

Richard Haass: Usually when I used to see the center, he would either be yelling at me in his office or giving me a hard time when I testified. So I, uh, I look forward to, uh, today I want to start with the fact that before you were a two term senator, before you are chair of the Senate committee on Foreign Relations, you were a mayor in the great city of Chattanooga. Uh, give it up. Uh, so I will put, I want to connect it to when you used to go home, how did you persuade your constituents that what you were doing in Washington that what you were doing as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was relevant to them? How did you, uh, how did you make them care about what it was you're doing and not resent you for doing that as opposed to something that was more immediately obvious in their, in, in their interest?

Bob Corker: Well, thank you and I'll answer that. It's good to be with you and I want you to remember how nice I was when you came in the communities. I'm glad to be with all of you. It's a privilege, uh, to be back in the fray to a degree. I've been on a six month strike where I haven't seen one second of television other than maybe the master's or something else, but, and they're my friends and television, but only know what I know through what I've read. Uh, to your question, um, you know, I was a business person actually in spent most of my life building shopping centers around the country. Um, I was a civic leader in my community and then you're right, I was a mayor. I was elected the United States Senate and went on the foreign relations committee really just to become a better senator, um, for the people that I represented.

Bob Corker: Um, it wasn't that I didn't study that in college. I knew not that much about history. And so what I learned about foreign policy, I learned doing death marches through the Middle East and other places and camping on the committee. What I found when I went back home, Richard was, um, unlike there's been dissertations that had been written about people who serve in the Senate and how it's a, it's in there on the foreign relations committee and especially if their chairman of foreign relations committee, it's a great way to be unelected. Um, I know Jim rash, I know Jim rash from, uh, Otto. Seriously, our chairman is a current chairman of the committee, was somewhat concerned that during his election year, um, he was then gonna become the chairman of the foreign relations committee.

Richard Haass: Remember when I first worked in Washington, a Fulbright from Arkansas was the chairman and he used to go home, put on his overalls and remind people that he was, you know, still local. He hadn't basically lost connection.

Bob Corker: Here's what I found, I think because of the Times, um, it was nothing like that. I found it as a tremendous enhancement. Um, people, uh, would want to talk about things. I will, I would have just returned from Afghanistan or Iraq or Pakistan or some other country. And I think in many ways it calls people to more interested in one I was saying or doing. So had it had the opposite effect for me. I never felt the need and I was always connected to home. Uh, being chairman of the committee and, or rising chairman, if you will, at some points in my

tenure, I was also able to help our state just by virtue of my relationships around the world, uh, to recruit businesses to our state. So I never found that to be an issue.

Richard Haass: Let's talk a little bit, by the way, we're going to talk for a few minutes between ourselves then we'll open it up to you all and I expect there'll be all sorts of questions about the issues. Does your, from Venezuela to Iran to what's going on at the G 20 to North Korea, to Russia, to China, you name it. There no shortage. Uh, it's a good time to be president of the council on foreign relations, by the way. No shortage of, uh, but I want to talk a little jewel down a little bit on Congress for a second. Uh, over the last few months, we've seen several times where the president had been granted authorities by Congress, whether in the area of tariffs or sanctions, uh, also in his ability to wage war and it just see, what are you saying when people say, you know, Congress is just, uh, either gone too far and it's grants of authority or they were made under one set of assumptions and the idea of using sanctions against Canada when the sanctions were put in place for national security reasons that essentially you have a president who's using powers not in good faith. Well, what's your sense about whether the balance is off and whether it needs to be a righted more? The pendulum needs to go back a little bit more in the direction of congressman.

Bob Corker: To me, that's an easy one. But the fact is that for decades, the balance of power has been moving towards. The executive branch has been doing that for some time and it's been, it's really been magnified over the last decade or so. The country's divided, um, congress is divided. It's difficult for big, big problems, uh, actually any problem to be solved by Congress right now because of that polarity. At the end of the day, I constituents around the country, our citizens want to see action take place. And so they're more forgiving actually in many ways supportive of an executive branch that's willing to, to take things on. To me, that's the opposite of what ought to be happening. We should be, um, acting as a full, uh, you know, equal branch. The legislative branch is certainly equal to the executive branch. They have some powers on foreign policy that no doubt, uh, through the constitution, uh, gives him some progress.

Bob Corker: But the 1974 trade act, there was a waiver put in place by Congress. Congress gave the president a terrifying ability in an emergency and an emergency. Um, I thought that it was an absolute abuse of authority for him to use that, but tariffs in place against Mexico and Canada and then the European Union and then led you charge Richard on the Senate floor to try to pass a piece of legislation to block what he was doing. There were seven or eight Republicans to join me. Democrats are divided on the issue because the steel unions and others, uh, keep them at bay on issues like this. Any other time though, Republicans would have been swinging from the ceilings, trying to keep a Democratic president from doing the same. Uh, the same thing happened. Uh, same thing happen on the border issue where emergency powers were used. Um, are you kidding me?

Bob Corker: I mean this, this was, by the way, there was 25 or 25, \$25 billion was available a year ago to deal with the border issue. If the president was just willing to grant a permanent status to dreamers, which by the way, 85% of Republicans would like to see happen. So you're seeing more and more of that. I know recently on the sale to Saudi Arabia, emergency powers were used again, surpassing congress. Uh, personally, I do think we should be selling defensive weaponry to Saudi Arabia. One of the things that, and by the way, I'm, uh, I'm, I'm, I'm really disgusted with the way our country is handled. The cause Shogi killing. I mean, I, I think that in our own country, the crown prince would be convicted in 30 minutes by a jury just hearing the evidence that we have against what has occurred. But I do think we should stop selling them often [inaudible] weaponry currently until we figure out some way of dealing with what they're doing. But again, Congress did take actions there. It's going to be, it's going to be vetoed and he's going to overcome it. But that is a place where they did step forward and try to block what was happening.

Richard Haass: Okay. So you're right, Congress can pass things. It's going to be Vito and Congress will not vote to override the veto, largely because the preponderance your Republicans won't challenge this president. And that is that just simply a crass political fact of life that they're worried if they challenged this president, they go home and they get primary, then they lose.

Bob Corker: Uh, look, it's uh, um, we have this conversation a nonstop. I, I, I, uh, I have a lot of friends in the Senate on both sides of the aisle. And um, I talked to my friends who ran in 2018 on the republican side and they tell me, Bob, look, nobody asks us about issues anymore. No one base does not ask us about issues. And these are people who come to Republican primary events, which a lot of people don't go to. But there is a, a group of people who do and what they're asking folks, and these are the ones that decide who is going to be victorious in a primary. They're asking one thing, are you with the president or not? And an answer that says, well, I'm with him when he's right and I'm, I'm not wedding one is wrong. That is not an acceptable answer in many of the states where folks are worried about primaries. And so you see that playing out right now mean for instance, I'm on the emergency powers component relative to the border. I got to believe that. Uh, and I respect and, and really, you know, such a great privilege to serve in the Senate. I would say of the, of the 50 plus senators we have on the Republican side, uh, 40 something had to believe that that was an inappropriate stance. And yet you had very few people who stepped forward to do it for that reason of seeking, uh, wanting to seek and win reelection.

Richard Haass: I always think a democracy gets in trouble when secret ballots would be fundamentally different than public ballots. And that's what you're suggesting. We've reached now with the Senate,

Bob Corker: you know, I, I, people ask me all the time, Richard, um, are you concerned about money and politics? And I go, no, I mean, there's so much money washing around now. I, it doesn't concern me. What does concern me deeply is how

people are getting their information in social media itself. Um, it greatly concerns me, what's happening there and how people are traveling, uh, traveling on bad information. I give us a talk recently at Harvard is about two months ago and somebody reminded me that committee hearings in the Senate were private up until 1971 no one attended, but the senators themselves. And so what I see happening in our country is we're moving from a democratic republic where we elect people to make decisions on our behalf to where people are weighing in in such massive ways now with through so many outlets and senators are looking at how many emails and how many phone calls, which by the way, in many cases are generated by incorrect information. And I do feel as moving to a place where it's not the way that it has been as made our country so great. But in that is it being a democratic republic, there's so much participation and so much direct, uh, contact that is, that is not necessarily always grounded. In fact that it worries me. It does worry me.

Richard Haass: What else? A little bit about another aspect of Republicans when it comes to foreign policy. During the Cold War for four decades, Republicans basically stood for a large us leadership role in the world. Pretty big on defense spending, willing to greenlight the use of military force element. The principle though also in terms of a concern, say about human rights we did in this, in the Soviet Union, uh, or in China, but essentially support for free trade. You and I could probably make a list long with most of the people in this room of what traditional farm republican foreign policy, and this was true of Bush 41, Reagan, Eisenhower, you name it. Uh, what is Republican foreign policy now and is there one that's different than Donald Trump? Cause what I'm, I'm interested in not just whether will stand up then, but after Donald Trump goes, yeah, what, what, what, what is, what is left of Republican foreign policy.

Bob Corker: So that's kind of a long answer. Uh, and, and it's got 35 minutes or so. So the, you know, the, the Cold War was a unifying factor, wasn't not for 40 plus years. Republicans and Democrats work together through successive administrations of different parties to counter, uh, what was happening. And so, so at union and 89, you know, all of that change. And so that unifying, uh, that unifying force that was out there, US against them, you're there with them or you're with us dissipated. We had a successful venture in 1991 with Desert Storm where we knew what we were going to do. We did it and we left, and then we moved into other cause a very capable administration. I think that's a, I think you started in that administration exactly right. I'm sure solely because of you. It worked out the way that it did. But, but you know that despite maybe I get, there you go. So then we enter into two conflicts. Uh, yeah. In, in Iraq and Afghanistan. And then we had that, we had the votes on the AUM AFS, which now have kept our country very divided or authorization for the use of military relations. They use the military force. We had this whole asymmetric warfare where we're not dealing with nation states, but we're dealing with groups that kept morphing to other countries and it's really changed the complexion of how people, um, view foreign policy and it's kept Congress from being able to come together.

Richard Haass: Well, let me just be more specific though. I mean, you got, Donald Trump is against free trade. He's undermines America's allies in Europe and Asia. As literally as he was getting on the plane for Japan, he was taking shots at all of our, uh, allies. He pulls out of a half dozen significant international, uh, agreements. Do you sense that this is now Republican foreign policy? You think this is an aberration and whether it's a Nikki Haley or Mike Pence or somebody else one day that Republican foreign policy looks more like Trump's predecessors than like Trump?

Bob Corker: So I was getting to that. Um, what I see happening, first of all, if you ask about the Republican, I can, I could name the, the, the most extreme positions, uh, right now that are held by Republican, some that are as dovish as anybody on the democratic side. And some that still, uh, first response to any kind of diplomatic conflict is, is to bomb the country. Okay. So we've got, we've got basically two extremes right now on the republican side. I think many people as I watch people who are thinking about running for president, again, they've done it before and I seen many of them taking on a more populist posture because that's where the nation on both sides of the aisle is evolving. But look, as it relates to to president Trump himself, I do think it is his own foreign policy. I don't think that necessarily that the Republican senators have adopted that.

Bob Corker: There in many ways are afraid to counter that. But I've found that his foreign policy is one of, of personal grievance. Um, the best way to, to affect his decision making is to be the last person that calling. I used to get calls from the, well, it's actually not a joke. Um, I used to get calls from the White House before decision was going to be made and if the decision was going to be made at, so let's say nine 45 or 10 o'clock in the morning, staffers would call me and say, if you don't mind, would you please call it about nine 20. Okay. Because we don't like the direction, uh, that this is taking, we're worried that x is having too much influence. Uh, one of the things that the president, uh, thinks is that anybody who did anything before him, uh, whatever they did was, was, was not correct and wasn't done as well as he could do it.

Bob Corker: And so you see that taking place, he has a personal, um, anema Animus, if you will, towards the European Union. He really believes that it was created to undermine us, entrust and to Pete with that second, nominally. Um, so, so much of it though is about personality. And so I think that, and personal grievances, how people in the past have dealt with them, how much flattery takes place when meetings occur. And so I don't think that that's translatable, if you will, to a group of people who serve in the Senate. It's just a very different way of dealing with foreign policy. Um, and certainly not one that's going to have a lot of consistencies.

Richard Haass: Okay. I'll ask you a question and I'll suggest the interest of fairness. I'm also willing to answer it. What are, what, what worries you emotionally, what it is and what, uh, what's worrying you most now when you look out. And I think it's a, it's look, it's a, it's a big agenda of foreign policy, national security issues out

there right now. What, what's the one or two, whatever number you want to, things that really where you and in particular that you don't think are getting the attention they deserve. It's that it's that mismatch between how important they are and you just don't think they're getting us looked at enough.

Bob Corker: Well, we are moving back to a place where we're dealing more with nation states, right? I mean the whole issue of Isis Al-qaida those are still issues that uh, you know, we're semi dealing with that kind of thing. And, and, uh, and Yemen right now, but it's dissipated. And so now we're moving back to traditional, uh, foreign policy where we're dealing with conflicts, alliances, uh, with other countries, um, alliances, not so much anymore. Um, I guess, you know, for me the biggest issue, uh, is the issue China. And, um, I say that because it feels right now that we're becoming more and more entrenched in disagreeing instead of aligning the world around us and dealing with the two most compelling issues that we need to deal with with China, which is the theft of our intellectual property and the forced transference, um, uh, forming partnerships in China causing our companies to lose ownership of what they're doing.

Bob Corker: To me, that was the issue that we needed to be focused on with our allies. Instead, we alienated them. And now it seems that we're in a doubling down, uh, situation with China. There are by far our greatest, uh, challenged to deal with. I hope it's one that is going to be managed appropriately, but to me that is the one that has the most longterm consequences to our country. Um, I actually thought the way the Iran thing turned out, it was hard to believe that, um, you know, a commander in chief would not know of the number of casualties that might be inflicted, uh, until 10 minutes before a decision was made. I actually think that wasn't the case. I think that was, I think what happened was, again, people talked to him and the very end right before he was getting ready to make the decision and talked him into taking the position that he did and then, and then this was laid out.

Bob Corker: But I do think that, um, uh, and it worried me during the time of Tillerson, I used to have a coffee and breakfast with them every two or three weeks to talk with them, talk about what was happening. It's the, it's the disregard for diplomatic efforts and sort of the quick response to things. Um, uh, where you're undermining diplomacy, you're basically throwing a lot of Hubris out and as you know, in different countries is interpreted in different ways. Not Everybody speaks the same language that we do. It's, it's that, it's things getting out of control, uh, because someone does something on the ground and all of a sudden it's escalated. So I would say China and then just some conflict like Iran erupting because I'm a steady hand, if you will. It's not a, uh, taking control of what's happening and thinking about things in that manner.

Richard Haass: Okay. Why don't, um, you're about halfway through our allotted time. So in the interest of fairness and the a, this must be some doctrine. Uh, let's open it up and again, anything is fair game, either what the senator I have discussed or, or

not. And we'll just, we'll pack as much in as we can to the next 25 or so minutes. I think if you raise your hand, we'll get a microphone. Uh, too. I see a gentleman here in the second row with his hand raised. We have more than one microphone. Okay. Okay. We got to pick up the pace. They're kind of, you know, know. Yeah. Thank you.

Audience Member: Uh, the pivot to Asia under the Obama Administration, uh, from the military. Um, at the same time, China, uh, projecting power in the south China Sea. Uh, we seem to have under both illustrations, sort of just walked away from that projection of powers that build up military in the south China Sea and abandoned both Vietnam and the Philippines. Any comment on sort of what's happening there and what your thoughts are about where it might go from here?

Bob Corker: Not Richard. I know just came from there. He might be better to answer that. I, I don't, I don't think that we've stepped away from that necessarily. I think we've continued to invest, uh, naval wise in what we're doing and, and I, I don't think you're reading as much about it. Uh, you're not saying as much as what's happening on the ground.

Richard Haass: I agree. I mean, we're still doing the challenges, uh, the sale throughs, the flyer. So trainees claim China's search these claims along with everyone else. We don't, uh, accept them. They flat out lied about what they're doing there. They've militarized islands and so forth, but we're not accepting any of these as phage. They call them plea. I think the bigger issues in Asia right now are things we're not doing is one, one of the most consequential decisions this administration made in its first week was not to join the Trans Pacific partnership, a major economic and I would argue strategic era. I think this a weakening of our alliances with Japan, South Korea and the others, this constant chipping away at them and harping about about the trade relationship and suggesting that the security relationship is now a conditional. And actually one other thing, I don't know, Bob agrees with him.

Richard Haass: We uh, for 40 years now the United States, China and Taiwan have managed this kind of very careful orchestration of the Taiwan situation. And essentially there's been an agreement to disagree. And in the course of these 40 years, Taiwan is thrived economically. It's been secure and it's been so become a robust democracy. And I'm not confident that the next 40 years we're going to be able to say this something. But I'm beginning to see signs that in all three places, China's becoming much more demanding and reunification. Taiwan is beginning to push certain things, certain status issues. And we in particular and your former colleagues are looking at ways to upgrade us Taiwan relations. And I'm worried that this is a sleeper issue that could one day one or another of these three parties will do something that one or another, the other parties can't live with. Much more dangerous to me than a shelf. China she crisis is a Taiwan crisis. My regular. Then we got to, I'll let you two arm wrestle over the

microphone. I think ladies first, but then you can pass it to the gentleman on your, on your left.

Audience Member: Okay. Thank you. I just had a question about, um, our relationship with Saudi Arabia and what you think in terms of giving them nuclear weapons and how you think it's going to all unfold and you know,

Audience Member: are they like, yeah, everyone keeps saying there's such a great friend to us and you know, their strategic position in the Middle East itself.

Bob Corker: Yeah. So, um, if the crown prince himself, we're here on the platform. I'm, and I'm sure many of you, you've seen him do it. He is one of the most impressive, uh, young leaders that I've ever met. My first, the first time I met him, he was 32, I think he's 34 now. Uh, he could speak to economics as well as any, any Harvard MBA, he's or any Wall Street person. I mean really, um, spoke well if you will, of a vision for the country. They understand that fossil fuels is not going to be forever. Um, uh, the thing that's gonna drive their country. And so he's diversifying, he's doing small things to, uh, uh, to deal with women's rights and thriving and of course, allowing people to go to the movie theaters.

Bob Corker: And you have to remember that within the country he has to balance, even though it may be a monarchy, if you will, he has to deal with the Wahhabist religious sector. And so he's got to do what he's doing. He's got to tilt both ways. Um, so I would say that he's very talented. I think he's on the other hand, has, uh, made some, uh, I don't know what the right word will be. Freshman mistakes. Uh, I mean, I think after having the major summit, uh, that took place in Riyadh and then all of a sudden turning around, um, and doing what he did with cutter was just an absolute, um, uh, ridiculous and naive thing for him to do. Um, and obviously what he did with Ka Shogi, uh, to me is beyond the Pale. Um, I was part of a small group of people who had the, uh, briefing directly from Gina, uh, at CIA.

Bob Corker: And, uh, like I'm, I'm surprised that this UN thing has just come out with what they've come out with. It was, uh, it was very grotesque and I think for us to respond to say that, you know, if they did, we don't know if he did it or didn't do it, but there our friend, I think that we have to, one of the things I've learned about leaving the Senate, um, and I had no idea of this, you're up under the hood. You're working, uh, hard every day. You're up at four 30. You're trying to get briefed up. You're dealing with things that are happening around the world. Uh, one of the things I never imagined was that an I'm mine is a minor voice. I was just a member of the Senate, how much your voice matters matters around the country and it matters around the world.

Bob Corker: And when the president said what he said about that issue that was heard around the world, it was heard in Saudi Arabia. Um, and so, um, and again, if you have a crown printed say 34 today, that learns that it's okay to do this, more of this will occur. So I think we haven't quite figured out. We do need to, I don't

call them our friend, I call them a semi important country, a semi important country that, uh, that has been important to us economically not near so important. Now that is part of a somewhat positive alliance that we have in the region that we need to do what we can to hold them together, but to marsh them when they're out of line and do things incorrectly. And I think we'd been way too chummy with that. And that's one of the things that truly has a, is divided congress today. The whole conflict in Yemen. And I don't think there's near enough reporting by the way on the Huth, these firing of missiles into Saudi Arabia. And by the way, we have a lot of American citizens there who security is at risk. But, uh, we in my opinion have not striven to balance that properly. And, um, um, again, I would say that let's sell them defensive weapons to protect themselves. Let's hold off on the offense of weapons until we see better behavior.

Richard Haass: Let me talk on another country in the Middle East, which, uh, whether you think your f you and your former colleagues in the congress are overly and unconditionally supportive, which is Israel, you a, this administration, you know, has essentially supported the movement of the embassy to Jerusalem. It's, it's come out in supporting the annexation of the, uh, Golan this after two and a half years. The deal of the century neglects dimension, political criteria. It's essentially a, it was described the other day instead of the expression by, um, one of my colleagues, Mack boot who wasn't real politic. It was reality state politic. Uh, basically putting out great financial incentives without a political dimension. And there's people like me who worry cause they say this is doing no favors to Israel. If you want Israel to be a secure, prosperous Jewish democracy, in order for that to happen, you actually need a Palestinian state as well. So do you think this administration in the and supporters in Congress on this issue are actually doing Israel a service or a disservice?

Bob Corker: Well, I'm going to say something that, that uh, probably will get tomatoes thrown at me. Um, I in my time there and again, I just learned what I learned on the ground. I don't have the steeped knowledge that you and many others in this audience have, but um, I came to believe that the whole Israeli Palestinian issue was not of the great importance that people have placed on. And I'm sorry. Um, I don't think the IRBs really care so much about it. I'm sorry. Um, I think that, uh, I think that the whole focus on it, um, uh, we need to focus on it. It's an issue like many others around the world that need to be resolved and there are so many poor and destitute. Um, uh, Palestinians, I've traveled, uh, the gossip from top to bottom, uh, in Cognito, uh, know that I was standing beside them as leaders as they were pulling things out of the tunnel coming, uh, from Egypt.

Bob Corker: So I mean, I've seen firsthand the devastation there, the poverty that people are living in. Um, but I, I don't think there has been a partner for Israel to deal with. I think that BB has been overly, uh, militant in his handling of it. I know he's our friend, but I just don't think it's been the biggest issue in the world. I'm sorry. Um, the, uh, the, what the administration is attempting to do is in, in Jared

came in and talked to a small group of us, uh, six months or so ago before I left. It is going to be focused on the economic piece, but it's also gonna be focused on the fact that we're not, it's not too state. It is state minus still having the security apparatus of Israel there. And you can understand while on one hand they would want that security to be there for their own citizens. On the other hand, when you look at these settlements, I don't think people, uh, that haven't been there quite realized what these are. I mean these are cities, the cities are built up in the western bank and, and uh, there is going to have to be a trade of real estate as you mentioned. But, um, I, the answer is I think they've, the way they've gone about it probably is going to lead to stalemate for some time. Um,

Richard Haass: what about if it led to Israel, if this is the Palestinians are clearly rejecting whatever's being put forward to you and if this leads to Israeli selective annexation of chunks of the, uh, of the West Bank, uh, do you think that Congress would do anything about that?

Bob Corker: Um, honestly I don't think that, uh, because of the way the whole Israel issue plays out in Washington, um, I think it'd be very difficult for Congress to unify a in a white to oppose that. Do you agree?

Richard Haass: I agree and I agree with something else. You said before that, I think this for so many years we equated the Middle East with the Arab Israeli dispute, but I think tomorrow or if there were a two state solution, it wouldn't matter one bit for Syria, for Libya, for Yemen, for stability and Saudi Arabia for the future of Egypt, which is increasing by a million people every seven or eight months. So I think it's important to Israelis and Palestinians, but I no longer, it's not a key to the region. I agree.

Bob Corker: It matters to Jordan and the king has staked his future on it and he, you know, is obviously a student of the region and he likes, likens himself to the Henry Kissinger of the region. I always enjoy being with him, but it matters to him. I will tell you in my many, many, many, many trips and just like in business where you spend 80% of your time on problems and 20% of your time on opportunities, the same thing happens in foreign policy. So most of our trips and efforts, we're in the Middle East. I never ever heard other than the king of Jordan. Anyone ever mentioned the problems they were having their country tied in any way whatsoever.

Richard Haass: Palace, I'll pick on something you said. You said we spend 80% of our time on problems, 20% on opportunities. Give us an example of an opportunity that you think is out there, potential one that is being under attended to. What if you had some discretionary calories, time, money, whatever. What do you, what do you think is of as something interesting out there?

Bob Corker: I think we have tremendous opportunities in the Western Hemisphere, um, and uh, to, to just tighten those relationships. Obviously Central America is, is uh, got tremendous issues that need to be dealt with and what we need to be doing

is working. I mean, look, if, if you are a mother or father and some of these countries and what was happening there, it was happening to your family or what's happening around you, probably what you'd be doing is trying to figure out a way to get to the old good old USA. Okay. I think that's what most of us would be attempting to do. But the region, I mean, you look at South America, you look at the resources, you look at the, the other countries which are trying to, to, to deal in there, especially as a race from metals and resources. Um, I think that the western hemisphere for us as a, an absolute tremendous opportunity to, to strengthen alliances and to, to help this whole region embrace human rights, democracy even more fully

Richard Haass: implicit then in what you said, I assume as you did not agree with the administration policy of reducing aid going to Central American countries, but rather you would probably favor more of it if you had confidence that was being targeted in the right way.

Bob Corker: And that, and that's the issue. I mean, these governments, uh, some of the, some of the, uh, rhetoric that's used about our aid is, unfortunately, some of it is true and it does end up in corrupt hands and causes some people to be able to stay in power longer. But no, we need to, to help, uh, build up the democratic institutions in these countries. Uh, and uh, and make sure that, I mean if you want to say a country that doesn't function, and I spent a lot of time there my last year in the Senate, it's been as whale and they have actually, they, they've just undone the institutions of democracy there and um, um, that leads to bad outcomes and what we need to be doing is everything we can to strengthen those [inaudible]

Richard Haass: okay. Gerald, did you have your,

Audience Member: this is a naive question.

Audience Member: Just as a citizen and observer in this country, you are one of the few people to speak up to president Trump, you and senator McCain. Will we ever reach a point where people will place country above their self interest? You're telling US people won't speak up to the president because they want to get reelected, but what about the rest of us? We have no voice. We need. Some of us from blue states have to Repub tube democratic senators. We have no voice, but we want the country to change. Now will anyone ever speak up other than you and the late Senator McCain to this president? So I

Speaker 5: [inaudible]

Bob Corker: first of all, when I ran for the Senate. Um, I told people in our state that I was going to serve a for a maximum of two terms. When I came to the end of my first term, I almost did not run for a second. And, um, knowing that I was likely to be the lead Republican on foreign policy, I went ahead and did that. But each month during the campaign, uh, from my second term, uh, I was really

reanalyzing whether to do so. Uh, and so I say that to say that when I was in the Senate, I felt the entire time, 100% independent, that I was representing our state, both sides of the aisle and when I was around the world representing our country. And so I never felt any inhibition to, to not just speak what I felt to be the truth.

Bob Corker: If you counter that, um, with the fact that there are numbers of people who plan to be in the Senate for the rest of their life and you understand the tribal way that politics, um, has evolved. Um, and while I would prefer to have people who run to serve in the Senate, to be there on a mission, a mission, and to do their job and to leave, I would prefer that greatly understand why people react the way they do. I'm sometimes disappointed. Um, but, uh, I'm sorry. Uh, it is the way that it is and a lot of people, here's, here's what people I think end up, here's what they end up rationalizing. They end up rationalizing that the country or their state is so much better off with them being there. Like I, I'm just, it is the rationale. Look, I may, yeah, I may have to, you know, sort of, I may have to soften the edge here and I may have to, to do this, but, but for me, be reelected, the country is so much better off having me there because of my institutional knowledge or whatever.

Bob Corker: And so, look, I'd much prefer that. Uh, my sense is that, that, you know, you come into the Senate and people say, well, there's all this, we talked about it last night at dinner with, there's all this institutional knowledge that people have and when they leave, um, it disappears. I don't know. I think if you apply yourself, um, it is like drinking out of a fire hose in the beginning. But I think the curve is pretty rapid and I think that to have people there who are fresh and energetic and not focused on being there for 30 to 40 years, um, you'd see more of that happening. But today [inaudible]

Richard Haass: Bob, I want to raise an issue while we have some time on field, uh, which is, uh, climate change. And my question is what gives with Republicans on climate change? The science is overwhelming. And if we were actually doing things in terms of clean energy, it would generate jobs. So it'd be good economically. So let me give you my theory and tell me why I'm crazy. But I actually think that a lot of the opposition to climate change and the Republican Party and the president's base is not about climate change. But this has become a symbolic issue where the elites are saying, and people like me, the foreign policy establishment is saying this matters. And people are just saying, we're tired of listening to all your people telling us what matters and we're just pushing back and we know this gets under your skin and that's your problem when we like it. So am I missing something here or is cause I can't understand given what climate change will do to us as a world and as a country economic and national security implications. And even I do think there's economic opportunity here in terms of solar alternatives. What have you, I cannot understand. One last thing, even for evangelicals, last I checked, God created the heavens and the earth. We're here as custodians. Why have republicans become so hostile to doing anything serious about climate change?

Bob Corker: Yeah. So I think there is a degree of the cultural aspect that you alluded to in the second part. And that is this a sort of elite, uh, sense that, uh, people are trying to hoard over, if you will, uh, uh, people. So I think there is some of that, I think obviously they're there. Let's face it, what's happening in politics today that positions like this are helping people get elected. I mean, this is a position that president Trump took that it was a hoax. I will say that there are more Republican senators then you think that that believe climate change is real and not just that, but humans are contributing to it. Okay. I mean, you take Lamar Alexander, I take myself, uh, I think Mitt Romney and other people. There are people there that believe that the issue has been, what do you do? I'm in, it really is, I remember back in, I was on the energy committee when I first came to the Senate and I remember calling rex Tillerson at Exxon at the time, uh, um, said, hey, you know, look at, uh, uh, you know, a carbon tax seems to me to be like a semi rational thing.

Bob Corker: What do you think? And he agreed. By the way, I mean this whole rube Gerbo gold blurred, you know, cap and trade thing. I went to Europe to study what they had doesn't work. It's not working. That what we proposed here in our own country, uh, would not work. But what do you do about it and what do you do in particular when you raise a price on carbon and the technology is not quite there, if you will, to be able to, to cause the transformation that take place. So again, I think what the world is not really come to yet and what we as a nation if not come to okay, we agree that climate change is real. We agree humans are contributing. But what are the policies that we put in place that don't set us so far back economically and demean people's standard of living to actually overcome it. And I don't think either side of the aisle yet, uh, has embraced it. Technologies, no doubt are really moving ahead. And as you mentioned, yes, solar in particular that solar and wind to agree is coming on

Richard Haass: by certain dereg. It's clear that some of the deregulation going on EPA, even in the automobile industry is saying we want to keep higher cafe standards. There's, there's things, even if we can't solve it, we're certainly doing things that we're making it worse.

Bob Corker: Yeah, no, I think, you know, the, the mileage standards that were put in place years ago, uh, did a tremendous amount, uh, to help us as a nation move ahead and let's face it as it relates to develop countries we've actually done or than most in the world. Um, uh, trying to create a world regime to deal with it though, uh, when you're dealing with a country the size of China, which is trying to move as many people as they can and to higher economic conditions, um, makes it very, very difficult and makes it difficult for citizens to understand why their economic growth because there are developed countries should be hampered, uh, to allow others to catch up.

Richard Haass: I thought the genius on a pushback on your that because two reasons. One is I do think the job creating part is real. Second of all, the genius of the Paris Agreement and a funny sort of way was there was a bottom up agreement, not

a top down. No country was told what it had to do on climate. Every country chose its own five-year path. And so this is how ambitious we're going to be. We're going to send our own goals. We're going to determine on how we get there. So it was voluntary and it was nationally set. And that to me it was, it was an international agreement. That was the sum total of national decisions. I would have thought that an administration that was obsessed with sovereignty, this would have been the form of international agreement. They would have love then they should have said this should be a model for all international agreements. We get to decide, nothing's imposed on us.

Bob Corker: Well, I was very much, I was put on the speaker phone while a whole cadre of people, uh, were gathered around the president before he, and they were all going pro and con. Um, I did think that, and, and by the way, the goals that we set in place, uh, in the out, we're not achievable. Let me say that one more time. The goals that we set in place or not achievement. Yes. Um, and so to me a better route of dealing with that was to see if there was some way to, to renege what we ourselves had put in place on the front end. That to me was a much better way of dealing with and stay within the compact, but to say, hey, we realize that the goals that were laid out, uh, are not something that we could do without just shutting our economy down. But we will agree to do this. And by the way, this is much greater than most countries in the compact, uh, were willing to do.

Richard Haass: You got time for one last quick question and one last quick answer. Yes ma'am. I see in the fourth row towards the back. I can't right there if you keep it quick, we'll keep it quick at our end, I promise.

Audience Member: I just wondered if you could talk about the current state of the State Department under this president.

Richard Haass: It's the state of state.

Bob Corker: Yeah. Um,

Richard Haass: that's a happy note to end on. Don't you think?

Bob Corker: First of all, I think that, uh, uh, Pompeo, um, having come from the military, having built a good culture at CIA, um, has, has done a, a, a relatively good job of reestablishing a better culture than exists that's then existed under rex Tillerson. And by the way, I was, you know, almost answered Tillerson's questions for him when he came before the committee in order to help him as he moved into that position. But, uh, I think it's better than it was. He's a, he's a smart guy. He's a little hot, more hawkish than I would be in that particular position, but I think he's done a better job inside. It's difficult to get people confirmed today. It really is. He had a chief of staff, um, that was coming over, hopefully from the CIA. It took like a year and four months to have that person

confirmed over grievances that really related back to things he had done as a congressman.

Bob Corker: Remember he was a tea party congressman from Kansas and he wore Hillary Clinton out over the emails, remember? And so there was sort of a payback that was taking place. What's been difficult to get people confirmed? Um, the political appointees, which typically are about one third in an administration, two thirds being professional have been very difficult to get through. Um, and um, um, I don't know what else to say. I mean, all of these bureaucracies candidly deal with such red tape. Um, it's amazing that we are successful as a country. But let me just close on this note. Um, look, I'm not a diplomat. Um, I'm a guy who worked as hard as I could during the 12 years that I was there. Um, our diplomatic corps and the people that represent us around the world are some of the finest human beings I've ever been around. And I cherish them. And as a nation, that is some institutional knowledge that we need to keep in place. And we need to do everything we can to support their efforts.

Richard Haass: Let me see two things. One is, uh, I actually think one of the real tasks for the next secretary of state, though the next is going to be to rebuild the foreign service. We lost incoming classes and we lost an entire generation of excellent people who retired early. This is going to take, this is a generational challenge now. It can't be done in a, in, in a year. And it matters to the diplomatic tools, one of the principle tools of national security policy. And at the moment, ours is weaker and less present than it needs to be. And the other thing I wanted to do was thank senator Corker for two things. One for being with us for an hour this morning and the other for all those years in public service and the way he did it. Thank you.