

CONVERSATIONS

WITH BILL KRISTOL

Conversations with Bill Kristol

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I: Dictators and Democracies (0:15 – 24:20)

KRISTOL: Hi, I'm Bill Kristol. Welcome to CONVERSATIONS. And I'm pleased to be joined today again by Garry Kasparov, the great world chess champion, democracy activist, author of several books, including the one we spent a conversation discussing, I think, when it came out, what, three years ago?

KASPAROV: Yeah, almost three years ago.

KRISTOL: *Winter is Coming*. So, that was on the state of the world. And, has winter come? Are you more cheerful, less cheerful? What was the subtitle of that book?

KASPAROV: The subtitle, "Why Vladimir Putin and the Enemies of the Free World Must be Stopped." And I think it's quite a timely conversation.

KRISTOL: So, how's that going? How's the free world doing against the enemies of the free world?

KASPAROV: Well, when the book was released in October 2015, there were many good, positive reviews, raving even, reviews: *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Weekly Standard*, *The Economist*, *Financial Times*, *London Times*.

Of course, there was the trashing review from *New York Times* based on character issues; so trying to present that the book was all about Obama bashing, though the book was highly critical about Bush 43, about Clinton, and about the *overall* policy after the Cold War. And my criticism was based on the fact that since 1991, America failed to come up with a long-term strategy.

And I think this is one of the most important and overlooked element of this construction. Dictators are very good in being reactive. So this is – they are opportunists, tacticians. While democracies must rely on long-term strategy; it's about laying down the strategy for years to come, not necessarily to benefit the office holder now.

And as for instance, in the mid-forties, in 1946 the Truman administration set up policies and also built institutions like National Security Council, CIA, NATO, Marshall Plan; Voice for America was turned into the counter-propaganda to – and it worked. Forty years later, with a Republican president, Ronald Reagan, delivering the final deadly blow to communism.

Since the early nineties, we could see that American foreign policy worked more like a pendulum swinging from one side to another, and it was all about presidents. So Clinton is there doing little; George W. Bush doing too much, as many say, though I would not agree with such, you know, a harsh assessment. Obama doing absolutely nothing. And it created an impression in the outside world that America can no longer be a reliable leader. Because if everything depends on the office holder today, so how can you expect America to lead the world, the free world? Especially at the time where we could see the rise of dictators all over.

KRISTOL: So let's talk about that. So three years later, I'm afraid dictators are stronger and the free world is a little weaker, no?

KASPAROV: Maybe today we see some hope, because I think the free world now is about to recognize the threat. So, just recently, we could see that G7 foreign ministers agreed to create a special group to study the malicious behavior of Russia, including meddling in the elections. Not only in America but also in Europe: interference with the political process, attempts to assassinate, sometimes assassinations of enemies of the regime outside of Russia, and, of course, the fake-news industry and wars. That's you know, annexation of Crimea, war in the Eastern Ukraine, and genocide in Syria.

It's a good move, as few others made by American administration and European allies, but it's late. It's just what bothers me that certain moves are being made, but they are always behind.

So, for instance, the same limited strike against Syrian targets in 2013 as Trump did some time ago, could have had a dramatic effect and, I believe, would have prevented Assad from moving forward and using chemicals again. And Putin, I cannot guarantee, but most likely would not enter Syria.

But today, as we predicted and as we learn from history books, the price went up. Any delay by responding to aggression of a dictator, any delay in recognizing the threat, emboldens dictators.

Especially at the time today when, unlike 75 years ago or even 25 years ago in Clinton's days, when the world did nothing to stop genocide in Rwanda, we know about it. It's not that we can claim our ignorance. "We never heard about it. We were doing something else. It was not on television." Today, most of these brutal acts of these genocides, you know, they are always live.

So and since we cannot claim our innocence by not knowing about it, we, by doing nothing, we're emboldening dictators. Because for them it's basically, "Oh, it's a green light. You knew, you did nothing. So why not to move forward?"

And for those who would say, yeah, Assad is now paying the price for using chemical weapons, I mean come on, Assad used chemical weapons *and he won*. When the first time he used chemicals 2013, he was just almost politically in his deathbed. He was just, you know, at –

KRISTOL: Everyone was discussing how long he would last, right?

KASPAROV: Yeah, exactly. The only debate was, you know, could he escape, you know, would he follow, you know, the footsteps of Gaddafi or Saddam? Or maybe someone would offer him political asylum, maybe he'd end up in Moscow or elsewhere or Iran. Now he's winning.

When you look at the Syrian map, I don't think it will last, but there's some pockets of resistance, but basically he's succeeded in eliminating some strongholds of opposition by using chemical weapons. Why he did it? Because they knew they didn't have enough manpower to enter the cities and to have these street fights; they used chemicals.

KRISTOL: But, also, I think your point, which you sort of, just as you develop, is they get stronger if they do something that's outrageous and everyone gets upset and then nothing ultimately happens. At the

end of that cycle, they're stronger, not weaker, because the outrage turned out to be impotent, right? I mean dictators benefit from –

KASPAROV: Yeah, but it also – it also shows the, not just limitations, but total uselessness of institutions like United Nations.

KRISTOL: Yeah, well –

KASPAROV: They outlive their importance; and in my book *Winter is Coming*, I've been addressing this fact that after 1991 the world needed sort of a new structure. As Senator McCain said, it's "League of Democracies."

KRISTOL: Right.

KASPAROV: We had to force other countries, non-democratic countries, either to move in this direction and stop paying lip-services but to get serious about respecting human rights and international treaties.

Contrary to these predictions, to these claims that by doing nothing, by sticking to United Nations' structures, that would freeze the situation and will not offer solutions, the Western powers decided that, you know, it would be politically costly to enforce any reforms, and it was all business as usual.

As a result, Russia used, I don't know how many times, the veto – only in Syria, basically blocking. And now they're trying to find sort of the legalistic ways of just going around –

I mean come on, United Nations is a catwalk for dictators. So every general assembly in New York, you know, apart from the fact that they paralyze the city, traffic in the city –

KRISTOL: Which is terrible, right.

KASPAROV: Yeah, exactly, which is terrible. But it's all a unique opportunity for dictators just to come from all the quarters in the world and to spend hours at the U.N. stage bragging about their accomplishments.

So it seems to me that, you know, in the last 25 years or so since the end of the Cold War, dictators, all authoritarian leaders from the world, supporting – what we know for supporting terrorism and all the destructive actions – they learn how to use democratic institutions to their advantage, not only political but also financial institutions, the business structures, the social fabric of the free world.

And, as the election in 2016 showed in America, the free world was sort of unprepared to this kind of hybrid war.

KRISTOL: Don't you think – it just seems to me things are, as you said, it's harder to be now in Syria than it would have been five years ago or seven years ago, and the same is true in general, in terms of standing up to dictators, regaining momentum, stopping erosion elsewhere in the world. And – but it's not as if people – maybe there's a little evidence in the G7 of some people waking up, but you really wouldn't look around the world and say that there's a huge reaction here and a huge willingness to do what we need to do.

So I guess, for me it's very – the disconnect between the reality out there, which is not good and it's getting worse, and public sentiment and elite sentiment here in the U.S. and elsewhere is pretty stark, pretty shocking, don't you think? I mean –

KASPAROV: Again, I think this is – the trend is changing slowly.

KRISTOL: Okay. Right.

KASPAROV: Yeah. It's the – I think it's the hope we will hit the bottom. But we should recognize that the price that we have to pay to stop dictators and actually to turn the tide. And, at the end of the day, whether we like it or not, it's not the diplomatic language. It's not politically correct. But, in many cases, the only solution is regime change. I know many people will jump out of their chairs: "No! How we can talk about it?" This is the only solution. You can talk about diplomatic solutions and about having endless negotiations, but unless you change the regime, unless you have countries like Russia, Iran, North Korea having different kind of governments, it will be a source of a problem forever.

It's the temporary solutions that only benefit dictators. Again, they're tacticians. The strategy should aim at changing regimes. You don't have to use [this] rhetoric, but you definitely have to look for every opportunity to strengthen forces within these countries, or outside, to create conditions where these regimes that are vulnerable. These regimes are vulnerable.

The strength of these regimes is a direct result of our weakness. They benefit from us being weak. It's not that we don't have economic or military or political power to go after them; we don't have political will. And that brings us back to the situation within our society.

It's not just politicians that are not willing to take actions. It's the general public. The public is not – is not ready to support those who can stand, take a stand as Ronald Reagan and just to point at Korea, North Korea or Russia saying "evil empire." The public is lazy, complacent. The public loves the language of appeasement because it's a good language. The moment you talk about deterrence, it's – and nobody wants to pay any cost. We want benefits, but we don't want to pay for it.

KRISTOL: That's a little depressing. That's a little worrisome. It does seem to be – I mean, couldn't things get – I guess what worries me the most is that it's already 500,000 dead in Syria; Putin already getting away with things and now Eastern Europe is going in a backward direction; China flexing its muscles, and us foolishly pulling out of trade deals and so forth.

You look around the world and you think, you know – in Syria, Assad who was supposed to be out of power five years ago, you know, the next moment now flexing his – using chemical weapons. Russia's in there. We kicked Russia out of the Middle East, what, 30, 40 years ago? And now they're back. I mean, how much – it could get worse. I mean, that's I guess what worries me the most.

I mean, three years from now we could be having this conversation. What worries you – I guess I'll put it this way: *what worries you the most?* We can't do everything at once. I mean, what? Is it Putin? Is it –

KASPAROV: No. It's the – what worries me, that's even being uncured-optimist by nature and I could see some positive signs of the free world waking up, it's what I learned from history. By doing nothing, we embolden dictators. We let them move much further than they could with us being proactive five or seven years ago, which means we will have to confront them from a much weaker position.

And, again, it means we will have to contribute more forces politically, most likely militarily, to stop them and just to push them back. That means, in many cases, we can see wars. Middle East is – for those who think, oh, yeah, maybe we have to remove American troops – And we can see all the Trumpists and the far left, they are just, you know, both arguing for removal of American troops and that's what will solve all the problems.

Yes, America can walk away from the Middle East. Israel cannot. It's called geography. It's there.

KRISTOL: Right.

KASPAROV: And for those who are just arguing for America being the only source of a problem, ignoring Assad's war crimes, and Putin supporting genocide, and the Iranian terrorism there, and, in general, the Sunni-Shiite schism and wars that lasted, what, for a thousand years? So I mean, for those that can tell –

Fine, imagine now America is out. Iran will stop short of attacking Israel while they are already building a bridge from Tehran to the Israeli border, to the Golan Heights? No, there will be a war, and you understand that Israel will, you know, will defend itself vigorously. It will not be leading from behind. It will use all its weapons, and we know what Israel has in its arsenal.

So it's not about us retreating. Basically, retreat of the free world makes war *more likely*. And this is a lesson we have to learn from the '30s. And when I read books about the '30s and about the rise of Nazis and the threats from Japan, Imperial Japan, and from Stalin, I had a certain sympathy for Chamberlain and other politicians, from Lord Halifax – now just following this movie *Darkest Hour* – because they didn't know what was coming. They didn't have books to read. And they had genuine concerns about the war, and they looked for every option to avoid war – even by offering concessions to Hitler or eventually to Stalin. But today, we don't have this excuse.

KRISTOL: No. And also, they have the excuse, which is a real excuse, I think – not ultimately a real – I mean, not ultimately a legitimate excuse, but an understandable excuse, of World War I. I mean think of that –

KASPAROV: Absolutely.

KRISTOL: They're only – they're less than 20 years away, in the mid to late thirties from, you know, an unbelievably devastating conflict. And so you can see that they think, *Oh my god, we stumbled into this war. We didn't realize what we were doing, quite. We thought we were doing the right thing, and we ended up, you know, on the way to a huge setback to Western civilization.* We had no such excuse, right? I mean –

KASPAROV: No, no, no. Absolutely.

KRISTOL: That's where – I think that that's even more depressing: that we don't even have a good reason for our passivity really.

KASPAROV: Yeah, but it's something in our nature. I've been trying to fantasize about the alternative history – just going back to 1938, just imagine it was not Chamberlain as the prime minister of the British Commonwealth, but Winston Churchill. Of course, he would not have accepted Hitler's demands. Likely, Hitler could have attacked Czechoslovakia, England, and, who knows, France maybe joining the war. And it could end – I think it will end up in, I don't know, in a year or so with Germany being defeated, maybe generals rising against Hitler, but hundreds of thousands dead, destruction across Europe, another war. And, 25 years later, you have historians writing about “warmongering” Churchill –

KRISTOL: Totally.

KASPAROV: – forcing Europe into war. And, if we had been so lucky, and had the peace-loving Chamberlain, we could have avoided it.

KRISTOL: Right.

KASPAROV: So, unfortunately, it's a repeated cycle. But now we know that it's this hypothetical didn't happen just because we learned, you know, the hardest lessons possible.

And still we're just, you know, we are inviting dictators to move forward because dictators never ask why; it's always *why not?* And to kick now Putin out of Syria and just to restore peace, even fragile peace in

the Middle East will require serious sacrifices. And expecting that it will be resolved on its own, without us paying the huge price, I think it's quite stupid.

And also, it's how people, how realistically, you know, people can expect America, being geographically far away from the Middle East, to still rely on two oceans to defend America? On 9/11, 19 terrorists killed more Americans than entire Japanese fleet at Pearl Harbor 60 years earlier.

So it's just – and today, of course, the opportunities for bad guys to cause harm to this country or to our European allies is just – they are just virtually unlimited. And having Putin behind them, using this old KGB machine, and other terrorists and thugs around the world who can see direct benefits from attacking America, defying America.

And, of course, having China that is doing nothing of that kind but benefiting from America being weak and, you know, building its economic muscles and also military muscles gradually just taking over small islands here and there. So China is more like an encroachment.

But you could say that the map has been changing. And you hear, from this administration or from European allies, still more calls for talks. You know, "How can we find common ground?" There is no common ground with people who do not share our values, period. Because the free world succeeded because we all had the same values. We could have differences between America and France or England or Germany after World War II, but the values were the same. So we relied on a free market, on rule of law, on democracy, on free and fair elections.

And, looking at others, you know, we should recognize that it could be a temporary solution. But the temporary solution only – it lasts only as long as we are strong. And if we show any sign of weakness, they will go after us because that's the way they can take political capital. Undemocratic regimes, they need confrontation to justify their existence, especially if we're dealing with countries like Russia or North Korea where you have one "Dear Leader," who must project strength, and he cannot afford even the slightest moment of hesitation and vulnerability.

KRISTOL: How vulnerable do you think they are? I mean that would be the other side of it, since people like me – I mean, sort of when Reagan said we can bring down the Soviet Union, we thought, *Oh, you know, if we can contain it and deter it and gradually make progress in Central and Eastern Europe, that would be great.* And Reagan seemed like a crazy optimist when he said it's actually weaker than it looks.

Do you think that's also true, though, that if we reverse policy in the West, that some of these dictatorships are actually not as fearsome as they look when they're on the march and when we're weak?

KASPAROV: The answer is yes. They are not as strong as they look or as they pretend to be, because they know how to use all the fake news and the propaganda – ironically, how to use technology invented and developed in the free world to undermine the very foundation of the free world.

So they learned how to do that. They now are operating within the framework of so-called "hybrid wars." Because *they know* they're weak. Russia today, Russia under Putin, is a pale shadow of the Soviet Union under Stalin, or even under Brezhnev, militarily and economically. But the problem is the free world is also pale shadow –

KRISTOL: Right.

KASPAROV: — of the free world under the administration during the — Truman's administration or Reagan's days.

I think the end of the Cold War played a trick on the psychology of people in America or in Europe. And I understand this as kind of a relief: for so many years, we lived under this fear of nuclear destruction, and all of a sudden, now, we don't have to be afraid of the attack from the Soviet Union. And, moreover, we can actually turn these great inventions of the era of the Space Race and nuclear race into commercial products. It's a consumer paradise.

So, what about us making, not just peace, but just embracing our enemies. Let's bring them in. And if we just, you know, negotiate with them? We open trade, we give them all the concessions, they'll change. No. This whole concept has been refuted decisively over the last 25 years.

If you open these lines of communication, and if you impose no demands for the other side, for non-democratic countries to enter this field and to act as equal partners, it's not that they will change their behavior; it's not that they will turn to be democratic. They will see an opportunity to corrupt you, corrupt our world. That's what happened.

They use all these channels to corrupt political elite, the business structures. And now we can look at the desperate actions of British government. They just realized they have Russian, call it, "investment" all over the place. You're talking about, what, 500 billion pounds? I mean, an insane amount. And how are you going to use that so you can – most of this money is shadow money, is criminal money; it's money laundering. But simply to take it away from the economy, this could have dramatic consequences.

So it's less scary here in this country, but still we have a lot of Russian money, a lot of influence. And because money buys influence, and influence buys politicians, and we could see there's so many voices now from high political quarters arguing that, you know, we need more reserve, prudent treatment. Just, again, *Let's slow down. Let's not make some drastic moves.* And that's what Putin needs.

II: Defending Liberal Democracy (24:20 – 57:27)

KRISTOL: You know, I suppose we shouldn't be too nostalgic either about the '70s and the '80s. The Cold War had its ups and downs. And I remember I think Pierre Hassner wrote this, the French thinker who is actually alive, not, I think, ailing, but this was maybe right after the end of the Cold War. And he said, you know, the West is proud of winning, as it should be. Reagan and others showed strength. But in a way, he says, it was a kind of comparative decadence: that the West was somewhat decadent, but, luckily, the Soviet Union was rotting much faster from within. And when we had a moment of standing up, under Reagan, it was enough to bring down that edifice.

But he was sort of warning against a kind of excessive patting ourselves on the back over that. And I do worry that, you know, over the last 25 years, sort of the things he was worried about have progressed further.

KASPAROV: But that's also, going back to the Cold War – and it's what I wrote about this period in my book – we should – as a professional chess player, I argued that you have to analyze the game. Even if you won the game –

KRISTOL: Yes.

KASPAROV: — you must go back and analyze it. Because it's not that you had the best game ever played. It's not clean from the first to the last move. It's about you making mistakes, your opponent making mistakes. But you have to understand what was the reason of you winning.

And the Cold War, just from my perspective, it's now – not as a professional chess player, but someone who was born and raised in the Soviet Union and could see the Cold War from the other side of the Iron Curtain – I believe the main advantage that led to a decisive victory in the Cold War for the free world was not just technology, the military power, but it was all about values.

So people on the other side, they just recognized that the communist ideology was an empty shell. It offered nothing to people. So the free world could attract millions, tens of millions, or hundreds of millions of people by the ideas that they could be free; they could decide for themselves. Power of ideas, that was the main weapon.

And that's what probably Reagan realized. That is it was the right time to actually, to push further. Because we reached a point where a communist regime based on forced labor couldn't compete with the free world in creating new technology. So, there was a moment for the final push.

Now it seems that we, you know, we are – because now I'm speaking from the other side – so, yes, we don't have technically the same Iron Curtain, but the world is divided. And the problem is this division is not geographical. It's not like Berlin divided by the wall. It's not Eastern Europe/Western Europe. This division is very often just among ourselves.

And we're tempted to offer this kind of moral equivalence. Yes, yes, this, *We're all wrong; so, we also made mistakes*. "Yes, but Putin did that." *But remember in Vietnam, Americans did –*

KRISTOL: Well, Trump, right – Trump –

KASPAROV: But exactly.

KRISTOL: "We have killers, too."

KASPAROV: Exactly. And that's the – that's the essence of fake news. That's the essence of Putin's propaganda machine. Because he's no longer selling you one right ideology. It's not like he's preaching communism or any other ideology. He's selling chaos. I call him "merchant of doubts." "Maybe we're lying. Everybody's lying." So, the truth is unknown. You cannot find truth because there are so many versions of that.

And that's what brings the free world down, because that gives a huge advantage to the other side that doesn't care about the rule of law or about international treaties. *Yes, we did that, but, you know, somebody else did that. Oh, Crimea, but Kosovo.*

So we keep failing to impose the rules and regulations that helped us to prevail during the Cold War. And we are voluntarily sacrificing our biggest advantage, our adherence to the values of the free world that, by the way, help to build the global economy, other industries because they –

If you look at China – so, what kind of Chinese innovations are we using? I mean, it's just they are very good in just copy/pasting, maybe advancing something. But still, the center of innovation is in the free world, because only in the free world can we have people that can challenge the status quo; people with free minds that don't care about taking the risk and failing. We know that there's the decisive advantage of the free market and our economy over central planning because we can accept failure. We can just – we can rely on people that are just willing to assume all this risk. While on the other side, they want to know the outcome in advance.

KRISTOL: There's a way in which in the Cold War, and before that, too, with the fascists in Europe, the clarity of the contrast helped in some ways to mobilize the West.

KASPAROV: Yes.

KRISTOL: You know, you saw what the lack of freedom was. You saw what a gulag was. You saw what genocide was, and you thought freedom, liberty, basic decency, self-government, rule of law really matters.

You saw how communism worked – it didn't work – and you said, okay, markets really are fundamental. Now, as you say, in a way the threats were – it's easier for – it's harder for people, in a way, to rally against because the threat is more chaos and, as you said, moral equivalence.

KSPAROV: Yeah, uncertainty, yes. It's –

KRISTOL: — and decadence, fake news, you know. And they have markets sort of over there, too. It's not like Putin doesn't – like there's not private business in Russia or China, obviously, and they have fake elections. It's a different kind of – I suppose in a way it's both – it's a more insidious challenge, perhaps, in terms of the West.

KSPAROV: But it's probably even more dangerous.

KRISTOL: Yeah, well, that's –

KSPAROV: Because it's not so obvious. That's why we heard about hybrid wars. It's they know they're weak. They know they cannot challenge us directly as Stalin or Hitler did.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

KSPAROV: But, they have so many ways of challenging us using our own institutions as vehicles to interfere with democratic process and also to poison our political, financial, and social infrastructure.

KRISTOL: I mean, in that respect I suppose, the Rome, the example of Rome, you know, falling ultimately is in a way maybe more relevant than the '30s. We're not – Rome didn't fall to some great, alternative system, you know. It fell to internal corruption and erosion; a lot of attacks on the periphery, a sense of loss of willpower, a loss of nerve. There were other issues, obviously; oversimplifying hundreds of years of history here. But, I mean I wonder if that – I mean, and we sort of are not maybe well set up, or we're not conditioned to think about the challenges quite that way, you know.

KSPAROV: No, because I think we have a very short span of attention. It's this – the Twitter era. So all these technologies.

KRISTOL: Let's not criticize Twitter too much.

KSPAROV: No, no, no, no, no. I'm not criticizing Twitter. I use it all the time.

KRISTOL: I'm teasing you. Yeah, you, and I know.

KSPAROV: No, I'm just –

KRISTOL: Yeah.

KSPAROV: No, but it's just — it's a very useful tool to actually, to measure the public reactions.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

KSPAROV: But again, it offers opportunity for the other side to sort of create fake news and just do fake trends and also to sort of create fake impressions of what the public thinks right now. But, you know, we pay too much attention to news that is coming right now, and just we are losing sight of, you know, of strategic vision.

So, what does the – so, what is the plan? So what do we want to achieve with the next 5, 10, 15 years? There's so many things that we can do because now we see the rise of AI in these new industries. By the way, coming, again, from America, from Canada, from Europe. It's not Russia or even China. So although China is just doing – it's a very good job because they could see that Russia is doing the dirty job and Putin is just, you know, under fire.

Well, China can benefit by just gradually sort of building its strengths behind Putin's hybrid wars. But it's time for us to think about the future. It's time for us to offer the vision, because that's what we're missing by trying to communicate this message to – our message – to the youth. Even in this country, even in Europe, and of course beyond the free world – in Africa, in Asia – they have to hear that we have a vision of the future that goes beyond, you know, a new iPhone or a new version of technology that allows us just to push, you know, instead of pushing buttons, you know, the swiping of a finger.

So what about space exploration? So what about the – what about the plans to move mankind vertically, not horizontally but just to new heights? We can do that. But it's about a vision that requires the combination of the change of the public mood, business community, but also political leadership. And so far we could see that political leadership has been concentrating on the very short-term agenda.

Nobody wants to think beyond two years' term, four years' term. Just again, it's one term in the office, and in the middle of this term, they're already thinking about re-elections.

KRISTOL: But in a way it's worse, isn't it? Because the political forces that seem to be on the ascendency in the West, not just in the U.S., are illiberal forces, people who are critical of globalization, of liberal democracy, of "boring" things like the rule of law. So in a way, it's not just that we have short-term – we have politicians who think in a short-term way or they're not quite as strategic as they should be. We actually have political forces rising that are *illiberal*, and that's –

KASPAROV: That's – yeah. That's part of the same conundrum. Because, here, in this country, a lot of people are concerned about the Trump administration, actually about Trump himself. But I think we should go beyond – we should look beyond Trump because the threat is that the Trump phenomena will push the pendulum too far to the left.

As we could see now in the U.K., that the Brexit frustration helped to boost unreformed communist, terrorist sympathizer Jeremy Corbyn, who is just – I don't think he will win elections and he'll be the prime minister, but the very fact that –

KRISTOL: But he could! He's one election away from –

KASPAROV: But, exactly.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

KASPAROV: But the fact is that we have such an awful person one election away from taking over Great Britain.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

KASPAROV: And I don't – now even I'm scared to think about all the consequences.

KRISTOL: Yeah, it's astonishing.

KASPAROV: Someone who is, you know, this Hamas apologist, communist sympathizer; someone who hates the U.S. and who believes that the free world has no right to use force while others – he can find

excuses for all terrorists and their backers in the Kremlin or in Iran. He could be in charge of the United Kingdom and its military and intelligence machines. It just – it's mind boggling.

But that's a real threat. We could see that the simultaneous rise of the far right and far left – even in France, we could see Le Pen but also Melenchon, who made almost the same – showed the same result at the first ballot of presidential elections. So, we could see in France that far right and far left made more than 40 percent.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

KASPAROV: And that's bad news. And Germany.

KRISTOL: And Germany, the coalition is hanging on –

KASPAROV: [Crosstalk] and –

KRISTOL: – but it loses – it's lost a huge amount of the vote.

KASPAROV: Exactly. So, and then we could look at other countries like Austria, that is just totally pro-Putin; Hungary, pro-Putin. We just, look at Eastern Europe, Central Europe.

Italy now, you know, I think I joked on Twitter that was the first election Putin won – free and fair election that Putin won.

KRISTOL: Right. Right.

KASPAROV: And it's quite scary, but I think, again, Europe is in this kind of political limbo because there's no leadership. We can go back to 1946, and that was – it was a much bigger mess, but there was American leadership.

KRISTOL: Yeah. So only once –

KASPAROV: Unless America shows leadership you cannot expect these problems to be resolved. Because it's the – in the modern world, if you walk away – and that's the mistake made by Obama and that's being, you know, now echoed by the Trump administration. You walk away, you don't solve problems. You create a vacuum, and the vacuum will be immediately filled by other guys, and I can even name these guys, whether on the regional level or geo-political level.

KRISTOL: I mean even in '46 we pulled out as fast as we could after World War II.

KASPAROV: But then realized – quickly realized –

KRISTOL: But then we came back. Churchill gave the speech in '46, but it was not well-received here. Then, with Stalin's threat and Greece and Turkey and so forth, we really did remobilize.

KASPAROV: But still – but still –

KRISTOL: And Truman deserves a lot of credit, and both parties – because the Republicans, though they had some isolationist strains, ended up supporting Truman and so forth.

But it does show that you do need a sense of threat, perhaps, to really mobilize. And there's a kind of weird combination of complacency and fatalism in the U.S., and certainly in Europe, I would say, that – I'm not sure which masks which, you know. Is it sort of the fatalism, people don't want to deal with the

threat so they pretend it isn't that great a threat or they think it isn't that great a threat so they don't deal with it.

KASPAROV: Yeah, but the enemy – but the enemy is just more of a chameleon now.

KRISTOL: Yeah. It's harder to –

KASPAROV: It's not, you know, the SS marching across Europe.

KRISTOL: Or Stalin. Yeah.

KASPAROV: It's not Stalin conquering neighboring countries. It's not Japanese Empire beating military drums, you know, and attacking China. The threats are different now, and that makes them more dangerous.

KRISTOL: Yeah, well that's –

KASPAROV: Because they make us weaker just from within.

KRISTOL: And from without, too, but it's not as dramatic. They take a little bit of Ukraine, you know. It's not like – right.

KASPAROV: Exactly. But this is – actually I think it's this – even when we look outside, so like Syria, it has a psychological effect.

KRISTOL: Yes, very much.

KASPAROV: *We do that, we kill people, we use chemical weapons, and you said nothing. Oh, no, no, you said a lot of things, but you did nothing. Fine. So we make a next move.* So it seems that this, over the last 10 years, I think from 2008, we were on just, you know, we were on sliding scale.

KRISTOL: Yeah. I think that's – I think that's really true and really, really worrisome. Let me ask you this. So this would be very helpful if you would answer this question. So I was giving a talk on a panel at an Ivy League school recently, and I was talking more about Trump and domestic politics and how important the rule of law was and liberal democracy and how we didn't appreciate – I was arguing with some conservatives who were a little more forgiving or understanding of Trump.

And I was saying it's a real threat if we go down this road towards a European type of conservatism; if we forget about the fundamentals of liberal democracy, markets, limited government, you know, whatever, rule of law. And an intelligent, I gather – I talked with him afterwards – young man, a student, actually, a senior, stood up and he asked of me, he said, "Mr. Kristol, I mean, let's be honest: We're bored with all this 'rule of law' and 'liberal democracy.' You know, it's nice, but that doesn't really get you up in the – that's not an existential reason to care about America or to care about politics."

And the attraction, he said, of not Trump exactly but of Trumpism is that it's about more than just this kind of "let's have a good process and a fair playing field, and let people live their own lives." That's too boring. And I tried to answer, but I don't think I – I'm not sure I gave a very convincing answer. So what is the answer to that? I mean what is the sort of fundamental answer on whether you would give such a – because I do think that underlies a lot of what – I mean, the more serious aspects and the attraction of Trumpism, if you want to call it that, to more intelligent – to some intelligent people is more along those lines, you know.

KASPAROV: For intelligent people I recommend to read a few books, and maybe they have to start from reading the Founding Fathers. You know, now I think that these debates they had in the eighteenth

century – *can you imagine?* In 1787 and just, you know, in the following years all these debates when they formed the government. They were so prescient. So they could actually see all the threats that not only American society but the rest of the world faced throughout the next two centuries, by just going from, you know, just from one form of democracy to another.

And, every time, whether it was in France, in Germany, elsewhere, that they try to walk away from this “boring rule of law” – it’s just regulations – into some “more effective” form of government.

KRISTOL: Or exciting person or –

KASPAROV: Well, it was very exciting. No, no. Hitler was exciting.

KRISTOL: Yeah. No, no, that’s –

KASPAROV: He’s very exciting.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

KASPAROV: And Germans were tired because they didn’t see how this old-fashioned, boring – it wasn’t a two-party system, but still they had some left, some right. So they couldn’t offer solutions. And Hitler knew just how to make Germany great again.

“Make Germany great again.” That’s – I don’t know how it sounds in German.

KRISTOL: Yeah. Yeah.

KASPAROV: But that’s what Hitler has been saying.

KRISTOL: And Mussolini.

KASPAROV: He did it – yes. He did it great, you know, for a few years, and it ended up and – you know what happened in Germany in 1945. So it just doesn’t work this way. So there are no shortcuts.

Yeah, I would love to find, you know, just the most effective way of solving the problems. And [let’s say] I believe that I’m intelligent enough to insist that I know better than many others. But at the end of the day, you know, it’s just – even if I’m, you know, I feel that I’m just the right person to offer you solutions. We go back to this good emperor/bad emperor. So this is – we walked away from that. So this is the checks and balances created by Founding Fathers. That was the most effective institution that not only preserved democracy in this country but made this the most successful country.

America is the most successful country in the world, just not because, you know, they were, okay, immigrants, they showed up here, the strongest survived; but also because they agreed to play by the rules, from Mayflower to Founding Fathers. They have been working incessantly on creating rules that will prevent tyranny.

KRISTOL: Yes.

KASPAROV: The same thing could be said about Great Britain.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

KASPAROV: So it’s also – it’s very successful because, over centuries, it had this fight against tyranny or force of tyranny and tried to actually – it’s all about limiting government’s power to cause you harm. So if we would look at the most successful countries in the world, they all follow the same old, boring pattern.

And any attempt, you know – you move to any continent; this is not about geography, this is not about race, this is not about religion. At the end of the day, it's all about countries – the society of the respective country to follow the procedures. You can look at South America, and you can see difference between Chili and Bolivia. They're boring countries. You could see difference between Columbia and Venezuela now.

KRISTOL: Right.

KASPAROV: You can go back to – or just go to another continent, into Asia. You could see the difference between South Korea and North Korea.

KRISTOL: Right.

KASPAROV: The South Koreans, same people. In 1953, brothers and sisters. You separate this country, and now you could see one that is ruled by the most brutal dictator in the world and another one is so scrupulously following procedures that they recently impeached and imprisoned the *president*. And also imprisoned the head of the biggest corporation in the country.

Now, do we want to be South Korea or North Korea? So it's – for those who would say China is such a big story of success, yes; but there's a tiny piece of China called Taiwan, with the same Chinese people, living in a tiny island, rocky island, not having the same resources as continental China. Do we want to be Taiwan or China?

It's just, you look at a map. And every time, you know, you just, you know, you compare those countries that follow the old, traditional, conservative, liberal – it doesn't matter; the words are irrelevant – but the rule of law, the regulations that created the level playing field against those that tried to find shortcuts, the result was always the same.

KRISTOL: Yeah. Well, that's a better answer than I gave, I think. I mean I tried to –

KASPAROV: I grew up in a communist country. So it is –

KRISTOL: So I said – well, my answer –

KASPAROV: So I can argue passionately for not making the mistakes that were made on our side.

KRISTOL: No, that was great.

So my answer was – my answer was talk to people who grew up in a communist country, and I think I mentioned you and other famous dissidents and people who wrote eloquently about this, as sort of this is the path you think is just more exciting, more existentially thrilling, more daring, and this is where it ends up. It ends up either in a nightmare, as in the German case, or at best in a very, you know, in a dictatorship that stifles –

KASPAROV: Well, look –

KRISTOL: – that stifles creativity and all the best people want to leave.

KASPAROV: Well, look at Venezuela now. Look at Venezuela. So just it's the – potentially the richest country in Latin America, and it's just – it's a nightmare.

KRISTOL: Yeah. That's a good current example. Because as I gave this answer, I realized I was also citing people who had lived and written before this young man, this student was born, in a different era

that he probably thinks is, you know, the past, and it doesn't hold anymore. And the people that we read who had such an influence, and the statesmen who had such an influence, and that is a real challenge, I think, for the West.

You know, Lincoln has that wonderful speech he gave, when he was 29 years old, in 1838 about, you know, "The memories of the Revolution," he says, "are gone." And we need to rebuild the foundations of respectful law out of reason because we don't have the kind of inspiring, you know, stories that fathers would tell their children about fighting the British or that kept the spirit of liberty alive.

And I really feel that way today, that somehow, you know, the spirit of – maybe I'm wrong, but, you know, that it was easier for us to look –

KASPAROV: But, the – you're right. Yeah.

KRISTOL: You grew up hearing about World War II and appeasement and Hitler and the fascists and Stalin, and you lived through the Cold War where you saw – you met people who had left the Soviet Union or who bravely protested and were put in prison, and others who would come over from Cuba, and you really had a sense of what was at stake. And I just – that has to be re-, somehow, captured, I think.

KASPAROV: But also, I witnessed the resurrection of KGB rule, in my country, that forced me to leave Russia and now to live in New York in exile. And that's another lesson. It's a hard lesson I learned. That is, evil doesn't die. It could be buried under the rubbles of the Berlin Wall for a while, but if we turn complacent; if we lose our vigilance, it sprouts out.

KRISTOL: And there's something in human beings that is attracted to that, right? There's a kind of temptation you might say.

KASPAROV: Because evil, you know, there are many ways to lie, and there's only one way to tell the truth. And evil can wear different clothes. And it doesn't present itself as evil. So, there are so many ways now of misleading people, especially young people because they – which is irony because –

KRISTOL: Well, talk about that since you do a lot with young people.

KASPAROV: Yeah, because – it's an irony because they don't even have to buy the books. I mean they can just look at the internet, just, you know, swipe their finger and read every story. They can learn more in five minutes than, you know, I could learn 20 years ago spending hours or days, even.

But still, you know, I'm shocked when they talk about, for instance, Bernie Sanders and with socialism. What do they know about socialism? It's an amazing debate. They think that it's just the – it's everything could be free. So they just – they don't understand money doesn't grow on trees. And we just have to, you know, we just have to invest before we can demand benefits, you know. Reaping benefits, you know, requires you plow and seed something before you can expect something in return. And I think it's partially our fault because we thought, oh, if it's on the books, you know; if it's so obvious for us, it will be obvious for them. Uh-uh, it's not obvious, you know.

It seems to me that again it's like – I keep repeating this, Reagan's prescient words, that "freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction." This is the war that we have to do all the time, going back to Lincoln and what you said. So it's – they need some sort of memories that they can connect with. It's not just to say, "Oh, Hitler, Stalin." For many of them, you know, Soviet Union was as ancient as Troy.

And it's very important that we'll actually find the right words, find the right concepts, find the right framework to sell this history. And I think one of the most powerful weapons is to talk about the future. So how –

KRISTOL: So talk about that, because I'm probably too backward looking, but I –

KASPAROV: But how the free world can make you feel better. That's why, you know, I'm a big supporter of space exploration. We have to bring back the dream, because when you – when we hear these great speeches, you know, from the past, from the leaders of the free world, it was all about dream.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

KASPAROV: So they could motivate people. They can inspire people. They can fire them up, because it's this – unless people are inspired, unless they are driven by the big idea, by the dream, they can be, you know, they can be easy prey for those who are offering the fake dreams.

KRISTOL: Yeah. I mean, people like me probably focus too much on the threat of – which is true, I believe; that you do not want to go down the road of abandoning all the safeguards of liberal democracy and the rule of law and self-government and so forth. But it can't just be the threat. It has to also be the positive vision on the other side.

KASPAROV: No. But it's only positive vision.

KRISTOL: The future vision.

KASPAROV: Because if you – I think, warning is just, you know, it's the last thing you want to do. Because people are getting fed up about warnings, warnings, you know.

KRISTOL: Right.

KASPAROV: There's the warning signs; you cannot go there, you cannot – no, it's just you don't do that because if you do that, it will harm the dream. So it's all about moving forward. And that's back to these great speeches. And that's how the great leaders could inspire citizen of the free world to create miracles.

Because at the end of the day, when we had to have fights, the free world that was slow, ineffective, and, as many dictators believe, weak, demonstrated strengths. But we don't want just to wake up at, you know, in the horrible night. We don't want, you know, just to wake up where Hitler takes over Parliament. We'd rather read books and bring the young generation to our side by offering them a great future, which is not guaranteed, they'll have to work for that. But they should feel that we care about that.

It's not only us trying to live on the laurels of our great predecessors. It's basically not telling them, look, you know, we did everything and now just, you know, let's enjoy it. It's a consumer paradise, and we can all live here. This is – if we offer nothing, then they will be affected by Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Putin, mullahs, terrorists because we know every generation has many passionate youngsters that are willing to change the world.

Unless we channel their energy in the right direction, somebody else will do it to harm us.

KRISTOL: That's very well-said. And so say a little more about, maybe just to close, about the right direction of, you mentioned space, but I mean, how much would you think is sort of technology? How much of it is sort of other aspects of freedom? I mean, it seems to me –

KASPAROV: It's – when I say space, people say, "Oh, why should we waste so much money on Mars?" You know, on Mars expedition. It's, "We don't know what we'll find there." By the way, that's exactly the point. We don't know. That was the driving force behind pioneers in this country crossing, you know, the Appalachians and moving westward without having a map.

But it's also, it's just from history we know that the most important things, the most vital results are always found in the process. We don't know what we'll find out by finding Mars, but I can bet you that maybe on one of the asteroids we'll find a new substance that will.... replace oil, I don't know. But some great things will happen, and it's very important that our energy be concentrated on exploration.

Exploration was always the key element of the success of the free world. And exploration is what makes the free world much – looking much more powerful than the non-free world because, again, we can take risk. We rely on individuals. We give them a chance to show themselves. While the unfree world always tries to secure results. So that's why they will always be behind. They can compete, as the Soviet Union did with America, for a short period of time. But, at the end of the day, we prevail.

And that will motivate young people. That will give them hope that they can also have their 12 labors, whether it's in the deep oceans or in open space somewhere. But exploration and physical expansion, they're very important.

And that's how I think we'll bring more and more young people to our side, because we'll show them that what we did in the past, the new technologies that they use now, they can actually build a foundation of a new world.

So we are working with them, for them, and the free world is still the best framework – with these boring regulations, with the rule of law, with these democratic institutions, those are just, you know, those are the framework, the right formulas of success. But it's for success for them to achieve by just, you know, following the footsteps of their forebears.

KRISTOL: That was terrific. You should – it's too bad you can't run for president. Maybe someone will watch this, will watch you, someone who was born here and is a legitimate candidate –

KASPAROV: I hope that I can – we can inspire young people to become proactive.

KRISTOL: No. I feel guilty of this. I think many people, I'd say generally of my way of thinking, were pretty good at explaining why you should not go down these terrible paths.

I think we're pretty good at explaining the history, maybe, of liberal democracy and the political theory of it, but the forward-looking vision, the excitement, the sense of risk and challenge, that's probably something we don't do enough of.

KASPAROV: But that's [the] secret of success of the free world. That's why this country's so great. That's why the free world always dominated the last 200 years any time when it confronted the unfree world. So it's, again, you play any game; you want to use your advantage. And you don't want to downplay your advantages and to give chance for opponent to use your weakness.

KRISTOL: And they win a static game, but they don't win a dynamic game.

KASPAROV: Exactly. Absolutely. The moment you play a static game, you give them chance to ruin us.

KRISTOL: Okay. Well, let's hope our leaders listen to you. Play a dynamic game; defeat our enemies and – but really do mobilize the country on behalf of freedom and liberal democracy. That's so important. You're doing work in that area. We're all trying to do our bit.

KASPAROV: Yes.

KRISTOL: And we'll continue that conversation in the future.

KASPAROV: Yes, absolutely.

KRISTOL: Garry, thank you so much.

KASPAROV: Thank you. Thank you.

KRISTOL: It really is great. And thank you for joining us on CONVERSATIONS.

[END]