



American Diplomacy in a Post-9/11 Era (10/7/19)

00:00:24 Noah Rauch: Good evening. My name is Noah Rauch, I'm the senior vice president for education and public programs here at the 9/11 Memorial & Museum. It is my pleasure to welcome you to tonight's timely program, "American Diplomacy in a Post-9/11 Era." As always, I'd like to extend a special welcome to our museum members and to those tuning in to our live web broadcast at 911memorial.org/live.

00:00:49 Recent global events have put a spotlight on diplomacy, both its efficacy and its limitations in advancing national and international interests. We find ourselves in an era when the relevance of postwar multilateralism has been called into question, secure diplomatic cables are increasingly susceptible to hacking, and nationalism and isolationism are on the rise in many countries around the world.

00:01:11 In the United States, recent years have seen a reversal of several longstanding—and not-so-longstanding-- diplomatic stances and norms, while shifting global power dynamics seem to be reaching an inflection point. In the midst of this, more than 30 U.S. ambassadorships remain vacant.

How do we best navigate this changing landscape, and what role does diplomacy have in these efforts? On the heels of the 74th session of the U.N. General Assembly, we are delighted to welcome two former diplomats to discuss these questions and many more.

Unfortunately, Ambassador Neumann was unable to join us this evening, and we wish him a speedy recovery.

00:01:46 Peter Ammon served as German ambassador to the United States from 2011 to 2014, and to the United Kingdom from 2014 to 2018, after serving as state secretary at the German Foreign Office in Berlin. In 2007 and 2008, he was appointed German ambassador to Paris. Prior to that, he worked as general... director-general for economics at the German Foreign Office from 2001 to 2007.

His prior diplomatic career included, includes postings to London, Dakar, New Delhi, and Washington. During his recent ambassadorship in London, his agenda was shaped by the British Brexit referendum to leave the EU.

00:02:24 And my last page is floating around here somewhere. He is... He is joined by Gérard Araud, a career diplomat. He is the former French ambassador to the United States and the United Nations, as well as director-general for political and security affairs of the French Foreign Ministry. He is a trustee of the International Crisis Group. He previously held numerous positions between 2000 and 2014 with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, including serving as ambassador of France to Israel and permanent representative of France to the United Nations.

00:02:54 Over the course of his career, he has worked on issues from the Iranian nuclear program to the adoption of resolutions on Libya, the Ivory Coast, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, and the Central African Republic, along with participating in debates on the Syrian and Ukrainian crises.

As you can see, we are incredibly fortunate to have these panelists with us this evening to share their insights and their expertise. With that, please join me in welcoming Peter Ammon and Gérard Araud in conversation with executive vice president and deputy director for museum programs at the 9/11 Memorial & Museum Clifford Chanin.

(applause)

00:03:31 Clifford Chanin: Thank you, Noah. I would like also to welcome everybody, and, uh, particularly our members. Our members are increasingly the core of these programs, we're very happy to see them. For those of you who are not members, we have folks outside who can make you members very easily. It's not very hard.

But, you know, when we were thinking about this program and talking about a program about diplomacy, I have to admit, we were thinking, "Oh, this is really sort of a easy, mild subject." And, you know, "What could possibly be controversial about this?" And then news happens. And so we're very grateful to have you here tonight.

00:04:08 We will talk about current events, but, you know, as is our practice here, you know, so much of what we do comes out of 9/11, and I, I... You were each in important positions within your foreign ministries back when the attack occurred. And I'm sure you have personal memories.

00:04:27 But I'm interested also in your thinking about the 18 years that have elapsed since 9/11, and the impact, as you see it, of 9/11 on American foreign policy, as you've experienced it as ambassadors from close allies of this country. So, let me start with the end, and Ambassador Ammon.

00:04:47 Ambassador Peter Ammon: Well, Clifford, thank you very much for, for bringing us here. I'm deeply moved. I had the chance to see the museum for the first time just a few minutes ago, and I'm still under the impression. And I noticed that people with us seeing the museum, we, we talked only in whisper. This museum has enormous force. It radiates force. And I think you can be very proud of how you do it. And I'm very grateful that you invited me.

Clifford Chanin: Thank you.

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Ambassador Peter Ammon: Short answer to your question, I think we have to... we are going into a new era. And 9/11 took us from one era, that was the era of, of the end of history. Maybe you know what I mean with this?

Clifford Chanin: Yeah.

Ambassador Peter Ammon: To the era of the fight against terror and nation-building, wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries. And now this era again comes to a close. And we are now in a new era where, uh, well, probably we have to cope with bad experiences, mistakes, or maybe too high expectations we had when we entered into this era of nation-building and, and the war against terror.

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I stop here because I think, I... This might, might be a bit controversial, but it is, uh, a point I would like to make here.

Clifford Chanin: Yeah; Ambassador Araud.

Ambassador Gérard Araud: I think 9/11 was, in a sense, the end of our illusions about the Western supremacy. Basically, after the end, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a moment of triumph, of Western triumph. You know, we were defining the future of the world. It was the end of history, everybody wanted, was dreaming of becoming a Western, democratic, liberal nation.

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And suddenly, with this incredibly brutal attack, the answer was there. And, and all the rest, what, what followed actually has amplified the message of 9/11, which means basically that, um, the West is not triumphing. There are people, countries, there are movements, there are individuals who are convinced and want to, actually, to hold back the West. And, and actually, we are on the defensive, you know, more and more.

00:07:11 There was 2003, the, the stupid invasion of Iraq, which was, also in the West, was showing the hubris, the loss of the sense of proportions on the on the Western, on the Western side. And the other way, and the other side, you have countries which are back-- China, Russia. So, again, 9/11, I think for me is the end of the Western illusions.

00:07:37 Clifford Chanin: Let me go to that, because, you know, the response in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the invocation of Article 5 of the NATO Treaty and then the deployment of NATO forces alongside the United States-- your own countries, as well-- in Afghanistan, marked, nonetheless, the power of that alliance and the unified response.

00:07:59 Um, very different in the response within the alliance and among the allies to the war in Iraq. How did you see diplomacy diverging at that point? What had been the unified response then became a very fractious and difficult period in the relationships, particularly between the United States and each of your countries, because-- you have described it in a particular way, the war in Iraq-- but it was not something that either of your countries supported in terms of the American involvement there.

00:08:34 So, what was the effect of that on the relationships and on each of your countries' sense of what American diplomacy or foreign policy had become?

(Ammon clears throat)

Ambassador Peter Ammon: Well, I think when the decision to go to war in Iraq was taken, there was a clear disagreement on, on the analysis of the situation. Probably the... what I thought, some Americans thought that, "Look, we had some very good experience after the Second World War. We defeated the Nazi regime, we defeated the Japanese militaristic regime. And after this came a perfect democracy and economic growth," and so on, and a wonderful, a wonderful success story.

00:09:16 "Couldn't this story be repeated in Iraq?" That, of course, Saddam Hussein was a horrible guy, and everybody should be relieved that, when he was gone. But the expectation was that after this, America could withdraw, or at least not be there, fully present, and a wonderful story would start.

And this wonderful story didn't come. It was a story of anarchy, of tribalism, of civil war that, that followed, outside powers taking advantage of the situation. And the whole situation became really dangerous and messy. So this is... the analysis of the Americans obviously was wrong at the time.

00:09:57 Well, maybe I should not boast of saying so, but we were a bit more... The French and we were a bit more skeptical about the, this American positive analysis.

Clifford Chanin: Let me ask each of you, I mean, what was the impact in your foreign ministries, not just of the disagreement, but of your sense that the Americans had made a miscalculation, made a mistake in this? How did that then affect your sense of the judgment of American foreign policy?

00:10:22 Ambassador Gérard Araud: Well, first, I think it was a major crisis. It was really because opposing the Americans, opposing American allies, was not an easy decision. It was quite... I remember in the French Foreign Ministry, there was a lot of discussion, actually, and to... And after, actually, after the invasion of Iraq, we were submitted to a lot of retaliation by the Americans, very petty retaliation.

00:10:49 Everywhere, the Americans were blocking the French candidates. But at the same time, and on the other side, we were overwhelmed by a demonstration of support coming from all the world public opinion.

But actually, very quickly, people forget that very quickly, there was a sort of reconciliation between France and the U.S., and I guess Germany and the U.S., because our common interest was to, to remain together. It was... we were working with Germany and Russia, but, of course, neither Germany nor France had any major interest or long-term interest to be with Russia. Our long-term interest was with the U.S., we are belonging to the same family.

00:11:37 And as for France, the reconciliation came in 2004, about expelling the Syrians from Lebanon after the assassination of the Lebanese prime minister by the Syrian Secret Service. It was really, so, I... I remember the meeting of George W. Bush and my president on September 2004, Actually, you had the impression that it was a love story, that nothing had happened. The long-term interest was there, to be together.

00:12:06 Clifford Chanin: How conscious is the discussion within the Foreign Ministry of the calculation of the risk to the relationship with the United States and the disagreement with the United States? You talk about a reconciliation coming in 2004, because another incident allowed you to turn the page in that relationship. But take us inside the discussions within, let's say, the German Foreign Ministry, about calculating the risk to the relationship and the value of the relationship with the United States.

00:12:32 Ambassador Peter Ammon: Well, the problem in Germany was that we had election coming up, and the public opinion was very, very critical of the American decision to go to Iraq. So, it was almost impossible for anyone running for, for the chancellorship to take a positive stance, but under the surface, among us, among the diplomats-- those people who do the... work in the machine room, so to speak-- we all were very clear and decided, "This cannot go on. Let the election come and go, and then we will have to do what we can to restore relationship with the U.S." Because the transatlantic relationship is the core of our foreign policy.

00:13:13 Ambassador Gérard Araud: On our side, I, I do remember that the diplomats basically would have preferred that-- of course, we couldn't support this, this invasion, which was legal and geopolitically very

dangerous. But we, our preference was not to oppose the Americans-- basically to let the Americans do it. And it was a political decision by, by the president to say, "No, it's a, it's, it's a critical issue. We have to say no publicly." Actually... and I think that eventually, I think my president was right.

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Clifford Chanin: But in terms of that calculation by the president, what was the argument in terms of the damage to the relationship and how you weighed that?

Ambassador Gérard Araud: The prime... Again, very often-- you know, in foreign policy, every, every decision is a bad decision. It's exactly like in your private life. Whatever you decide has positive and negative aspects, and you have to balance the two sides and said, "Okay, I'm falling on this side, rather than not falling on the other side."

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But if you are really thinking, if you are thinking, you can understand, you can just, you could have fallen on the other side. So basically... and my president-- and it was the, the political, the political leadership, it's normal-- had the two sides, the problem of the degradation of the relationship with, with the Americans.

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But the other side, there was, it was necessary to say, "No, we can't declare a war, a war of convenience." It was really the argument on the French side. War is for self-defense or under a U.N. mandate. That was a war of convenience. War is not an instrument that you can use this way in foreign policy at your convenience.

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Clifford Chanin: Let me ask about, um... William Burns-- who was a colleague of yours, senior American diplomat, now retired-- um, he's written about the militarization of American diplomacy. That, uh, the State Department, diplomatic approach, has in recent years-- and it's not just from 9/11, it actually... He traces it back to the extent, the extension of NATO, expansion of NATO, um, and that, as the Russians perceived the threat from that.

00:15:29 But he talks about diplomacy having become militarized in some sense in the United States. Is, is that a perception that would be related to your reflections on, whether war in Afghanistan, war in Iraq, or anything else since then?

00:15:44 Ambassador Peter Ammon: Well, the war in Afghanistan was a good war, and Germany sent troops, is still sending troops there, and engaged heavily financially, too. Um... we see the Americans... As a diplomat, my experience with my American counterparts always was that it was extremely difficult to negotiate with the Americans. I've negotiated with Russians, with, with French, with Americans, and I always found the American partners more difficult, most difficult, because on the American side, it was highly... the relationship between the various departments was quite often very conflictuous.

00:16:23 And when the Americans came to me and said, "Well, we have finally found a common denominator with the Defense Department," or in any other department, and they said, "Please don't touch it, we can't really move any, any bit here," yeah? This is something you wouldn't have with a Russian. They have a different style, I don't, I don't want to praise it. But from a professional point of view, it was much easier.

00:16:49 Clifford Chanin: Was that your impression, as well?

Ambassador Gérard Araud: That's something that everybody knows, when you are negotiating with the Americans.

(laughter)

Ambassador Gérard Araud: Usually when you are negotiating with the Americans, they, they come after three weeks. You know, you said, "We negotiate," they come three weeks later, because it has taken three weeks for the interagency process, you know, to have reached a decision.

And they arrive, and they are exhausted and say, "We can't change it anymore."

00:17:12 So, it's not really a negotiation, you know, really, because the... for the Americans, negotiation is negotiating with the C.I.A. and the Department of Defense, not so much with foreign countries.

Clifford Chanin: Huh. (laughing) Um... I don't know where to go with that.

(laughter)

00:17:31 Clifford Chanin: You know, it, it does strike me, though-- and we were talking about this before-- that, you know, and you mentioned, we seem to be in a new era. And whatever the 9/11 impact was, and it may continue in a variety of ways, but the sense of diplomacy in the world seems to have changed in important ways, and some of that has to do with the role of the United States.

00:17:53 But, you know, we have this phenomenon in our country here, but in each of your countries, Brexit, dealing with it, your role as the German ambassador in the U.K. There's a nationalist current that is much more powerful than it was five, ten years ago, and seems to have had a great impact within all of our countries, and certainly in the relationships among the countries.

And I wonder how you see this in the context of more traditional diplomatic approaches. Is diplomacy up to the task of dealing with this new phenomenon?

00:18:30 Ambassador Gérard Araud: We have never been up to the task.

Ambassador Peter Ammon: Well, I would, I would say at least we should try. But, but a new era brings in a new form of, of diplomacy. And we have had different forms of diplomacy in the past. For example, in the 19th century, we had what was called "Realpolitik." So, at that time, these, the states entered into agreements of convenience with each other.

00:18:58 The, uh... these agreements, these treaties that were dominating or setting the scene in Europe in the 19th century were very unstable. They were treaties to balance power on the continent, for example, and then one day, we could change again, and then a war happened as a consequence of this instability.

00:19:23 And I think that we are going somehow a little bit back to this sort of thinking, because now the relationships between states, or between governments, are less value-driven, as we were in the past, where we said, "We, the West, what, what unites us is our shared values," and that what kept NATO together for... how many years now? 60 years?

Clifford Chanin: ...70 years.

00:19:46 Ambassador Peter Ammon: Now it's a marriage of convenience. If Mr. Putin is of interest to country X, then probably we'll enter into, into an agreement with them. And so this whole thing predicts more instability in the future and more work for diplomats, of course, to, to keep these balls in the air, as Bismarck used to say.

Clifford Chanin: Hmm. You tweeted, Ambassador Araud, after the... It was a celebrated but short-lived tweet after the 2016 election. You tweeted, "After Brexit, after Trump, a world is collapsing."

Ambassador Gérard Araud: A world is collapsing.

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Clifford Chanin: Yes, and so, this is the postwar order, and the multilateral world.

Ambassador Gérard Araud: No, a world is collapsing. I was, and I was right, obviously, because after that, you wear the Yellow Vest in France, you had the Lega in Italy. Basically, that was the world of the liberal democracy, the, the certainties that we had about liberal democracies, which were collapsing.

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Brexit, you could think it was an accident. You know, we read of the usual vagaries of our British friends. But after, that... We love them. And, and after, after Trump, it was not possible anymore. And I was thinking of our own presidential elections in May 2017. So, that was really something very-- really, the populist wave, it's something very important.

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And it has consequences on, on diplomacy, because all the populist, yours and ours, are sharing basically the same contempt or lack of interest for shared values, for human rights, for alliances; the same leaning towards authoritarian leaders. And it's, it's striking, because basically everywhere, it's the same thing.

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The same hostility to, against the United Nations, and in the case of Europeans, against European Union. So, you see, suddenly, you see a sort of, in our societies, a new class of, really a new, you know... A new ideology about foreign policy, which is more less the opposite of what it was.

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On the, on the external side, as I'm the Frenchman, I am in charge of the cynicism of... of cynicism. And, and I love it, because, you know, I have always been very, very skeptical about the idea of, that NATO was about shared values. Actually, NATO was simply because a common enemy. The enemy of my enemy, you know, well, he's my friend.

00:22:23 And because, you know, in 1919, the U.S. was engaged into the First World War, and the U.S. didn't stay six months in Europe. The Americans left and left us alone to face the rise of Germany against us. And in 1945, the Americans stayed in Europe not because of they wanted to defend democracy, but simply because there was a common enemy, which was the USSR, and that France and Britain were not able to face this enemy.

00:22:54 So, we have always been in Realpolitik, in balance of power. The only difference now is, we were the big guys. We had... you know, uh, uh... in France, we were calling the U.S. after 1990 "the hyperpower." There was only one, one superpower. It's over. Gentlemens, ladies and gentlemen, it's over. We are now in a more balanced world. The West is, has lost its absolute supremacy. So what we call the West, the end of the liberal order-- there was never a liberal order.

00:23:30 You know, ask to the Africans if they believe that there was a liberal order. Millions of African had died, you know, really, in this supposed orders. There was six or seven wars in the Middle East. Really, no, there was no order. There was simply a world where we were the big boys on the block. We are not anymore.

Clifford Chanin: Ambassador Ammon, is that... respond to that.

Ambassador Peter Ammon: No, I'm more...

Ambassador Gérard Araud: He's in charge of the feelings.

00:23:56 Ambassador Peter Ammon: I'm more optimistic than Gérard, um, but maybe I have to. But I would agree on one point. I think the, the new era that's, which starts right now or maybe has started with the advent of President Trump or maybe even a little bit earlier, this new era will probably be defined by the fight for supremacy between the U.S. and China. So the relationship between these two countries will define the

future of the world, and it will... how it is played will be of huge consequences for all the others.

00:24:32 For example, uh, this situation gives Russia an enormous leeway to play. It can be sort of a junior partner to China, or it can offer his, its support to us in some way or the other. It can take all kind of, of... It can exploit the withdrawal of the West.

00:24:53 We have seen now, as America has withdrawn or not, not engaged in, in Syria, Russia is moving into this gap. And right now Russia is, Mr. Putin is holding a conference with all the... with most of the African leaders because he feels, or he sees that Africa is no longer of interest to, to America. So again, here, there's an opening, and he... I think it's very, very obvious how he, how he plans his foreign policy, Mr. Putin.

00:25:27 He's, he's, he's opportunistic. He's a master of opportunism. And, and he plays this, and so we can predict what he will do. And now the worry I have is that, as, as NATO gets weaker, he will see opportunities also in the part of the world where I come from, in Europe.

00:25:51 And so far, NATO has been quite, quite clear. We, we have said that, in the Baltic states, where you have huge Russian communities which might invite Putin, we have said, "No, these countries belong to the E.U., they belong to NATO," and to make, to underline this point, we send German troops, American troops, British troops to these countries.

Ambassador Gérard Araud: And French.

00:26:15 Ambassador Peter Ammon: And French troops. So... as trip wires, yeah? So, we've been very clear, and there has, nothing happened there. It's all quiet on this front. The moment NATO loses, or the trust in NATO collapses-- it does not even need a collapse of NATO as such, a formal collapse-- but if trust in NATO evaporates, uh, Mr. Putin will have a new ball game.

00:26:38 Clifford Chanin: Let me ask you both about NATO itself. President Trump, during his campaign, was highly critical of NATO, focusing particularly on his sense of the European allies not spending enough money, and so on and so forth. Um, the alliance and its supporters in the Congress have sort of rallied around. And the president hasn't been focusing on NATO that much lately. He comes back to it occasionally.

But I wonder, in each of your views, do you feel NATO is in danger? Do you feel that there's an American commitment that is enduring, or is this all up for grabs?

00:27:15 Ambassador Gérard Araud: Well, you know, first, I think, you know, really, what I like in President Trump that very often he's raising a real issue, you know. In his own way, but he's raising a real issue. You know, the military budget of France, plus Germany, plus U.K., it's twice the military budget of Russia.

00:27:35 So, Russia is not USSR, you know, really. So, in a sense, if you are an American citizen, you can say, "Why do we need to defend Europe?" Europeans, you know, basically, we have the, the financial means to defend ourselves. So, I think it's a real debate that we should have between Americans and Europeans, really.

00:27:56 And because what... you know, in a sense, for the Americans, NATO is also a way of keeping its influence on Europe. You know, it's really, nothing is free. There is not such a thing as a free lunch. And so there is a question. So, why Europeans shouldn't take their own defense into their own hands? We have the means to do it, so it's your choice.

Also, the Americans', you know, really, so it's a real debate. And when the President Trump says, "Why should we defend Montenegro?", to be frank, why should you defend Montenegro? What is the American national interest in Montenegro? You know, really.

00:28:33 So, there is a lot of questions which basically, in a sense, before President Obama and President Trump, there was a sort of conventional wisdom in the, the think-tanks in Washington, DC-- you know, what President Obama called the Blob or, and President Trump calls the Swamp-- you know, really saying "We should do it, we should do it." No, that's your political choice. I think it's a real question. Why NATO? Why NATO?

Clifford Chanin: But what is the answer? What is the answer to that question?

00:29:01 Ambassador Gérard Araud: Really. And I'm sure that Germany has a very different answer from, from France, and France say, the French, we say, "Okay, we are, we love, we are... If the Americans want to stay in Europe, why not? And we, we are brutalized. We are spending a lot of money on our defense. But if not, the Europeans should be able to take their own defense into their own hand." And that's what we have been saying for, for decades.

Clifford Chanin: Yeah.

00:29:26 Ambassador Gérard Araud: But we were a lone voice. To be frank, we were a lone voice, but usually the French, we love it.

Ambassador Peter Ammon: Yeah. We were... Germans took the opposite stance and trying to keep America in. Uh, we still do. And America... American troops are mainly in, stationed in Germany. I think at the height of the Cold War, you had 500,000 G.Is. in Germany. And... I think now you have 37,000. I don't know how many we have in France, I think almost none.

00:29:56 Ambassador Gérard Araud: Yeah, since 1967, there is not one American soldier in France.

Ambassador Peter Ammon: So, this, this is the difference. Um... yeah, but it's, uh... The argument about the two-percent target, which you kindly didn't mention.

Clifford Chanin: The budget level, yes.

Ambassador Peter Ammon: The budget level. NATO has given an undertaking that every member should spend two percent of its GDP on, on defense. Uh... the time scale was, the timeline was not very precise on that, but Germany is not, and of course, a number of arguments came up in the public debate in Germany on this.

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One of them was that if we spend two percent of our GDP on, on defense, everybody will be frightened, yeah? Because our GDP is higher than of our neighbors, and, and two percent would probably... We... wake everybody up and say, "Oh, this is... The old German problem is raising its ugly head again."

Clifford Chanin: Yeah. We had Secretary-General Stoltenberg here for-- the NATO secretary-general—a year ago, and he was raising this question, as well, and defending the idea that NATO needs to spend more money. And gradually, in some cases, it's been happening.

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Ambassador Peter Ammon: And if I just may portray the public debate in Germany, they say, the main point is that they say, "What do we need? What kind of weapons do we need?" And I remember, I, myself, I was in the early 2000s, I was, as you said, I was the director-general for economic affairs. That means that I had to sign off all the export licenses. And there was a time when the Germans had about 3,500 Leo-2 tanks, which are, we think, better than the M1A1. And we, we sold these tanks for scrap until, down to 300.

00:31:47 And I had to sign the export of scrap to other countries, sign it off, and I was so shocked. I said, "Well, this is, this is just a waste of, of essence, what we're doing here, because these are wonderful tanks, and they are considered to be the best in the world, and, and we are selling them off at scrap value."

00:32:08 And then my opposite number in the defense department, in German defense department, said, "Well, yes, we, we think we don't need them anymore." And I said, "Can't you just put them in a garage somewhere and, and forget about them?"

"No, no, we have to look after them and oil them and keep them, keep them in good shape if we want to keep them. So we, we have to get rid of them." Now everybody is worried that we have so few tanks. Uh... well... uh... The argument in, the public debate in Germany now is that if we now have again 3,000 Leopard tanks, this would not change the situation in Europe at all.

00:32:45 What, what we are concerned about is Mr. Putin's behavior: Mr. Putin moving into Crimea, Mr. Putin going, making the life of Ukrainians miserable in, in Eastern Ukraine. How can we stop him? Can we do this with another 3,000 tanks in Germany? We, we could not. What, what we can do is, we can try to make his life miserable by putting sanctions on him.

00:33:15 And Germany is the biggest economic partner of Russia in... And when we say that, for example, certain trades are no longer permitted, when we say that some oligarchs will not get a visa to come to Germany anymore, that we, when we will freeze their assets in Germany, we know it hurts him a lot, yeah?

00:33:40 By, by... of course, we cannot do it alone. We have to convince the Italians and the French and all the others who also have some economic interests in, in Russia. And it took us an enormous effort. And we spent a lot of political capital in, in Europe to convince our European partners to put these sanctions on, on the Russians, of which we know they hurt

them. But this is the way we try to move Putin in a certain direction. But we couldn't do this with spending another 50 billion euros on tanks.

00:34:13 Clifford Chanin: Hmm. Let me ask each of you, and so, you're in London for the Brexit campaign.

Ambassador Peter Ammon: Mm-hmm.

00:34:20 Clifford Chanin: Um, what is your reporting back to your capital like? What are you telling them? How are you explaining what's going on? And likewise, I want to ask you about your reporting back to Paris after the election of President Trump and the America First mentality. So, what does it look like to... your characterization to your foreign offices back home?

00:34:43 Ambassador Peter Ammon: It's hard to say this in, in a few minutes. Brexit happened for many reasons. One central reason I, I discovered was that society in Britain is deeply split, like the American society, like the French society, like the Germans society, like in Italy. It's, it's a strange disease, that... which seems to spread all over Western countries, and this split in society where people don't talk about each other.

00:35:14 Here... I know families in Britain who don't talk to each other anymore because one is, one side is pro-Brexit, and the other side is against Brexit. People are so polarized that the center disappears and the fringes become more powerful. I think this, this pattern, this political pattern, is at work almost everywhere in Western countries.

00:35:40 And the tendency is that strongmen get elected. That... you will have strongmen in... Well, we have a strongman in America. You have strongmen in, in Italy, Austria... Well, in France, a, a new force came out of, out of nowhere. The old political parties in France have also disappeared, almost. And Mr. Macron is a new force that came out of, out of nowhere.

00:36:12 So, here we had some good news, maybe it's a good French character that Madame Le Pen didn't win the elections, so we... But we were very close to it, you know. I think there is a disease in, in the Western countries that, that splits societies, makes it more difficult to, to discuss in earnest political issues, and which is supporting the creation of strongmen, and strongmen have, have a different foreign policy, too.

00:36:44 Clifford Chanin: So how did you explain the America First movement to...

Ambassador Gérard Araud: No, first, I think that everywhere, as my, my, my German colleague said, everywhere you have a voter rebellion of 35%, 40% of the population against the system. 35% of our citizens are considering that the system is rigged against them and that they really say they are ready to toss the table, since they consider they don't have access anymore to the table.

00:37:12 Really, so, the only solution that we have, because a democracy can't work against 35, 40% of population-- the majority is not enough, the law of the majority is not enough-- we have to respond to their anxieties, to their resentment. You know, really? So basically, Trump, Brexit, the Yellow Vests in France is this rebellion of a substantial part of our, of our citizens. And again, what they say, we have to listen to them.

00:37:44 You know, in America, after the election of Trump, in Washington, DC, I was meeting all the experts that you have in your country suddenly discovering the crisis. And, you know, when peoples tell us, tell you that 40% of the Americans have seen their income more or less stagnating for the last 30 years, you know, really, suddenly, you said, "What else?" You know, really, and you had the crisis of 2008.

00:38:11 And on top of that, the millions of Americans lost their home. Not a banker went to jail. You know, really, so, what... You know, really, that's really-- and basically in, in more or less the same terms, the same crisis, the same population which consider they are being victim of

globalization, and... So that you can leave this place optimistic, actually, the worst is ahead of us, because with globalization-- with automation and artificial intelligence-- millions of jobs are going to be destroyed in the lower middle class, which is the pillar of our, which are, of our democracies.

00:38:50 So basically, it's what I told Paris, trying to say, "Let's forget Donald Trump. Let's forget the daily tweets, and let's look at what is happening in the American society, because usually when it's happening in American society, it's happening in Europe five years later."

00:39:05 In diplomatic terms, "America first" means "America alone." It's very striking that every time that we start, we try to work with Donald Trump, with this administration, on an issue, it didn't work. You know, when my president went for the state visit in 2018, basically he told your president, "Okay, we have a problem with China." Again, in-- on this issue, Trump was, again, was the guy who said publicly what everybody was thinking or whispering. "We have a real problem in terms of trade with China. Let's work together."

00:39:41 And the answer of Trump was, "No way, I'm settling my score with China, and after that it will be with the European Union." So, and... so I know, on a lot of issues, you know, "America first" means "America alone." There is a basic contempt for alliances, of history, shared values.

And, and when the British after Brexit, will come to the U.S. to negotiate a free trade agreement, they will be treated like the Chinese. There will be... There will be British blood on all the walls.

00:40:13 Ambassador Peter Ammon: Well, the British, I wrote in-- I can say this now because I've retired. In one of my last reports, I say the British have a choice: "We will either become a junior partner of the EU, or a junior partner of the U.S."

Clifford Chanin: What is the... You've both described a fairly critical sense of what's happening in the United States now. And these are internal discussions you're having at foreign ministry levels. But how does this translate to popular opinion in your countries and public attitudes towards the United States?

00:40:47 Ambassador Peter Ammon: I think in the end, for the Germans, the U.S. represents the elder brother. You know, there's still... You may, you may fight your elder brother, but in the end, he's still family, he still the one you would look up to. There's-- you have enormous reserves, so to speak, of goodwill in Germany, and this doesn't prevent the German media-- some of them are really, fairly...

00:41:16 We love to play this, to show how critical they are, and how emancipated they are from America, and that they are now standing for the good values in the world. I think you can-- this is, this is real, but don't take it too seriously. I think in the end, America is... is the partner we want to have. There's no divorce.

00:41:41 Ambassador Gérard Araud: No, I think it's an important element. Again, I think how much I discovered at this, at this... with the election of Trump, how the Germans were, I should say, sentimental about their relationship with the U.S.

Ambassador Peter Ammon: Mm.

00:41:56 Ambassador Gérard Araud: Basically, the U.S. more or less created the Federal... Federal Republic of Germany, you know, really founded, you know, this new Germany. So there is a really, a, a very strong feeling between Germany and the U.S. And with, with the French, we are more relaxed, you know, really, and with our relationship with the U.S. You know, it's a roller coaster, you know, really, basically, we are... we are the oldest ally of the United States, we are the only G7 country which has never been at war with the United States...

00:42:27 But nevertheless, we have had very good family squabbles. So it's-- we are very good at squabbling together. So in a sense, well, that's, that's an American problem. But we're really much less sentimental than the Germans about it. Much more-- much less shocked than the Germans were.

Clifford Chanin: Let me ask, we talk more now about very specific current diplomatic events, and one of the most recent ones involved France, here at the United Nations General Assembly. President Macron, in his effort to try to broker a conversation between President Trump and the president of Iran, Rouhani, who was in the country for the General Assembly.

00:43:07 That didn't finally work, but I wonder what you can tell us about the role of diplomacy-- and a more traditional approach to diplomacy that President Macron was representing-- and dealing with President Trump, who has, I think we can say the least, not a traditional approach to diplomacy.

Ambassador Gérard Araud: What, what we were facing was a... an American strategy of maximum pressure against Iran. Basically, you have—your country has declared economic war against Iran. You know, the sanctions against Iran are devastating. Iran is going to lose 9.9% of its GDP in 2019.

00:43:45 You have to understand that, basically, no European company may go to, to Iran, because basically Americans are telling European companies you have the choice between American market and Iranian market. They don't hesitate 45 seconds, of course. So it's, it's-- it's devastating. So basically, you have-- but why not? You know that, you know, basically, diplomacy is balance of power. Twisting the arm of the weak is, I guess, the core of a good diplomacy.

(Ammon chuckling)

00:44:15 Ambassador Gérard Araud: But, but, the problem we had is that if you twist the arm of the other side, it is to go to a diplomatic negotiation at the end. You know, after that, you know, the Iranians are supposedly... And the problem with this administration is that there was no diplomatic path, basically, because a number... In this administration, there's nobody who can negotiate. You know, really, nobody has the mandate of negotiate, considering that the president consider that he's the only one to do it.

00:44:45 So that's, gave the idea to the French president that since-- why let's not have him sort of a meeting or between the Iranian president and President Trump the way-- after all, Trump did the same with Kim Jong Un...

Clifford Chanin: Mm-hmm.

00:45:02 Ambassador Gérard Araud: The North Korean. So why not? Let's-- let's have, you know, a meeting between the two presidents. Trump agreed. John Bolton didn't, and John Bolton left. So, really, President Trump was ready to meet with the Iranian president. But now we are bumping into, really, a diplomatic problem which is on the Iranian side, because the Iranians said, "Well, we go to a summit, but, like in any summit, the decisions have to be taken before the summit. So we are not going to really to be totally surprised."

00:45:35 And it's all the more important on the Iranian side that the Iranian president is not the head of the system, is not able to take the decision on the spot, because, you know, he is, you know, the supreme leader and the political system behind it. So you have the problem that, the French, we have, is, on one side, there is President Trump, who says, "No, really-- I am the negotiator," and, and the other side, the Iranians, they really, in a very traditionalist way, say, "We want to know what will happen the day of the summit." So, that's the why, for the moment, we have failed to bring the two... the two side, the two sides together.

00:46:18 Clifford Chanin: Do you think this is an ongoing effort that might bear fruit?

Ambassador Gérard Araud: Yeah, it's an ongoing effort, because really, there is something very, very specific about President Trump. He doesn't want war, and that's really something... You know, he's not a neo-conservative, he's not a George W. He doesn't want war, and that's a very, very strong feeling.

00:46:38 And secondly, he doesn't have any limitation, and in fact, he's ready to meet the devil. You know, he's really, he doesn't care about human rights, democracy. He met Kim Jong Un and says how great he is as a guy, so he may... Now he may meet anybody in the world, so that's something which we are trying to play on that.

00:46:59 But the other side is, as he is not a real diplomat, he is not ready to negotiate. He wants to do everything by himself. On the Iranian side, we have a real, a real problem. They are afraid of sending their president, you know, meeting Trump, and we have no preparation whatsoever, which doesn't fly very well in the Iranian system.

00:47:23 Clifford Chanin: So what does this do to foreign perceptions of dealing and negotiating with the United States? If, if there really is no structure, no system behind high-level decision-making in this country, what does it mean for people whose jobs it is to implement policies, negotiate about differences, and that sort of thing?

00:47:43 Ambassador Peter Ammon: Well, this is the high art of diplomacy, to cope with such a situation. But I just want to end-- to throw in one thought on the Iranian problem. Uh, you, you rightfully said that Mr. Trump does not want war. Well, I'm happy he doesn't want war. But this message has well arrived in the heads of the Saudis, of the Iranians, of all the people in the Middle East.

00:48:10 And what you see now is that the Iranians, for example, believe they can test the Americans. They can find out, "How far can we go? So we put some mines on some tankers, blow them up, shoot down a drone. Nothing happens." And now they're trying to find out how far they can go. And you should also look at the domestic policies in Iran. Someone who dares to challenge the U.S. and gets away with it is a great hero, yeah? So, the Iranians are exploiting this situation, huh? Which is, of course, not to everybody's liking.

00:48:50 Clifford Chanin: Yeah, yeah. Is diplomacy by tweet in any way related to any traditional practice of diplomacy, or can it coexist with diplomacy as you have practiced it, and as diplomacy has existed for centuries?

Ambassador Gérard Araud: No, it's-- it's obvious that, really, basically, things have dramatically changed, that the tweet... The tweeting president, your tweeting president is, I think, is opening the way of other tweeting politicians. I think that no politician in the future will, really will, will not-- won't think of it, you know, because it's a very good way of going over the head of the press, of the traditional press, to talk to your constituency.

00:49:39 So really... And also, the social media are there to stay. You know, really, when I was a young diplomat, the question was basically to look for an information, which was rare. And now the problem of the young diplomat is to make a selection about a... another abundant information. So really, so things are, are changing, changing very quickly. Also, our societies don't accept the top-down approach. They want to be part of the conversation.

00:50:12 So we have to invent a new, we have to invent new diplomacy. There is a problem. There is a problem, because diplomacy, it's very difficult to negotiate, and there... in a transparent way, you know? Well, that's not possible, you know, really, because if you negotiate, you make concessions, and you don't want the concessions immediately revealed to your own public opinion.

00:50:37 Any negotiation is based on ambiguity, and ambiguity is possible only if it, there is no, not too much transparency. So if there is, there is... Of course, there is a disconnection, maybe a collision. But at the same time, we are democracies. We're not going to get rid of the social media or the demand for transparency by our, from our citizens.

00:51:01 So the diplomats have also to change their mind. You know, we're... to change their way. They have to be more, I guess, more open. But again, it will depend also on the country. You can be quite open in the U.S. As an ambassador, I was tweeting a lot. If I was ambassador to China, I would have only tweeted about the castle of Versailles and all about French cooking. But...

(laughter)

00:51:28 Ambassador Gérard Araud: You know, really, which should have given me, really, a wide range of topics, but not on politics.

Ambassador Peter Ammon: Yeah, well, when I was in, in London, I held back. I did not use... I tweeted on German cooking and...

(laughter)

Ambassador Gérard Araud: Which was very quick.

Ambassador Peter Ammon: And...

(laughter)

Ambassador Peter Ammon: And German sports cars, and German soccer players, which was quite successful. But I didn't dare to really, uh, become part of a debate on Brexit in the public, yeah?

00:51:57

Ambassador Gérard Araud: Of course not.

Ambassador Peter Ammon: Because, again, knowing how Germany is seen in Britain, the Second World War is not so far back in their minds, so immediately, I would have to face some very ugly, ugly comments. So I did my traditional diplomacy, and... tweeting with the nice things.

00:52:19

Clifford Chanin: So there is, of course, an episode of American diplomacy in the news that we've all been talking about lately, and I, I want to ask you each to reflect on these conversations that our diplomats have been involved in between Ukraine and the United States, and not so much on the details of the case. Speak of to that as you wish, but from a professional point of view, is this as unusual as it seems to us? Has some line been crossed here that we recognize, but that looks different from where you sit as professional diplomats?

(laughter)

00:52:57

Ambassador Peter Ammon: Let me give you a diplomatic answer. I never seen such a thing happen in our system.

(laughter)

Ambassador Gérard Araud: No, I... You know, I'm just saying, really, we are living in a time where nothing is, is remaining secret a long... You know, really, you had the WikiLeaks and you had... And again, you can say it's always coming from the Americans, but it's also, I think, a reflection of our societies. Leaks are something that you, really, you should expect.

00:53:33

And so it means also that when a president is talking to another president, he has also to take into account who is on the other side of the, on the other side of the line-- whether he can rely on his discretion or whether he can't.

But I think that more and more, we are going to see such incidents down the... Really, again, transparency and leaks, and social media-- it's so easy now, you know, really, for social media to leak. Much more, much easier than it was 20 or 30 years ago. So again, once more, I believe that Trump is opening the way.

00:54:16

Ambassador Peter Ammon: And why not? I remember when WikiLeaks came out, someone phoned me and said, "Oh, look here in WikiLeaks, there is a telegram the American Embassy in Berlin wrote, or an ambassador, an American ambassador in Berlin wrote about a conversation he had with you."

Why, we would certainly be interested to read it up. And, yes, I looked it up, and it was a report on a conversation I had on a very technical issue with him. It was nothing spectacular, but it was a point to be negotiated. And I said, "What, in the end, the American ambassador portrayed my viewpoint very, very well to the State Department, much better than I had formulated it myself." So I was very happy.

(laughter)

00:54:59

Clifford Chanin: That's taking the bright side of leaks. (laughing) But... it's... You each mentioned, you know, this tendency towards strongmen in our politics, and you used President Trump as an example of it. So the conversation that we're talking about with the Ukrainian president is, in some form, a conversation of strongman to strongman, or strongman to would-be strongman. Or strongman to someone he wants to be a strongman on the other side, that they can decide something outside of the system.

00:55:27

And I'm just curious as to how that fits with diplomacy. Is this diplomacy contradicted? Is this diplomacy that would shrug its shoulders and go along? How do diplomats fit in to such a circumstance?

Ambassador Gérard Araud: But you know, diplomats, we are serving our bosses, you know? Really, so... So I don't see the problem, you know, really? Basically, we have a president, or we have a political system, and we're implementing a policy. From time to time, we are disapproving the policy that we are implementing. Personally, I've always said when I was disapproving, but after that, I've always implemented in the most loyal way I could.

00:56:09

So you know, there is... the diplomats, we are not creating policies-- we are advising and implementing. But there is a political level which, in our democracies, which is taking the decisions, you know? We are discussing before the meeting the resolution on Libya. You know, really, which was basically a Franco-British endeavor, and... I implemented it, you know, really, to my, to my best. But I had my doubt about this policy. I still have my doubt about the policy.

Ambassador Peter Ammon: I agree.

(laughter)

00:56:46

Clifford Chanin: That's a very diplomatic way to turn to the audience for questions. Um, we have some microphones here, so I will ask— gentleman raising his hand in the middle there. Wait, just wait for a microphone, please.

Audience Member: Thank you. Merci, danke. If diplomats serve their bosses, as you so properly put it, and in the event that-- and there is a distinct possibility of Britain eventually rejecting Brexit-- is it a world where we could possibly see the realization of Jacques Delors' old

dreamabout the European Union, that it'd become a strong player even more than it is today?

00:57:33 We don't know the EU in this country like perhaps we should. And do you see, for all of these reasons, not a weaker EU, but a stronger one, and one that, more relevant than ever?

00:57:49 Ambassador Peter Ammon: I think it depends on how dangerous the world around us will get. Form follows function. If, if the world really... it becomes more aggressive, more dangerous, then I could imagine that Europe will get its act together and create a European army, for example, which is debated right now. If the world stays like it is, I'm more skeptical. I think there are enormous centrifugal forces in Europe today, and there are fault lines, which go, which crisscross the E.U.

00:58:23 There's a fault line between North and South. In short term, the Southern countries are hoping for a more lenient monetary policy, so that governments could spend more, whereas the Northern countries try to be more austerity-minded.

There's a division between West and East, you know, you have maybe heard of the Visegrad states, the East European countries that have different view on certain... well, human rights, and the implementation of traditional structures in their countries.

00:59:02 So there's a... There's fault lines that become more visible the bigger the EU gets. The EU has expanded enormously in the last... Well, in the first ten years of the, of the 2000s, and entered into another ten years of crisis management, the second decennial, and I wonder what is happening in the, in the coming... in the 2020s now, before us. So I said, if the outside world stays more or less docile, I think we will be very busy with ourselves and you will not see much progress.

- 00:59:45 Ambassador Gérard Araud: No, I think the European Union is and will remain a major power on a lot of issues, which are the most important issues for our future-- climate change, but also privacy. You know, and privacy, the management of artificial intelligence, the fight for biodiversity, the negotiation on trade, which are actually the real issues, you know, other than the Russian tanks, that's a real issue for our future.
- 01:00:12 And the European Union is the right framework to handle these issues. And, you know, for instance, privacy. It's very interesting, you know, privacy on the exchange of data, we have a strong policy, and a little... The U.S. didn't have. But actually, more and more, the high-tech companies in California are adopting the European standards. Because there are no American standards, very really.
- 01:00:35 So, they, really... So we are... we are defending, we have a multilateral vision of the world. We are defending it. And, you know, on a lot of issues, actually, multilateralism is the only way to handle the issue. As I've said, climate change, biodiversity, the future of the oceans-- you know, it's not a question of France or Germany or, or Malta. It's really the European Union. So on that, we are a power, a major power, and we'll remain a major power.
- 01:01:04 The question of army or defense, I'm skeptical, frankly, that we can do it, because, basically, there are some European countries which are not ready to do it. You know, really, frankly, Germany, with a military budget of 1.3% of the GDP, and the public opinion, the German public opinion, is not favorable for... for military, an active military policy, you know, really. And when the French want to go to Africa, a lot of European countries consider they are, they are neocolonial adventures.
- Ambassador Peter Ammon: Which they are.
- 01:01:41 Ambassador Gérard Araud: You know, really, and so they consider it neocolonial adventures while we, we in the South, we simply considered Africa is around... is across the street. So, again, and so that's... That's, I should say, and I agree with my colleague, also, of course, if the dangers

coming from outside are growing, Europeans will be obliged. You know, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." We'd be obliged of, of, really going maybe into a stronger military structure.

01:02:10 Or if the Americans are leaving, you know, really, Europeans will feel obliged to go to a military structure. But for, really for the moment, short of this... of this constraint, I'm a bit, a bit skeptical.

Clifford Chanin: Another question, right up front. Hang on one second for a mic.

Audience Member: With the U.S. continuing its maximum pressure on Iran, and Iran getting more aggressive, do you think the JCPOA will survive?

01:02:46 Ambassador Gérard Araud: Again, I really... The JCPOA was a very good agreement to monitor and limit the Iranian nuclear program. It was never intended to solve the other issues raised by the Iranian foreign policy. And when arrived the Trump administration, the three Europeans-- Germany, U.K., and France-- we went to negotiate with Trump, the Trump administration, to handle these other issues, the missiles activities, terrorism, regional activities.

01:03:20 And there was a negotiation going on. And we were at 85%, 90% of an agreement, and suddenly in... really in... President Trump really basically denouncing JCPOA, and swept away the negotiations that we were conducting with the Americans. So now we are to square one.

01:03:39 Without the JCPOA, the Iranians can simply do whatever they want on the Iranian scene. So far, they have been quite restrained, and they have really basically increased their program in a very incremental way. But to be frank, now there is no limits, you know, really. So it's, it's dangerous, and we wanted by or through the JCPOA to avoid the alternative of an

Iranian bomb or bombing Iran, really. And that was a good way of doing it.

01:04:11 So now, again, it's... are we going back to the JCPOA? If the Americans are not going back to the JCPOA, the Iranians won't be back, won't be back, and the Iranians will incrementally being more and more provocative on the, on the nuclear... on nuclear side.

01:04:31 Ambassador Peter Ammon: The test question is, is Israel, is Saudi Arabia, are the other states in the region safer without the JCPOA or with the JCPOA? And I think the answer is quite clear. We are less safe now with the JCPOA in the doldrums. And as you said, Gérard, there was the point around 2005, 2006, when clearly the alternative was bombing of Iran or, uh, you know, or what? JCPOA, it was the alternative.

01:05:09 Now JCPOA is... has been destroyed by Mr. Trump. Uh, so is a bombing now imminent? Imminent, is it, or not? If it's not, then, of course, the situation is, is different from 2005, 2006, because we could have had this situation earlier. We tried to prevent... we... I think the Europeans in the game tried to prevent a situation where war was... which was really moving into war.

01:05:43 And, well... Now this blockage has moved, been moved away, and I don't see how this situation in the Gulf can be resolved. There's a program running, the computer is programmed for war.

Clifford Chanin: Who else? Gentleman right there.

01:06:07 Audience Member: Uh, do you think there's any way to resolve the Afghanistan conflict through diplomacy? I don't know if you've talked much about Afghanistan today, but I'm just curious about your thoughts.

Ambassador Peter Ammon: Well, we've tried for how many years now? 18 years. And I, I remember that we... well, we Germans had a budget of about a billion euros a year to spend in, in Afghanistan, and some good has been done. There have been some schools for girls built, and the education system has been, has been improved. There is some result from all this, these efforts. But, of course, the society in Afghanistan is still divided as it was, along tribal lines, mainly.

01:07:00 And so if... Now we call it... Well, we bring it to a situation somehow similar to the helicopter on the Saigon Embassy. You have this picture still ahead of you. America is going away and don't counting the cost. And if you are repeating this, this scene now, that all the money, all the human sacrifices are wasted. I think that's my, that's my... and this is of today.

01:07:36 Ambassador Gérard Araud: I think we, when we went with the Americans to Afghanistan, to be frank, we were quite skeptical. We went there, in a sense, out of solidarity after the 9/11. You know, remember the discussions in Paris. First, there was the idea of saying, "What is our national interest in Afghanistan for the French, really?"

01:07:56 And, secondly, Afghanistan, you know, everybody was remembering 1842, destruction of the British Army. 1879, re-destruction of the British Army. You know, really, this country, which has never been conquered by anybody-- the Soviets, the way the Soviets were also defeated. So, really, we didn't have a lot of expectations. But nevertheless, we consider it was necessary to show solidarity with the Americans by sending our troops. And we have been from... and, actually, we left, I guess, before the Germans-- we left in 2012.

01:08:34 Ambassador Peter Ammon: We are still there.

Ambassador Gérard Araud: You're still there, exactly. And we left in 2012 because we consider that, basically, we are going to nowhere, really, too. And now there is a sort of race between the American negotiator and Donald Trump, because Donald Trump wants to bring... Bring the boys home and, and I know some... And up to a point, you can understand it.

After 18 years, what is the... what will he do? What is really... Why to stay two, three, four, five more years? What is going to change?

01:09:07 So, so again, I, I don't know what diplomacy could do. You could be, you could be... Again, it's my role here-- you could be cynical and say that up to a point, it's the problem for the Russians, the Indians, the Chinese, more than for the Americans... And the Iranians.

Ambassador Peter Ammon: Indians, Indians.

01:09:25 Ambassador Gérard Araud: And the Iranians. And the Indians, the Pakistanis, and so on. And to say, "Ladies and gentlemen, we did our job, now it's your problem." And it could be a major problem in terms of security also for the Chinese, for instance, or the Russians. You know, really, you could also do that, saying, "It's your problem. Why should we go there?"

01:09:46 And I think it was also the feeling of President Obama. If President Obama didn't withdraw the forces from Afghanistan, it was because he had withdrawn the forces from Iraq, and there was ISIS. Suddenly, there was the upsurge of ISIS, so he couldn't... The U.S. administration, the Obama administration couldn't afford having, you know, this sort of crisis in Iraq and also in Afghanistan.

01:10:11 But very often I emphasize, when I want to wake up my liberal friends, saying, you know, really, "Under some issues, it's not so different, Obama and Trump, in foreign policy. Both men have understood the fatigue of the public opinion in this country to be the policeman of the world." Ukraine, it's not Trump, it's Obama who did basically nothing and outsourced the crisis to the French and the Germans. Syria, it's not really Trump these days, but basically, he's following the lead of President Obama.

01:10:46 So it's really... I think it's a trend, and I'm convinced that whoever will be elected president in 2020, basically, we are not going back to the American leadership and the Americans leading... you know, really playing the role of, of the policeman of the world. Of course, there will be nuances, and nuances are important in diplomacy. But I'm not sure... I don't think that, for instance, President Warren would be really willing to engage the U.S. again into military operations, and President Biden, either.

01:11:20 Clifford Chanin: Well, this is both frank and diplomatic in its tone, and I think we should... Join me, then, in thanking our guests-- this has been a wonderful conversation-- Ambassador Peter Ammon and Ambassador Gérard Araud.

(applause)