



The China Challenge: A Conversation with Senator Rick Scott

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John Walters:

Good afternoon, and welcome to the Betsy and Wally Stern Policy Center here at Hudson Institute. I'm John Walters, Hudson's chief operating officer. Hudson Institute's mission is to promote American leadership and global engagement for secure, free and prosperous future. We develop policy solutions by understanding the national good beyond the limitations of conventional thinking.

Today we are honored to have with us Senator Rick Scott, and it's my pleasure to welcome him here to Hudson Institute. He will discuss the great power competition between the US and China, with Asia-Pacific security chair Patrick Cronin, my colleague. Rick Scott has represented Florida in the United States Senate since January of 2019. Senator Scott serves on the Armed Services Committee, the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, the Budget Committee, the Special Committee on Aging, and the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. He's a busy man.

Throughout his tenure in the senate, Senator Scott has been a vocal advocate for stronger policies to counter the geopolitical economic threats that China poses to the United States and our allies around the world. He is also one of Congress's chief critics of Beijing's human rights abuses and repression in Xinjiang province, and in Hong Kong and throughout China.

From 2011 to 2019 Senator Scott served as Florida's 45th governor. Prior to his election, the Senator had an extensive career in business and as an entrepreneur, he's also a veteran of the United States Navy. Welcome, Senator Scott, it's my pleasure to invite you to come to the podium and make your remarks. Please join me in welcoming Senator Scott.

Senator Rick Scott:

John, thanks for the introduction. By the way, the budget sounds really impressive. The budget committee really doesn't do anything. If we did, we wouldn't have trillion-dollar deficits and have \$23 trillion worth of debt. First off, I want to thank everybody for the opportunity to be here. I want to thank the Hudson Institute for the opportunity to be here. Before we begin, I want to say a few words about a friend Jimmy Lai. He was arrested this morning in Hong Kong along with some former law makers, Lee Chungwang and Yong Sum. They were arrested for participating in peaceful protest against a repressive government that's denying the people of Hong Kong the basic rights. Jimmy and the other leaders of the peaceful protest should be honored for their commitment to freedom and human rights for Hong Kongers. Carrie Lam and the Chinese Communist party should consider their next moves very, very carefully. I think everyone, we're all going to follow it and hopefully our government will be very responsive.

Today we're here to talk about the threat we face from communist China. And let's remember, it's communist China. We can't forget that. Xi, the general secretary of the Chinese Communist party is a dictator, a human rights violator who's denying basic rights to the people of Hong Kong, cracking down on dissidents, militarizing the South China sea, and imprisoning more than one million Uyghurs in internment camps simply because of their religion.

We cannot continue to pretend the General Secretary Xi is a world leader intent on pursuing policies of freedom, economic cooperation and peace. He pursues policies that are good for the Chinese Communist Party, period. He is a despot in disguise, he is Mao Zedong with a makeover. Unfortunately,

the last few decades of policies coming out of Washington have not solved the problem of communist China. We've merely altered the battlefield.

For far too long, since President Nixon traveled to communist China in 1972, the United States has pursued a policy of cooperation and integration. President Nixon's goal was to disassociate communist China from the Soviet Union and prevent their further intrusion into Southeast Asia. But as the decades marched on policymakers in Washington convinced themselves that they could change communist China. That they could bring them into the world community. Some focus solely on strengthening the US economy and expanding opportunity for American companies. Our relationship with communist China was an opportunity to venture to new markets, new industries, and new wealth.

On this front, some companies have seen great success in the short term, but others have watched the Chinese government orchestrate the theft of intellectual property and ultimately their customers. For those whose focus was on spreading American values of freedom, democracy, and capitalism around the globe, the hope was that a relationship with communist China would naturally result in their adoption of our values. Many were convinced that if they showed communist China and its people that we have a free market economy of human rights and individual dignity, of a democratic system that respects the will of the people, that they would naturally move in our direction.

It's time for policymakers in Washington to admit that this effort has been a complete failure. Rather than move communist China in the direction of democratic values, the policy of economic cooperation has simply given communist China the resources to compete with the United States on a global scale, all while they continue to nationalize industries, steal from US companies, deny basic human rights, violently suppress dissent, and pursue policies of religious oppression.

Our posture towards communist China has simply strengthened a determined adversary. One, they've used this conflict as a zero-sum game. They win, we lose. For Beijing, their goal of increasing influence around the world requires the United States and other freedom-loving countries to be weakened. communist China does not want to join the community of nations so much as it wants to rule it.

The result. Whether we want to admit it or not there is a new cold war. The threat today is not another nuclear annihilation. Rather, this is a cold war focused on technology, misinformation and political persuasion. As I've traveled around the world, I've seen communist China global reach up close. In Panama, communist China is building a port, their own port to control the flow of goods in our hemisphere. In Argentina, communist China is building a new nuclear power plant that the Argentine government doesn't need or want. Across Africa, communist China is mining natural resources with the goal of furthering their control. And all around the world, Chinese state sponsored national champion technology companies like Huawei expand their reach.

Right here at home, we've been faced with instances of Chinese infiltration into American research institutions with the goal of stealing sensitive, often taxpayer-funded research. communist China's goal is to control as much of the region in the world as they can. We must be very clear about this, and we must restructure our global posture and national security apparatus to reflect this growing threat.

Communist China's strategy is systematic and global. They're building up their military. They're subsidizing strategic industries. They're working to control natural resources. They're infiltrating weak economies and using their presence to exert political influence. They're applying more pressure in East

Asia, particularly Hong Kong and Taiwan while also expanding the region all across the globe. They're building a surveillance state, both inside and outside of communist China to dominate and control the flow of information. Our commitment to peace, democracy, and human rights around the globe must be paired with an equally global strategy to deal with the growing threat of communist China.

What I've tried to focus on throughout my first year in the US Senate is finding every opportunity possible to reveal communist China's true intentions, and their fundamentally anti-democratic worldview. Our goal must be to untangle some of the missteps our government has made to protect the citizens of the United States and the long-term security of our economy.

I introduced legislation that would prevent the federal government from purchasing drones made in communist China and other adversaries due to the national security threat. I introduced legislation that would prohibit intelligence sharing with countries that give Huawei access to their 5G networks. I introduced legislation that will prevent US companies from selling component parts to Huawei and other Chinese-owned tech companies. I have supported a national defense strategy that reflects a commitment to combating the threat of Chinese military expansion. I fought to expose Chinese propaganda outlets like China Daily that collaborate with US media companies to publish inserts appearing to be real news. I've urged US research institutions and hospitals to take steps to safeguard sensitive technology and research. A push that has already resulted in high profile institutions terminating employees who had undisclosed relationships with communist China.

I fought successfully to get the Peace Corps out of communist China. I joined legislation to prevent federal retirement savings funds from being invested in communist China. I was the first US senator to visit Hong Kong after the protest began and supported the Hong Kong human rights and democracy act. One of the few bipartisan accomplishments of this Congress. Also introduced legislation that would prevent US companies from selling crowd control equipment to the Hong Kong police. I support legislation to urge Taiwan's admittance into the WHO, and have strongly voiced my support for continued arms sales to Taiwan.

I've traveled to Latin America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, urging countries to understand the threat from communist China and not bow to their political and economic pressure. Over the last few years, we've seen a tectonic shift in the way policy makers view the problem of communist China. It may be the only issue that both parties fundamentally agree on. We're taking the threat to our security and our way of life seriously, and that's progress. But there's a lot more to do.

My hope is that discussions like these and those that are happening in the halls of Congress, and in boardrooms across our country, will further our goals of highlighting communist China's aggression into developing a comprehensive strategy to address this threat.

Today I've spent a lot of time talking about the geopolitical threat of Communist China, a threat I think that's going to dominate the next century. We often talked about this threat in very abstract terms, but I want to conclude today by talking about the real people that are suffering in communist China.

There is a human cost to the kind of anti-democratic, anti-religion and anti-human rights regime that General Secretary Xi is leading in communist China. I've traveled to Hong Kong and I've spent many hours meeting with the leaders of the democratic protest. Many have been beaten, sexually harassed, or arrested simply for exercising the basic rights they were promised during the handover from Great

Britain in 1997. Nathan Law was one of them. Nathan was one of the students that founded Demosisto in 2016, and he cofounded the Network of Young Democratic Asians to promote exchanges amongst social activists. He was elected to the legislative council and became the youngest legislative counselor in history, only to see his seat overturned by communist China.

He was later jailed for his participation in the umbrella movement. I was honored to have Nathan as my guest at last month's State of the Union. Journalists have been imprisoned and expelled from the country for simply reporting the truth. One lost her eye to police violence.

More than one million Muslim minorities are being held in internment camps simply because of their religion. Faced with reeducation programs, isolation, and forced organ harvesting. In some instances, communist China sent men to sleep in the same bed as Uyghur women, a disgusting act with no purpose other than to demean, degrade, and dehumanize. It's cruelty, plain and simple. It's barbarism.

We can no longer pretend that communist China is an ally with good intentions, merely a partner with customs or political system that we don't fully understand. We know what communist China is. We know who they are. Communist China is a totalitarian regime, bent on world domination. One that quashes dissent people, often violently, and destroys anyone or anything that stands in its way.

We all remember the brave man who stared down Chinese tanks in Tiananmen Square with no concern for his own life. The image was an inspiration to millions around the world who stood in solidarity with those students fighting for their basic human rights. He was nicknamed Tank Man, and we still don't know exactly what happened to him, but we should assume he was murdered by the communist Chinese regime.

Today in communist China, we have thousands of images that reflect a continuation of this hero's resistance against despotic rule. The protest in Hong Kong, the journalists risking their lives and their safety to shine light on injustice. The Uyghurs fighting back bravely in the face of suffering. The politicians questioning Xi's leadership. The brave health workers who tried to warn us about the Chinese coronavirus.

America stands with the freedom-loving people of Hong Kong and Taiwan. With the historically persecuted people of Tibet, the peaceful community of Uighur Muslims, Falun Gong, and the journalists and political dissidents in communist China. We stand for human rights. And we stand against political neutrality in the face of evil. The challenge posed by communist China is great. We have to face this challenge head on.

It will be the conflict that determines whether the world community will embrace the values of democracy and human rights or cower to the whims of dictators. I will fight every day to make sure we come down on the right side of history. Thank you.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

Senator, very powerful speech and thank you very much for not only those words but now being willing to spend a bit of extra time and conversation. The impressive thing about your speech to me was not just your passion, but you've enumerated so many specific examples which my own research would corroborate, those are all real. But I work in a think tank and I've been working on research in the region

for a long time and you've given a better speech than I could give. How did you come on China? How did this interest in China and this passion develop?

Senator Rick Scott:

First of all, wouldn't we all love so that China would do the right thing and they could become part of the world community? That would help to be a competitor but not an adversary. Somebody that doesn't want to have a world domination. Here's the way I've always thought about it. I grew up in a very poor family. I lived in public housing. I don't know my dad. My parents ... I have an adopted dad, didn't have work. I remember when my dad got his car repossessed.

What's China doing? They're intentionally stealing our jobs. They don't open up the markets. So number one, they're not a ... They're an adversary. They're not a legitimate competitor. They steal our jobs intentionally. They don't act responsibly.

Number two, I have family members that have been involved in drugs. What are they doing? They're selling fentanyl in this country. They can sit there and they can sit there and know what everybody does through our social scoring but gosh, they can't find that darn fentanyl that they're shipped into this country killing American citizens.

You just can't imagine what they're doing to the Uighurs. Who could do that? How could you be that barbaric? And so if we don't stand up for ... if Americans don't stand up for freedom, democracy, human rights, who does? We are the leader ... we are the leaders. And I think it's important for all of us to do it. I think we all have to understand when we buy a Chinese product, we are helping Xi focus on world domination. Every time we buy anything from China, we have to think about that. That's what we're doing.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

Senator, when we think about the Coronavirus outbreak right now, that started in Wuhan and in China, there's plenty to criticize. Xi alternatives, the party, the Chinese Communist party for covering up the information flow, which contributed, I think, to the severity. But it is a pandemic and we share that interest. How do you think about the Coronavirus and China's role and the CCP? It's partly a shared interest in terms of pandemic, but at the same time the party has a different priority, right? The communist party wants to save the party.

Senator Rick Scott:

We're at least three months into this crisis with the coronavirus. Does anybody trust anything that comes out of China? No. I mean the first time we're going to really have a chance to see what's the incubation period, what's some mortality rate, what can you do? Is really South Korea. South Korea is going to be ... I believe they'll be transparent, but I don't believe there's anything that's coming out of China that's transparent.

And so it's causing ... Is our CDC over in Wuhan? No, not allowed. Was the WHO been able to go over over there and do their independent analysis? No, they had to do it with the communist Chinese party. So I think they ... And then not letting Taiwan ... intentionally making sure Taiwan is not part of the WHO, I mean this is about world health and so it's ... I'm very disappointed. They're not worried. They're

not concerned about what happens to the world. They're very focused on staying in power. We have no earthly idea actually what ... about anything with regard to the coronavirus based on what China's put out. It's inconsistent what they put out.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

It's a serious problem. Another serious problem and one that you've introduced legislation on is the drone issue. I've seen China sale of drones in the Middle East, including killer drones. They can't ... We can't compete even with them in terms of how they operate.

Senator Rick Scott:

No because they subsidize the industry.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

Right. What about your good legislation? What are the obstacles or what are the challenges to trying to get this legislation over the bar and not to mention surveillance technology and other technologies that maybe should be kept out of our economy?

Senator Rick Scott:

Here's the positive. The positive is the Department of Interior stopped. Positive is we got through the National Defense Authorization act, the Department of Defense is not going to be buying Chinese drones. But we ... I haven't gotten enough support, in my opinion, out of all the branches of the federal government. I mean the Chinese government, they are very smart. They lobby and they ... So, I believe everything we're doing will happen. It's just when, how long it's going to take.

If we just stay after it. I'm a business guy. If I stayed after what I wanted to get done in business, I got there. So the same with this. But we're trying to get the State Department, trying to get everybody to support legislation. And it's work because there's still people that just think, "Oh gosh, if we're just really nice and we just engage, it'll all workout." Well, we've been doing that for a long time and it hasn't worked out.

Senator Rick Scott:

I mean we wouldn't ... I mean I still ... I wish that communist China understood that they would be better off to be part of a world economy that they don't have to dominate. I mean, let everybody go compete and the best person win. Don't do it the way they're doing where you have to steal and things like that.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

Well, one of the arguments would be that we need to provide alternatives as well. 5G is another area where we've been lagging behind. We've allowed China to kind of have its chain and state champions, like Huawei and where have we been?

Senator Rick Scott:

Yeah, I agree. I think one thing we've got to do is we have got to be better organized at explaining what the alternatives are. We've got to have more discussions about what ... We really are not going to be able to share the same intelligence or information with Germany or with the UK. And Nigel Farrage was over here this week and that's one of the things he's focused on. But we're late to the game as far as talking about it.

I think there's going to be plenty of alternatives, but we've got to get out there. We've got to promote it. We have to ... What I did as governor when I wanted to promote something, I held a conference and tried to get people to start talking to each other. You don't have to have ... Government doesn't have to go run things. You have to get people to cooperate.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

Senator, you're right. And you've got that business experience as well as running the state. And now at the Senate, you have an ability to kind of tax the administration, the executive branch to audit themselves, right?

Senator Rick Scott:

Right.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

And to find out what they're doing or what they should be doing and inform the Congress so that you can make meaningful legislation.

Senator Rick Scott:

Yeah, I mean, part of ... And I mean, it's great to be on some of the committees I'm on because you have good oversight. And the way my experience in this job ... I've had this job for 14 months is if you are logical and you continue to ask questions and you continue to push and push and push, then you know, people start, they start listening and they start reacting. And that's been our experience.

It was ... I mean, I don't know why we were, why the Peace Corps was in Hong Kong or in communist China, were getting no return. And so it took a few months, but they're not there anymore. There was no return on it. So my job is ... and I tell people this is, these jobs are fleeting. I have this job for at least six years. And if you have ideas of how I can get messages out, I mean, and as US senator, you have the opportunity to travel the world, to get your message out. And that's what I'm committing to do. But if anybody has ideas of how I can get this message out better, I'm willing to do it.

But we have got to compete against these Chinese companies that are trying to surveil us and trying to control our data. So and not just from a government standpoint. From your standpoint, do you want all your data out there where the Chinese government's going to have it? I don't.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

Senator, one of the challenges here with dealing with China is because they are such an integral part of the global economy, this question of decoupling kind of pits the national security professionals versus

the businessmen and women. You've been both in national security and business, so how do you see decoupling and the possibility or what we have to do here to disentangle ourselves on critical technologies at a minimum?

Senator Rick Scott:

It's not because of American people and what we're doing, it's because of what communist China's doing. I think there is going to be more decoupling. I think we're seeing with the coronavirus or I think people are saying to themselves, "Are we too dependent in a country that acts an adversary?" And I think there's ... that's going to cause some people to rethink their supply chains.

But I think when people sit and say to themselves, "Do I want to support a regime that does ... has the human rights record that the communist party has in China?" I think people are going to say, "I'm not going to do that." So I think that's going to cause more than decoupling. So China can change. China can be a competitor rather than an adversary. I mean I hope they do, but I think it's going to happen.

I think unfortunately that's the path we're going down and people are going to have to choose. Do you ... And I choose, one, I want more jobs in this country. I don't want people selling more fentanyl in this country. I don't want China to try to militarize the rest of the world. And they lied to Obama on the South China Sea.

So, and we have ... we're it. We're the ones going to stand up for human rights. If this country doesn't, who does?

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

Indeed. With the South China Sea, Xi Jinping promised President Obama he wouldn't militarize the South China Sea then did.

Senator Rick Scott:

What have they ever done that they agreed to do? I mean it's like this new trade deal. I would love to do more trade with China. We all would. How many of us believe they're going to comply?

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

It's a great question. When you deal with the American system though, we're a big, open, inclusive system. You've run a state. I'm a proud native of Florida, but I don't pretend to think that my hometown of Sarasota or my university town Gainesville could protect us from China's intrusions. They're exploiting our open system, our universities, our research lab, our businesses. So how can you now in the Senate, in the national government, help our states and local communities and governments clamp down on a malign behavior and exploitation?

Senator Rick Scott:

Well, I think first off, Americans don't want China to steal our stuff. So we started talking to our universities and our hospitals, and already in Florida and you're seeing around the country, that they're looking into it and people have been held accountable. You saw Moffitt Cancer Center, they let three of

their top people go because they had undisclosed relationships with communist China. And so I think that's good. I think that's going to happen. Other people are proposing legislation, but I believe that Americans, we're innovative. I mean we will win if we understand what the challenge is. But I'm going to continue to make sure, and I know there's others who are going to make sure that hospitals, our universities, are all thinking about China's commitment to steal our ... It's not just business information but taxpayer information.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

And one of the challenges with the communist party's activities is that they'll go wherever the opportunity is. So it's the Caribbean, they'll send Belt and Road Initiative money, and then they'll say, "By the way, a military relationship should now follow. The PLA should come in." What about our own hemisphere, more broadly, in terms of China's activities?

Senator Rick Scott:

They're building unnecessarily, and without disclosing all the information they're building down at the Panama Canal, they're building the terminals down there. I was down there talking to them as I was in Argentina, communist China is building a nuclear plant that the government doesn't want. They're helping Maduro down in Venezuela, and he's committing genocide against his citizens. You see these little kids starving to death. They can't get medicine, they can't get water, they can't get food. If you want to go see something close, that's just an unbelievable crisis, go to Cúcuta in Columbia and you see these young moms with two or three kids that are sleeping on the streets. And thank God for USAID and the Catholic charities because they're running a place that they serve about 5,000 meals a day. So a lot of these little kids and moms are getting one meal a day, and they're waiting three or four hours for it. And communist China is helping Maduro down there.

So they're here. We have to understand that they are infiltrating our hemisphere. And in every problem that happens in Latin America ultimately happens in America. I mean it helps people like Hezbollah come to our hemisphere.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

Indeed. You've mentioned several times the fentanyl crisis which preys upon it, and creates further the opioid crisis in our country, trying to pretend or offer some assistance. Maybe they did actually provide some assistance, but unfortunately they don't stop looking over here or ... How are you looking at-

Senator Rick Scott:

Has it stopped?

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

No. It hasn't stopped.

Senator Rick Scott:

I mean we only have five international mail centers. And there's so much mail that comes in through China, we can't check every package. And I was down at the mail center down in Miami, which is like the fourth busiest. I mean every day they're finding illegal drugs coming in from China. Every day. And they're able to track it better because they don't have as much mail as some of the other mail centers have that are even busier. I don't think there's any question, when you look at how communist China runs their economy, this is all intentional. They know where this stuff is made. And so it's there, it's intentional. Everything they do is very systematic and very intentional. And we'd love the [inaudible 00:30:41] change. We'd love to just go and compete. I'm a business guy. I love to compete. Just make sure the rules are fair, I'll do everything I can to win.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

You've graphically described even some of the horrors in Xinjiang, for instance, that the Uyghurs have suffered. But our Peace Corps does good work around the world in tough zones, but why have you been so passionate about trying to get our Peace Corps out of there and succeeding in doing so?

Senator Rick Scott:

Sure. Well, I think we're running trillion-dollar deficits in this country. We cannot waste our money. When I was governor of Florida, I walked in with a \$4 billion budget deficit in my first year, I balanced the budget. And by the time I left, we were running \$3 billion surpluses, because we looked at how we spent every dollar. And there are 4,000 lines to the state budget, and it was about an \$87 billion budget. My goal was on every line we had to get a return. I believe that about our federal money. It's somebody's tax money. So I've been going piece by piece around to different agencies, and say, "What do we get for it? What do we get for it?" So I asked the individuals running the Peace Corps to come in and tell me what are we getting for being in China? I first said, "Why are we there?"

They said, "Because we were asked." I said, "It's not a developing country. They're working hard to take all of our jobs." I said, "So what do you do there?" They said, "We teach English." Said, "So how's that help us?" I said, "Do you teach capitalism? Do you work with the state department? Do you work with the Department of Commerce?" No, we don't work with anybody." They said, "Somebody might talk about it, but we don't have any plan to do that. We just teach English. That's all we do." I said, "So how much do you spend?" They weren't sure. I said, "Tell me exactly what we get for it." And no answer. There was no answer what we got for it. So that's somebody's money. We're taxing our citizens, we should expect to get a return every dollar we spend.

And so I said, "If you can't tell me that we're getting a return, then you ought to get out." And then they said, "Well, maybe somebody could go to work for the state department." I said, "Great." I said, "Has that ever happened?" "Not that we know of." I mean you can't make this stuff up. When I was governor, I could tell you stories because what happens, we have so many wonderful people to work in our government, but often no one's thinking about why are we doing what we do, and maybe it made sense 20 years ago, but why are we doing it today? And I think this was an example, maybe it made sense 25 years ago for the Peace Corps to be there. But when they're impacting our jobs, they don't open up their markets, we're not teaching capitalism, we have no example of where something good happen. Then why are we doing it? Let's stop.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

We have limited means. We have to protect our national security, and we've been doing such good humanitarian work. We assume it will be repaid, but unfortunately there's some places that are just not worth investing in.

Senator Rick Scott:

It's not, why are we doing it? And we're running trillion-dollar deficits.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

Indeed.

Senator Rick Scott:

Somebody is going to pay for these deficits.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

Now one person who's paying are the tuition that's coming in from Chinese students. I'm thinking University of California, San Diego, where one fourth of the student body is from China. A lot of tuition, so there's a lot of pressure and push back from universities.

Senator Rick Scott:

And we subsidize every student.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

Indeed.

Senator Rick Scott:

Think about what we're doing. We subsidize all the students. So we're subsidizing the education for the people that are coming in. So when I became governor, we were raising tuition in Florida in our universities, 15% every year, plus inflation. Who can stay up with that? I mean it made no sense. And then I said, I asked them, I said, "Tell me your survey. Do people get jobs?" "Oh, we don't do surveys like that." "How much money do they make?" "We don't do surveys like that." I said, "You're crazy." And so I changed the funding to 20% of the budget, \$580 million a year of our 11 universities in Florida. They get money tied to three things. What's it cost to get a degree? We now have a second lowest tuition in the country. Do you get a job? How much money do you make? And so now if you look at US Newsroom Report, Florida now has number one higher education system in the country. And if you're a Gator fan, the University of Florida is number seven in the country. And they'll be in the top five within two years.

Because we set up what are we doing this for? Let's get a return on it. It's somebody's money. We're subsidizing this. The tuition doesn't cover all of it. We are subsidizing this. If we're subsidizing it, you should expect your tax dollars to get a return.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

I'll be lecturing at my alma mater in Gainesville in just a couple of weeks, so I'll have to bring that fact up.

Senator Rick Scott:

They're number seven now there.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

Senator that's a good achievement for a place that, when I was there, they said, "This is a suntan university." So we've come a long way. Some of those Chinese students, kidding aside, literally one taking photographs outside of the Naval installation at Key West. What is that all about?

Senator Rick Scott:

Right? I mean, the law in China is if you're Chinese citizen, by law, you have to spy for China. If they tell you they want information, you have to go get it. That's the law of that country. I mean, think about this. I mean, if every American knew what communist China was doing and what their laws required them to do, we would have a totally different approach. And part of my job is I'm going to do everything I can to make sure everybody in the country knows this with the hope that maybe China will completely change. They haven't so far. But yeah, they're stealing our technology. I mean, we pay for this. I mean, we're spending all this money, whether it's NIH dollars, or what we're putting into our universities, all these research dollars, and then they just go steal it.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

Senator, I know your time is short. And just in terms of wrapping up this great discussion, I wish we had more time. I mean, what is it that you'd like to see America stand for in this time that we live in?

Senator Rick Scott:

You know, I believe we ought to stand one, for human rights. I think we are the one place that ... We believe every individual's life is important. And so even though the Uyghurs don't live in the United States, their lives are just as important as all of ours. And so I want a country and a population that really believes that. And then I think about the kids like me growing up, that their parents struggled for work. They got to have the same shot I had. I grew up in this country at a time where you could get a job. But if you look at it, what's happened? And while we have a really good economy now, I mean, there's a lot of the jobs that China's taken. And they've taken it not because they were good competitors, but because they did things that were wrong. And we've got to stop that.

We need to do trade deals, but they got to be fair to Americans. Got to be fair to American taxpayers, they've got to be fair American workers. And I'm going to fight for these things. And then the primary purpose of the federal government is to make sure we continue to have our bill of rights and our way of government. That's not what China wants. China wants to dominate the world. That's how they're acting. I have grandkids, I got married really young. I have six grandsons, a granddaughter on the way. I want them to live in a country where they say that they get the same rights that I grew up with. And we're going to have to fight for it. And hopefully it won't be a military fight, but we're [inaudible]

00:38:29] going to happen is if we can fund our military and China quits putting all the money to try to defeat our military.

Senator Rick Scott:

But thank you again for the opportunity to be here.

Dr. Patrick M. Cronin:

Thank you, Senator. And good luck with this. Thank you very much. Please [inaudible 00:38:43] thank you to the Senator.