

among the President's current team, the President is talking about recklessly shredding the agreement.

As President Macron of France warned us today, such a move would be very reckless and it would be reckless to replace what we have today without having something to substitute for it.

Mr. Pompeo has weighed in on this issue over the years. It is not only that he has been a fierce opponent of the Iran deal, but he has proposed military strikes against Iran. In 2014, he said that it would take "under 2,000 sorties to destroy the Iranian nuclear capacity. This is not an insurmountable task for the coalition forces."

That is a dangerous illusion—the notion that there would be absolutely no response to an American attack on Iran's nuclear facilities.

Iran, of course, is right next door to Iraq, where the United States spent an ill-fated number of years, at a great loss of lives both to Americans and Iraqis and at great cost to the public. To just talk offhand about bombing Iran as the solution is not the kind of sentiment or mindset that we want in the Secretary of State for the United States of America.

The idea that he somehow had a conversion to diplomacy is difficult to believe, given the testimony that he has provided and the statements that he has made.

We also know that we are at an inflection point when it comes to the situation in North Korea. In a span of just a few months, President Trump has veered from taunting Kim Jong Un over Twitter to recently calling him "very honorable." We are all rooting for diplomacy to succeed in North Korea, but we all know that the opening rounds are, in fact, the easiest legs, and that reaching a credible and lasting accord with North Korea will take significant time, hard bargaining, and the support of our partners and allies in the region.

When it comes to Russia, President Trump's affection for President Putin continues unabated. Two weeks ago, he rejected the sanctions on Russian companies found to be assisting Syria's chemical weapons program, contradicting his own U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Then, he earlier congratulated Putin on winning the election—an election that we all know was a sham election and that the outcome was never in doubt. It was marred by ballot stuffing and forced voting, and it was hardly what you would call a fair and free election.

When it comes to Russia, despite appeals from Republicans and Democrats in this body and in other parts of the country, the President has decided not to take action to address the threat of Russian cyber attacks in our upcoming elections. In fact, Admiral Rogers, the former head of the U.S. Cyber Command, testified just in February that President Trump had not directed him to confront Russian cyber operations at their source.

So while Mr. Pompeo has said that Russia will meddle again in our midterm elections, he has been much quieter and softer since his nomination was presented by the President with respect to President Trump's soft approach to Russia and Putin.

It is also a fact that our next Secretary of State will be responsible for managing tens of thousands of Foreign Service officers, civil servants, and locally employed staff of the State Department at our embassies and consulates overseas.

We all know that at the State Department today, we are witnessing historically low morale. In his budget, President Trump has tried to gut the State Department of its personnel and resources, issuing two budgets in a row that cut the State Department's budget by over 30 percent. You cannot conduct the diplomacy of the greatest country on Earth with two hands tied behind your back. Yet I heard nothing from Mr. Pompeo about challenging the President with respect to the deep cuts to the State Department and the resources that he will have available to him to conduct American diplomacy.

There is also the very long history of really awful remarks that Mike Pompeo has made toward various minority groups here in the United States, including Muslims and the LGBT community. You have to wonder how somebody who has made these comments is going to be able to oversee a State Department that has patriotic Americans who are Muslim Americans, who are LGBT, and who come from other minority groups. How do you lead an agency when you have made those kinds of comments about people in your workforce? And how do you represent American values overseas when you have disregarded those important values here at home?

Mr. Pompeo has said that Muslims "abhor Christians." He has said that all Muslim leaders were "potentially complicit" in acts of terrorism. He has made other statements and has not condemned statements made by groups that were supporting him.

We have heard today from the President of France, Mr. Macron, a speech that uplifted the best of American values and French values. It was a speech that could have been given by earlier American Presidents, Republican or Democrat. He called upon America, France, the NATO allies, and other freedom-loving democracies and countries that respect the rule of law to seize the mantle of leadership.

He said:

We can actively contribute together to building the 21st-century world order for our people, for all people. The United States and Europe have a historical role in this respect, because it is the only way to defend what we believe in, to promote our universal values, to express strongly that human rights, the rights of minorities, and shared liberty are the true answer to the disorders of the world.

He warned against using anger and fear to divide us. He said:

We are living in a time of anger and fear because of the global threats, but these feel-

ings did not build anything. You can play with fear and anger for a time, but they do not construct anything.

What we have heard from President Trump is exactly the stirring of anger and division that the President of France warned about in his talk today to the Congress. It is those fears that President Trump has sought to exploit rather than to rise above and to lead.

As I look at the record of Mr. Pompeo and as I listen to the statements he has made, including many repulsive statements about different groups within the United States, I have to conclude that he does not reflect the great tradition in American foreign policy of standing up for those universal values that the President of France talked about today. It is a sad moment in our history when it requires a President from France to remind us of those universal values.

France has been a leader in the world, but the United States has been the chief organizer of the post-World War II era. And our friends in France, in England, in Germany, and other allies not just in Europe but around the world have stood with us. Yet, in this administration, we see a full retreat from that kind of American leadership around the world.

I regret to conclude that, looking at Mr. Pompeo's record and statements, he is part of the retreat and not part of the leadership that we need in the 21st century. So I ask my colleagues to oppose this nomination. We can do better. We need to remind every Member of this body that the United States has always stood up for those values that are in our Declaration of Independence and in our Constitution, and we need to uphold those values in the conduct of our foreign policy.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

DARK MONEY

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleagues and to associate myself with their remarks on the critically important issue of unlimited and unaccountable money in our political system. I would like to thank my colleague from Rhode Island, Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, for organizing this speaking series and for being a national leader on the issue of campaign finance reform.

While my colleagues make important points about how our rigged campaign finance system can and does serve as a channel for anonymous billionaires and special interests to exert undue influence across our political system, I would like to focus my remarks on a related issue: how our broken campaign finance system also threatens our national security.

There is no serious dispute that malign foreign actors like Russia are working to subvert our democratic processes and sow chaos in our political system. As we have seen, their strategies depend not on direct conventional attacks upon our Nation, but an

asymmetric approach that exploits the existing divisions and vulnerabilities of our open society, our democratic institutions, and our free markets.

Even though we are now aware of this, we have not taken the necessary steps to repair the situation. Indeed, our Nation retains a campaign finance system that empowers anonymous donors to funnel unlimited amounts of money to influence public policy at every level of government, and to hide their actions behind corporations.

This misguided system, which fell into place in the wake of the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision in 2010, allegedly has been exploited by foreign adversaries to advance their agendas on our soil.

How does this threat work? Prior to *Citizens United*, an incorporated entity did not have the same right as a flesh-and-blood human being to make contributions and expenditures in elections. This distinction makes sense. Corporations typically are permanent legal entities. They can amass outsized sums of wealth and, critically, they can shield the human beings behind them from scrutiny and liability. It is easier for those who wish to circumvent the laws protecting our democratic system to do so from behind a corporate mask. Thus, when the Supreme Court gave corporations the right to make unlimited independent expenditures in elections, it also opened the door for those who wish to hide their election spending to cover their tracks with shell companies and other entities that only exist on paper.

Our Nation historically has sought to safeguard our system of government from foreign influence. The Constitution requires the President to be a natural-born citizen. Early lobbying disclosure reforms were crafted with the threat of foreign propaganda in mind. And it remains a Federal crime for a foreign national, directly or indirectly, to spend money to influence our elections. But how can we know that authorities have the tools they need to enforce the law consistently when the law permits donors to funnel unlimited sums into elections and cover their tracks with shell corporations?

There are serious allegations that foreign actors have taken advantage of this vulnerability in our system. CNN reported in early April that Special Counsel Mueller is investigating whether Russian oligarchs used donations to think tanks, political action committees, and straw donors to cover their illegal campaign spending in the 2016 cycle.

One figure who is suspected of this type of malign influence-peddling is Alexander Torshin. Torshin is the deputy governor of the Central Bank of Russia, a close Putin ally, and was recently sanctioned by the Trump administration, along with other oligarchs and high-ranking Russian Government officials. Multiple press reports stemming from documents turned over to congressional investigations by Trump

campaign associates detail how Torshin allegedly cultivated people associated with the NRA to influence the 2016 election. His ultimate goal allegedly was to arrange a meeting during the campaign between then-Candidate Trump and Putin. Press reports indicate that the FBI is currently investigating whether Torshin illegally funneled money to the NRA to assist the Trump campaign in particular.

Indeed, if Russia did use the NRA to circumvent public scrutiny of its electoral meddling, it would have been following the same pattern as the Koch network. Robert McGuire from the Center for Responsive Politics stated: "We've seen some of the groups in the Koch network give large, six and seven figure grants to the NRA—knowing that the NRA is going to spend the money on ads in an election. . . . The Russians could easily have funneled money into the NRA coffers using a similar pathway. . . . A legal, ostensibly apolitical donation to the NRA by Russia could have freed up other restricted funds to spend on politics."

While money is fungible, it is quite striking that the NRA spent over \$30 million to assist the Trump campaign—two-and-a-half times more than what it spent in 2012 to assist Mitt Romney.

These allegations regarding links between Russia and the NRA are among the most widely reported, but there is evidence of other instances where Kremlin-linked oligarchs and their allies allegedly directed money into American elections. For example, Viktor Vekselberg, another close Putin ally and oligarch who made billions from a government-sanctioned oil deal, allegedly funneled over \$250,000 through a U.S. corporation run by his cousin to spend on the 2016 election. The cousin had no prior history as a major political donor before the last election cycle. Vekselberg was also recently sanctioned by the Trump administration for his close ties to Putin and alleged role in advancing Russia's malign influence activities. Special Counsel Mueller is also reportedly investigating whether Vekselberg funneled money into the 2016 election.

These are two illustrations of how those from Putin's inner circle may have sought to influence our elections. Some of these methods may appear legal because the source of the money on paper was a person who is legally allowed to make expenditures on American elections. But experts, like Louise Shelley, director of the Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center at George Mason University, doubt that these sums could have entered our political process without approval from the Kremlin. As she puts it: "If you have investments in Russia, then you cannot be sure that they are secure if you go against the Kremlin's will. You can't be an enormously rich person in Russia, or even hold large holdings in Russia, without being in Putin's clutches."

If sophisticated special interest groups in our country rely on dark money to pursue their political agendas, and the Kremlin and Kremlin-linked actors can exploit this vulnerability, then it stands to reason that other foreign actors can also manipulate our system. As long as we maintain a system wherein a political spender can be a corporation that received money from another corporation, which, in turn, received money from yet another corporation, there will be no accountability in our campaign finance system.

Even if it cannot be proved that illegal campaign spending is changing electoral outcomes, I believe it is unacceptable for our Nation to knowingly permit an open conduit for foreign meddling in our elections, which has an effect on our national security. Our system of government depends on public faith that election results reflect the will of the American people.

Going forward, I intend to speak further on this topic and work on ways to give authorities much stronger tools to prosecute the laundering of foreign money in our campaign finance system. In my view, this is not just an administrative or an election issue; this is a national security and international criminal issue, and as such, there should be investigations and prosecutions on that scale. I invite my colleagues to work with me on this important issue, and I thank my colleagues again for highlighting the need to take unaccountable money out of our politics.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, at 12 noon on Thursday, April 26, there be 4 minutes of debate, equally divided; that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the Pompeo nomination; that if cloture is invoked, all time be considered expired and the Senate vote on confirmation without intervening action or debate. I further ask that following disposition of the Pompeo nomination, the Senate resume consideration of the Grenell nomination, with the time until 1:45 p.m. equally divided in the usual form; and that at 1:45 p.m., the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination. I further ask that if cloture is invoked, all time be considered expired and the Senate vote on confirmation without intervening action or debate; and that with respect to both nominations, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid