

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

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LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP AT HOME AND ABROAD: A CONVERSATION WITH SUSAN RICE

THE INAUGURAL JEFFREY A. BADER MEMORIAL LECTURE

Thursday, September 5, 2024

UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

WELCOMING REMARKS

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FIRESIDE CHAT

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ROUSE: Good morning everyone. Good morning. I'm Cecilia Rouse, and I'm the president of the Brookings Institution. And it's my absolute pleasure to welcome you to the inaugural Jeffrey A. Bader Memorial Lecture. I would like to extend an especially warm welcome to Rohini Talalla, Jeff's wife, who's joining us virtually today. I did not have the pleasure of working with Jeff Bader before his passing last year, but according to his Brookings colleagues, he was a man committed to eye watering candor yet deep kindness and empathy. It is not often that you encounter someone with both a blistering intellect and benevolent nature. Jeff was a rare find with a career equally as exceptional. A towering diplomat, scholar and advisor in the field of China studies. Jeff had a decades long career spanning multiple administrations of both parties, serving in the US Department of State, the office of the US Trade Representative, and the National Security Council. In 2005 Jeff joined Brookings as the founding director of the John L. Thornton China Center, which remains one of the top centers of for the study of US-China relations in the world. To honor Jeff's legacy, this annual lecture series will bring renowned speakers to Brookings to foster candid conversations. I can think of no one better to kick us off than Ambassador Susan Rice, my former colleague. Just as Jeff was. Susan is a towering figure in her field and expert in foreign as well as domestic policy. She has an incredible range of experience and has served as U.N. ambassador, national security advisor and Domestic Policy Council director. To name just a few. But we are particularly proud of Susan today because she is one of our own. For seven years, Susan was a senior fellow in the Foreign Policy Program at Brookings just as her mother, Lois Rice, was an economic studies expert at Brookings before her. Susan, we were honored to welcome you back to Brookings for this special event. Finally, I would like to share that we've created the Jeffrey A. Bader Memorial Lecture Fund to support this annual series. We are deeply grateful to Ambassador Jon Huntsman and Jerry Wang for their significant contributions, which made today's event possible. We're also circulating cards with information on how you can contribute to the fund, should you be interested. I would now like to turn the podium over to Ryan Hass, who serves as a senior fellow and director of the John L. Thornton China Center, as well as Chen-Fu and Cecilia Yen Koo chair of Taiwan Studies at Brookings. Ryan will moderate a fireside chat with Susan, after which they will take questions from the audience. Ryan, over to you.

HASS: Well, thank you very much, President Rouse. That was a wonderful introduction. It was a wonderful, wonderful introduction. And Jeff deserves every word of it. I also want to thank Ambassador Rice. You are an extremely high demand across the country. And the fact that you would take this time to honor Jeff, is a tribute to him, but also a tribute to yourself. I plan on spending the next hour organizing our conversation around a few themes. The first will be around leadership and then foreign policy, domestic policy, and then how we're looking at, the '24 election and the year ahead. I promise I will save time for you as well. To pose

questions to Ambassador Rice at, at the end of our hour. But before we turn to leadership issues, I want to take a minute to, ask you about the man that we're here to honor, Jeff Bader. You worked with Jeff here at Brookings in the Clinton administration. In the Obama administration. You've seen him in all kinds of different settings. What most stands out to you as you think back on your experiences for Jeff?

RICE: Well, I've got so many warm memories of Jeff. But before I get to Jeff, I just want to say thank you. Thank you to Ceci President Rouse. Thank you to you, Ryan, for, being such a wonderful friend and colleague. Thank you to all of my, former Brookings colleagues who've been so warm and welcoming me back here. It's great to be, at Brookings. And it really is a special place for me, and for my family. So no better place to be in particular to talk about somebody that I love as much as I love Jeff Bader. As you said, I've worked with Jeff in many different incarnations over the years, going back to, when he was at the National Security Council in the Clinton administration, and I was at the NSC. And then when he was ambassador to Namibia, at the end of the Clinton administration, I was the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. So we worked together then and we were colleagues at Brookings, and we worked together on the Obama campaign, and we worked together in the Obama administration. And what stands out to me about Jeff, is this combination that Ceci alluded to of incredible warmth and generosity of spirit, but also piercing intellect and, you know, very tough minded, when it comes to the issues and the problems. And yet nobody had a more impish smile, a more ready laugh. Nobody cared more for friends and colleagues. He was an amazing and devoted husband to Rohini, whom he adored, and who ensured that we all got to know and adore Rohini as well. I miss him, and, especially being here in this place and thinking back to to all the the time we had together. Nobody knew China, as well as Jeff in my opinion, and had this amazing combination of, you know, personal feel, you know, deep, academic knowledge and an understanding, of the complexities and the challenges, that, were inherent in the U.S. China relationship. And, you know, I. Have one regret only. And I did my best. But I really wish that he'd had the opportunity to be our ambassador to China. That didn't work. But he served in so many critical ways, that that were vital to, our national interests. And, I think, he'll be remembered also as somebody who truly, truly invested in people and the next generation of of China scholars and leaders that have come.

HASS: Well, it's a wonderful, reflection on Jeff. I want to pick up where you just ended. I and many others were beneficiaries of Jeff's mentorship. And I know that you spent a lot of time mentoring people as well, but I want to get personal with you for a second. If you could go back to a younger version of yourself and offer advice to yourself as you launched into your professional and public career, what would it be?

RICE: Well, I'm embarrassed to answer this question in this context because some of these folks here worked with my younger self. They probably have answers to their own to that question. You know, there's some things about when I think back, to my early career, in particular to my service in the Clinton administration when I was privileged to begin working on the National Security Council staff. I was 28 years old. I was a director on the NSC staff. And within two years, I became a senior director running the Africa office. My first job was working on the United Nations and peacekeeping. And then, at age 32, I was named Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. So I was in big positions of responsibility at a very early age. And needless to say, I got some things right, and I got some things wrong, and I learned some real lessons and leadership and growth along the way. The things that I would say to a young Susan Rice, about what I got right and what I would do again. You know, I think, for better or for worse, you know, I, I was confident in who I was, and I brought that, confidence into the room, which was necessary. As somebody of that age, but in particular as somebody who looks like me. And that offended some people and that, impressed some people that created some adversaries along the way. But being fearless, being forthright, being unabashed, I think is something I would advise others to be. What I would say I did wrong was I was insufficiently patient, and I remain so impatient. But I'm getting better, I hope, at almost 60 versus early 30s. You know, I learn sometimes the hard way that policymaking is a team sport and that you have to bring out the knowledge, the experience, the inputs, the perspectives of everybody on the team and value them and appreciate them and listen to them and learn from them. And, in that way, you're more likely to not only get to the right answers, but get to the right approach to implementing the right answers in a way that's much more sustainable. So, you know, I think leading a policymaking process is, is analogous to, either conducting an orchestra or, you know, playing point guard on a basketball team, which is something that I did not very well, but, frequently in high school.

HASS: Well, you've worked, very directly with three presidents President Clinton, President Obama, President Biden. What can you draw from those experiences? What attributes distinguish each of these leaders?

RICE: Well, three great presidents to work for. I'm so grateful and proud to have been able to do so, but three really different people. President Clinton, has or had and I believe has what I can only describe as a photographic memory. Just the extraordinary ability to, to retain what he reads and, and perhaps also what he hears. You know, very thoughtful, smart, probing, intellect. He I think he grew enormously, over the years

that I that got to work with him. And yet, you know, as as people may recall he also had this, you know, uncanny ability to make the people he was engaging with feel valued and seen and heard. President Obama, may be the smartest person I've ever had the privilege to work with. You know, you would write a, a memo or make or present a briefing to him. You had better be ready, as you know, because you worked with him, you know, for the second and third and fourth quarter questions. And, and if you could make a persuasive case, an argument and, defend it. You know, he had this ability to probe and absorb and make sure he elicited the inputs and opinions of, you know, everybody who mattered. And to him, everybody who mattered was not just the senior people in the room, but more importantly, the experts in the room on the back of the bench, in the in the situation Room. And then when he thought he had all the information that he needed, he would often say, well, I'm going to sleep on it and come back the next day with a decision. And he was not he he deliberated, but he didn't tarry over difficult decisions. And then once they were decided, you know, we marched on and implemented and it was, you know, a pretty straightforward process. President Biden has the most uncanny gut instinct of anybody I've ever had the privilege to work for. A feel for people, a feel for process, a feel for timing. And I think that accounts for his legislative successes, which really have been unmatched at least since Lyndon Johnson. And you could, you know, he would take perhaps more time to, to make, a consequential decision. And, you know, he might revisit it and come back to it from different angles and different perspectives. Once he made the decision, he was all in and and completely committed to it. I should put this in the present tense. He is all in and and committed to it. But there were times when he would say, you know, this is something I want to do, but now is not the right time. And it took me a while to sort of understand, you know, how he was thinking. He was really sequencing the landing of the planes that he wanted to, ensure, you know, where, you know, issues or actions that got completed. But he had a sense of how it had to be sequenced to maximize success in the aggregate, not just on the issue that you might be working on. So, as I said, three really different leaders, but, wonderful presidents, each of them. And I feel so lucky to have gotten to learn from them.

HASS: You're the first person in history to lead both the National Security Council and also the Domestic Policy Council. How did, your work in foreign policy prepare you to to deal with domestic issues? And if I can be slightly mischievous, who do you prefer dealing with? Foreign leaders or American leaders?

RICE: Or what?

HASS: Or American legislators.

RICE: You mean members of Congress?

HASS: Yes.

RICE: I think it depends which ones. There's some of each that I could do without. But. It's interesting, you know? I think I was really fortunate to bring 25 plus years of national security, decision making, process experience to the work on the domestic side. I mean, I think many of you know that in national security decision making really has a structure to it. You know, there's the interagency working groups and the deputy's committee and the principals committee in presidential directives and decision memoranda. And, you know, a very, you know, sort of well oiled, approach to how you surface issues, surface options, make recommendations and decisions, and then follow and track their implementation on the national security side. And rarely, with the exception of, the prior administration. Has that process sort of failed to operate in a predictable and, you know, pretty uniform fashion? That has not been the case, in many instances on the domestic policy side, for variety of reasons, it's been more of an ad hoc, more, of a. You know, come as you are approach driven by the nature of the president or by the people working on domestic policy. We have not always had the same structure and rigor in terms of, you know, deputies principles, decision memos. And, and, and follow up implementation and what President Biden explicitly asked me to do. Having worked with me, in national security over the course of the Obama administration was to bring that structure in regard to the domestic policy side. And so, you know, I ran that, office and that effort, though much smaller in terms of personnel, in very much the same way I ran the interagency as national security adviser. And President Biden issued early in the administration, the domestic policy equivalent of what is the National Security decision directive number one, or whatever. You want people to be one of the changes, whatever administration. But it's the, it's the decision directive that instructs the National Security Interagency as to how to run their processes. Who's on the NSC? You know, how it gets, crafted and how it's meant to function. I did the same with President Biden's support on the domestic policy side, which, gave me the tools that I needed to run a process, for domestic decision making, which was analogous to what has long been the case on the national security side.

HASS: Interesting.

RICE: Some of the cabinet agencies weren't quite, accustomed to that, but they adjusted.

HASS: Well, we won't pin you down for, for details on that, but I take your word for it. If I can shift briefly to foreign affairs and leadership on the world stage, public opinion, public perceptions of United States dipped a bit in the previous administration. They have.

RICE: A bit.

HASS: They have regained, in this administration. I wanted to get your sense for how you diagnose that. But even more fundamentally, why does it matter to the American people how the United States is perceived abroad?

RICE: Well, for the diagnosis, I think it's pretty simple. It helps when you don't tell the world to go screw itself. Yeah.

HASS: Okay.

RICE: Got that? Basically, it helps when your friends and allies feel treated like friends and allies.

HASS: Yeah.

RICE: And. I do think it matters, because leadership is also a team sport. And leadership, requires that there be team members who are valued and respected and feel they have a contribution to make, and that their interests and, perspectives matter. And, you know, in a world where, we're seeing well, that's period all the time the case. But I think it's particularly the case, in the context of, you know, an increasing alignment, if not alliance among our principal adversaries, you know, Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, all, you know, increasingly collaborating into what some might call an axis of authoritarianism. And against that backdrop, the United States having friends and partners, that respect our leadership, and prefer to work with us rather than against us, whether they're in Europe or Asia or Africa or Latin America, matters enormously.

HASS: Right. Well, we're we're here to honor Jeff. And so I feel a certain obligation to ask a question about China. Even though this is a broader discussion. Jeff, as you mentioned, was leading thinker of his generation on all issues related to China. He played a fundamental role in architecting our approach, our

strategy towards China. And that's a legacy that will carry on. But how do you look at the relationship between the United States and China today, and where do you see it heading going forward?

RICE: Well, I really would love I'd love to have a dialog about this because your views are so interesting to me. But, I mean, I think it's safe to say that this is. One of the most complicated and fraught periods in the US-China relationship since normalization. We're dealing with a very different China than, frankly, the one you and I, worked with or dealt with. Now, you know, eight years ago. And it's a China that's much more aggressive. That is really unconstrained, by international rules and norms and laws and unabashed about it. And it's one, as I said, that is increasingly, not just collaborating with but I think, you know, coordinating and strategizing with others among our principal adversaries. And, you know, it therefore increases the risk of, of confrontation and conflict, which I think we have an interest in seeking to avoid. Even as we stand up for our core interests and our values, and our friends and, in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. So the challenges, as you often hear it said, is to to manage our competition to the greatest extent possible without that tipping into conflict, if that can be avoided. And in my opinion, also critically in preserving space for dialog, and for, cooperation, if, if and where possible, on things that serve our mutual interests. I still happen to believe that, you know, there are global issues ranging from, from climate, to, to disease that, that the United States nor China can tackle in isolation, that there has to be some measure of coordination and collaboration. And so, you know, being able to do those things is critical. But we're a long way from, you know, the period in which, you know, the US and China were able to work together on things like an Iran nuclear deal or nuclear nonproliferation as it related to, North Korea, or, you know, the Nuclear Security Summit or even the Ebola epidemic in, in West Africa. Right. And and that's, I think, sadly, going to be, the pattern for, for the foreseeable future. And it's going to take really deft leadership to, advance our interests and, our security, our economic, well-being through, you know, things like protecting our technological advances and edge through, preserving and protecting our supply chains while at the same time trying to avoid an outcome in which, you know, we see the world splinter into two competing economic camps, where nobody benefits or we certainly benefit to a lesser extent, because we're competing for, a share of a much smaller pie.

HASS: Right. And one final question on foreign policy. And then we can shift to domestic. But, President Biden often talks about how we're at an inflection point in history that, that this moment is very critical, very fluid as you look out over the next decade. What do you see as the major issues or obstacles that the United States is going to have to contend with and think through?

RICE: Well, I think we've started talking about some of them. Certainly. A China with a different, focus and orientation, collaborating with a revanchist, aggressive Russia that is, you know, continuing to push the envelope. And, and also. Collaborating with, with Iran and North Korea. That challenge is, I think, a core one. But I think it's complicated by, you know, the extraordinarily rapid advances in technology and particularly, the, the impact of artificial intelligence and the potential for artificial intelligence to, to morph into artificial general intelligence or AGI or even artificial superintelligence. How that plays not into things like drone warfare. I'm that's petty really in the big scheme or even, you know, how it influences our nuclear doctrine, which is hugely important, but how it impacts the the broader strategic competition, as well as our economic competition and how we manage that competition in the context of technology without, you know, risking this technology, driving it out of control, where, you know, I think there's not an inconsequential potential, that there could be loss of human control. And so how do we manage all of that? How do we govern globally? This, very complicated technology and, set up, a mechanism both whereby the United States can preserve and extend our, our strengths and advantages, but at the same time, ensure that technology benefits, benefits the parts of the developing world that are already, too far behind. And how we prevent that competition with, with, competitors like China from from spinning out of control.

HASS: Right. I feel like your answer has given us a bit of homework at Brookings.

RICE: We've got a lot of homework at Brookings. If I could, can I just add one other thing that another another area that that I think we in the United States aren't thinking enough about, is how do we. Revise and, energize the global trading system in a way that, not only serves our own domestic interests, but also extends benefits to parts of the world that are left behind. I mean, I think we've we have sort of taken a vacation, from thinking, sufficiently creatively about, global trade. I'm I'm not opposed in any way, shape or form to, you know, to building up our domestic base and our manufacturing capacity and securing our supply chains. I think we absolutely have to do all of that and protecting, you know, our most sensitive technologies. But at the same time, we can't walk away from, from global trade, and we can't, be oblivious to how our approaches affect countries and peoples that, that really have no choice but to be part of the global trading system.

HASS: I'm happy to hear you emphasize that. I think that's a, underappreciated element of the discussion in Washington these days. If I could shift now to domestic policy, you mentioned earlier, that you thought that President Biden had the best, domestic record since President Johnson.

RICE: Legislative record.

HASS: Legislative record.

RICE: And, of course, that's not at all self-serving.

HASS: Well, that's what I want to ask you about, because, as the head of the Domestic Policy Council, you played a fundamental role in lowering prescription drug prices, relieving student debt, reunifying unaccompanied minors separated from their families at southern border. I'm going to ask you to pick among your favorite children here. What do you think was the greatest success, domestically, of this administration?

RICE: Well, first of all, you know, there are many, many things that that I'm proud of as a citizen and as, somebody who was able to serve Ceci and others in the Biden administration that worked narrowly within my remit in domestic policy. I mean, the economic successes, things like, the infrastructure, legislation, the Chips and Science Act. You know, efforts to reassure manufacturing of the economic recovery, post Covid. You know, the job creation, which has been. You know, historic the lowest levels of of unemployment for African-Americans and others who have long suffered, you know, persistently high unemployment. These are all economic achievements that I owe credit to my colleagues for on the domestic policy side. You did touch on a number of the things that that, I'm proud of. You know, some of which really don't get a lot of attention. You mentioned, you know, you mentioned unaccompanied minors, but it's really people may forget, you know, the Trump administration separated thousands of children from their families and kept no records of, you know, who these kids were and who their parents were. And one of the things that we spent, you know, a huge amount of time on and it was difficult and thankless and got no press, was reunifying many of these children with their families? And, you know, we were able to do that, to a very remarkable extent and whittled down to, you know, a, you know, a very limited core, the number of, of kids that remained, un reunited. And so that's an example of something that nobody pays any attention to. But I think on a human level, is is hugely important. You know, we we have had the most impactful and effective relationship with our, tribe, tribal nations in this country than, than any other administration. In a very long time, we've been able to advance and secure the rights of LGBTQ Americans in a way that, I think many people don't pay attention to. So those are sort of the kind of some of the UN, unnoticed things. But I have to say, if you asked me to, you know, to point to the thing that I think things that have been most impactful to everyday

Americans, it certainly comes in the health care sphere where we were able to extend, coverage, health care coverage to more Americans and has ever been the case and bring the uninsured rate in the United States down to the lowest level in history. That that's a big, huge deal. And that was expanding the Affordable Care Act and the subsidies to enable people to afford coverage under the Affordable Care Act. It was working with states like North Carolina, among others, to enable the expansion of Medicaid, so that, many more people were able to be covered where they weren't previously. It's the Inflation Reduction Act, and the unprecedented, ability now that the administration, the executive branch, has to negotiate the cost of prescription drugs down for seniors on, on Medicare and most recently announced the first ten drugs that are drugs that everybody in this room is, you know, taking, for, for diabetes, for blood pressure, for cancer that, you know, were completely unaffordable if you lived in the United States. Fine if you lived in Canada or Europe or wherever. You know, the fact that seniors on Medicare, starting next year, will not pay more than \$2,000 for their prescription drugs, no matter, you know, how expensive their cancer medications might be. Is an enormous, accomplishment. And bringing the cost of insulin down to \$35 a month, as a, as a high watermark when people are paying hundreds of dollars a month, in many instances, on Medicare and elsewhere, those are things that that I think are tangible, concrete, and would be, frankly, hard to undo. And the good thing about these, health care, reforms is that they still kicking in. I mean, there's more to come. And, I'm hopeful that if we are, to have a Harris administration, that we'd have the opportunity to extend, many of these benefits. \$2,000 cap on prescription drugs, \$35 insulin to people of all ages, not just those who are, on Medicare.

HASS: We've already sort of addressed this question, but as you look forward, it's sort of the same question on a forward looking basis. Where do you see the greatest opportunity to use domestic policy to improve people's lives? What's sort of in the category of unfinished business that you would like your successor to drive forward?

RICE: Well, there's a lot. It would help very much if there were, an amenable Congress. And, obviously, a Harris administration. I think we I touched on the health care side there, many of these important, reforms that can be broadened and expanded. I think that obviously with, cooperation from Congress, the opportunity to codify Roe v. Wade, and to, codify voting rights, both of which have been, you know, done have experienced huge violence from the courts, are critical priorities. On the in terms of the domestic policy agenda. You asked about unfinished business. I mean, one of the key pieces of unfinished business from the Biden administration has been, on things like childcare, paid, family and medical leave, eldercare, which

are often lumped together in the so-called care agenda. I think that's hugely important for, affordability for Americans and enabling, people to deal with the, you know, often overwhelming challenge of supporting, an elderly parent or, children who need quality care while their parents work. I also think that, you know, there's a huge amount to be done in the housing sphere. And you've heard Vice President Harris, talk about the importance of, you know, trying to build 3 million more, housing units in, in the near term and making, housing, particularly for first time home buyers, more affordable and bringing down rents. I think that's all, hugely important. And that too, was, you know, a part of what was what you may recall is the Build Back Better agenda, much of which we were able to achieve in the context of the Inflation Reduction Act, but much of which didn't make it through, largely because, of Senator Manchin.

HASS: Well, I'm going to ask one more question, and then we'll turn it over to our audience. You.

RICE: Have I should also say, in fairness, Senator Manchin made it possible to get the Inflation Reduction Act. So.

HASS: Okay, well, we'll give him that. You have worked very closely with Vice President Harris. How would you describe to all of us her leadership style, and what do you expect her to prioritize if she becomes elected?

RICE: Well, I think well, first of all, I should say, just for context, I first met her, then not even then. Senator and this attorney general, Harris, before she ran for the Senate, then had the opportunity to engage with her occasionally in the Senate. And as she ran for president in 2019, and then, of course, to work with her, in the white House, when when I was working on domestic policy. And I guess if I were going to describe her, I would say she's very smart. She's tough, but tough at the same time as I think she really cares about and always is curious about and concerned about the impact of policies and decision making on regular people. So she's the one in the room who's saying, but what about, you know, what about how this affects X, Y, and Z people. I think she's very much got a temperament that's suited to being commander in chief. She's deliberative. She's, you know, even keeled. You know, she prosecutes the issues, not just the people. So she really, probes and and and pressure test and, you know, it can put a. A weak kneed, staffer on their on their heels if they're not ready, to to, you know, to answer tough questions. I think that's a good thing. But but she's she's got all of the, capacity, I think, to be, a very effective president. What is she going to prioritize? I mean, I think she's been articulating that in, a very helpful way. And it seems like everybody

except the media is paying attention, to, she's talked a lot about reducing costs for families, and she's talked about it not only in the context of, you know, every day, things that you buy in the grocery store or whatever. But, very importantly, housing costs and health care costs. She's, she's talked about the importance she attaches to an economy that is serving, working and middle class Americans as opposed to, the, the super wealthy, and, and big corporations. So I think in terms of tax policy, she's been, clear that, you know, she's going to not increase taxes as President Biden committed to on anybody earning less than \$400,000 a year. But beyond that, they they in the rich need to pay their fair share in the middle class, need to get the benefit of the tax breaks, and the tax policy is going to be on the agenda front and center early in 2025 when the Trump tax cuts, expire. And ensuring that, you know, that we extend and make permanent the refundable child tax credit. Which was a signature accomplishment the first year of the Biden administration, which resulted in reducing child poverty in this country by almost half. It was extraordinary how effective and how quickly that, that piece of tax policy yielded benefits. And it is something that we can and we should, you know, make permanent, and, and extend. So I'm sure that will be a priority. She's spoken, a lot about that. And then, of course, you know, codifying ro, ensuring voting rights, preserving and protecting our democracy, all of those are vitally important priorities as well. And she's really focused on, you know, the challenges so many Americans are facing, which is, you know, they're working as hard as they can, sometimes multiple jobs. You know, just to stay afloat. And that's not sufficient. We need to create an economy where people who are working hard can get ahead and can, you know, can give their kids the hope and expectation that, as we've had in past generations, that they too can do well and in fact, do better than we are.

HASS: Well, thank you for for sharing that insight. It's a really unique perspective, and I want to turn the floor to you all, to ask questions of Ambassador Rice. Please be brief with your question. Introduce yourself. We'll start with Sheldon Ray. We'll take questions two at a time.

AUUDIENCE QUESTION: Thank you, Ryan. Thank you, Ambassador Rice , for being here. These these, relationships are extremely complex. We all understand that. But many of our allies, as well as adversaries are somewhat disturbed and befuddled about the US India relationship where India, like China, is buying Russian oil. I think Russia is still India's largest weapons supplier. And then today we find that India has supposedly been providing support for the war in Ukraine. And while we vilify China, Modi gets a state dinner.

HASS: So, I let's take one other question.

RICE: Is there a question there?

AUUDIENCE QUESTION: Hi. Nice to meet you again. Ms. Rice, we met in Beijing this summer. So my question is, what do you think are President Biden's unfinished policy objectives on China? And, in the possibly last meeting between the two presidents of China and the United States, at the end of this year, how do you, how likely do you think it is that they will be able to accomplish a new list of concrete policy goals, like how they did in San Francisco last year, including resuming mail, mail, talks, cooperation on AI and, anti-drugs. And, what might that list look like? Thank you.

RICE: So I got to pretend to be a foreign policy person speaking for the Biden administration, which I'm not going to pretend to be. So I'm speaking in my own voice, from my own perspective. I think on US, China, I mean, I do hope that there's an opportunity for, President Biden and President Xi to have at least one more engagement, ideally in person. But, if not and through some other means. But I don't think it's realistic to expect, a whole bunch of, new deliverables, so to speak. You know, frankly, I think we would want to see and hope to, to cement, really meaningful cooperation on fentanyl and precursors and have that sustained. I think that, you know, there's been some progress. It's not been perfect or sufficient. The AI dialog, as I understand it, has been pretty superficial, and not particularly, substantive. That should change its time. I'm going to build a mil ties. I mean, I think in communication that's just sort of basic hygiene and ought to be, sustained. But, you know, I don't think, let's be frank, that what came out of last year's summit was much in the way of a big deal, was better than nothing. And it was an important reset, or at least the, putting, as you used to like to say, putting a floor on things. But, I don't think we should overstate, you know, the substantive, outcomes of that, certainly relative to, to what, has been the case in the past and there's some very difficult issues, on the trade front, on, on, you know, China's, overt support for, Russia's actions in Ukraine, that, you know, we'll need to continue to be part of, not just dialog, but, you know, we have to to see real action on and, you know, in, answer to the question on India. Nobody's suggesting that, that that the US, India relationship or India's relationship with any of its, proximate, neighbors is a is is a simple or, you know, one dimensional one. India is a complicated player and important, but, an important one for the United States. And even as we differ on things ranging from know treatment of minorities and, human rights, to, you know, the role that that India plays, its dual role, vis-a-vis Russia and even occasionally, with China, it is a huge player, on the global stage and one that, I believe it's in our interest to, to to work with and seek common

interests with, even as we recognize that India's interests are in many ways not going to align with ours, they also aren't aligning with China's, and in some respects, not with Russia. So, we need to be savvy and manage that complex relationship wisely and carefully and not, not try to, view the US India relationship, which is, you know, obviously and importantly, multi-dimensional through a pretty simplistic prism.

HASS: We can, invite other questions. There's a question right here. And I also want to give Ambassador Rudd the opportunity, if he would like to, to say a word. He was very close with Jeff Bader.

RICE: And you can ask about Jeff or talk about Jeff rather.

AUUDIENCE QUESTION: Thank you. Ambassador. Thank you for your wide ranging briefings. My name is Anna, and I'm from Ethiopia. When your active role is in Africa, which was a decade or so long, I was in my undergrad, hoping that you actively follow the political. The recent order of this, that especially in East Africa. I want to know your paintings and your briefings in terms of things happening in East Africa region. You can say Sudan, that is unfortunate for Ethiopia. Somalia and Egypt is coming there. So what is the state of the US and what is your prospect? What will happen in the near future having your, extensive experience in the region? Thank you.

HASS: Ambassador Rudd, would you like to?

AUUDIENCE QUESTION: Thanks for the opportunity to reflect on Jeff and to pose a question which is very Jeff related and builds on something that Susan said before. Jeff one you for about 20 years was always, a duck who flew with two wings extended. One wing was hard national security policy on the China question, and the other was one which recognized what Susan pointed to before, which is the importance in the Indo-Pacific and what we earlier call the Asia-Pacific of the economic, trade and investment agenda. He said that this duck does not fly unless both wings are flapping. That's my Australian paraphrase of the more impeccable prose of, Jeffrey A. Bader. But building on those reflections, Susan, I'd be interested a few to reflect further on if president, Vice President Harris is elected as President Harris. And what you said before about revisiting the trade agenda. How can that best be done? Through the prism of, supply chain security from the US perspective? And how is that then extended into the wider region? If, for example, we end up with a Congress which is still hostile to the through the passage of, shall we say, formal free trade agreements or other forms of trade liberalization.

RICE: Well, I thought you're going to say nice things about Jeff. Isn't that enough?

RICE: To be honest, Kevin, I don't have enough of a feel for how, Vice President Harris's, perspective has, evolved on trade. I don't want to even pretend to wade into that, because I think it's. It's just not an area where I've had the opportunity to really work with her. So, I'll leave that to to her and her team as they choose at the appropriate time. I do think, that she's been, you know, very much a part of and. A believer in the efforts that the Biden-Harris administration has embarked on to shore up our supply chains, to preserve our, technological, edge, in, in critical, sensitive, technologies. And I don't expect that to change in any meaningful way. But beyond that, I'm not comfortable saying much more. You know, we could spend all day talking about East Africa. I won't, I will simply say that, you know, many of the things that are transpiring there are deeply tragic and concerning. To me personally, as somebody who spent a lot of time working on Africa, but also, most importantly to the people of the region who really are suffering and nowhere more than, in Sudan. Again and again and again, from from Darfur to, you know, the civil conflict. It's just it's horrific and, heartbreaking. And what has always been a complex set of problems within Sudan have now become even more complicated by the fact that many outside powers, particularly in the Gulf, have, you know, taken to that, country in that region as their, playground for their own, competitions. And that has only exacerbated the suffering. And I think my personal opinion is that US policy, towards our, to towards the countries of, of the Gulf, and, and others who are playing in the East African region, has to take into account what is happening in East Africa, not simply, what's happening in the Middle East and our obviously important and pressing interests and concerns there.

HASS: We have time for, for one more question. Let's take it from the lady in the back with the blue dress.

AUUDIENCE QUESTION: Thank you. Would it pardon me? What advice would you give Americans who are concerned about the genocide against the Palestinians and feeling like they're hitting a brick wall in Washington, particularly people who are simply speaking up for human life and rights under a law.

RICE: Well, I'm not sure it's my role to give advice, to. To activists of of of any stripe. I think the, you know, the administration, is working day and night, to try to, finally achieve a ceasefire and the return of the hostages, an end to the suffering of the people in Gaza and, put in place, the kinds of a regional arrangements that can help ensure Israel's long term security, which is vitally important to the United States,

and to the region as a whole. The the suffering that the people of Palestine have endured is, as horrific as was the suffering of the Israeli people after the unspeakable terrorist attack on October 7th. And the suffering is too much, and it needs to end. And I'm, grateful and and proud of the efforts of my friends and colleagues in the administration to try to end this. I can only imagine their frustration. And I can only imagine that, you know, every day that passes for the families of, those that are still held hostage or, don't know the fate of their loved ones. What they're suffering through, what's, what they're enduring is, is horrific as well.

HASS: Well, Susan, we want to make sure that we give you, the final words. If you have any any reflecting thoughts, you're welcome to offer them. But this has been an incredibly rich conversation. I think Jeff better would have been proud of. It has offered all of us an insight into what it looks like to serve at the highest levels of government, both on foreign issues as well as domestic and and, giving us a window into the rigor through which you think about these issues. So I, I'm very grateful.

RICE: The only thing I would say in closing is that I hope, hope Jeff was watching, and I hope he knows how much he's loved and respected by all of us here and many, many more who aren't able to be here.

HASS: Well, please join me in thanking Susan Rice.