Robert Kagan: [06:20](#)

I want to, I just think it's important to frame this, this discussion correctly, at least from my point of view, which is that I sort of object to the idea that this is a u s China competition and a even a u s China clash. Um, I think what this is a clashes between an international system and a set of norms, uh, with, uh, a country that may be, uh, dissatisfied with that system and antithetical to those norms. I think, I mean, I don't know what's what Bolton is particularly thinking about, but if you want to say that, uh, there is a liberal world order which the United States is a central part of, but by no means the sole part of, and that China is, uh, you know, in some way in conflict with that order. I think that's a fair characterization.

Peter Baker: [07:09](#)

Yeah. Emory, we saw Vladimir Putin, of course, president of Russia, right? In Financial Times. You are affiliated paper a couple of weeks back that the liberal oral order is obsolete. That it has no relevance in today's world. Um, what do you think of that?

Anne-Marie S: [07:25](#)

Well, I think it's impossible for the world of 2045 to be run by an order that was created in 1945. It's like 19 in 1945 being run by the great powers of 1845. So from that point of view, the liberal world order has to change. And the biggest problem we've had is that those of us who believe in it and believe in a rule, govern order are looking backward and saying, we need to hold on to

this thing not forwards in terms of here's how a set of rules and norms and institutional arrangements can actually solve global problems, which we're not doing a good job of. And I just want to say one thing on the u s China clash of civilizations. Trump injects race everywhere he can and this is no different and I just have to say, you have to read Bob Kagan and the Washington Post on exactly how this is happening. This is how you inject race in foreign policy. This is not just clash of civilizations. This is as the director of policy planning, my predecessor said at a new America conference, this is a non-Caucasian rival, which is just bs in the first place given who the United States is. So this is what that's about.

Peter Baker: [08:38](#) Well Joe, that's a really good question and that's really point. Good point is this, we only have a clash of civilizations with people who do not look like us. Right. And um, but does that mean that therefore that the fact that they don't look like us, uh, means that they don't share, uh, some of the same inherent values or that we can't spine inherent shared, uh, commonalities?

Joseph Nye: [08:58](#) No, I I agree with both a bobbin and Ann Marie. I am about to publish a book called do morals matter a precedence in foreign policy from FDR to Trump. And what's interesting when you look at those 14 presidents is that they never defined things in terms of race. The liberal world order was defined in terms of an open rules based system. Yeah. I think Anne Marie's right, that you're not going to have the degree of liberalism in the terms of democracy that we might have expected. But in terms of an open end rules based system, the Chinese have a lot of interesting listen to that panel, those two panels we heard this morning. There's some areas where we need to hit hard at the Chinese and should, but there are other areas where we have common interests. Climate change being an example, and the argument that somehow civilization or race has anything to do is just nonsense. We forget that when we set this stuff up at Bretton Woods in 44 and at the UN and 45, there are a lot of people, including Chinese who were not Caucasians who were part of it.

Peter Baker: [10:08](#) Well, can I, Joe, I want to follow up with you for a second. You signed this letter this month, a couple weeks ago. This letter of a hundred. I did scholars Emory did too. Sorry. On the idea of a balance policy toward China. Both of you should answer then. It doesn't though. President Trump have a point that the balanced policy we've tried in the past hasn't worked. And isn't there maybe an argument to be said for a more aggressive, assertive policy that's getting their attention now you go ahead first. So I

would, um, I e I think we heard as we heard this morning, I'd agree exactly with Anya manual that yes, China is changed its policy to end. And the whole point about not being a complimentary economy and being a competitive one and where China wants to go and what she shamed Peng wants to deliver. Absolutely. We had to change our policy toward China. How he's doing it absolutely wrong in so many ways.

Joseph Nye: [11:00](#)

Yeah, I agree. And I think the main problem Americans have is to go back to Lyndon Johnson. We're not very good at walking and chewing gum at the same time. I'm all for hitting Ford. Yeah. Ford, but Never Johnson was the one who city couldn't do it. But in any case, the point is that, uh, we, we should hit hard on China. Uh, we should have freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea, which we're doing. We should hit hard on intellectual property theft. I don't think Weiwei should be allowed to do five g zip. Big Difference between that and vilifying China. I thought those two panels we heard this morning, we're quite good on trying to get a balance. Reason I signed this letter of a hundred is that Washington goes through pendulum swings and the new conventional wisdom. If a bright young

Peter Baker: [11:53](#)

staff or Republican or Democrat, the more anti-Chinese you can be, the better your future career. I'm old enough and have no political ambitions to say that's nonsense. Real policy has to be in the center. We go, James, should we be focusing that much though on China and Russia? You know, we, we came out of the Cold War. We started talking about threats in a different way, right? Under Clinton, we've talked a lot about trans national crime and trafficking and drugs and under Bush of course we talked a lot about intelligent, I mean, sorry, terrorism and and and so forth and under Clinton a lot, sorry, under Obama, a lot more about climate change. I'm really just one part at a, uh, are we missing something? Then

Jane Harman: [12:30](#)

the answer to that is yes, but let me say two things before that. You talk about the class, clash of civilizations. How about the uncivilized clash we're having right now between some of the rhetoric of our president and some of the rhetoric of those on the far left in Congress. It's dreadful. And lobbing grenades back and forth is, it seems to me suffocating a well intentioned effort to make some decent policy around a lot of subjects, including this one. So I, I just wanted to say that. And the other thing is, uh, the other thing is when we talk about people who are a different color from us, have we looked at our own population country? Who are we? I'm from California. It's a majority minority state or whatever that means. Um, but it has a huge

number of people who are from Mexico and Latin America and a huge number of people, oh goodness, from Asia, Asia, including China.

Jane Harman:

[13:27](#)

And some of them are our best contributors. So we are a, a, a country of immigrants. And before we decide that people, other people look different, that's what we look like. And these four Congress women who were getting, uh, pilloried and it's, it's, I don't know any of them and I'm not defending everything they say, uh, but they're all Americans. And let's, let's embrace the fact that Americans look different from each other and have different ideas from each other. You're here. So there's that. Now you asked if there are other issues. Yeah, there are. I mean, I think our new strategic doctrine in the United States is in, is, is good. It says that Russia and China are strategic competitors. That's what it says about each of them. And I think the intention was, I remember being briefed on this by Jim Madis. I'm a member of the Defense Policy Board.

Jane Harman:

[14:18](#)

The Dif, the intention was to keep them as separate competitors. I think some of our actions are driving them together. But this, uh, doctrine replaces a doctrine we've had for 18 years focused on counterterrorism. And what we're missing is that terrorism is still an urgent threat in this country. And we should not downgrade our focus on that. I just would mention that a number of us in in this room, I think we're part of something called the homeland security experts group, isn't that sweet name. We met here for two days before this conference. Michael Chertoff is a coach here, have it with me and we talked about the urgent threats against our country from within our country and outside our country. That should not be ignored in this, in this effort to redefine our relationships with Russia and China. You said strategic competitors, is that the right phrase we should be thinking about when it comes to big powers like Russia and China, maybe Bob, do you think that is, is that the way to confront or characterize them?

Robert Kagan:

[15:18](#)

I mean, no, they obviously we are in, you know, we are in an arms competition with China and technology competition with China, but I think there is a danger and there's a danger even in the way the national strategy is formulated, that we look at the world as sort of the big powers. We're the only ones that matter. And the only thing that matters is our relationship with China. Our relationship with Russia, you know, pro or con, hostile or not hostile. And I think that is to misunderstand what the strength of American foreign policy has been since 1945 which is, uh, we created an international order and I actually don't really agree that it's not going to still be relevant in 2045.

And the key element of that order was that we put an end to cycles of geopolitical conflict in Asia and Europe. Uh, we basically in a way settled the problem of geopolitical rivalry in those two continents.

Robert Kagan:

[16:16](#)

And, and Russia and China were always somewhat on the outside of that. Um, but the, the reason that we were successful in the Cold War was not because we went head to head with Russia and beat Russia in Sputnik. And you know, the art, the moon shot had nothing to do with beating Russia. Um, what, what led to the end of the Cold War was the strength of the world order that we'd created, which included all the richest countries, all the freest countries, all the most innovative countries locked in a successful strategic alliance that deterred any aggression by those of those other two powers. And, and I think we are still in that same situation. China is stronger than it was then. Russia is weaker than it was then. But the core of our strategy has still got to be about these strategic alliances, this largely democratic world, this open economic order.

Robert Kagan:

[17:11](#)

And that's how we'll deal successfully with China. Not by looking at everything China does and saying they're better at us than this. So that's a disaster. I mean, our goal with China, I'm sorry, I'm going to stop in one second, but our goal with China should actually be to encourage their success as a country economically, socially, while at the same time deterring them militarily because that's the, that's the threat that we have to make. It can't be just a threat to us that they're doing well economically and our foreign policy should not be designed to, to make China do badly economically. I don't think that's the secret to the successful stable world that we want to have

Anne-Marie S:

[17:52](#)

nodding and shake your neighbor. [inaudible] we're disagreeing handsomely and that I agree with you on the China part. I really do. Uh, but on the liberal world order, and remember I started my careers as a law professor, right? Teaching international law, I believe in the global order of absolutely. But look, if you are India, if you are Africa, if you are Japan, if you are Germany or the EU, and you look at the Security Council, you're like, what is this? This is a doctrine. This is a, a structure that had to be updated and many of us tried to actually see Security Council reform and of course it wouldn't happen. You either tried to do it with adding four more, a great powers or you tried to do it with meaning and power multiple ways. I try it. Many of us were engaged precisely because for this order to make, to preserve itself and to preserve its relevance, it has to be updated. That has not happened. So now what you're seeing are lots of powers deciding, fine, I can't be on a Security Council, I'll set up

my own regional organizations. Plus when is the last time the Security Council actually solved a major global problem, right? If you are the next generation and you were looking at the UN, you are not seeing an organization that is actually functioning in a way that really makes a difference. That's been told since 1945 periodically. Yes. No, not true. Not True, not during the nineties

- Robert Kagan: [19:28](#)      sweetness and I, I wanna know you want to go down the line, but the difference between friendliness is that you're much more of an institutionalist when it comes to the liberal order. Yeah.
- Anne-Marie S: [19:35](#)      No, I'm not. Bob. And the council has anything to do that is not true.
- Robert Kagan: [19:39](#)      World Order is established by the security arrangements that the United States established after 1945 and those who have not. And there's a place for India in that. And there's a place for Africa in that.
- Anne-Marie S: [19:50](#)      Yeah. As long as if we, we give them sufferings for refer, we're the, we're in charge and we let them do it. They're not gonna put up with that. But you're not, you're actually not listening to what I'm saying. Oh, I'm sorry. Yeah, you're not, let me just say what I want to say. I am all for, I'm rules. Don't forget, I'm, I'm all for a rule-based order. It has to adapt. Those of us who grew up in what it was in the 20th century have to recognize a lot of change. From my own point of view, it's not state-based institutions. It's global networks of many different kinds. That includes states and business and nonprofits, uh, and in, in, in ways that go well beyond the institute.
- Robert Kagan: [20:36](#)      It's the rabbi said you're both right. [inaudible] back the, I think to go back to your original question, Peter, there's nothing wrong with a national security strategy, which says that
- Joseph Nye: [20:48](#)      China and Russia are strategic competitors. They're not the only competitors. And that's, uh, an important opening point. But there are two things wrong with the strategy. One is it doesn't distinguish between Russia, which is a declining power which you have to handle very differently from China, which is a rising power. A declining power can be extremely destructive cause it has few stakes in the game. So Bhutan is a spoiler and if you just want a historical example, world war one was started by Austria-Hungary with a little help from Serbia, but it was the declining power which took the highest risk. And so Putin is a very high risk and the danger is a strategy which adjusts the

him, which does not mean what Obama did, which is debt denigrating, but figures out how do you use him. That is something which is different from the strategy you want for China.

Joseph Nye: [21:54](#) A rising power, which actually has a stake in the future. And for that you go to an Marise point, which is you can get China to play in a rules based system. It won't have the liberal values we want. But there are certain things as we heard this morning where you can get them in. We call China revisionist power, but there's a big difference between the revisionism of Heifer in the 1930s who wanted to kick over the table and China, which simply wants to kill the table. So it gets more of the poker earnings on top that can be handled. The Hitler type problem. Yeah. So the big problem with this strategy is it doesn't distinguish between different types of competitors. The other thing wrong with the strategy is it's not what we're doing. It has almost nothing to do with what president Trump is doing.

Joseph Nye: [22:46](#) President Trump's, I don't think, I don't know whether he's read that strategy. I had some of my friends in the government say no, but the, but the major point is Trump does have a strategy. We heard it this morning. It's a strategy of nationalist protectionism, which sees the u s as the sucker over time. And this order, which Bob and Ann Marie referred to in Trump's view, is a sucker's order. And if we would just do unilateral nationalists protectionism, we would make American great again. And that has almost nothing to do with national security strategy. 1917 | 2017.

Jane Harman: [23:26](#) Jane, what do you think about that? I mean, do we do, are we a, is it the president actually following his own national security strategy or is it all made up, uh, as he goes along? Well, I was just thinking about the fact that it was written by people who no longer worked for him. They've all been forced out or quit or fired. And uh, so I think probably that is dead on arrival. What is his strategy, Joe? Joe is right in this sense. I mean, the way he looks at things is real estate deals a, you do a deal with somebody else. So it's bilateral and it's win lose. Somebody gets the property, somebody doesn't get the property. And I don't think international relations set up that way. I don't think they ever have and I don't think they should. I, I agree with Bob.

Jane Harman: [24:11](#) I loved your book by the way. You know that I know that many times and the jungle grows back is the name of the book and it's all about what happens to us if we abandoned the liberal world order and the jungle is growing back in some respect. So I love the book, but I also agree with Ann Marie that the world is

changing and our multi-lateral must have, these relationships have to adjust and change too. And I agree with Joe. I'm not only not that Russia and China are a completely different one is a declining power and one's a rising power. So where does this leave us? It to me, uh, leaves us in need of leadership that gets the world, uh, where it is now and where it does grow. It is going. I think that there certainly are people in this administration who still work there who have that view, um, that our alliances matter.

Jane Harman: [25:01](#) Certainly our alliance with NATO matters a lot. The U s congress basically unanimously believes that. I mean, I, I haven't gone back to Congress much cause it's such a downer, but I went, I went three months ago or so. Um, when the, uh, secretary general of NATO who was just here yesterday spoke on the floor of Congress, why did I go? Because he was invited, uh, on a bipartisan basis, listen up by Mitch McConnell and Nancy Pelosi and the things he said, God, universal applause. Everybody stood up, everybody applauded. And we haven't seen that movie in a long time. So all I'm saying is there are folks in the United States who still have very potent podiums who see the world as, I think we all do, including you, Peter Question,

Peter Baker: [25:47](#) Jane. I mean like is Trump and outlier, who at some point will, will go away in a year and a half or five and a half years, and then the Republicans and the Democrats will come back to this sort of semi consensus they've had over these large questions before his arrival or as he changed things in a more permanent,

Jane Harman: [26:03](#) well, if you're asking me, I don't know the answer to that. I don't think we know if and when Trump is going away. And there also are other people now in leadership positions in other countries who are behaving the way Trump does. So I think our politics is changing. Um, you know, there's some good signs, some bad signs, but populism, um, bottom up politics, diffusion of power driven by social media, globalization, fear and Trump is playing on this big time, a fear of cultural change. This kind of thing, uh, is everywhere in the world. So I don't think we ever can go back, what are we going to go forward to? And that's a challenge

Peter Baker: [26:44](#) for all of us. And let me just speak up for think tanks. Um, three think tanks we think and we, and, and we try to frame issues based on a serious sober understanding of, of, of issues. And I don't see that happening in many places. Of course, I'd give a shout out to the Aspen Strategy Group and the Kennedy School. So Emery, we, if we're heading into 20, 20 with w with this question of whether president Trump will, will stay around, we'll be resolved. The part of the question is who might be the

alternative? And you wrote this week, I think there's this week and Financial Times about the Democrats and their debate. And they were asked what is the single most uh, important threat to the United States? And in a lot of them said the more traditional answer, like a Russian word, China. And then some of them said the, you know, climate change or nuclear proliferation or with cross border. What did you take from, from, from that discussion on their part?

Anne-Marie S: [27:34](#)

So I do think there's a big generational difference, uh, between the kind of more traditional view that the threat is a state based threat. That's the geopolitical view and what I call the global view that is much more concerned about what are the threats that are not affecting whether the u s is up or down visa vi another nation, but what's happening to us as individuals. So if you looked at the, the answers to that, what is the greatest threat? It's split. It was about half and half. And Mo, the younger folks mostly said climate change or nuclear proliferation. Now both of these can be both because climate change has impacts on different states. Canada's a winner. Other states are not, uh, and nuclear proliferation. You can say, well that's, you know, Iran is up or North Korea is up and we're down. But the way Corey booker talked about it and the way Tulsi Gabbard Gavin talked about it was we individuals are threatened by climate change, by nuclear proliferation I'd say by migration for many people.

Anne-Marie S: [28:40](#)

And that's a different worldview. And so when I look again at the liberal international order, if this is both and I want it, but it's not enough, you have to also have ways of tackling these threats that do not stop at state borders. And there again, you have to bring states in, but you also have to bring business and all the civic groups to tackle things that affects people's lives. And I do that. Sorry. I think that's a, uh, if you look at the younger people and you ask them what the threat is, very few people are likely to talk about great power, Power Bob Picture.

Joseph Nye: [29:16](#)

Look, I just wanted to echo what Ann Marie said. If, if you recall that terrific interview that Susan Glasser had with Farah it just before lunch, that is a great indication of the problem of restricting yourself. Just a great power competition because what little veiny has done is cut the soft power budget of the u s by 30%, and I'm all for a power budget. I was a deficient defense department official, but to cut the soft power budget ignores all that wisdom that was in Pharaoh's very interesting book and also her interview. In addition to that, you can't go back to the world before because the world has changed. Uh, Ann Marie mentioned climate change, which is very real. But let me give

you a couple of examples. When Bill Clinton used, uh, was able to Bob Milosevic in Serbia, uh, there's no chance that Milosevic was going to come and strike the continental us big oceans.

Joseph Nye:

[30:19](#)

So off neighbors and when he set cruise missiles, this is just 20 years ago, set cruise missiles into Sudan or Libya. Uh, you know, there not much chance they strike back within a few years. A non state group turned art commercial aircraft into cruise missiles and killed more people than the government of Japan did in 1941. And if you say, well what else? Cyber, all of a sudden you don't know whether you're being attacked from 10 miles away or 10,000 miles away and you find out that a North Korea, a primitive state in many ways is able to damage Sony pictures to try to affect the quality of discourse in our country. You can't go back to 1945 because there's a whole new set of threats, but you're also not going to deal with these threats in unless you have a rules based system. And on some of these things like terrorism, climate and issues like cyber rules, you can imagine where rules basis of that includes China, right. James? Or you're jumping in. I'm going to go to Bob.

Jane Harman:

[31:32](#)

Yes. I mean the answer to that is, is yes. Um, when I mentioned that we have downgraded the terrorism threat, I certainly was including cyber terror and I was including non state actors. And I let's add to that the danger of miscalculation, which could occur certainly in those fears, even more than in our interactions, whatever they may be wrong or right with China and Russia. So, uh, I think, uh, we need norms and values. I think most people, I look, look at what just happened in Hong Kong. I don't think anyone missed that. There are a whole bunch of folks living in China. We have one China policy who don't want the China rules to apply to them and they've been pretty effective so far. And we'll see. And we'll see what's happening with Taiwan to a country that we still consider a country, although within this policy, uh, and, and where we provide literally military aid. So I think there are universal values. I think there are the, certainly the, the framework that have built since 1945 which does need to be retooled. And then you overlay that with a lot of things Anne Marie was just talking about. And Joe was talking about. And I think there's a way to move forward, uh, and be stronger than we have been. But if we don't pick wisely, if we, if everything is a zero sum bilateral negotiation, uh, I can see this falling apart very fast. Bye. Bye.

Robert Kagan:

[33:02](#)

I'm sure you agree with everything that just been said.

Jane Harman:

[33:06](#)

[inaudible]

Robert Kagan: [33:06](#) you in here for us what I meant, but anything because you just heard, did you a couple of other news make a couple of points with maybe the slightly repetitive, but, and, and I don't mean to suggest that we don't have to, obviously we have to adapt. But what, what really worries me, I guess more than anything because there's always gonna be new technological threats. There always have been. I mean, terrorism wasn't invented in 2001. Um, you know, and, and other means of, of creating problems, there's always going to be something new. Uh, what I want to just emphasize is that what was created in 1945 was unprecedented in the history of the world. Uh, and it created an a, a world that was also unprecedented in the level of prosperity and the level level of freedom and in the level of general peace. And I think what we don't really recognize is how quickly that can disappear.

Robert Kagan: [34:07](#) And so I wanna make sure that while we're doing all the other things that you're talking about, that the one thing we do for sure is hold that together because we don't think very much about what will happen in Europe if the United States withdraws, we think that Europe is just going to go sailing meekly by. But I believe that Europe will return to the problems that had had before. Ultimately because we are the day of sex mock in our keeping Europe, uh, stable and the same as true in Asia where the, where the conflict between Japan and China was the historic conflict. And it will be the conflict of the future. Um, and so if we can maintain those things, of course we have to do all the other things. Now, just to get to your question, which is where's, what about Trump and the American public?

Robert Kagan: [34:53](#) Trump didn't create this mood in the American public. Uh, the American people, it's worth recalling that what we did after 1945, what the American people did was take on unprecedented responsibility for global affairs. No nation in history has ever shoulder the responsibility to the American people's shoulders. All kinds of reasons why they did it. But it was not only unusual for any other nation, it's also was unusual for the United States. That's not the history of the United States prior to 1945 is taking on global responsibility. So I think it was inevitable that at some point American many Americans are going to say, remind us again why we're doing this. And this began I, Iraq was a catalyst. Afghanistan was a catalyst,

Peter Baker: [35:37](#) but it, uh, the 2008 financial crisis was a catalyst. But I think it was waiting to happen. But eventually Americans would come to doubt whether this was necessary. And we are firmly in that place right now. I believe Obama, with his general sense of pulling back was where the American people are. And I fear that

Trump, where Trump is, is not far from where the dead center of American public opinion is. Yeah. When, when, when Trump says horrible things about NATO, we in this room get all upset. The American people don't get upset. They're not complaining about it. So that's my concern that we are in ineluctably moving in this direction. I think I'd actually, you're right. And it takes out that there's more commonality between Obama and Trump and a lot of people recognize, I mean, obviously Obama is a more politesse figure. He's not a bomb thrower by nature. He's gonna, he's not gonna tell NATO that they, they stink the way that Trump does, but, and you take away their protection isn't part of it. The idea of, you know, why should we be the world's policemen is at the essence of what Obama said with his don't do stupid stuff. A philosophy is being the world's policemen means doing stupid stuff.

Joseph Nye:

[36:44](#)

In a way he could, I forget whether he, right, right, right. But you still were not, can I just disagree a little bit with, with that characterization of Obama? Uh, though I agree with Bob's basic point. The U S Japan alliance is the single most important asset we have in East Asia, and Obama did not denigrate that. No Trump left behind the stink bomb. Lee left a socket saying, maybe this isn't worth it. After all, in 1990s in the Clinton illustration, we did a national intelligence estimate which showed that China's Bauer was going in creeps. The first thing we did in policy terms was not to ask China into the WTO. It was to reaffirm the security alliance with Japan and that worked and all these people say, China's going to drive us beef on the first island chain. Guess what? The first island chain has a name, it's Japan and they pay us to keep 50,000 troops there. China cannot drive us beyond that if we keep that alliance right. Here's where Bob's exactly right. Where I disagree is that Obama let that down. You're really just not until Trump that you had any American president who let that [inaudible]. It's

Peter Baker:

[37:58](#)

not as straight. Obama's not as structure in the same way that Trump is. I don't mean it that way. What I mean is the idea though of how much America should assert itself in places like the Middle East, like Libya. He, I think he was, I think, tell me if I'm wrong and would know better. I think he was burned by what happened in Libya. He believed it ended up being a mistake. He shouldn't have allowed himself to be convinced to do it. And from that point on, his philosophy was we can do more ill by intervening in an aggressive way, then we can do good and therefore we should hold back as a, as a philosophy. Did I wrong about that? Yes. And but actually, so this conversation has helped me understand exactly. You and I disagree

Anne-Marie S: [38:36](#) and it's a very important point. You are absolutely right that Obama liked, Trump had a view that the United States should not be the global policeman that he absolutely. And he was pulling back in various ways the differences. He thought what he was painting to a, you know, he was pivoting, but even there, he didn't want us to always be out front. And I disagreed vehemently with them on Syria. I wanted him to be far more out front on values issues where you and I agree the differences. Obama was absolutely determined to replace that u s role with a much more multi-lateralism one. He was committed to multi-lateralism to a degree that even people like me got frustrated with. Whereas Trump has no use for multi-lateralism. Trump wants us to go alone. So the Obama Vision, and this is where you and I disagree, if the US pulls back out of Europe, Europe's not going to fall apart.

Anne-Marie S: [39:37](#) We're not keeping Europe together. Europe has its own problems, but ultimately Europe with us are part of a vision of a rule-based order and we need them. They're more at the table. We need all of our allies more at the table. So I think the difference is I believe in this order. I think it has to be updated radically. I don't believe it's the u s that has to keep it together. Oh, go ahead. No, that's the, that that I think is a, is a really key difference in terms of how Trump and Obama thought, but maybe also sort of your vision of what a rule based order that looks it has to look like. And what, how I see it being well, any

Jane Harman: [40:15](#) more comments? Obama, uh, with climate change and Obama with the JCP POA agreement with our allies, uh, to contain Iran's nuclear program and a number of other things was inventing new, uh, forms of collaboration. But I wanted to raise something we haven't discussed, which I think is possible and that is the u s can be left behind by the behavior we are exhibiting. Europe is a larger market than we are. And I was in Europe last week. Nobody seems to have any use for our current government in Europe. Uh, they feel very, uh, insulted. Uh, but Europe just did a big deal with Mercosur, the, the Latin American trading regime. And there are other deals going on between Canada and Japan and et Cetera, et cetera. And Sean and I and China. And I see a possibility that our smaller market, especially if we behave the way we're behaving, uh, could be, it could have fewer opportunities in the world and, uh, realignment and relationships could emerge that leave us out. Let's think about China in Europe and belt and road all over the place, uh, in places where we're not the Chinese, uh, economic model in places where we're not active. So I don't, I think we retreat, uh, if that's what we're doing, which is a word I don't like

- Peter Baker: [41:34](#) at our peril here. We'll ask Bobby, just have one last thought on this, but anybody who wants to ask questions of the panel now is the time to, to, to get ready to stand up. And I don't know if there's a Mike the microphone over there and, uh, and we'll have Bob answer real quickly if you have anything to say on, on, like they were saying,
- Robert Kagan: [41:51](#) well, first of all, I mean, I want us to work my, my whole point is that we have to work with our allies. I, I guess the only thing I disagree with, which is sort of where, you know, I've always disagreed with John Ikenberry that you could pull the United States out and the institutions would still be strong. I think the United States is the core that makes the institution strong. That doesn't mean we shouldn't have strong institutions. Anyway. I, I just, I just, I guess just to, and I think Trump is not where the American people are in his absolute determination, not only not to defend the liberal order, but actually to bring it down. And let's not let, this isn't an accident. He is deliberately supporting the Nationalist Anti Liberal, uh, political moments in Europe against the liberal governing powers. He is actively undermining the liberal free trading regime, uh, and he is actively more sympathetic to authoritarian governments than the liberal democratic government.
- Robert Kagan: [42:44](#) So he is in fact working against the liberal world order. Um, but what makes me worried is I just don't know how the American people respond to that. And just then, at one point, you know, in the 1920s, you had three things come together at the same time. You had anti-immigration sentiment, protectionism and isolationism. What we definitely have the anti-immigration sentiment. We definitely have protectionism and it seems to me that that goes hand in hand with a withdrawal from the world and when we have a any portion of our country chanting send her home. That is not the basis of a successful international foreign policy.
- Joseph Nye: [43:21](#) Good. Can I agree with Bob just on this point, which is I think we focus too much on the threat to the liberal order coming from the rise of China and not enough from the fact that American attitudes will turn inward. In my book I quote Madeline Albright who says what worry Sir is that we're going to act like we did in the 30s in which we were to use her phrase, the indispensable country, essentially the largest country that could provide order and yet we acted like a free rider and if we returned to being a free rider then I think Bob's right, the jungle will grow back.
- Peter Baker: [43:57](#) All right, let's see if I can get the audience involved here. Anybody have some questions for the great panel crowd?

Somebody here someplace right here. And could we get the microphone over here? She's coming. I know there are people way back.

- Speaker 1: [44:11](#) All right.
- Robert Kagan: [44:15](#) If I listened to this
- Speaker 1: [44:19](#) to walk,
- Audience Member: [44:20](#) I come away with the idea that Trump is not the right person for the job. Therefore I want to
- Audience Member: [44:32](#) what people wanna do. I, I don't think he's ready for that job. Who will ever be ready?
- Peter Baker: [44:42](#) Well, that's actually question, right? So he's the first president who comes into office in our history without a day of office in the government or the military. Right? So the question is, if I can take your question a little bit further, has he learned anything? Is He learned anything? Is He different today than he was when he came into office? Do you see any evolution or is this a, where do you think it is? There's definitely been an evolution in it getting worse. That's the policy.
- Jane Harman: [45:06](#) Yeah. I don't want to make this all about Trump and, oh, by the way, the Wilson Center is nonpartisan. Just point that out. But I think this is about, uh, the incredible shrinking congress, which used to have a big role in these issues and where people are in their corners, lobbing grenades rather than working together. Because if you're bi-partisan, your target practice and your primary, and so I think it's about that. I think it's about the American public, which is retreating. It's a horrible word, but retreating from foreign policy rent large, it doesn't understand what foreign policy is. I remember over and over people ranting at me about how could a half our budget go to foreign aid? I mean, it's 0.1% of our budget goes to foreign aid, which the Trump administration wants to reduce further. Congress doesn't, but the Trump administration does. So I, I what I'm saying is I, I don't think you can make it about Trump.
- Jane Harman: [46:00](#) I think there's blame to spread around and I don't think it started with Trump. I think he's made very true to advantage of what the mood is in the country. But I think you can also talk about Obama and you can talk about some mistakes we've made since nine 11 on a bipartisan basis. We've also made done some things right, but I think nine 11 was a watershed moment

in this country and I don't think we have our, our, our sea legs back. I don't think we have found a balance going forward, but I would just underline Bob's last point because I think it is hugely important. It isn't just Trump, it's Trump and supporting populace across, across Europe and other parts of the world. And one of the themes absolutely is that the EU, the liberal international order, anything that constrained sovereignty in any way is bad. So there is a very deliberate effort here. That is Trump or right back here.

Audience Member: [46:53](#)

Yes sir. John Scarlett. I'm from the United Kingdom, a member of the permanent member of the UN Security Council. Thought I'd just mentioned that. Um, now this is, um, about great power competition. This sort of sense of the conversation if we're talking about so popular opinion and popular feeling, if you put it out to opinion January and you talk about great powers, China would come up as a big theme and almost definitely a threat in different ways that we'd been talking about. It's much less clear how people, you know, in the country more widely view Russia or whether they really worry about Russia particularly at all. And I'm interested in commentary on that point. And as also secondary, I'm quite quite picking out one point holding it. Bob made the ads that we do does importantly we get our history right because we won the Cold War comprehensively and display great strength in doing so. It didn't always feel like that at the time. And it wasn't always all furious that, you know, the West or the United States and the rich nations were going to be out there in front and we weren't really pacing competition and there was intense competition globally between the west NATO, US and the Soviet Union right up until the 1980s. Right. So we need to be careful, uh, to get the historical perspective right. Okay.

Joseph Nye: [48:24](#)

The first part is, is it pet question? Russia is well taken, right? President Trump says Russia should be our friend president Trump's administration says it isn't. So, which is it? Well, I mean, just on the democratic debates, three people, uh, said, you know, that Russia was actually the greatest threat. Elizabeth Warren's whole article on foreign, on her foreign policy is much more focused on, uh, threats to our democracy. Looking at Russia, I think there's plenty of concern, uh, about Russia. Yeah. I, John, I hit, yeah, there's more concern in Britain than in the u s in public opinion, that debate because you've suffered things like the screen pole poisoning and various other things. Russians had been even worse in Britain than in the U s they've been bad enough here. I think though, the, the question I pointed out is that if you have a country which is suffered a decline as Russia is suffering, you have to ask, what can I do then not to

accommodate them, but when I can reach something which preserves a degree of status, help them.

Joseph Nye: [49:30](#)

So last week John Bolton was asked about renewing the arms control nuclear arms control agreement with the Russians. And he said, we haven't made a decision, but it's unlikely. That is a terrible, terrible decision to the Russians have said they want to renew it. There's a case work can be in both of our interests and it gives the Russians something they need greatly, which the field that they're dealing with this across the table, not as a complete equal but close to it. And we have to learn not to like the Russians, to realize that they are a declining power in a spoiler, but to ask, can we find ways to accommodate this psychological need? When Obama dismissed the Russians as merely a regional power, he was technically correct and it was a disastrous statement.

Jane Harman: [50:28](#)

So that's the way we have to start thinking about the rush. But, uh, the sense of grievance in Russia is huge based on some actions. We have taken a and maybe some actions and they're declining economy, but I was going to say we can't ignore Joe in this coming election. The election interference that is proved to be coming from Russia and the disinformation campaign that they have waged over three elections. And if we want to have a fair and free election in this country, uh, all brain cells have to be on the target. And I think most of the Trump administration, perhaps not him, but most of his administration is doing the right thing about that. Or a great question right here. I think everybody knows Andrew Mitchell. Oh, I'm the tough one. I would say,

Audience Member: [51:12](#)

I just wanted to say, um, as we talk about these alliances and our role, uh, something just happened that the president is announced, which is that the USS Boxer has shot down, presumably an unmanned Iranian drone, uh, which it's the president says came within 1000 yards of the ship, a dangerously close. And I'm just wondering as the danger of an accidental war could actually take place where our relationships with our allies in the region with this president and this administration and with our, um, particular foreign policy leadership standards. When you have incidents such as this, which has just happened.

Jane Harman: [51:58](#)

Well, that's the danger of miscalculation. That's what I, I raised earlier. I think by getting out of the JCP away, the Iran deal, the way we did, we alienated people who should be on our side, two of the, of the parties who are on our side with respect to containing Iran nuclear ambition. We're Russia and China. Let's

understand that. And, and what I worry about now is I don't, I don't know what the specific facts were here. I don't, I'm looking, I assume nobody knows that yet. But if that escalates and we have a different set of friends in the Middle East at the moment, the Sunni Arab states really want to confront Iran. John Bolton wants to confront Iran. President, uh, uh, Trump so far as I know, doesn't want a military confrontation with Iran. Israel, uh, is having an election season where confrontation with Iran would probably help. And so I don't know how this all sorts out. And let's remember on world war one Joe was, or one of you were mentioning World War One, most people looking back on that, uh, that's a 101 years ago was the armistice think that it was based on a miscalculation. No one can define the actual factual, uh, linear progression that led to a war that was a just war and it was the most bloody war in our history. So I worry enormously that we don't have the tools and we don't have the focus, uh, to make sure we've got our facts right. I want to

Robert Kagan:

[53:26](#)

give Bobby who was Bobby shaking his head. I want to give him a chance to give us a thought. Well, I, Germany wanted war in 1914 and that's why there was a war. It was not, we didn't stumble, nobody stumbled into war. And I mean on a ran, I don't know what's going to happen obviously, but my reading of history is that when two nations don't want to go to war, they don't accidentally go to war. Well, somebody has to want to go to war. And my reading of Trump is that he doesn't really want to go to war and they shot down a drone. I mean that is not necessarily leading to war. And I don't think the Iranians want a war. Now you can all laugh at me in a week when the war is started and you can say, that guy should never be invited back. And I'm sure I won't be invited back here, but I just don't, I don't think conditions stumble into war as much as we think they do at loose right here. And the one right here and then I think we'll wrap up. Yeah.

Audience Member:

[54:15](#)

Um, you haven't yet of delved into India, the role of India, which after all is about to become in the next few years, the largest population country in the world. Um, and which many years ago the National Intelligence Council identified as the global swing state between the dominant America and a challenge, a challenging China.

Audience Member:

[54:34](#)

What, what role

Audience Member:

[54:36](#)

do each of you see India but specifically Narendra Modi is India playing in great power rivalry in the years ahead?

Robert Kagan: [54:46](#) Can I say a word on that completely. The Aspen Strategy Group began a strategic dialogue with India in 2001 and one of the things that's interesting is every time you would raise the question of China at the official level, it was all with the best of friends and we want trade and so forth. And then as soon as it got to a little bit lower than the prime minister and you started talking to let's say the national security advisor and so forth, we're scared as hell of the Chinese. And we want to make sure we improve relations with you. The Indians want to have it both ways. They want to be able to keep the facade of good China, India to relations, but they also want to make sure that they improve the relationship with the u s to balance Chinese power and when you go, I was at a meeting in Beijing earlier, the former Indian national security advisors there.

Robert Kagan: [55:40](#) The Chinese were berating him for not supporting belt and road. He said Belton road is a device for containing India. What is la DOR and hub and Toyota has nothing to do with economics. It's a containment policy. So yes, India is going to be increasing increasingly important. That's why we talk about when we have here the head of the [inaudible] Pacific Command, we have to think of India in balance of power terms but also realize they're not going to make an alliance with it. I think we're running out of time. We've actually probably almost run out of time, but I promised one question back here and then we'll wrap up. Thank you so much Liz. Economy from the council on foreign relations, so just one sort of glimmer of hope and then a quick question. The glimmer

Audience Member: [56:24](#) of hope is actually that this administration is far more international and multilateral than I think many of you are giving it credit for. That's not to say the president, but if you look below the level of the president, what's going on with the NSC? If you look at what's happening in Congress, the passage of the Aria, the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act, the build act, we've created a whole new institution to fund overseas private investment. Uh, we are out there doing joint projects to electrify papa new Guinea and in consultation with Australia, New Zealand, uh, and Japan. So there's a lot going on under the surface of, of the, uh, of the president and his rhetoric. So I think we need to recognize, uh, that there are many more, uh, actors in this government than simply the president. The question is really for a, an marine and, uh, Joe and that is, um, you seem to paint a picture of a China that we can work with, right? But I think that Bob has pretty much articulated here our core values, the values of the liberal world order. They are not ones to which, uh, sort of China adheres. Uh, we see China not only, uh, arresting and detaining 2 million Muslim leaguers in its

own land, but also exporting elements of authoritarianism globally through the Belt and Road. How do you work with a government like that?

Joseph Nye: [57:33](#)

Hmm. So

Anne-Marie S: [57:37](#)

you'd do both, right? You make very clear, uh, that you stand for a different set of values and they are universal values in China at one point signed onto them and you push really, really hard as, as, as vocally as you can. Uh, and there I stand with sort of a, a universalist view, but that is not the premise of the UN system. That may be the premise of the council on, uh, the council on democracies. That may be the premise of NATO. They're, they're different for where we can push very hard against China on its violation of universal values. But the UN is set up on the premise that if we are going to solve global problems, we also have to work with countries that are very different than we are. So on something like climate change, I am not a climate change can do us all in I am. China is critical. So I am not going to not work with China on climate change because of their policies toward the weavers. And that's where we, you have to simultaneously support a global system and global norms. And I think as the United States of America stand up for universal values, which is why it's so critical that we stand up for them at home to start with against nations as other nations as well.

Joseph Nye: [58:53](#)

Joe, do you want to end it? Yeah, no, I agree with Ann Marie. You can condemn China's behavior in Shin John, right. At the same time, you can work with a month more effective control of carbon in the plant, in the climate situation, and we've got to learn to walk and chew gum at the same time. We're not very good at it. All right. Thank you guys very much for coming. Thank you.

Speaker 11: [59:13](#)

Thank our panel for a great conversation. [inaudible]

Speaker 12: [59:25](#)

we are taking a break now. We will come back in this room for another session at 2:00 PM.