

Speaker 1: [00:00](#) She is a foreign policy expert and intellectual with a moral voice for the future of this country. And she's a member of the Aspen Strategy Group and she's going to be interviewed by our great friend and the chief foreign affairs correspondent for NBC News. Andrea Mitchell. Thank you Susan and Andrea,

Andrea Mitchell: [00:19](#) thank you so much. Nick Burns, ambassador mixer ambassador rise. It is great to be with you here with you, with all of our friends at the Aspen security forum. I wanted to ask you first about the fact that president Trump said recently that president Obama was begging for a meeting with Kim Jong Un, but that chairman Kim and here, okay. Starting with comedy as she says, the chairman cut. Kim would not grant him that meeting. Uh, did that happen? No, no, no. Wait.

Susan Rice: [00:59](#) I hate to put it as bluntly as it needs to be put, but that's yet another lie. There's no basis. In fact, um, President Obama made it very clear from his campaign in 2007 and 2008 that when it served the United States national interests, he was prepared to engage with our adversaries. We never sought in the case of Kim Jong on such an encounter, nor did Kim genuine sequin with us, although there were diplomatic contacts at various levels, uh, throughout the, the Obama administration. Um, and we worked in in various ways both to ratchet up the pressure on North Korea, coordinate with our key partners in the region, um, and uh, and try to address the still very problematic issue of [inaudible] of North Korea's nuclear program. But the notion that president Trump has, uh, fabricated that somehow an effort was made that was rejected is just false. And I'm, I'm sure I'm, unfortunately, that won't be the first time I have to say that

Andrea Mitchell: [02:03](#) today. Well, there've been three meetings so far between president Trump and Kim Xanga on one at the DMZ where president Trump famously walked across the line into North Korea. Um, what has been accomplished do you think by that, by the last meeting when you walked across the line with the series of meetings that they, there is a personal relationship.

Susan Rice: [02:27](#) It's certainly better than fire and fury. Um, and a hot war, which seemed early in the administration to, to be something not to be discounted. Having said that, when you look in substance at what's been accomplished, um, it's frankly very little. What I worry about is that the long standing United States objective of complete verifiable, irreversible denuclearization is seemingly less the priority of this administration. We're interested potentially in steps that fall far short of that. We've achieved nothing in that direction. What we do have, and I think it's

better than the alternative, is a voluntary and temporary moratorium on missile and nuclear tests, which is certainly better than the alternative. Um, but that's about all that that one can say has been accomplished. Meanwhile, the North Koreans have every ability to continue, uh, the enrichment and reprocessing activities that lead them to expand their arsenal. And we have every reason to believe that they continue to expand their arsenal even as, um, this process of stop-start diplomacy continues and they are now suggesting that they might resume a long range missile tests if we resume the, uh, what used to be routine joint military exercises with South Korea?

Susan Rice:

[03:55](#)

Well, first of all, I think we made a serious mistake and it seems to be one that the president did on a whim without consultation with the Defense Department or South Korea when he suspended, um, or bilateral annual exercises. And they actually many exercises over the course of a normal year. We've now gone, um, more than a year without those annual large scale exercises, which undermines readiness, military readiness in an important way. Um, and this exercise that that was going to happen was much smaller scale, um, exercise. It doesn't do what we actually need to do on a regular basis for readiness. And yet even the small scale exercise, which, uh, the president presumably didn't take off the table after his first meeting in Singapore, the North Koreans are objecting to and trying to turn the screws to suggest that should we go ahead with that small scale exercise that they might resume nuclear and missile testing?

Susan Rice:

[04:55](#)

I think that shows you how fragile this whole process is. The president has suggested that it's OK for the short range missile tests which have resumed, which are threatening to Japan and South Korea are allies and are violations of UN resolutions as well as long as they long range missiles that threaten the United States. Uh, don't resist this undercutting our relationship with our Asian allies? Absolutely. First of all, as you say, these short range tests are prohibited under international law under the sanctions that the United States over many years has worked very hard to achieve and sustain implementation of. So, you know, for the message from Washington to be to Seoul and Tokyo, that frankly we don't care what happens to you as long as these missiles aren't coming or have the potential to come in our direction, that grossly undermines our alliances. Um, and it calls into question our commitment

Andrea Mitchell:

[05:58](#)

to our presence on the Korean Peninsula, our presence in Japan and our readiness to stand up to a potential North Korean

threat that is actually more than a missile test, but in fact, um, a substantive serious threat to our allies in the region. So that undermines our leadership, that undermines our strength in terms of dealing with North Korea. And it further exacerbates the tensions that are just below the surface in these very critical bilateral relationships. I want to ask you a better ran and, uh, we're out of the Iran nuclear deal. We are of a series of escalating incidents in the Strait of Hormuz, an offer in the last 24 hours from foreign ministers to reef to begin negotiations and more intrusive inspections if they would be a cessation of all American sanctions and non-starter from the American perspective. Um, John McLaughlin has said today that he thinks it's an offer that ought to be pursued.

Andrea Mitchell: [07:00](#)

Uh, most likely it wouldn't be from this administration, but where are we, where we've reached the stage more broadly where the president of United States says he called off, uh, an offensive strike against or ran 10 minutes before launch. Uh, I'm wondering if you could take a step back and look at the, the decision making process. How do we get to a process where we get out of a multilateral agreement, the Iran nuclear deal and take a series of steps including sanctioning the RCG, the Revolutionary Guard for a lot of misbehavior, acknowledged misbehavior? Have we thought through the next steps in each step of the way? Is there, are there deputy committee meetings? Not that I know of, but maybe you know better than I, how does John Bolton and Mike Pompeo and the national security team conduct foreign policy in terms of looking ahead as they make these very critical decisions?

Andrea Mitchell: [08:02](#)

There's a lot in that question and okay, let me try to talk about a ran and then talk about the national security decision making process or, or lack thereof with respect to Iran. I mean, as you all know, what the president decided to do, uh, in against the very strong advice of all of the senior advisors and um, if you agree with Kim Derek's assessment that's now been leaked, which I think in all likelihood is accurate, purely out of spite, purely out of a willing, an eagerness to undo literally as much as he can that Obama has done. The president pulled out of the Iran deal with absolutely no plan B and now he says his goal is to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. Well, the Iran deal, whether you like it or not, was being completely adhered to.

Susan Rice: [08:56](#)

Um, without violation. Byron, not only for the duration of our tenure in the deal, but actually for over a year after we violated the deal, aggregated it and reimpose sanctions. Now we have no means of short of the use of force, which itself is not

sufficiently effective. And I'll explain why to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon should it decide to go forward. We had that capacity. Uh, while we remained in the deal, we had all of our allies, um, you know, with us in support of that endeavor and we had, and, and w w we could lose at any moment, the most intrusive inspection regime ever established around is gradually testing how many different ways and steps it can take to get out of the deal before we react. And what Trump has done is to set up a situation where the likelihood of conflict is vastly increased, whereas had he stayed in the deal and worked with the Europeans to try to strengthen its provisions beyond its duration, um, and to address separately.

Susan Rice: [10:10](#)

But, um, nonetheless, uh, importantly, many of the concerns that we have all had about Iran's behavior beyond its nuclear program, we would be in a far better place. But now what we have is escalating tensions, a real risk of a planned or, or inadvertent conflict and no way to calm down and no pathway, um, back into the deal that this administration seems to be willing to explore. I think if they were willing to explore way back there is one. Um, and I've laid out some incremental steps that I thought could be taken, but I also agree with John McLaughlin that it's noteworthy that for the first time the Iranians through foreign ministers a reef or offering something, whether we think it's sufficient, whether we like the quid pro quo that is the proposal or not, it is an opening and it is one we would be wise to explore.

Susan Rice: [11:08](#)

It doesn't mean we take the deal. It's not a binary choice, but it does open the door, the aperture, uh, to the potential for um, exploring what we can achieve that would get us back minimally to the constraints and confines of the deal and look to, to move beyond that if that's indeed possible. But where we are now is, is really the worst of all worlds we haven't done. We haven't improved around his behavior at all. On the other factors that we're concerned about. It's missile program. It's support for terrorism, it's human rights record. Yet we have lost the constraints that we're working. Um, with respect to the Iran deal, we talked very briefly about John Bolton and the national security process and I know that sounds

Andrea Mitchell: [11:53](#)

weedy, but arguably it's very important. Um, a year ago I was sitting here with Dan Coats and informed him that there was a tweet that five days after a disastrous Helsinki summit with Latin recruiting, the president, the White House was inviting Vitamin Putin to a return summit. There had been no notetakers, no American note-takers for two hours at that meeting. And you know, famously he was inviting Putin and the

national security advisor had not known about it. And to my best of my reporting, the secretary of state had not been informed of that as well. There was no discussion. It was basically prudent to Trump, to Bolton, to Sarah Sanders sent out a tweet. How does that, how, how damaging is that in terms of the way we conduct foreign policy, the way other leaders view the opportunity to exploit and flatter this president into making snap decisions?

Susan Rice: [13:01](#)

There are at least two fundamental problems with the national security decision making process as we speak. One the deputies committee, the principles committee, this is the cabinet level and sub cabinet level, um, body that I chaired his national security advisor at the principal's level that involves all the relevant cabinet agencies. And that in normal times meets to deliberate over the most important or pressing issues. It's not meeting regularly. That process is, um, eroded to put it mildly. And instead it seems that the national security advisors sort of engaging bilaterally, um, with the various cabinet colleagues and limiting the opportunity for collective, uh, decision making and collective, um, assessments of the challenges and airing all of the various issues and presenting all of the principal's views faithfully and fully to the president, which is the role of the national security advisor. So that's problem one and it's dangerous and it's dysfunctional.

Susan Rice: [14:06](#)

And it means that not only are the most high profile issues like Iran and North Korea and the like not getting the attention and the, the careful deliberation that they deserve. Then there's the second problem. And the second problem is that regardless of what might happen at the principal's table, the president wakes up and does what the hell he wants to do on any given day on any given moment without the benefit of the input and wisdom of his national security team and the experts in the interagency. And that is exceedingly dangerous. And as you said, it, it makes him very malleable, makes him subject to um, his own whim, but also the manipulations of, of adversaries and friends alike who may flatter him or cajole him, prompt him into doing things that don't accord with our interests. And we see it literally almost every day. So how do we get to a point where we're 10 minutes from war with Iran means wasn't going to be, by the way, just a couple strikes and everybody laughs and shakes it off and goes home.

Susan Rice: [15:08](#)

That was going to be the start of a war because he Iranians are not going to sit there and take that. So how do we get to that situation? It's bewildering to me as somebody who's sat through many decisions about the use of force, that one, the

president could make such a judgment and then with the planes in midair, turn it around. But secondly that if the reasons the president gave for changing his mind, which were that you know, he realized there would be a lot of civilian casualties hadn't been sufficiently surfaced to his full attention prior to the launch of the strikes. We're in deep trouble.

- Andrea Mitchell: [15:50](#) Isn't that the first thing that the military presents is a series of what the casualties would be on an escalating scale is absolutely one of the first.
- Susan Rice: [16:00](#) And, and if it's not, it's the first question that the president should ask or the national security advisor filling that.
- Andrea Mitchell: [16:08](#) Can you imagine another American president inviting the Russian ambassador and the Russian Foreign Minister into the Oval Office and blurting out, um, very closely held intelligence from an a strategic ally?
- Susan Rice: [16:21](#) Highly classified and tell him no, I cannot. I mean, I can't imagine that. I can't imagine the president of the United States sitting one on one for hours and meetings with Vladimir Putin with no note taker. I mean, I could go on and on, but there are just so many aspects of how national security policy is being conducted that not only break every norm but, um, run the great risk that, uh, decisions get made that have not been fully considered, are vetted and that the consequences could be,
- Andrea Mitchell: [16:55](#) ah, quite deadly. I just want to say to the audience, I've been covering foreign policy, um, for many years and covered Brent Scowcroft, Condoleezza Rice and a lot of your Republican predecessors, and these were not norms in their white houses either. No, no. So we're not talking, uh, this is partisan politics. This is Sui generis. Uh, another thing that is not normal is to have a president of the United States saying things that are now being described today by Angola, Morocco as racist and by Boris Johnson and Theresa May and Justin Trudeau and other foreign leaders to say nothing of Americans. No, just within the last hour, the president said he is unhappy that a congresswoman can hate our country after he, yesterday under some from
- Susan Rice: [17:50](#) reportedly his daughter and other Republicans, uh, denied that he had inspired the racist chant in North Carolina. Uh, the videotape says it tells a different story. Um, so what message is he communicating to Americans and to people around the world?

Speaker 4: [18:12](#) [inaudible]

Susan Rice: [18:14](#) well, the message to Americans is that only some of us count, and I've never heard that out of the mouth of an American President before. Um, there's no other words for it. It's xenophobic, it's racist, racist. It's divisive. Um, and it's not who we are, but it seems to be who this president is. And I take no joy in saying that it's, it's tragic and it's, um, it undermines the fabric of our national unity of our democracy. Um, the only Americans who counted seems are those that the president thinks will vote for him and anybody else doesn't count. You're in effect, Lindsey Graham validate that yesterday or the day before when he said, well, you know, as long as you're, he's not racist because if you are Somali wearing a magna hat, he'd let you in the White House and embrace you. So in other words, the only Americans who are worthy of embrace are those that have or would vote for this president.

Susan Rice: [19:31](#) So instead of having a president who represents all of us and views all of us as worthy of concern as every prior president in my lifetime, and yours has, whether you liked them or not, we have, um, this new, very, um, ugly, divisive approach to leadership and it undermines us internationally. And when you hear our closest allies repudiating the president and calling his comments racist, you know, that should concern all of us deeply. But it's true and it means that when we need those allies to join with us in the next big challenge, whether that challenges dealing with the Isis 2.0 as we were able to rally over 70 countries to our side to deal with Isis in the first instance or whether it's fighting a global pandemic or whether it's dealing with a conflict in the south China Sea or Russia as an invaded Ukraine, we were able to bring our allies together with us and join with us not only on the basis of our but on the basis of the power of our example and the values that we stood for. And now quite to the contrary, we have our allies saying to us that that what they hear out of the mouth of the president is um, wholly inconsistent with the values that we purportedly share it with our allies.

Andrea Mitchell: [21:15](#) Where they need to. That is of course our immigration policy. We have for all intents and purposes, stopped asylum procedures on our southern border by this latest executive order. And that follows cutting off State Department aid to the northern triangle countries. Um, these are laws embedded in congressional action as well as international treaties. Um, how can the United States stop the right of, uh, application for asylum to people on our southern border?

- Susan Rice: [21:51](#) Well, I don't, I don't think ultimately we'll be able to do that. I think there will, there are challenges in the courts and I think that it's going to be very, very difficult to sustain a blanket policy of denying, um, asylum seekers even the opportunity to have their cases heard. Now, I gathered that in in the last day or two, the administration, not at the presidential level but at a lower level as acknowledged that in fact this is a pilot program that they're going to try on small sections of the border and see how that works out. Um, whether that's the case or not, it will be challenged and I think it will be in all likelihood, um, overturned.
- Andrea Mitchell: [22:34](#) Oh, the Obama administration was criticized by many people in the community for its deportations and struggled with these issues. Jay Johnson has acknowledged that as well. But, um, how did we get to the stage where we have the numbers of people and the conditions that we are seeing and that members of Congress are reporting when they do gain access to these facilities, which are appalling. There's, there's no other way to describe these conditions.
- Susan Rice: [23:06](#) Well, the conditions are appalling. The policy of separating children from families, from parents, um, adults is, is appalling and it's completely unnecessary. I mean, yes, we have in the past and at present had a, you know, large numbers of people coming to the border. We had this very problem in 2014 during the Obama administration and we didn't separate families and put kids in, you know, horrible conditions. What we did was worked with HHS and other aspects of the, uh, executive branch to try to expand the facilities available to these migrants. Even as we tried to enforce the law at the border. And you know, nobody, no inspector general, no members of Congress came and visited those sites and reported the kinds of conditions that we're hearing now, the differences. One in the Obama administration, we faced this challenge. Um, we tried to address it to the extent we possibly could in a humane and decent fashion.
- Susan Rice: [24:14](#) And now it seems that the policy on, uh, of the current administration is to make the conditions so awful and appalling that in their judgment it becomes a deterrent for people to come to the United States. Well, there's many problems with that beside the fact that is, it's a grotesque treatment and fellow human beings. But the reason these people are coming in the first place, as you well know is because they fear for their lives. And if that's the choice, they're going to keep coming. And so, uh, you know, we need to undo the president's very ill considered decision to stop all assistance to the northern Triangle Central American countries. That decision seems to be

designed to encourage more people to come. The investments that we started to make and that were, um, sustained for a period of years to try to help these countries deal with the root causes of crime, of poverty, uh, of violence. That is what is spurring the outflow, um, is, is now been, has been abandoned at very much the time when we need it most. So I think on, on, on many levels, one needs to question the motives as well as the, the practical policies that have led us to this shameful condition.

Andrea Mitchell: [25:47](#)

I'll ask you how you navigate, um, relationships, strategic relationships with leaders around the world, and an open embrace of dictators. Uh, famously Barack Obama had a terrible relationship with Vladimir Putin. We understood that and saw canceled meetings and, um, stare downs at, at various times between the two at GE twenties. But what we now see is Radomir Putin, Urdu on Duterte, MBS in the last g 20 in Osaka MBS, who had been, um, basically shunned by many other leaders after the [inaudible] murder was now embraced because of the jocular nature and the private meeting, you know, the breakfast with the president and um, is now, you know, elevated

Susan Rice: [26:43](#)

again, um, he's supposed to host the next g 20 shooting. No, no. I mean, the larger problem is the denigration of our allies and the imposition of punitive measures against our allies, whether they're tariffs, uh, or penalties against their companies for abiding by a deal with respect to Iran that, um, that has been validated by international law and that the United States itself negotiated disparaging individual allied leaders and the whole concept of the western alliance on the one hand, while on the other hand, lifting up, elevating, embracing, uh, and locking arms with some of the most dangerous and despicable leaders on the planet, that's not who we are and who we have been. Just because we have a difficult or hostile relationship with a country doesn't mean we can't engage them. And indeed under the Obama administration, even after the invasion of Ukraine, which is when the relationship really deteriorated, President Obama talked to Vladimir Putin more than a dozen times on the phone and met with him on multiple occasions, uh, at various international forum.

Susan Rice: [28:13](#)

So the, we have to deal with countries and leaders that we, uh, don't respect and disagree with. But that doesn't mean that we have to embrace them and elevate them and absolve their behavior, uh, in its worst forms. And that's what president Trump has done. And I think it very much undermines the confidence of our allies in who we are in our constancy and

whether we'll uphold our treaty obligations. It completely casts to the wind are our core values of democracy and respect for human rights. And it emboldens leaders like Mohammad bin Salman who think with good reason, apparently that he can get away literally with murder and face zero consequence. What does it say to the world and to him when the president ignores the conclusion of the intelligence community about the responsibility, his responsibility, it means them get away with murder. I mean, this is the same problem we have with respect to Russia.

Susan Rice: [29:26](#) The intelligence community has been very professional and very responsible and faithfully reporting its judgements and findings, whether with respect to Russian interference in our democracy, uh, or with respect to the kiss Shogi murder. Um, the president has decided to discount and denigrate the professionals in our intelligence community. Um, and, uh, in the face of all facts, defining the facts, um, taking, taking the word of of some of the worst actors, um, instead. And you know, the damage that does to our, our domestic institutions, including our intelligence community, can't be overstated. But what the, what's worse is the message that it sends to these dictators, um, that there is literally no consequence whether, you know, arms sales continue around, um, the back of Congress or, uh, we continue to support a, uh, totally, um, excessive war in Yemen or, uh, we say to Mohammad bin Salman, you know, go ahead and do what you want to do inside your country or outside to an American resident. And no problem.

Andrea Mitchell: [30:52](#) Now as we sit here, well we don't know, but the, um, according to Iranian television or late or radian media, the IRG GC says that they have seized a British oil tanker for allegedly violating, they say international regulations. Um, so we don't know if this is the case, but this is just another incident in the strait. So it's a British oil tanker named the Sternum Piro, not sure of the actual name. So, um, we are again on another precipice as this escalation continues. Yeah. It, uh, [inaudible]

Susan Rice: [31:35](#) each of these incidents in isolation, um, are not especially alarming in the aggregate. They are given that we're dealing with, um, players who seem to have little interest in deescalating or little interest in taking, um, opportunities to deescalate. I think I have no idea the validity of that report. Um, but it wouldn't surprise me given that the Iranians had been angry since the British sees one of their vessels.

Andrea Mitchell: [32:11](#) And we should point out as people here know that there are divisions there between uh, Zarif and Rouhani on one side

supposedly, and the Revolutionary Guard, which is still reacting to the sanctioning by the State Department of their leadership as well. So

- Susan Rice: [32:31](#) it was a longstanding divisions that have likely only been exacerbated. Let me ask you about your book. Tough love.
- Andrea Mitchell: [32:40](#) You've written a book that's coming out I believe October 8th. We're looking forward to reading it and hearing more about, you know, your exploration, obviously your evolution, your, uh, extraordinary experience in foreign policy on the national stage, but also growing up in an amazing family. Well,
- Susan Rice: [33:04](#) thank you for mentioning it. I'm looking forward to coming out. It's, um, it's very, it's, it's many things in one, it's a family history and a personal story of my growing up in Washington d c in the sixties and seventies and a interestingly bi-partisan environment, uh, in a family that was involved in, um, public issues and public life, um, in, uh, as an African American young girl in White, uh, and privileged educational environments and the experiences that that led to its about my work in government, in the Clinton and the Obama administrations in the difficult issues that we dealt with, um, in both contexts. And it's my personal rendering of, of what I learned along the way where I made mistakes, where I think I learned where I succeeded, um, and what contributed to that. Um, and then similarly, um, through the Obama administration where I tried to take, uh, a sober look at various of the key issues that, that I was privileged to work on.
- Susan Rice: [34:11](#) And at the same time, it's a very personal, um, story about, you know, how I was raised, uh, the challenges I went through as a child. Um, my parents very difficult and bitter divorce and what effect that had on me. It's about being a mother of two young kids is I was doing these, um, rather challenging jobs. It's about being a daughter of aging and ailing parents and like many people being in that sandwich generation of dealing with kids on the one hand and um, and aging parents on the other. So it's all of those things in one. But I think if I were to summarize the key theme, it's really about resilience. Resilience in the case of my parents and grandparents in turn in the face of, of racial discrimination, resilience in an environment, um, where, um, in many respects I was, um, one of very few like me and resilience in the face of, um, some of the very public, uh, challenges I faced is UN ambassador and national security advisor. So it's what I learned from that. And it's also ultimately, um, a, an allergy for our national unity in our democracy and what we must do in my, in my view, to overcome our domestic divisions

and to be strong and cohesive. Um, even in the moment that we're living in that we've been talking about for most of this, most of the sour.

- Andrea Mitchell: [35:43](#) Um, and finally as you remind me, as the former UN ambassador, we haven't had a UN ambassador since December. Um, what are we missing by not having a UN ambassador among some 20 vacancies or acting secretaries where you have cabinet secretaries or leaders of agencies who cannot have, uh, their own chiefs of staff and their own, um, important undersecretaries and assistant secretaries who can answer to them and create a team to carry out policy?
- Susan Rice: [36:15](#) Well, obviously when the United States lacks, are you an ambassador or a secretary of defense or Secretary of homeland security for many, many months. Um, we are not firing on all cylinders by definition and in the context of the UN where everyday we are engaging with literally the entire world, countries that are friendly countries that are unfriendly and having to negotiate, um, on some of the most important issues and advance our interests in defend our values. To do that without the benefit of a Senate confirmed ambassador. Um, at the top of the mission who has the opportunity to, to participate in the policy making process is a huge detriment. Uh, and I hope very much that it won't be long before, um, our nominee Kelly Craft has the opportunity to, to get confirmed and get up to New York. She's had her hearing. Um, and I hope she'll get there. Wow.
- Andrea Mitchell: [37:19](#) I want to thank you. And then we have a few minutes for questions. So, um, let's look around the room. Yes sir. We have some mics floating and
- Audience Member: [37:36](#) you seem to have some different views than the man in the White House. What do you do about the a tens of millions of his base that back him tooth and nail. What do you say to them?
- Susan Rice: [37:56](#) You respect them, their fellow Americans who are entitled to their opinions. I'm entitled to their vote just as those who disagree, deserve, respect and deserve a voice and not to be denigrated.
- Andrea Mitchell: [38:10](#) And then she pointed out that the national security, the director of Nash of National Intelligence, I should say today, appointed an official to be in charge of election security. So one would hope that we are as we did in 2018 to the best of our knowledge, they were a lot of thwarted attempts to interfere foreign adversaries attempting to interfere with our elections in

the midterms. So we would hope that in 2020, we can be a lot more aggressive and um, fighting off attempts at interference. We have time for one more question over there.

Speaker 4: [38:48](#)

Yes ma'am.

Audience Member: [38:51](#)

I want to thank you for your candid and also inspiring remarks. Thank you. I like you very much believe in our democracy and I'm just wondering, you know, uh, according to the qualifications for someone to run for president, uh, correct me if I'm wrong, uh, you have to be a certain age and a citizen of our country. I'm wondering if there is some way to, um, shall we say, uh, upgrade the qualifications for someone to run.

Susan Rice: [39:36](#)

Thank you. We have to be born in the [inaudible], born in the United States, be 35 years old. Um, I think we'd have a bit of a debate and a discussion about how to define those additional qualifications. I think we as voters get the opportunity to decide that question on an individual basis. It might be nice to envision some additional ones, but that obviously as you know, that would require a constitutional amendment, two thirds of the states to ratify it. I think we're a long way from that. Um, and I'm not even sure that frankly, that's what we need. I think we need committed, um, patriotic Americans who put country first in both parties to step forward and offer to lead, um, and, and, and do so despite how difficult it is. And it could not be more important. And so I'm hopeful that, um, if we were having this conversation five, 10 years from now, we wouldn't have to put it in the, in, in terms of new qualifications in the constitution, but could find ourselves satisfied that in both parties we have qualified, capable leaders who care deeply about this country and want to govern in a unifying, um, and, uh, non polarizing fashion.

Andrea Mitchell: [41:04](#)

Well, I think that we have exhausted our time, if not our issues. So we take another couple of questions that would be wonderful. Ambassador Corps logos. Hi Tom. The man we used to call 101st senator. Nice to see you. [inaudible] know what you're all talking about, what we've heard here for the last two.

Audience Member: [41:34](#)

How would you rate except for Vice President Biden, the foreign policy experience or the other 19 characters up there on the stages for [inaudible] candidates? Well, obviously it varies enormously. Uh, and with as many as there are in the field, I think there are a number, um, including, uh, those of the sitting senators who have served for some considerable time and including on relevant committees, um, that have substantive, serious experience. I think those that have been veterans, um,

have have experienced firsthand, um, many of the, the, the critical challenges that are relevant, um, to serve as commander in chief. Then there's some who seemingly have very little experience. So I don't think one can, can generalize to be frank. I think there are plenty of candidates, um, in the field that have sufficient foreign policy experience. Um, and, and more, even more importantly, good judgment. Um, but obviously vice president Bryden stands head and shoulders, um, in terms of, of tenure, in terms of years of experience and breadth of experience on foreign policy.

- Speaker 4: [42:54](#) Any other questions? One over here back there. [inaudible]
- Audience Member: [43:02](#) secretary of rice. Thank you very much for your service and for giving us your frank opinions today. Um, we heard from the secretary general of NATO on Wednesday that NATO is only valid as long as it has the capability. And the belief by the other side that we will honor section five. Um, both yesterday we heard from both Joe Nye and Animal Davidson that uh, Japan is our number one military ally on. Now the leaders of both Japan and Australia have questioned the credibility of this administration being able to stand up to the treaties. Uh, Australia and Japan have had eight informal military alliance for years, strat world this morning reported they are, they are going to actually act on that. They want to team with Europe and not the United States to have a credible set of allies. Do you think we are credibility on our alliances can survive another two to six years under this kind of a situation?
- Speaker 4: [44:15](#) No,
- Susan Rice: [44:16](#) I hope so, but I worried enormously. Right? Let's talk about two years or a year, year and a half because I'm an optimist. I'm a nonpartisan. I think we've done, as I've indicated throughout this conversation, substantial den damage to, um, the fabric of our alliance relationships in Asia and in Europe. And you know, it, it, it's tragic, but it not surprising that, uh, that our allies are, are taking steps that suggest they cannot in all confidence, depend on the, um, the durability of our commitment to those alliance relationships. That's tragic. That's terrible. And we have got to rectify that as quickly as possible. I think, um, the good news is that on a bipartisan basis, um, in Congress and beyond, there is little question of the, the centrality and utility of our lines networks. And when, you know, the, the bipartisan leadership of Congress invites the NATO secretary general to speak before Congress that's maybe perceived as a symbolic doc.

Susan Rice: [45:37](#) But I think it's a very important statement of, you know, across the board understanding of how important those relationships are. But you cannot denigrate them day in and day out, uh, and, and, and not exact a price, a cost. And, and the other thing that needs to be mentioned is it, you know, these alliances don't function on autopilot. We, the United States have a role to play in being the glue that niched these relationships together. So, you know, today when we have a challenge between South Korea and Japan as we've had in the past, when there's palpable friction between them, know what we would normally do, what we've done in the past we did in 2014 was to bring them together and try to be that glue that helps them smooth over their differences. If I'm not mistaken, when asked about this today in the Oval Office, the president was like, why do we have to do everything for everybody? Um, which I think undervalues the importance of each of those countries individually, but seems to again suggested a lack of understanding or appreciation about how and why these alliances are so important. So we're going to have a lot of repair work to do in two years. Uh, and if it's six years, um, I, I really hesitate to think what will be up against, quite honestly.

Susan Rice: [47:04](#) Okay. One, one, can we ask it on an optimistic yes. One last question. Thank you.

Audience Member: [47:09](#) Thank you. Ambassador Rice. My name is Amrita Torres. I'm formerly with the State Department, uh, as an FSO. And I was at the u s mission to the UN most recently. Thank you for your service. Thank you. Thank you for your service to, um, I am interested in diversity in foreign policy and what we can do to really increase the role of women of color, women, you know, people from diverse perspectives, personalities, LGBTQ communities. Um, I've seen a real sort of gutting of the State Department including from these particular communities. So I'm wondering advice that you have in ways that we can attract diverse talent.

Susan Rice: [47:42](#) Okay. Well, first of all, contrary to what you might expect me to say, I strongly encourage those who are serving in the State Department, Foreign Service officers, civil servants, and in other agencies who are concerned or frustrated or otherwise feeling alienated to stay. We need that talent across the national security agencies. The experience of our career, public servants cannot be replicated swiftly or, or easily. We cannot afford a generational gap in, um, in, in qualified experienced people serving in these national security agencies. And I, I'd say that in full knowledge of how difficult some people are finding it, including if not especially people of color, LGBTQ people, um,

women potentially. But we have to stay and, and be part of rebuilding. To get back to the previous question. Um, our leadership, our values, our alliances, all the things that make us strong and therefore safer. I, um, you know, in the Obama administration, particularly in the, in the last couple of years, we worked very hard to prioritize, um, expanding and, and, and uh, broadening diversity within the national security agencies.

Susan Rice: [49:08](#)

And I'm proud to say had the, the robust support of all of the secretaries and agency leaders across the administration and national security. And we codified some practices and policies that, um, I think are very beneficial in terms of rectifying the, the diversity gap. And there is a considerable gap, particularly among foreign service officers, particularly in the seniors' ranks as well as in the senior military ranks. Um, but in one does that not because diversity is nice and not because you know, it's, it's a PC thing to do. One does it because as we found in government, like the private sector, like the nonprofit world, through study after study, it makes for better decision making. It makes for better outcomes and it makes us stronger. And that's why, you know, retaining and attracting top talent, including top diverse talent throughout our national security agencies, frankly, throughout our government, um, is essential to our strength and functioning, um, as a global leader and as a democracy. So it's not, uh, in my view, it's not a optional nice to do. It's an absolute necessity. Well, I

Andrea Mitchell: [50:28](#)

could not agree more with that too. Uh, he has someone who covers the State Department. The brain drain is profound and we really need people to just stick with it and try to tough this out. Uh, because we are losing a generation, as Secretary Albright has said, fewer and fewer of her students who are taking the foreign service exam. And, um, it's really demoralizing and we're going to face a real crisis in the future. Thank you so much. Thank you,

Speaker 4: [50:58](#)

Susan. Right. Thank you to Nick Burns for making this all possible. [inaudible].