

CONVERSATIONS

WITH BILL KRISTOL

BILL KRISTOL:

Hi. I am Bill Kristol. Welcome back to *Conversations*. I'm very pleased to be joined again today by my old friend Steve Rosen, just retired as a very distinguished and popular professor at Harvard, winner of many teaching awards, distinguished scholar, but continuing his work in international relations, foreign policy, beyond Harvard, doing work with other institutions and doing a lot of speaking too, and really thinking through this new era in foreign policy.

Steve, we've had two conversations in, I think, early 2019 or early 2022, both of which stand up well and I recommend those to people, but Steve, thanks for joining me again.

STEVEN ROSEN:

Thanks for inviting me, Bill. It's a pleasure to be here.

BILL KRISTOL:

It's great to have you. When we last spoke, you were talking about this new era in American foreign policy, I guess in international relations in the world and how you have many thoughts about it and how important it is to try to get it right as much as we can. What is this? People always say this is a new era, but I think you have a case that it really is a new era. Why is it a new era? Why isn't this just as people always say, it's a new era?

STEVEN ROSEN:

Well, it's a new era, but you can't understand why it's a new era until you look at the old era and looking at the old era, it helps you understand some things that are some principles. There's some analytical concepts that are constant and some things do change. I mean, let's go back to the Cold War. I mean that's the place where most of us started and the founding document of the Cold War is George Kennan's X Memorandum in which he lays out the case for containment, but he paints a picture of the world. He says, this is the way the world is and this is what we need to do because of the way the world is and the way the world is-

BILL KRISTOL:

And the way the world is going to be for a while, right?

STEVEN ROSEN:

Yeah, this is supposed to be a long-term planning document. He was in charge of the policy planning staff and he says, look, the world has five industrial centers of power, United States, Great Britain, the rural river Valley of Germany, Soviet Union and Japan. You can't let one country dominate the four Asian centers of industrial power. It was a very kind of industrial era picture of the world. It was a picture which says, the United States has the advantage of geographic distance, some degree of protection because of the oceans, but if one power gets control of all of those Asian centers of

power, the United States may not be in direct jeopardy of being invaded, could happen, but kind of unlikely, but certainly in danger of being coerced. There's too much power in the hands of a hostile actor is not a good idea, so we have to make sure we contain the Soviet Union so it doesn't gain the control of those five centers of power, four centers of power outside of the United States.

That's the old world. Okay? Very industrial. Focused on location of coal, location of iron ore, major centers of heavy industry. Is that the world we're living in today?

BILL KRISTOL:

Also Steve, wouldn't you say that was somewhat ideological? Maybe Kennan less so perhaps than others, but certainly the early Cold War, very much liberal democracy versus communism.

STEVEN ROSEN:

Obviously, although Kennan, as you say, the way to understand the Soviets Union is to understand Russian history, the Russian mentality and this is Bolshevik overlay- it matters, but it's really a classical realist picture of the world. The Cold war ends. Is the world changed? Well, obviously the Soviet economy collapses. You don't worry about that much. It's the end of history as our mutual friend Frank Fukuyama says, in which it doesn't matter where economic power is located because everybody is going to live together and work together and there's no concern. But at the same time, there's the beginning of this intuition that maybe the location of iron and steel and coal is not really as crucial as it was. We were a post-industrial world, a post-post industrial world... But there is still the intuition that it's not a good idea for one hostile country to get control of whatever it is that constitutes the source of power.

Let's fast forward to 2015, 2017. There is this awakening in the United States with a growing realization: China may be acting to gain control over the economic sources of power in Eurasia. Remember what that was like in 2013, 2015. Belt and Road. China is building this network of trade influence, railroads, transportation, all the way into Italy, all the way into Amsterdam, all the way down into Greece. They're buying up the ports in Piraeus. The thought is, China may be trying to get control of the Eurasian sources of power, which might be sufficient to give China the ability to reach out into the United States, affect the United States, coerce the United States, isolate the United States. There's this sense in the economic sphere, China's economic power is giving them the ability to influence, coerce, control, major sources of power in Eurasia, maybe in Africa as well. Militarily, China is building up a massive amount of military power. This is my home turf, so I'll be a little bit more specific about it. China started studying the American military in the first Gulf War.

BILL KRISTOL:

This is great, but I want to very much come back to this, obviously. Let me just interrupt with this predicate question in a way and then we'll spend a lot of time on China, which is, you went right to China in discussing the new era, which makes a lot of sense and we'll see why as we go through this conversation, but just to be devil's advocate for a second. Putin's launched the largest ground war in Europe in 80 years, I guess the largest war in the world probably, in 40 years. We had 9/11, middle East chaos, terrorist threats, nuclear proliferation. How much is the new era China and how much of it is the medley of things of which China's one, maybe the predominant one?

STEVEN ROSEN:

Right. I skipped over the emergence of Islamic fundamentalist terrorists and the very real problems of Russia. This is going to sound harsh, but in retrospect, I think the judgment of history will be that the United States overreacted to the threat posed by global Islamic fundamentalism. 9/11 was shocking in the way that these kinds of psychologically shocking events are. It was unexpected. Maybe we should have expected it, but it was not expected. It was right in our home territory. The visuals were overwhelmingly dramatic and it made a searing impression on our collective mentality, but when you look back at it, there was no sequel, there was no follow up. Maybe that was because of effective and vigorous counter-terrorist efforts, but the idea that a non-national network of Islamic actors, who amassed enough power to present a sustained threat to the United States, seems not to have happened. Now we're 25 years into this era and maybe I'll be proven wrong. The fear was that they might get a nuclear weapon. There was some near misses where they might've, but didn't happen.

BILL KRISTOL:

Maybe our overreaction to us crushing them in a way that made it easier for us to say now. Not our overreaction, but our reaction led to us crushing them.

STEVEN ROSEN:

That's an interesting question, which is a little bit of a tangent, but again, the professional judgment is now the Islamic networks were not crushed. They were slowed down, but they're building back. They're still there, but even as they exist, nation states represent the major way in which societies aggregate power. There is still no substitute for the nation state in terms of visibility to organize collective activity, amass resources, focus them, use them and so forth. Russia, again, there was this general disregard of Russia because of its economic malaise, which I think is real and which I shared, but we overlooked Putin's commitment to restoring an imperial Russia based on a nationalist orthodox Christian Russian hegemony within East Russia. We didn't underestimate his capabilities, we underestimated his resolve, his willingness to pay costs and so forth, but those constraints on his capabilities are real. He is running out. Look, you don't go to North Korea hat in hand asking for weapons if you have a strong military economy. You don't go to Iran and ask them, please take your nascent drone industry and put it at our disposal, if you have anything like a functioning military economy.

BILL KRISTOL:

That's a good point. Yeah.

STEVEN ROSEN:

One of the things that, again, that we are learning, is that we overestimated the effect of economic sanctions on constraining the actions of actors. Economic sanctions do restrain the capabilities of hostile actors, but if they're determined to go ahead, then they're going to still go ahead and that's what Putin has done. I'm not in any way trying to say we don't have to worry about Islamic and fundamentalist actors. They are there. They are going to be capable of doing things that can cause us concern and China might do things to take advantage of that or even facilitate it. After all, I was a member of an American government which aided Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union, I mean, after the Soviet Union invasion in Afghanistan and we did it because we wanted to tie down the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

China, I think, is the dominant actor, but it may work along with or maybe collude with the Islamic world and it's certainly working with and colluding with Russia and that means Russia is important, but Russia is important primarily insofar as it distracts us from China or as it enables China to do things it couldn't do without Russian cooperation.

BILL KRISTOL:

Okay, that's excellent. You've done justice to those problems and threats which remain and we'll get back, I'm sure, later to the whole question of, is chaos as much of a threat as Chinese power or that's related to-

STEVEN ROSEN:

Well, chaos is a threat but the thing I'd like to get back to later if we have the time is: in the Cold War, we dealt, very roughly, with a bipolar world. Soviet Union was the main enemy. We could focus on that. Now we are faced with an interesting problem. China is the main threat, the pacing threat as the Pentagon says, but we're acting in a world in which we have to develop a strategy for multiple theaters and multiple actors. That's not something we've done since World War II and it poses some very interesting problems and we're not doing as well as we might be doing to handle the problem of a multiple adversary world, a multi theater, multidimensional conflict.

BILL KRISTOL:

That's great. We will get back to that, but let's go back to China now. We've done the economics. You're going to do the military threat.

STEVEN ROSEN:

China got focused on us from the outset there, recognized us as the global hegemon, or they wanted to contest us. The Gulf War taught them the new way of war that we had deployed and stealth cruise missiles, precision strike, all that stuff, and they went to work figuring out how to beat it. Then in 1999 we bombed their embassy in Belgrade, which was an accident, but come on. You can't expect us to believe that was an accident. We know you didn't like what we were doing. You smacked us upside the head and we're not going to let you do it again. That meant they accelerated their effort to build up the capabilities that would blunt, as my student [student's name] says, blunt American military capabilities in the areas of the world that matter most to the Chinese, in East Asia.

Here's the point. Around 2000, they began putting a lot of money into building a military that could blunt the American military as they saw it and as it existed 20 years ago, and they did a very good job of that. They built anti-carrier forces, which cause considerable headaches for the United States Navy. They have built forces that could strike at the four main military bases in East Asia, there's only four of them and so it's not terribly difficult to figure out how to build for-

BILL KRISTOL:

For us you mean.

STEVEN ROSEN:

Out which the United States operates Okinawa, Kadena, the bases in Guam and Diego Garcia and they realized that the United States military could not do anything in the Western Pacific without using space. Western Pacific's a long way away. You need satellites to provide communication. You need satellites to provide information. You need satellites to provide navigation, so they started building forces that would strike at American carriers, strike American bases in the region, strike at our forces in space, and they did this in a classic way, which is mass. They just built more missiles than we could possibly shoot down with our defenses and it worked. It resulted in a situation in which you produced something which is a little bit infamous in Washington, the big scary China briefing, in which people lay out the inventory of Chinese missiles. How many hundreds of missiles they have and how few we have.

Okay, but what is the point? They built a military that was good at dealing with the American military that they saw 20 years ago. In addition to that, Belt and Road, they looked like they were expanding economically, they were going to deny us the assets and cooperation of our friends and 2016, the Russian intervention in the American alliances by cyber and social media, all of these things said, oh my God. The Chinese are bluffing us militarily. They may be able to deprive us of our allied support by using economic tools of coercion and influence and there's this new weapon, cyber warfare, that militarizes social media and we're not sure what it does, but it looks really bad because it gets inside of our social system and kind of spreads false information. We don't know, but it's bad.

That's where we were about 2015, 2017. That's the bad news. I mean, it was a real threat. The Chinese really worked very hard at building a military. They worked very hard at building economic networks of influence. They worked very hard at developing cyber tools and cyber methods to attack us in our own rear areas, in our own homeland.

BILL KRISTOL:

Were we complacent and distracted for those 15, 20 years or was some of it just going to happen anyway because you know what, it's a very big country and we weren't going to have the kind of advantage we had over them in 1995, 20 years later?

STEVEN ROSEN:

Mixed picture. To some extent we were complacent. The Bush administration, the George W. Bush administration had the doctrine of responsible stakeholders. Remember that? We were going to bring the Chinese into the fold. We were going to give them a stake in the existing world order and they were going to become supporters of the world order. The wake-up calls that initially got people alerted were the building of the artificial islands of the South China Sea, the interference in the Hong Kong political process and the mass incarceration and virtual genocide against the Uyghur people of Xinjiang. This woke people up out of complacency, but as my friend [friend's name], our mutual friend [friend's name], it wasn't crazy to think that China was becoming more integrated into the world economy and therefore might not want to upset it. It was wrong. It was definitely wrong, but many people in both parties supported it. But in 2015, 17, all of these events that I've mentioned kind of got people mobilized. The great thing about America is American society. The American government has the strength and weaknesses, but we won World War II because we mobilized American society and that began to happen in the second half of 2010s.

What was one of the critical elements of the Chinese effort to keep us, keep the American military, away from Taiwan, away from East Asia. They were going to blind us. They were going to knock out our satellites. How could they do that? We had a small number of very capable, but very expensive and very hard to replace satellites. They cost like \$10 billion each. You could launch them once every year or so. You shoot a couple of those down, the American military is kind of out of business. Can't talk to each other, can't see what it needs to see, can't navigate, all kinds of stuff. What was the big revelation of, one of the big revelations of, the Russian War in Ukraine? It was Starlink. It was Elon Musk, which as a private commercial endeavor, he invested his own money, maybe some government money too, but mostly his own money, in doing what? In building an entirely new architecture for satellites. Instead of having a small number of very expensive, very hard to replace satellites, you now have thousands of very small, widely distributed satellites. You can shoot one down. It doesn't make much difference. It can maintain connectivity and that's how the Ukrainians were able to maintain internet access globally.

The same thing is happening in the commercial sector with regard to reconnaissance. There are multiple commercial reconnaissance satellites taking pictures with cameras, taking pictures with radars, that produce imagery that would have been the envy of the US intelligence world 20 years ago. They're that good. In other words, there's a widely distributed network of reconnaissance satellites. Hard to shut down. There's now commercial satellites which collect radio information, the classic electronics intelligence and they're doing it for commercial as well as other purposes, so the Chinese now wake up not because of American government efforts, but because of the creativity and strength of the American civil sector. We can't shut down the United States military by shooting down a few satellites. There's just too much capability out there.

BILL KRISTOL:

I mean, this resilience is partly the international economy, since these American economic developments could-

STEVEN ROSEN:

Market globally.

BILL KRISTOL:

Depending on... and also have things in them that come from global trade and so forth. So it's a kind of paradox that globalization with China... and it strengthens... China takes advantage of that, but then we in a way, take advantage of it too, right?

STEVEN ROSEN:

Yes. I mean, one of the objectives I would argue that the Chinese have, is to control this global network of technology so that they get what they want, and they can keep us from getting what we want as a tool of coercion. That's why maintaining influence in West Europe... look, everybody knows, that the only company in the world that can make these microchips is based in the Netherlands. Well, okay, we want to make sure that China doesn't develop over-influence over Western Europe for that reason. But again, the resilience is the result of the American ability to tap into this global network of technology, tap into this global network of talent, mobilize its own stuff, and produce

a new set of capabilities, which are thwarting Chinese efforts in one very focused, but very important dimension.

Second thing that happens or that's revealed by the Ukraine War, the use of social media was a big headache. I mean, we didn't know how effective it would be, but we did worry about it. And one of the things that happened as a result of Putin's invasion of Ukraine is the American social media industry mobilized itself to support the Ukrainians and to support the American government. Remember before Ukraine, we had people in Google saying, "I'm not going to work on a contract that is with the American Department of Defense." You have people in the company that used to be called Facebook saying, "We're not going to cooperate." That flipped on a dime.

You now had people in Facebook working with the American intelligence community to take down Russian disinformation efforts within a time span of 12 hours. New York Times had a story about three days ago. Facebook now took down a Chinese effort to spread misinformation through multiple channels, because it was something that was in their interest to do. In other words, instead of having a narrowly focused US government DOD effort to stop China, you now have a broad American effort because of the threat of Russia and China to American political, social values, as well as commercial interests, to act in ways that make it more difficult for China to achieve its objectives through disinformation. Finally-

BILL KRISTOL:

It's so interesting, just one word on that. I've always thought Ukraine is a huge moment, and in a funny way, I think it more maybe in the traditional NATO alliances, you can't let Putin win. What message does that sent everywhere, including China. But it is interesting that Ukraine, it could end up being that Ukraine is a huge wake-up call, one of whose main effects is not simply to wake us up about Putin, dictators, brutality, all kinds of other things, alliances, NATO. But to wake us up about China. The wake-up call isn't always about the direct thing that... you know what I mean? Isn't always provoked by the thing that you're being awakened about entirely.

STEVEN ROSEN:

It works the way you said, but it works through the mechanism that you outlined earlier. Again, you and I live in this world. All respectable academics said conventional war among developed states, that's so 19th century. I think some European diplomats actually said that. And what Putin did is... no. I mean, the use of tanks and armored invasions is part of the world we still live in. We don't like it, but it's real. And it made people willing to look at what the Chinese are doing. Well, they're building all these ships, they're building missiles, and they're saying they're willing to use them. And we didn't believe Putin what he said he was willing to use force. So maybe we should believe the Chinese when they say they're willing to use force. So it's a wake-up call with regard to a general phenomenon. War is not an obsolete phenomenon, and it focuses attention on China. And once you look at China, it's not hard to see what they're doing. During the period in which there were these active debates and some of other people on our side were despairing of our ability to do the right thing, I said to them, "Don't worry, if we're right, reality is our ally." If we're right, the Chinese themselves will be the people who persuade the American people that they have to. Putin himself will be the person who persuades the American people that we need to do these things.

We're slow, we're delayed, but we finally get there. Last thing I wanted to mention on this kind of way in which the Chinese are now living in a world that they did not expect, and therefore we may be in a somewhat better position. We're not out of this yet. First was satellites, the second was social media. The third was this Belt and Road Initiative, this effort to use Chinese economic power, markets, supply chains to exercise political control over many of the areas of the world, not only in East Asia, but go all the way over to France and Germany. That now seems to have backfired. Or at least have producing results which are less effective than desired.

This was partly the result of the war in Ukraine, which made European countries unwilling to cooperate economically with China, because China was not taking accurate steps to limit or oppose Russian innovation of Ukraine. But it was also taking place because of the Chinese efforts to use political money improperly to entrap countries with debt. And the public opinion polls that we can see indicate that levels of support for China are going down. Levels of investment in China are going down. Levels of Chinese investment that are acceptable in West Europe are going down.

So the Belt and Road Initiative, which appeared to have been a major end run around American military efforts to contain China—we're not going to fight a war with you America, we're going to just make sure that none of your friends want to do business with you because they'd rather do business with us—that now clearly seems to have been reversed. It hasn't gone away, but the trend lines are now in the opposite direction. And globally, the Belt and Road Initiative now seems to be a money-losing proposition for the Chinese, which is difficult for them to sustain. Almost by definition, the Chinese investments in the developing world were enterprises, which the West had passed on, because of corruption, because of they were simply not going to produce returns.

And the Chinese went said, "That's okay. We'll build your roads, we'll build your airports. We don't care about whether they're economically viable, because what we want to do is carry favor with you." And it turns out that you can only do that for so long because they're money-losing enterprises. And so the Chinese themselves are cutting back on these efforts because they don't have infinite amount of foreign exchange reserves to pop into these countries. On top of that, there's been a rise in local opposition within the developing world. The Chinese are not good players. They don't hire local workers; they import Chinese workers. They treat the local population badly. They work in cahoots with authoritarian regimes to thwart popular democratic movements. So, the efforts by the Chinese in space, the efforts by the Chinese in social media, and the efforts by the Chinese to use economic influence are not ineffective, but they're certainly much less effective than we were worried about five, six, seven years ago.

So, the bottom line is we're not out of the woods. China's economy is still formidable. Chinese military is strong and growing, but they have their own weaknesses. This is one of the big lessons of the Cold War. People will say the Soviet military is overwhelmingly strong, and people will say, "Well, but look at the Soviet economy. It's terrible." And the point is both were true. You had to take into account the Soviet military was capable, but the Soviet Union had its own internal dysfunctions. And the Chinese system has their dysfunctions. Why is it...the Chinese are slow to react to the

changed military challenge that we are posing to them, that I outlined before, because it's a top-down hierarchical system.

BILL KRISTOL:

Well speaking of that, let me ask two things about just your account over the last seven years, which is so interesting. You didn't stress the change in character or apparent change in character of the Chinese regime itself. I mean the centralization of power to Xi. How important is that? Or is that more of a continuum? And what about COVID? How much did COVID end up being for good and maybe not so good reasons, well, for whatever reasons, sort of a wake-up call or an inflection point in terms of people's views of China?

STEVEN ROSEN:

All of the major long-term military development efforts pre-date Xi Jinping by 15- by 20 years. And the efforts to expand Chinese influence in Eurasia also pre-date Xi. What Xi has done, which is new, is to more overtly centralize power in himself and to remove constraints on himself. Jiang Zemin did similar things, but he did it more subtly. Hu Jintao was basically his figurehead. Jiang Zemin remained pulling the strings behind. He remained on the Central Military Commission, so forth. What Xi Jinping did was he kind of took off the mask. There's one ruler and only one ruler, and it's going to continue.

As for COVID, this is one of the things which we have to watch. The COVID epidemic and the reaction of the Chinese Communist Party to combat COVID brought to light many of the pre-existing dysfunctions of the Chinese system. The Chinese economy focused resources on the coastal industrial regions. They got migrant workers coming from the interior agricultural regions to work in the cities because they were cheap. You didn't have to provide them with health benefits because they were not residents of the cities. They were guest workers. And the Chinese government neglected the countryside. A Stanford professor, Scott Rozelle, did on the ground research with thousands of researchers in China. And what he revealed was that the Chinese myth of healthcare in the rural areas was that... The reality of Chinese healthcare in the rural areas was a myth- that healthcare was getting worse in many areas. So when COVID hit, the Chinese system got a double-whammy, because the rural areas, which were full by and large of very old people and very young people and poor healthcare systems. And so they were very vulnerable to COVID. The migrant workers from the countryside going to the cities didn't have healthcare because they were not residents- in the *Hukou* system, in the residential registration system in China, you can't get benefits unless you're registered resident of a city. They didn't get benefits. And then on top of that, you had the zero tolerance lockdown policies, which temporarily limited the spread of COVID, which killed people because it prevented them from getting access to medical care. And then you had the un-premeditated, poorly thought-out, total removal of COVID restraints. The current estimate for the first three months of 2023 is that there was 1.8 million excess deaths in China in just those three months. And those are primarily in the rural... sorry, the urban areas.

Anecdotally, students of mine coming back from China said they talked to their Chinese friends, they couldn't get their relatives cremated. The backlogs at the crematorium were so large that they said, "No, we're not taking them." So COVID is one of these flashes of lightning, like Chernobyl was for the Soviet Union. It's not like

Chernobyl. It was the exception to the rule. It was the one nuclear reactor in Russia that didn't work right. Sorry- in Soviet Union. It was representative of Soviet patterns of behavior. COVID and the response to COVID and the catastrophic consequences of the CCP policies are making that visible.

BILL KRISTOL:

I think COVID also had an effect on our, don't you think, sense of China? Again, for reasons that were both sort of real in terms of it did begin there and also demagogic perhaps in the way it was presented at times.

STEVEN ROSEN:

Well, again, it is one of these kind of illuminating moments when the Chinese Communist Party's indifference to information flows was made by...which was, we couldn't get the data sets that we needed for the DNA and so forth, much less-

BILL KRISTOL:

If being a responsible stakeholder means anything, it means the world, it means you will contribute to global health. That's not a political issue. That's if you have a disease starting in your area, you try to be transparent about where it is and how it works. And I do think that was a bit of a... if you're sort of a well-meaning liberal, who cares a lot about the WHO, not that we all care-

STEVEN ROSEN:

Exactly.

BILL KRISTOL:

Not that we don't all care about the WHO, but it's like, geez, they can't even work with us, let alone... of course they don't like our alliances, but they don't even work with the World Health Organization?

STEVEN ROSEN:

Absolutely. You hit the nail right on the head. The expert communities in United States who most wanted to believe that the Chinese are human beings like us, they're scientists like us, they're doctors like us, we could work together, those are the people who got slapped upside the head. And not just once, but repeatedly.

And these people went out of their way to say, "Oh, look, the Chinese government is not doing it." And this turns out that Chinese government is consistently and still destroying data, refusing to release data, stopping researchers from going in and collecting data. I knew lots of guys in the American military in the 1990s, and they liked the Chinese. "Why do I want to fight China?" That kind of thing. But the repeated tours of duty in China, which brought them into contact with this, made them converse. "These people are not willing to share information. They're not willing to cooperate. They're very different from us and they're hostile."

So yeah, it's a sequence of events which are not accidentally coordinated because they're all reflective of the same basic pattern of governance in China, which is changing the US perception of the CCP or China. And it has to be weakening the basis of support for the Communist Party rule in China. The economy's stagnating and

people's moms and dads and grandparents are dying, and the Chinese government is basically not doing anything effective to help them. What those effects will be, we don't know. But one of my favorite policy suggestions or initiatives is simply to make it available to Chinese people, the information they ought to have about the public health situation in China. Just like the American Embassy provided information about the low quality of the air around the American embassy in China and put it on the internet. We should make available, "Here are what our figures of excess mortality are. Here's what our figures are with regard to the levels of infant mortality in China."

BILL KRISTOL:

Well, that's a good transition to how are we reacting in the sense that... I mean, that would be a public information campaign. That's the kind of thing we used to do a lot of in the Cold War and truthful information- but putting it out there in the other country to affect opinion there. And so, it sounds to me like what you're saying is things have changed, we're not kidding ourselves anymore or as much anymore, so maybe it's if you want the Cold War analogy, Soviet Unions were our great ally. They were until '45 and took a while for that to wear off, so to speak. And then things happened in '47, '48, even '49, but our policies didn't change that much. Berlin airlift and stuff, but not fundamentally I guess until, what, '50, maybe '49, '50?

STEVEN ROSEN:

Korean War was the big change.

BILL KRISTOL:

It sounds like maybe analogously we're sort of in the '48, '49, maybe '50 itself, but we're not yet in the actual, Okay, we're now changing our military or building up...or maybe we are...building up our military enough, building up, really being serious about economic policy, being serious about political efforts to deal with this threat. Or are we? Where are we on the spectrum of moving along to deal adequately with this threat?

STEVEN ROSEN:

Again, the analogy you draw, that you put, is very well drawn. There was this general sense that the Soviet Union was not friendly. They were a problem for us, but really it was the Korean War which was the galvanizing event, because they're not actually willing to use armed force to change the status quo. So- I think it's not unreasonable to think that the Russian invasion of Ukraine was a proxy for the Korean War, which is governments of this kind are in fact willing to use armed force. And of course, the immediate response is to help Ukraine, and that's right, and that does help us against China. But we now see slowly, because the American military is a big apparatus and takes a long time to change, we're doing the kinds of things that people... I don't want to toot my own horn, but I was arguing we had to do 20 years ago, but we were focused on the War on Terror and were not convinced China was a threat. If you only have four bases in East Asia, build more bases. If big bases are vulnerable, build small bases.

And there was a news item a couple of days ago, United States and the Philippines are investigating a new commercial dual use port that's halfway between the Philippines and Taiwan. Okay! The United States Marine Corps, God bless it, was first off the market. It said, "We have to do what we can with what we already have to deal with the threat that China is posing to us." What's the threat that China's posing? Big navy, lots

of systems that can shoot missiles. It's going to take forever for us to get to rebuild the American surface Navy. It just takes too long. The ships take too long to build.

So we're going to take missiles that we already have and train Marines to land out of the way islands, set up missile bases where they can shoot at Chinese ships, where they can shoot at Chinese airplanes. Just as the Chinese are making our life difficult, we can make their life... But in ways which are hard for the Chinese to find, because if you're on land on an island, you can hide, hard for them to attack, because you have lots of them, you can spread them all over the place, and you can do it with what you already have. The American military changes slowly because changing major weapon systems is a big deal. It takes years, sometimes decades. So the Marine Corp properly had the idea, "We'll do the things with what we've got." And the big part of the American military is also changing. Big-

BILL KRISTOL:

Is it changing more than you would've expected or anticipated 10, 20 years ago? I mean, has it turned out to be a little more flexible and responsive to events than one might've thought?

STEVEN ROSEN:

Big bureaucracies are pretty predictable. They have patterns of behavior which are deeply entrenched. And so, no, it's not changing faster than I would expect, it's changing more, is the word. Which is, "Okay, we used to produce 200 long range missiles a year. We're going to produce 400 long range missiles a year and two years from now, we'll produce 600 missiles a year." Okay, this is not World War II where you're churning out victory class-

BILL KRISTOL:

100x of what you were doing before or 1000x.

STEVEN ROSEN:

Right. But over five years, that increased rate of production makes a difference. And there are surprising amounts of interest in the American government to blunt the Chinese political warfare efforts. They're reaching out to influence our allies. Why can't we have efforts to work with our allies to address their concerns and make sure that they're more willing to work with us? The whole AUKUS relationship, where the United States worked with Australia and the UK to build up Australian maritime capabilities...The Australians were one of the major targets of Chinese economic influence. Australian iron ore [inaudible] exports to China. Big lever, big lever that the Chinese could use, and a lot of Australian politicians bought into that. But okay, we could do the same thing. We, to give the Biden administration credit, we facilitated one of the first successful tripartite meetings between the United States, Japan and South Korea to get them to work together, which everybody knows it's difficult because of the past history between Japan and South Korea, but it's now its operant.

And we have a modest but useful effort with India because they won't be our ally, but if they wind up having an economy that's half the size of China, that makes a difference. This is the way the world is different. It's more like the world of World War II than the Cold War. During the Cold War, we had the fiction that allies mattered, but we really

provided all the heavy lifting for the military. It wasn't good, but it worked well enough. In World War II, we needed our allies, we needed the UK. Now we need our allies. We have to make compromises. We have to not do things that we would've liked to have done because we need the support of... A lot of the constraints of the American government in Ukraine are because we needed to keep the Germans on board, period.

BILL KRISTOL:

But I feel like that's more widely appreciated that alliances are a headache, but the only thing worse than having alliances in Europe and Asia is not having alliances in Europe and Asia. 10 years ago, I feel like the smart aleck point of view was to be not anti-alliance, exactly, but, "Come on, that's a relic in the past or it's silly," or either on the right, "It's too much of a pain in the neck," on the left, "It's too much dividing the world into friends and enemies." And now I feel like there's a pretty broad consensus that we don't want to go into the next decade and two without robust alliances.

STEVEN ROSEN:

And we have to be more flexible in the nature of the partnerships we built. It's not all going to be like NATO, and that's okay. If India is strong and India does things that we don't always like, that's good enough. And this was the part that I wanted to get to. It's not only the big economically significant countries that we're working on. If China is reaching out to build a global military presence, we have to go to those countries where they want to establish facilities. We have to work, if they want to build up communications networks, if they want to have satellite downlink stations, if they want to have anti-submarine warfare sensor systems deployed, we should be reaching out to those countries and saying, "the Chinese are not your friends, and oh by the way, we can offer you a better deal."

So that is proceeding... that is surprising. The American State Department is actually much more proactive. Much less, "Oh, the Chinese are our friends. Let's find areas...let's work on climate change together." There are significant elements within the State Department that want to do what is necessary to prevent this hostile outreach by China, to act in ways that are contrary to the interest of the countries that they're targeting and contrary to American national trust. So are we going as fast as we would like? That will never be the case, because you can always think of ways we could be doing it better and faster. But because the American society... The American State Department didn't change because President Trump told it to change. Or because Joe Biden...It changed because ordinary foreign service officers had learned their own lessons, that they had to deal with China in a way that they thought was inappropriate 20 years ago.

Our system has the strengths and weaknesses of our own system, just like any system does... which is we're broadly based...the ideas of the American deep state, I think, are overstated. The American bureaucracy reflects American social values, but with a lag and it moves along. We're in a better position now. Just like towards the end of the Cold War, the American system shifted in the 1980s to become much more supportive of the Reagan- The Reagan administration did things that were begun under the Carter administration. There was a bipartisan effort to step up the level, and I think we're seeing the same bipartisan level of effort to deal with the challenge that the Chinese place.

Let me finish with one thing, which it does get back to the theme of how the world is different. Remember the old world? Industrial world? Ownership of resources, coal, steel, oil, that mattered. We're living in a world where resources still matter, clearly, but not as much. Silicon is so widely distributed that you don't have to own all the world's silicon. Lithium turns out to be very widely distributed.

One of the things, the thing that matters now that may be critical for the development and exercise of geopolitical power is talent. We want to be as active as we can to make sure that the flow of talent to the United States out of those areas is facilitated. Now, the Russians are doing a great job of pushing out their best people into areas where they're more likely to work with us. And after Tiananmen Square, a lot of Chinese people defected either internally or came across...

My second favorite national security issue. Number one is make available to the Chinese people the information that the Chinese people simply ought to have. The second is to have an immigration national security waiver, that they're just like we have H1B visas for special people who have special expertise, we should have special visas for people and their families from China who we will vet and who we'll work with to prevent their being exploited by the Chinese Communist Party, but which we bring over to make them useful for us rather than useful for the Chinese.

I sponsored some research and one of my students went out and interviewed large numbers of Chinese S&T students in the United States, and they said, "We'd be perfectly happy to stay in the United States. You have to bring our families over, though." And if we don't bring their families over, then we're subject to the coercion because the CCP will say to us...

BILL KRISTOL:

No, that's good. That's a good initiative. I mean, it's a part of a broader question of whether our immigration policy, which is sort insane from a national security point of view and other points of view, in my opinion, economic wellbeing point of view. But that gets to our whole political system, which maybe we should close on, but I want to interrupt before I get to that, just a couple of quick points. Taiwan, you mentioned in passing. How much is that the center of gravity for now? Is it the equivalent of Berlin or is it overstressed, in a way, in the normal discussion about China over the next few years as *the* flashpoint? I mean, give us a quick judgment on that.

STEVEN ROSEN:

I think the PRC built up massive military forces that they wanted to have dominate the area around Taiwan so that they could "win without fighting". The Taiwanese would realize, America would realize that the military balance was so lopsided against Taiwan that any American efforts to oppose China would obviously fail, and therefore we wouldn't go down that road, and therefore Taiwan would quietly fold back into the Chinese fold. That hasn't happened. China's military dominance is being challenged.

And so, I think the fold-back strategy of China is not to mount a massive military campaign against Taiwan, which now looks like it might fail because of all the factors that I mentioned before: American satellite system will work; We have new weapons systems that are being put in the field... So it's risky. The point of building up mass is

that you reduce your risks. Everybody knows who's going to win and if you actually roll the dice, you win easily. Now, it's a risky proposition for the Chinese.

So what are they going to do? My bet is that they'll do what they're doing now, but more so, which is elevate the levels of harassment in and around Taiwan. We see the maritime harassment, we see the aerial incursions of the Taiwanese airspace. The point of that is to make it harder and harder for Taiwan to do business with the outside world. From time to time, internet cables are pulled up by fishing vessels and the Chinese say, "Oops, we're sorry." So you interfere with Taiwan's internet access to the world. All these things are to put economic pressure on Taiwan and the Chinese utilize their contacts with Taiwanese politicians who are more sympathetic to reunification to say, "Look, all this pain, all this misery, totally unnecessary. All you have to do is say 'one China, two systems'. That's all you have to say, just one China."

And you don't want to roll the dice to find out whether your American friends actually show up if we put pressure on you. I think the strategy has shifted to more of a political coercion, more of a Berlin 1948 kind of thing. You isolate Taiwan and you hope it falls without a fight. I don't think we're well prepared for that. American military got prepared to fight an overt Chinese attack on us and Taiwan. We're doing better at that. Chinese probably won't do, so the Chinese probably won't do that. They'll use a ambiguous salami slicing political military coercive campaign. And what will we do?

Well, in Berlin 1948, we had airlift convoys going to Berlin. Will we have convoys going into Taiwan? Will we have American naval vessels escorting merchant ships? Maybe. That's not easy to do. We don't have that many ships, for one thing, so we get our allies to also come? Well, maybe they don't want to. The Europeans are not as sold on the defense of Taiwan as they are sold on the defense of Ukraine.

The Chinese are very carefully and astutely saying to all of our European friends, "Taiwan is not Ukraine. We recognize the principle of national sovereignty of the Ukrainians, you have to represent the principle of national sovereignty with regard to China, Taiwan's part of China. We're not Putin. Taiwan's not Ukraine, and you don't want to fight us. You don't want to cut yourself off from us economically." I said, the trends are moving the opposite direction, but European economic interaction with China is still massive.

So if you're asking me what's my worry about Taiwan, it's this gray zone harassment which wears down the Taiwan population. They say, "We're suffering. The Americans are not ending our suffering, so why don't we just cut a deal with the Chinese?" I think we can defeat that strategy, but we have to work on it because it's not a case where solving the big military problem also solves the ambiguous political problem or the political challenge.

BILL KRISTOL:

One irony of your somewhat upbeat, I got to say, account of what we've managed to do with our allies over the last six, seven, eight years, and the fact that the glass is maybe a little more half full than half empty in some respects, and China isn't quite as 10 feet tall, as we used say, during the Cold War. Of course, all this depends on... And you stress the US government's done pretty well, but also a lot of this comes from, as it

were, bottom up, from US economy, US society, being able to change and having a lot of resources at its disposal, a lot of inventiveness and a lot of ability to learn some lessons. I mean, it does raise fully front and center, and this is a much longer conversation which we'll have in a few months... I guess I should have said before, earlier, we're speaking on September 6th here, so we'll have this conversation on January 6th, but it seems like the greatest threat, though, is the health of the American political system, but also American society really. That is to say, if we get all, leaving aside particular... Obviously I have my views and you do too, of who maybe would be the best and worst likely presidents, but if we have a general situation of lack of seriousness about the world, A. And B, I don't think that's compensated for it by being rhetorically tough on China, but not being serious about everything else. But tell me if you think I'm wrong about that. And C, just general chaos, collapse of trust, demagoguery, huge social rifts and almost secession by one part of the country from the other and so forth; all of that seems like a hard thing to sustain while pursuing the kind of serious, sober, fairly farsighted foreign policy that you've been talking about. And of course people worried about that a lot during the Cold War era, and they were right to worry in retrospect. I mean in retrospect it worked out, but in the middle of it was like, "Geez, we're having massive resistance in the South to civil rights. Are we able to really at the same time rally our allies to fight the Soviet Union? And we have some wars that went badly in Korea and Vietnam, God knows, and how are we going to get through that?"

So just say a word in general about how worried you are about that and what particular things you might focus on. And particularly in the foreign policy side, it feels to me like the easy out is to sort of...well, I'm for being tough on China, I'm just not for doing anything else that would help actually over a significant period of time sustain a serious tough-on-China policy.

STEVEN ROSEN:

Well, just like at the beginning of the conversation, when you asked me, "How has the world changed?" I said, "Well, to answer that question, you have to go back and say, 'Well what's the world like before,'" with regard to the American political system, are we badly off or what's the nature of the problems that we face now?

I would say, "Okay, let's go back," and I wrote a little essay for the Alexander Hamilton Society, which is, "Okay, let's look at the periods in which the American political system was as badly fractured as it could be, observably has been," and obviously it would be the period before the American Civil War and during the Great Depression when the challenges of the American political legitimacy were massive. And what was the foreign policy component of that?

And you can argue with my reading of Lincoln and my reading of FDR, but I think it's not unfair to say both of them tried to unify the United States in its efforts to deal with this external problem. Confederacy is not really external, but it's sort of external to the political. It was to adopt a position in which the president of the United States said, "My job is to protect the United States. My job is to prevent the United States from being attacked or if the United States is attacked to deal with that."

Lincoln, as you recall, in his first inaugural, doesn't say anything about ending slavery in the South. In fact, he endorses the Constitutional provision to return slaves to the South. In other words, "I am not the aggressor. If there's a fight, I'm not going to start it." And he very carefully acts in ways so that the South fires first at Fort Sumter.

Why? Because he knew that he could not struggle successfully to unite the United States if the United States was even more divided because people said, "This war was not necessary. You started this war, you could have avoided this war."

Franklin Roosevelt faced a different problem, but an equally severe problem. We forget just how bad things were in the 1930s. Charles Lindbergh was the most popular American in the United States, handsome man, romantic stories, tragedy of the kidnapping of his child. He was a Nazi sympathizer. He helped sponsor America First rallies. He went to Germany to tour German aircraft factories, came back saying, "These guys are great. These guys were wonderful."

Father Coughlin was the most popular media figure, rabidly antisemitic, Huey Long, all the... So what did Roosevelt do? Roosevelt was a committed internationalist. He wanted to deal with the rise of fascism. But what did he say? He went in public and he said, "I hate war," at the famous Chautauqua. He said, "I am a pacifist. I am not going to get America into a war. I'm going to defend America. I'm going to tell you all the things that the enemies of liberty are doing to try to encroach on our freedoms."

He doesn't declare war on Germany even when Germany sinks American destroyers in the North Atlantic, the Reuben James and the [inaudible] in 1940 and '41. And he waits until there's a clear attack on the United States.

Okay, what's the lesson for now? The United States does have severe internal divisions. There are legitimate debates about what the proper foreign policy for the United States should be. There are bitter debates about what the nature of American society should be. A war which is seen as a war of choice initiated by the United States, which could have been avoided, will make things worse.

I speak as someone who supported the war in Iraq. I thought it was both necessary and I think that it could have produced a better... but I was wrong. It turned out for a whole bunch of reasons not to have gone the way that I thought it would. And it made things worse in the United States. And maybe I'm overlearning that lesson, we could talk about-

BILL KRISTOL:

But I think that's... Fine, I'm okay with not fighting wars of choice. I don't think we fought a heck of a lot of them in our history. We fought like one really- Iraq, if you want to call it that. Really when you get right down to Vietnam, maybe Vietnam. Yeah, fair enough. But that's not what we're likely to do it feels like to me. And I would just address this obvious counterargument, which is, yeah, well, I admire Lincoln and Roosevelt's statesmanship, but they also were followed by the Civil War and World War II.

The point here is to stop World War II, not to deal with what, by the time FDR had a chance to do much, was probably inevitable because of 15 years before that of us not being part of the world and so forth. So that's a little different kind of a challenge, which makes me a little more worried, I suppose. I mean, not war-worried. I think you're very wise to remind us of how bad things looked in America in the late '30s politically and socially, so to speak. But anyway, I just-

Well, but I would at least initially take a leaf from FDR and from what we have done recently, which is helping Britain's... The British against the Nazis is helping America. The Committee to Defend America by defending Britain. And that's what we're doing in Ukraine. And people I think are properly making the argument the best defense of American liberties is to prevent the successful incursion of liberties by a powerful military dictator.

And we should be doing the same thing with regard to China, which we are doing. We're working with the Japanese to build up their military capabilities, working with South Korea to kind of get them better oriented, working obviously with Australia, and modestly working with India. They live there, they live next to China. They have all the incentive. They wanted to know that we are supporting them because fighting China by yourself if you're Japan or India or South Korea is not a good idea. So we should be saying, "If you are attacked by China, this is an attack on the Free World." But the war will be started when China goes to war, and that will deter China from going to war.

BILL KRISTOL:

No, I take that point, but it doesn't quite address the degree to which we just become incapable of being serious, being taken seriously by allies if we, for example, have an election and just pivot and go 180 degrees different policy on Ukraine, or collapse NATO, or if the social divisions here are so deep that people just don't believe we can be trusted.

That's what I heard when I was in Europe a lot the last year, "With all due respect, Biden's doing a pretty good job. Even some things Trump did weren't as terrible as we thought they might be at first. But can we trust you guys going forward?" And they don't mean trust in some touchy-feely sense, they mean just like, "Are you reliable as a grownup serious country?" We weren't, in fact, if I could say in the '20s and '30s, as a result, we had what we had by 1941, right?

STEVEN ROSEN:

Yes. Again, continuing with at least the effort to learn from past experiences, I can't solve the problem of American presidential elections. I wish I could. There's nothing I really can do about that. But I would suggest to President Biden and whoever wins the election in 2024, that they do something that Lincoln and Roosevelt did, which is consistently, repeatedly address the American people to explain to them the nature of the problem, and the nature of the threat that they're facing.

Roosevelt didn't give one, didn't give two, he gave at least a dozen speeches in four years before 1940, he said, "American people, this is what the world is like. This is the

threat we are facing. This is what we have to start doing now. This is what I'm not going to..."

People have said, I think correctly, the American president really hasn't stood up and said, "American people, this is what we're facing in China. We're facing a country that's rich as us basically, technologically it's not that far behind us, it's certainly better off than the Soviet Union was, and they're fundamentally committed to..." We haven't said that.

I think maybe 60% of the American people already believe it, according to the American political report. But the President has to say it, and the President has to bring the American people along so that over time you don't get these kinds of wild oscillations in American public opinion and political behavior. And therefore, our behavior will demonstrate that we're a serious country to the rest of the world.

One of the things that a serious effort to change American public opinion at the grassroots level would do, would make it more possible to pursue American international objectives by a means of formal treaties. Right now we use executive agreements because we can't get these things through a divided Congress.

If you get people elected who argue, "Yes, we are committed to the defense of whatever," and then... Democracies are credible. The United States are credible with regards to NATO and things like that because they're treaties, they're formerly binding. And now we don't have the ability politically to do that. So we have these crazy deals with... like the US-Iran Joint Agreement, which everybody knows could be flipped or overturned by the next president. But you can't get a treaty passed through the American Senate with the current state of American political opinion. You can't change American political opinion unless you wage your campaign to do so. And I said, Roosevelt did this. I mean-

BILL KRISTOL:

Yeah, and I think the other thing... The President has the ability, and Biden has done this occasionally, but it's done in a rather... not in a very sustained way, and using some phrases that probably aren't the greatest, "Rules-based order." We have actual historical examples of what the world looks like when we don't try to help establish a decent order friendly to us and to our allies and to our principles, as friendly as possible, at least. And an example of when we have done that post-'45 on. So in a way we do have this big benefit that FDR didn't really have, and Lincoln didn't really have of, "Well gee, don't throw away what we've achieved."

And in a way, for all the new eras, I guess I'll close with this, and I hadn't really thought about this before, for all the talk of the new era in a certain way it's both a new era with a new main adversary and different threats of chaos than in the past and so forth... but it is a continuation in some respects of the Cold War and post-Cold War era in terms of America being at the heart of a set of relationships and alliances that preserves more peace than would otherwise be the case, and more freedom that would otherwise be the case.

It seems like that should be a little easier to explain with the history we have behind us, but I don't know. But it hasn't been done much, I guess, except for you and Bob Kagan and others and articles and books, but by actual political leaders since McCain, I would say not so much.

STEVEN ROSEN:

Yeah. As I said at the beginning of the conversation, I said, "The world has changed in some ways, but there's some fundamental insights." The control of Eurasia by a hostile power is bad for America, and this is something... and so Chinese control and influence over Eurasia is something which will present an existential threat in the United States. We have to do what we need to do to make sure that that doesn't happen. That is the constant, that has not changed. What has changed is-

BILL KRISTOL:

Don't you think also something like nuclear proliferation, people could be reminded that it's a lot better for us to have a world where we pretty much put the brakes on that actually, kind of amazingly, over 30, 40, 50 years, and that could just get unlocked and then what kind of world are we looking at 10 years from now?

STEVEN ROSEN:

In 1999, I wrote an article and I showed it to you before I published it, and we talked about whether or not it was actually a prudent thing to publish it, because it said that if the United States does not maintain global stability, the incentives for other countries to get nuclear weapons will be much higher. And as things now stand, those incentives seem to be increasing.

And I think your judgment, which was correct at the end, this was a good thing to publish publicly because it reminded people of the need to maintain or restore order, or because of the consequences, because of the nature of the world that would exist if you don't. You have to explain to Americans, "You may not like spending more money to make sure Japan is safe. If Japan is not safe, Japan will get nuclear weapons. If South Korea is not safe, South Korea will get nuclear weapons. Taiwan might even get nuclear weapons."

The Taiwanese government in the past tried to get nuclear weapons. Okay, and American foreign policy, which spends 4% of GDP on the military instead of 3%, that's expensive, I'm not trying to minimize that, but how much does the world cost when you're dealing, as you just put it, with a world in which there are multiple small nations, where there's small nation concerns and rivalries, and a few hundred nuclear weapons to back them up. Just how safe do you feel in that world?

So as I said, painting a picture of the world that you are avoiding is hard to do because people, "Oh, you're inventing this kind of fantastic boogeyman to scare us into it." But it's not an unreasonable thing to do.

And again, I think we mentioned in the last conversation that we had, if Churchill had been successful in 1936 and 1937 in getting the West to stand up to Germany, there probably would've been political chaos in Germany, there probably would've been

military coup. It would've been a mess. And everybody would have said, "Look what a stupid policy we could have gotten..." Because they wouldn't have known what they avoided; they had avoided World War II.

Well, we're not trying to prevent World War III, we're not trying to say that World War III is inevitable if we don't take... but there are very clear ways in which the world will be more dangerous if the United States does not... no only as you say, say the right things about China, but spend the money and accept the obligations to defend the parts of the world which otherwise will defend themselves. And there's only one way they can defend themselves against China, and that's by getting nuclear weapons.

BILL KRISTOL:

Yes, you said there's a big China threat or problem. There's a big, let's call it chaos, multiplicity-of-threats problem. They're related, they can be related of course. And that does seem a little different maybe than the Cold War, which was a little more the Soviet Union by itself. So that's maybe more challenging to explain, more challenging to deal with in terms of actual policies and so forth.

STEVEN ROSEN:

Very quickly, because we're dealing with multiple threats, we have to have a strategy for dealing with multiple threats simultaneously. You can't say, "Well, I'm not going to think about Russia. I'm not going to think about the Islamic world because I'm focusing on China." You have to have a strategy which utilizes limited resources in the areas that are not the main adversary, but which engage them and keep them. And I think to some extent, again, to give Biden credit and Trump too, in the Middle East, our diplomacy was not inactive. We were trying to isolate Iran diplomatically and made some progress there.

And with regard to the Islamic world, we were so disenchanted with any efforts to deal with that, we just don't want to have anything to do with it. I think that is not a healthy attitude. The fundamentalist elements within the Islamic world, in Pakistan, in Yemen, in Iran, are not going away. You can't wish they were not there. So you have to do a better job of handling that. And as I said in particular, making sure the Chinese are not in a position to exploit these elements of chaos in ways which further their interests.

BILL KRISTOL:

That's great. And this has been very instructive and thought-provoking, and many other things we could follow up on, which we should follow up on in maybe a year from now or a few months from now, depending on how alarmed or how hopeful we are. But I think the mix of alarm and hope here is... I'm more of an alarm person, as you know. But it was good to have, and you have historically been, but I've got to say that the sober analysis of how we have begun to get serious and do certain things and adjust to this new era is very helpful. And I really haven't seen that articulated that well in many places at all. So Steve, thanks so much for joining me today, really an interesting conversation.

STEVEN ROSEN:

Thank you Bill for inviting me. Pleasure, and I hope to see you again.

BILL KRISTOL:

We'll see you, we'll do it again. And thank you Steve Rosen, and thanks to all of you for joining us on Conversations.