



# Dialogues on American Foreign Policy and World Affairs: A Conversation with U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney

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- Representative Liz Cheney, *U.S. Representative from Wyoming's at-large congressional district*
- Walter Russell Mead, *Ravenel B. Curry III Distinguished Fellow in Strategy and Statesmanship, Hudson Institute*
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## TRANSCRIPT

*Please note: This transcript is based off a recording and mistranslations may appear in text. A video of the event is available: <https://www.hudson.org/events/1685-dialogues-on-american-foreign-policy-and-world-affairs-a-conversation-with-u-s-rep-liz-cheney52019>*

**SCOOTER LIBBY:** Thank you all for coming. I'd like to welcome our live and our video audience to Hudson Institute. I'm Scooter Libby, senior vice president here at the Hudson Institute. Some of you may know me better in my former role as a novelist.

(LAUGHTER)

**LIBBY:** We have two bestselling authors here. I don't like to brag, but my sales exceeded triple digits.

(LAUGHTER)

**LIBBY:** It's a pleasure to be in the presence of Representative Liz Cheney from Wyoming in her second term. She is a member of the Armed Services Committee and the Natural Resources Committee and most recently named chairwoman of the House Republican Conference, which makes her the third-ranking Republican in Congress - in the House. And it also makes her the highest-ranking woman in the House ever.

**LIZ CHENEY:** Republican.

**LIBBY:** Republican woman in the House, sorry.

(LAUGHTER)

**LIBBY:** Thank you for the correction. According to a widely cited publication, The Hill, when she got this appointment, her...

**WALTER RUSSELL MEAD:** She was elected.

**LIBBY:** When you were elected to this appointment...

(LAUGHTER)

**LIBBY:** I'm about to prove the point of this comment. Your father said to you, don't screw it up. Liz, you used to say that to me daily, as I've now demonstrated. And I'm sorry to say that I never took this as a sign of affection. Now, it may not surprise you that Liz's first campaign for the House came in 1978, when she was 12 years old, and she got lost at the Douglas, Wyo., state fairgrounds. Liz has never been lost when it comes to issues important to our country. It's my pleasure to have worked alongside her three times, notably, when she was the principal deputy assistant secretary of state for the Middle East. There were some tense times back in those days, but she was always informed, insightful, calm and commanding. Her meteoric rise in the House and in the nation is no surprise to those of us who have worked with her.

We're also lucky to have with us Walter Russell Mead, my colleague, the Ravenel Curry distinguished fellow in strategy and statesmanship and the global view columnist at The Wall Street Journal. I recommend to you today's column on the U.S. foreign policy and Secretary Pompeo's speech, which is typical of his great work. He's also the author of two outstanding books, "Special Providence: American Foreign Policy And How It Changed the World" and "God And Gold: Britain, America, And The Making Of The Modern World." These have been praised by reviewers, historians and diplomats. In short, he's an insightful columnist and a careful historian and as you may see today, a man with a great sense of humor. The Czech-born novelist Milan Kundera wrote during the era of totalitarian socialism. And he begins his greatest novel by exposing the dangers of airbrushing history - that is changing history for political ends.

Decades earlier, the British novelist George Orwell did the same. We don't have totalitarian socialism or socialists in America today. But now, as then, there are the dangers of rewriting history and distorting issues. We have, still, dangers posed by authoritarian states like Iran, China and North Korea. We still have to foster economic growth and alliances and protect our environment. And technology continues to change our military needs, our economy and our world. We're lucky to have today a talented historian and a brave and insightful chairwoman here to help us understand what lies ahead. Walter, we'll begin with a discussion. And perhaps at the end, there'll be time for questions. Walter.

**MEAD:** Great. Thanks, Scooter, for that introduction. And thank you so much, Representative Cheney, for coming to be with us this morning. Let me just say to the audience that the representative has agreed to take questions at the end. And so in order to make this process a little more orderly, we have - interns will be passing out pieces of paper for you to write questions. You can write your name and affiliation, if you'd like, on the question. And then afterwards, I'll take a look and see if I can't group the questions or otherwise do it in a sensible way. Also, she has to leave at 12:50, and we are holding an elevator for her. So I'd ask that all of us stay put until she has a chance to get away. These dialogues that we have here at Hudson with policymakers and significant figures in public life are intended, really, not to try to get away from the normal format of Washington journalistic or television interviews and sort of gotcha - trying to sort of force people to respond in soundbites and so on.

Our purpose here is to give you a chance and give our friends watching on video and television a chance to really get your own sense of what a figure in public life thinks, how they look at the world. And then you come to your own conclusions about whether or not you agree with this person's point of view. So I'm not here - I'm actually here to try to draw out this shy flower here and see if we can't encourage her to speak her mind with us. And the first question I've got is, you look around the world today, and I don't know when I've seen as many crises. Now the China trade talks are causing the stock market to whiplash every day. I guess we've got drones attacking Saudi petroleum facilities. We've got ships in the Persian Gulf being hit, sabotaged. We've got Venezuela in chaos. We've got Ukraine situation. So a lot of things everywhere you look around the world are in chaos, so what should American priorities be at this time?

**CHENEY:** Well, thank you, first of all, Russell - or Walter for having me here today. Thank you to Hudson. Thank you to Scooter for the great introduction. And thanks for the opportunity to talk about these issues. You're right. I completely agree with you. If you look at the world we face, you look at the complexity of the challenges, you look at the threats, you look at the number of them, I don't think we've had as complicated of a threat environment, globally, since, certainly, World War II as the one we face today. And it's complicated for a number of reasons that you - you've mentioned some of them. If you look at the threats that we face, you know, we've got the threat continuing, ongoing from radical Islamic terrorism, the threat from Iran, from North Korea, obviously the return of the great power conflict with Russia, with China. And in many cases, these threats have arisen during a time period in which our own capabilities were diminishing. And I think you can clearly look at the period of the Obama administration. You can see the determination - frankly, the combination of the Obama administration policies and what was going on in Congress and our ability to put in place the kind of defense budgets that are necessary.

And so you had a period of decline in the United States in our capability while you were, at the same time, seeing a pretty rapid increase in our adversaries' capabilities. And I think there's a

real disconnect, in many ways, between sort of what the American public generally believes about our capabilities - I think we've become very accustomed to thinking that we're going to have dominance in every domain at all times - and the disconnect between that general belief and the reality we're facing where, you know, you've got things like the threat of hypersonic weapons. You've got, obviously, what's going on in the cyberworld. You've got what's happening in space. You've got what's happening with respect to nuclear modernization that we've seen both the Chinese and the Russians, in particular, involved with. And so, you know, we - President Trump made the right decision over the course of the last two years in terms of allocating the resources, requesting the resources necessary, Congress approving those resources and appropriating them for the defense budget. But we have to recognize that's going to be an ongoing challenge and one that, you know, we can't just say we've provided resources necessary for two years. We have to ensure that we continue that build-up. So it is a dangerous world, and it's one where the United States has to remember at all times that our safety and our security relies upon preeminence, relies upon dominance. And then we've got to make sure that we're focused on that and making sure that we maintain that and that we regain it in areas that we have lost it.

**MEAD:** Do you have any sense of how far we're falling short financially? I mean, should - how much more defense budget should we have?

**CHENEY:** Well, I think we've had two good years. We had the 700 and 716 billion appropriation. You know, this year, the administration's requested 750 billion. The challenge that we face in Congress is the Budget Control Act and the extent to which the Budget Control Act, which was put in place in 2011 for reasons that were sound but has had exactly the opposite effect that it was intended to have - people said we need to come together, and we need to deal with the debt. And so what the BCA does is basically imposes these caps and has given the Democrats the ability to demand a dollar of increased domestic spending for every dollar of increased defense spending. At this point now, you know, we'll see what happens. And negotiations are going on. I don't think we'll be at a dollar for dollar. And if you aren't able to come to an agreement, then you face the very real and devastating prospect of a sequester. And so I think that, you know, the sequester, which will hit in January if we don't come to agreement - it's like taking a meat axe to the defense budget. And it's absolutely devastating. So we're going to need to see, you know, I'd say 3% to 5% growth continue for a number of years to come in order to make sure that we're doing everything we need to do.

**MEAD:** My math is maybe a little off, but that's sort of a \$25, \$35 billion a year kind of trajectory. Yeah. If you look at our relationship with China, which is probably the country that presents the greatest mix of, I would argue, both opportunities and challenges for the United States, what should our priorities be in that relationship? What do we want with China?

**CHENEY:** Well, I think, you know, the Chinese have made very clear that what they want is to diminish America's strength, power globally. They feel that, you know, their own future, their own trajectory, their own dominance in the world, both commercially and militarily, depends upon diminishing us. I think the Chinese very much went to school on what we did in the first Gulf War and looked at those weapons systems and have now - and been very public, frankly. You know, I think that both Republicans and Democrats got China wrong over the course of a number of years and thought if we simply help encourage China to open up economically, join the WTO, that we'll see this society open up, you know, from a political perspective and become part of the community of nations. That's not what's happened. And Chinese belligerence, the

extent to which the Chinese techniques that they use to attempt to monitor their own society, their own population, are clearly capabilities that they would like very much to export globally. The Belt and Road Initiative is not a benign initiative. And I think they pose a real challenge for us because, obviously, commercially, China is, you know, hugely important to us.

But having said that, I think that, you know, what we're seeing today - and I'm a free trader, but I think if you look at what the president and the administration are doing with respect to the tariffs, I support what they're doing. I think that, you know, they're saying, look; we can no longer have a situation where the Chinese lie. And so working very much to get commitments in writing, working to make sure that there's verification, working to help protect American companies from the kind of intellectual property theft that we've seen repeatedly is crucial. And I think, you know, one thing we have to be very careful about when it comes to China is the extent to which you see, you know, what we've seen in the South China Sea where, you know, they will continually say, President Xi, you know, committed to President Obama that he would not militarize those islands and has clearly gone ahead and done so. And, you know, their weapons development, weapons systems development is absolutely targeted at denying us our ability to project our forces.

So when we look back at the issue of the defense budget, for example, you know, it becomes very, very important that we modernize, very important that we are focused on what's happening in space, and I think, also, from an arms control perspective. What we saw the president announce, what the administration's pushing for with respect to the extension of New START, for example, is we're not going to go down the path where we limit ourselves in treaties where the Russians cheat, as they've been doing in the INF treaty, and the Chinese aren't party to them. And so those treaties have to reflect the reality of today's world, which means the Chinese have got to be limited, as well.

**MEAD:** How well do you think the administration's handling the situation in the Middle East?

**CHENEY:** Which one?

(LAUGHTER)

**MEAD:** Yeah. No, there's a range. There is a range.

**CHENEY:** Right. Yeah.

**MEAD:** You've got to look at the whole thing and...

**CHENEY:** Yeah. Well, I think to start with Iran, I completely agree. The administration was right to pull out of the JCPOA. I know you all have heard the arguments previously about the JCPOA - but the combination of absolutely no real verification system. The Iranians weren't required to disclose their past nuclear activity. There were no limits on their ballistic missile or terrorist support activity. And instead, we just shipped, you know, \$1.6 billion to them. And then I heard somebody describe what John Kerry did after that, which was travel the world, acting as, basically, the, you know, head of the Chamber of Commerce for Tehran and helping to encourage people to invest in Iran. You've seen exactly the opposite approach now - which I think is the right approach - to say, you know, we aren't going to accept a false agreement that brings us some sort of false security about the Iranian nuclear program.

We are going to do everything possible to exert maximum pressure, and that includes a sanctions regime. And I think, you know, what you're seeing now is - are the actions of a nation whose economy is being cratered, and that is maximum pressure. We want the Iranians to come back to the table. We want a real deal. But the kind of sort of belligerent threats that you're seeing in the Middle East today are ones I think the administration has responded correctly to - making clear that we're not going to be blackmailed, that, you know, the Iranians have got to understand very clearly that any attempt - you know, force against the United States will be met with an overwhelming response. And I think you've seen that by the movement of our assets there. But the Iranians continuing their nuclear program, continuing to have U.S. taxpayer dollars to fund terrorist activity is something that we simply won't stand for.

**MEAD:** You hear a lot in the U.S. about the problem with human rights in the Middle East and the problem of democracy. And people will look, whether it's at Saudi Arabia or at Egypt or maybe even on the West Bank in the Palestinian territories, and say, you know, shouldn't the U.S. be doing more to promote democracy, promote human rights in those countries? How would you respond to that?

**CHENEY:** Yeah. I think it's very important to promote human rights. I think that, you know, if you look at the history, though, you'll see that in both the case of Egypt and in the case of the Palestinian Authority and the elections in 2006, that the - you know, for example, with respect to the PA, Hamas won the elections. And in Egypt, you had the Muslim Brotherhood rise. And those are fundamentally anti-democratic movements and movements that, you know, basically will prevent all freedom for all the citizens forevermore. So I think that it's - it is a challenging set of issues. I think it absolutely has to be on the table. But I think it's also important for us to remember that we have other issues that we're focused on with those countries, as well, and that includes our security and our safety.

**MEAD:** The trans-Atlantic relationship has come under a lot of stress in recent months. I guess that's happened before. But how important is NATO and how important is that trans-Atlantic alliance to the United States? And what should - what, if anything, should we be doing to try to strengthen it?

**CHENEY:** Yeah. I think NATO is the single most successful, most effective military alliance probably in history. And it's crucially important. I think we have to maintain it. We have to strengthen it. I think the United States has got to continue to be a leader. I think it's right. You know, President Trump is doing what presidents before him did, to some extent, in terms of saying, our partners in NATO have got to be willing to pay their fair share. And so I think that's crucial. But I also think that, you know, we have to recognize and understand what our interests are. And I do think, you know, the acknowledgement of the way that the United States has benefited tremendously, beyond measure, from the international order that we, basically, set up, that we lead - it's been in place since the end of World War II. And we saw, certainly during the Obama administration, what can happen if the United States walks away. The idea that, you know, the Obama administration promoted - and you've written about this, Walter - that somehow, you know, we could pull away from the Middle East and hope that the Iranians would secure our interests - I mean, it was crazy. And today the question for us is, if we aren't the ones that are helping to set and lead the world and set the rules by which people operate, then you will have nations like the Chinese, like the Russians, that step in. And neither the Chinese nor the Russians share our commitment to freedom, share our commitment to the importance of the individual, share our commitment to open, global commerce around the world. And so I think it's

very important for us not to step back. And there are certainly some voices in both parties that would advocate it. But I think that would be absolutely the wrong thing to do from our security perspective.

**MEAD:** There does seem to be a kind of a public mood, at least among some, of wanting to pull back a bit. People look at - you know, there was the Cold War, and then there was the - you know, the war on terror. And, you know, the United States has been engaged all around the world. We had the war in Afghanistan that is now we have - it's now old enough so that people who weren't born when it began are old enough to fight in it. How do you talk to people who think that maybe, you know, some of our problems are that we've been hyperactive and that we need to pull back, rather than always be in charge and leading internationally?

**CHENEY:** Well, I mean, I think that that's sort of the diplomatic way to describe Rand Paul's view of the world, frankly, and the idea that, you know, you should blame America for these conflicts. As long as America has adversaries, as long as we have enemies, as long as we have those who want to do us ill, who want to fundamentally, you know, destroy what we stand for, you know, we have to decide - are we willing to fight for our values and - or not? And I don't think that those commitments can be time-limited as long as you have adversaries that are still in the fight and are still going to continue to threaten. So when I look at Afghanistan, for example, I see a situation in which, you know, we need to decide, how important is it - and I think it's pretty important - to prevent our adversaries from being able to establish safe havens, to prevent them from being able to establish territory they can control free of interference from us in which they can plot and plan attacks against us?

And I think that, clearly, has got to be our mission. And I think we have to be very clear-headed, with respect to Afghanistan, about the extent to which al-Qaida and the Taliban work hand in hand. We've tended to try to distinguish the two. But, you know, you - that is not the reality on the ground. And so I think we have to be very willing to protect those interests. And I think we just - we have to accept the fact that, you know, saying we're simply going to wash our hands of the world's crises and we're going to come home and withdraw within our borders is absolutely irresponsible and foolhardy. You know, we are not the cause of the attacks. And if we were to decide tomorrow that we were done operating internationally, we would invite further attack, actually - you know, the opposite of the result that those who advocate isolationism claim that they're working towards.

**MEAD:** As you look at the - at your Democratic colleagues in the House, would you say that they are - that we're getting closer to a consensus on some of these? Where is Democratic Party thinking on foreign policy going? I told you she was very shy.

**CHENEY:** (Laughter).

**MEAD:** It'll take a lot to try to bring her out.

**CHENEY:** Look. I think you have several different phenomenon - phenomena underway. I think there are, no doubt, moderate Democrats - and - who want to do what's right for the security of the nation, who understand and believe in America's leadership in the world. Unfortunately, they are not the loudest voices in their party right now. And, you know, you do have a group of very radical Democrats. Speaker Pelosi said that a couple of weeks ago, there were only five people in this group. I would tell you that there are at least 30 members of the Democratic caucus who vote with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez 95% or more of the time. And this is a group of members

who will tell you - most of them - that they believe in socialism and who seem to think we don't have any adversaries anywhere in the world. And so the question on our national security set of issues - and I would say on pretty much every set of issues - is whether Speaker Pelosi is going to continue to be captive to those voices.

There's a situation today where, you know, moderate Democrats will say - they will tell you privately - you know, we're afraid to speak up in our caucus meetings because we'll be shouted down or we'll be primaried. You can see, if you look at what the Democratic presidential candidates are doing, they're rushing to see how far left they can become, how far left they can move, and it's a very dangerous thing for the country. So I'm hopeful - you know, we'll have a real test of this in the next couple of weeks on the Armed Services Committee. We're going to be marking up the National Defense Authorization Act. And that has been a bipartisan product for the last 58 years. There are now some suggestions about things we might see the majority on the committee try to put into the NDAA, things that deny America's ability to use tactical nuclear weapons, to develop tactical nuclear weapons, language that would prohibit first use in our deterrence policy and in our strategy - things that would make it very difficult for Republicans to vote for that bill. And I hope we will not go down that path, but it'll be a test of how much people are willing - on the Democratic side - to put aside the radicalism and to come together to do what's right for the nation.

**MEAD:** Are there some colleagues on the committee who you think - on the Democratic side - understand the problem here?

**CHENEY:** I think there are, yes. And so I think these will be very interesting debates because that committee - I was surprised when I, you know, first became a member of that committee in the last Congress at how bipartisan it is. Now, you know, of course, we have battles and disagreements. But it is one of the more bipartisan committees in the House. And I really believe it needs to stay that way.

**MEAD:** All right. Some of the talk that we hear about Israel-Palestine relations and U.S. policy there - that may be a place where there has been, I think, some real headline creation by some members of the Democratic Party. What's your take on that?

**CHENEY:** Yeah, look. I think it's sickening. And, you know, I think people can have disagreements about, you know - certainly when I was working at the State Department, we had disagreements, you know, about what sort of the overall structure for working towards peace should look like. But what you are seeing today out of some of my colleagues on the Democratic side in the House is a kind of vitriolic anti-Semitism that should have no place in any of our public discourse. And I think yesterday was a really dangerous turning point. Before that, I think you could fault the leadership on the Democratic side with enabling this kind of discussion by their silence. You know, when they put a resolution on the floor that they told us was supposed to condemn Ilhan Omar's remarks, they removed her name from it. They couldn't even get agreement to condemn her by name for what she said previously.

Yesterday, however, you had both Majority Leader Hoyer and Speaker Pelosi stand up publicly and defend the comments of one of my colleagues who, you know, in addition to saying that, you know, she felt a calming feeling as she was thinking about the Holocaust, her justification for that was then to go on and tell this absolutely - this fantasy notion of the extent to which the Palestinians, in her telling, helped the Jewish people during World War II, when in fact, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem was working closely with Adolf Hitler. It is a set of lies that's meant to

delegitimize the state of Israel. And it's a really - it is a - it's a vitriolic anti-Semitism. And I believe that the leadership on the Democratic side should be ashamed of themselves for failing to stand up and stop it and speak out against it.

**MEAD:** One of the big differences, it seems, between the parties - or at least parts of the parties - in American politics today is that many liberal internationalists, let's say, look at international institutions and sort of say, OK. The future of world politics is that these institutions are going to become more and more powerful. Nation-States will lose power and that that's in the U.S. interests and we should be trying to build up a sort of a supranational, international, institutional community that would sort of - they would argue - make war less likely and promote human rights, fight climate change and so on. Where do you stand in that discussion?

**CHENEY:** I think that's ridiculous. I think that clearly - just - you know - just to put it bluntly - I think that clearly, you know, every nation's going to operate and should operate in accord with its interests. I thought that Secretary Pompeo's speech this last weekend was actually really fascinating on this point in terms of, you know, thinking about - and this is sort of my description of what he said; I'm not putting words in his mouth - but it is - these institutions that we built since World War II are very important. And our alliances are crucially important. But we also have to reflect and understand the fact that those institutions have got to reflect the modern world and the modern era. And certainly, when I was at the State Department, you know, too many times, you would see people saying, well, we've got to work towards an agreement. We have to work towards an international deal. And you then lose sight. You know, this happened in - on North Korea many times. You lose sight of how important the substance of the deals are because you are so focused on getting a deal - any deal. And I think, you know - that's where we have to understand and recognize how important it is to negotiate deals that are in our interest, to walk away when the other side, frankly, is - you know, the president did with respect to North Korea - to walk away when they're not willing to negotiate where we need to. So, you know, I think that the international structure is crucial, but I don't think that we should be in a situation where we think somehow that there's some, you know, international law out there that is going to defend freedom and security for the United States. We have to do that, and one of the most important ways we do it is by working with our allies and being a leader - being the leader globally to make sure that, you know, there is a world order that we all can continue to live in freedom and security.

**MEAD:** We haven't talked about the Western Hemisphere much yet. But this is certainly a time when, on the U.S. southern frontier with Mexico or in Venezuela, we're really seeing some upheaval and crisis. Let's start with Venezuela.

**CHENEY:** Yeah.

**MEAD:** What do you think the U.S. should be doing, and what's your reading of the situation there?

**CHENEY:** Well, I think that we cannot allow a situation to stand where you have the Russians, the Chinese, the Cubans so actively involved in our own hemisphere, so actively involved in terms of the support for the Maduro government. And I think, you know, when you look at, for example, the fact that we had a couple of weeks ago, the Maduro regime, you know, burning truckloads full of humanitarian supplies for the people of Venezuela, I think we need to be doing everything possible to back Guaido and make sure that we send a very clear message. I think in some ways, this is a test. You know, the Russians are trying to sort out whether or not they can

foment this kind of violence and upheaval in our hemisphere and whether we'll stand for it. I think everyone would like to find a solution that doesn't, you know, require U.S. military force, U.S. troops on the ground. I think that, you know, making sure though that the Venezuelan - the Maduro government understands that we stand with Guaido and we stand with the people of Venezuela is very important.

**MEAD:** There's been some talk of seeing Cuba as a key pressure point there. Do you support administration efforts to put greater pressure on Havana?

**CHENEY:** I do, I do. You know, if you look at - we had a young man come and speak to the House Republican Conference a couple of weeks ago who - his name is Enrique Padron, and he escaped on a boat from Cuba in 1994. And, you know, his message was really one that was directed towards the so-called democratic socialists in the House, saying, you know, look, this is the price I paid for free health care and free education. And I asked him, you know, as a child, what made him recognize that there was an America? You know, this was before the internet. What we don't realize, it was worth risking his life to get here, and he said Ronald Reagan and Ronald Reagan speeches on Radio Marti and the notion of, you know, this land where you could actually be free and people willing to risk all to get here. And I think we owe it to the Cuban people. We owe it to those who have escaped to come here, and we owe it to all of us, to be honest, about the reality of the Cuban regime and not to let them have the kind of impact and influence they're trying to have in Venezuela.

**MEAD:** And what about the southern border, which, I guess, gets into the whole difficult question of migration, which is both a domestic and a foreign policy question. What should we be doing about this?

**CHENEY:** Yeah. I think the southern border is one of the - the issue strain is one of the most partisan - it's become very partisan. And I think there were, you know, a number of us who thought, look, once Nancy Pelosi has the votes to be speaker, she will come to the negotiating table, we can have discussions in a very realistic, practical way about what's necessary to secure the border because securing the border shouldn't be a partisan issue, but that didn't happen. You know, she went from a situation where in the past, she and the others on that side have supported border security and fencing and walls to saying they wouldn't provide \$1 for it. We have to secure the border. I mean, that's sort of the most fundamental responsibility of any sovereign nation. I don't like the fact for the nation that we're to the point where the president had to declare a national emergency and is reprogramming funds to do it. I think Congress should have done its job, and we should appropriate the necessary resources.

But I also think that, you know, while we are making sure that our border's secure, we have to deal with our legal immigration system too. And we have to remember we are a nation of immigrants. That is a noble and historic, you know, fact at the heart of who we are. And we need to make sure that we're encouraging people to come to this country legally, and that means that our legal immigration system has to work far better than it does now. So I'm hopeful that because the president has now done so much to make sure we're securing our southern border that we should be able to now move to - let's have some common-sense agreement about what we can do to make sure that our immigration system works for those who want to come here legally.

**MEAD:** OK, great. Well, I'm going to switch over now to some questions from the audience. And I don't know if I'll get to all of them, but I'll do my best. We have a couple on North Korea...

**CHENEY:** Yeah.

**MEAD:** ...Asking about their recent missile launches, asking what the U.S. should be doing and is there some kind of a - you know, is there a prospect of a real solution there?

**CHENEY:** Yes, I think - well, I don't know if there's a prospect for a real solution. You know, I think that if you look at the North Korean game plan, you know, they are pursuing the same plan that they pursued during the Clinton administration, during the Bush administration. And it's one where, you know, they sort of demand concession after concession after concession, and they never actually - from us, and they never actually produce on their end of the bargain. And I think you have to give this administration real credit for saying we're not going to do that anymore. That's where we are now. I think that the president was right to walk away from the table. And I think that, you know, the North Koreans have to recognize and understand that we're not going to play that same game again. In the past, you know, we saw that - and I say this with - Scooter was very involved on the correct side of this issue during the Bush administration. We had some who weren't.

But the fact of that sort of negotiating tactic is one that we can't allow to continue. And I think making sure that the Chinese know that we're serious about the sanctions and making sure we continue to work with the Japanese, with the South Koreans to help to ensure that the North Koreans, if at all possible, move in the right direction. I'm not optimistic. I think that Kim Jong Un has decided that his nuclear weapons are more important to him than anything we can offer. But what we have to make sure that we're putting maximum pressure and not simply making concessions for the sake of saying we got a deal. I think that would be very dangerous.

**MEAD:** If that's true, that his nuclear weapons are more important to him than anything we can offer, what's the endgame?

**CHENEY:** Well, I think that we have to make sure that the pressure that the North is feeling is pressure that isn't - you know, that's from us. We have to we have to convince him he's wrong. And we have to make sure that he understands that he's going to be completely cut off and that, you know, his society, if it's possible, is experiencing even more of the kind of economic devastation that he has forced them to live under. I think the worst possible thing we could do, though, would be to say we're so desperate to be able to sign some kind of a deal that we agree to the terms of the concessions that he's offering that's anything short of, you know, complete, irreversible denuclearization.

**MEAD:** We've got a question here on U.S.-Russian relations. I guess Secretary Pompeo is either today or - I can't keep track of his schedule because it's changing, but - was meeting with President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov in Sochi. What is the state of U.S.-Russian relations? And are we stuck with a hostile relationship, or is there something that can be done?

**CHENEY:** Look. I think that Vladimir Putin is an adversary. I think Vladimir Putin - he's KGB, you know, the successor of the FSB. But that's his background. He's a thug. He's not somebody who's working as an ally with us. The Obama administration, you know, gave the Russians basically entree back into the Middle East after they'd been gone since 1973, and I think that it's important for us to recognize that. I think there's no question, and you've seen it repeatedly in multiple sources that the Russians did attempt to interfere in our elections in 2016. They will attempt to do so again. I think they need to understand the consequences of doing that. And I think that that's - the sort of threat that the adversarial Russia poses is another reason why we

have to make sure our commitment to NATO is absolutely clear, absolutely solid. And whatever discussions we have about our NATO partners paying their fair share have to always be under the umbrella of we know this is, you know, the most important military alliance that we have and that this is one that we will absolutely honor. Article 5 - I think the Russians need to know they better not make miscalculations about our commitment to NATO and to the defense of our NATO partners.

**MEAD:** Now, some people - and I think some of them are close to the current president - would argue that, you know, by driving Russia and China together into a tighter alliance, we end up with having a bigger problem for ourselves. Do you think there's a realistic prospect of the U.S. just being able to peel Russia away from China, or should we just - or is there not a lot we can do, and do we need to brace for that kind of confrontation?

**CHENEY:** I don't think that we are driving Russia and China into alliance by any means. I think that we have to make sure that we're dealing with each of those countries in a way that reflects our interests. And I think that I wouldn't want to see us, for example, say that we're going to somehow lighten up on the threat that China poses, that, you know, we're going to stop being focused on things like, you know, what Huawei could do to our defense supply chain or, you know, conversely, that we ought to somehow treat Russia in a way that seems to reflect that they're not an adversary. I think we have to - you know, our obligation and responsibility is to deal with the world as it is and to look at each of those relationships with respect to what our interests are and be pretty clear-sighted about what those adversaries want.

**MEAD:** What is your opinion on the president's maximum pressure campaign on Iran? Could this be leading us to open conflict, or do you think it will actually take us to a negotiation?

**CHENEY:** I don't think we have any choice. I think it's the right policy. I think it's an important policy. I think that, you know, the mullahs who rule the country have got to understand that we're, you know, not going to continue to go down the path of saying somehow we'll accept a phony deal, knowing that it doesn't protect our security just because it maybe, you know, gives commentators more comfort. I think the maximum pressure campaign is crucial. And I think, you know, the designation of the IRGC and of Omar Suleiman was the right thing to do. And as I mentioned before, the Iranians need to understand that we're not in a situation where they can try to sort of bully us off of what we know is in our fundamental national interest.

**MEAD:** And we've got a question from an audience member who says that Democrats have accused you of lying about Representative Tlaib's remarks on Israel. What's your response to that charge?

**CHENEY:** Well, go read the remarks, or go listen to the tape. I mean, if you look at the remarks in their entirety - and first of all, you know, there's no context in which it's OK to say when I think of the Holocaust, it gives me a calming feeling. There's no context in which that's OK. Second of all, if you look at the context of her remarks, she went on to tell lies about what the Palestinians did with respect to providing safe haven and her telling to the Jewish people after - during and after the war, and that's actually not what happened - and totally ignores the alliance between Palestinian leadership and the Nazis. So I think it's symbolic of a kind of real - you know, we said it before, just deeply concerning anti-Semitism. And if you are afraid to speak out or if you stand and defend it, then it becomes OK, and it becomes an accepted part of the discourse, and it can never be that. So I would just urge people - look at what she said and look at what she

and others have said in the past and look at the extent to which their leadership is now actually defending those remarks.

**MEAD:** OK. And then a final question from the audience, which is, you know, a pretty complicated one. But I think it's one you would have a lot to say about. And that is, how do we get more defense for our defense dollars? You know, we - there's a lot of inefficiency, duplication. And one of the arguments that people make and I think rightly so, that the false sense of security people have about American defense spending is they compare our nominal spending with, say, China's or Russia's.

**CHENEY:** Right.

**MEAD:** And there's some ways in which we get less bang for our buck than some other people. How do we do better?

**CHENEY:** Yeah, it is a complicated question. It's an important question. You know, one answer and one area where the blame rests is with Congress. You know, I did not have any more memorable experience in a bad way than I did when I was a freshman member last Congress and Secretary Defense Mattis came and testified before the House Armed Services Committee. And sitting there - and the way the room is set up, the freshmen members sit very close to the witnesses. So, you know, I was this close to Secretary Mattis as we are - people now in the front row. And he said to the committee that no enemy in the field has done more damage to our military's capability than the United States Congress has done because of our inability to provide sufficient resources on time. And that also contributes to inefficiencies and waste at the Pentagon. You know, when you have programs where people have to sort of constantly be thinking, all right, how are we going to allocate our money? Is Congress going to put us into a continuing resolution? Are we going to have a sequester? I think that's a fundamental abdication of our most important obligation as elected members, the House Representatives, and it certainly contributes to inefficiencies as does the overall bureaucracy. There's no question.

And, you know, you've got - I think General Hyten, who's the commander of STRATCOM, was the one who said it most recently. You know, when he was asked, what does he fear the most, he said he fears our inability to go fast anymore. So we're facing a situation where adversaries have been able to go fast. And we have got to make sure that we overcome them, and that requires figuring out new ways of procurement. It requires figuring out new ways to make sure that we're rewarding risk-taking at a responsible level instead of sending the message that, you know, we don't want the kind of risk-taking that brings innovation. But, you know, I have to start sort of where I sit, which is this. If there's any issue on which Republicans and Democrats should be able to come together and have to be able to come together for the good of the nation, it ought to be on doing our job to make sure our men and women in uniform have the resources they need to defend all of us.

**MEAD:** That's very helpful. I guess one very quick question - are you getting bored in the House of Representatives? Is there a possibility there's another part of Capitol Hill that you'd like to visit?

**CHENEY:** I am not getting bored in the House of Representatives. I love the House. I haven't made any decision yet about that race. But the House, you know, when I used to - when I was helping my dad write his memoirs and he - you know, when we got to the chapters on the House of Representatives, you could tell how much he loved the place. And I have to say, I

didn't, you know, really understand that until being there myself. And it is just a wonderful place. It's, you know - Alexander Hamilton was describing it, and he said here, sir, the people govern. And that's just the heart of our republic and a place where there's certainly no shortage of issues and challenges. And I really - I love, very much, being in the House. And when I have an announcement to make in that regard, I'll be sure to come back here to Hudson.

**MEAD:** All right. Thank you. We'll take a note of that. And thank you, again, for spending this much time with us. It was a great conversation.

(APPLAUSE)

**MEAD:** Please remember that we're going to let the congressman make her exit here before we get up ourselves. See you again soon. Thank you. It was terrific. You did great.