Congressman Mike Gallagher on the Importance of Strategic Alliances Amid Chinese Communist Aggression

TRANSCRIPT

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- Congressman Mike Gallagher, U.S. Representative from Wisconsin
- Rebeccah Heinrichs, Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute

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Rebeccah Heinrichs:

Welcome to this virtual event with Hudson Institute. My name is Rebeccah Heinrichs. I'm a Senior Fellow at Hudson and today I have the privilege of being joined by Congressman Mike Gallagher. Congressman Gallagher represents Wisconsin's 8th district, he is a member of the House Armed Services Committee, and he was tapped to serve on the congressional task force on China. And importantly, the Congressman is a Marine Corps veteran.

I know for my own, speaking for myself, I always read everything you write, Congressman, because you have the unique ability of not only explaining the big policy problems, but then also giving very specific practical solutions, which benefits my work and I know benefits many others. So thank you so much for your work. Thank you for being here to have this conversation about China.

And if I may, we'll start off by just setting the stage, talking about the China threat and then move along and have a conversation about how China has behaved during the COVID pandemic. Congressman, can you start off by explaining just the threat from China? How you perceive the near term and the long term threat that the Chinese Communist Party poses to American security and American way of life?

Congressman Mike Gallagher:

Well, thank you, Rebeccah, for having me. Thank you for all of your intellectual contributions to this debate. I also follow what you write, I think I follow you on Twitter even, so I really appreciate you challenging my thinking and serving as an invaluable resource to all of us policymakers that are trying to make sense of what I think are the early stages of this competition between our countries.

And I should confess, at the start of this, that I am not a China expert, I'm not a Sinologist. In fact, I'm a recovering Arabist. I spent most of my professional life, for the last decade, focused on the Middle East, learning the language of that region. And so I think of myself as a little bit late to the game, but I do think it's incumbent upon anyone that cares about national security and foreign policy to educate themselves because I do believe, and to the point of your question, that the Chinese Communist Party may be the single greatest challenge our nation has ever confronted and poses extraordinary challenges across the economic, the military, and the political domains.

When you look at the scale of the China challenge, in comparison to our 20th century adversaries, it's actually really sobering. In 1917, Imperial Germany's economy was about 36 percent of US GDP. In '43, Nazi Germany's economy represented 26 percent of US GDP. Imperial Japan, about 14 percent. And in 1980, the Soviet Union's GDP was still only about 40 percent of the American economy.

As far back as 2014, China was about 60 percent of the American economy, and that gap has been steadily shrinking. And under the lens of purchasing power parity, which is especially important for looking at what our respective defense budgets can buy, China has already
overtaken the US. So I just would submit that we've never been involved in a great power struggle with a country whose economy is so evenly matched with ours.

And what's more, the CCP has been working, on a nonstop basis, not only to steal intellectual property in defense-related fields, such as AI, robotics, and telecommunications, but also siphoned off our industrial power as well. And I think, and perhaps the last thing I'll say, the biggest lesson we've learned in the coronavirus crisis is not only another reminder of the nature of the CCP and the way in which it is willing to lie and obfuscate internationally, but just how brittle our defense industrial base is, how many single points of failure have infected our supply chain, and how many of those supply chains have a road that go back to Beijing. And I think this is why we're challenging ... we're struggling, rather, to mobilize in this crisis in a way where we fondly look back at how we did this in World War II, the days of Freedom's Forge, and the general bet we make on democracy relative to autocracy. It's about our ability to scale up and improvise in the face of friction.

I think what makes this competition very unique is just how dependent we are on China right now, and the question of how we selectively decouple from China economically, without punishing American consumers, I think is going to be in some ways the most significant question of the next decade. And I guess the good news is that I think that's a question that creates a lot of strange bedfellows, politically.

I see a lot of support, on both sides of the aisle right now, for what I would call responsible decoupling legislation. And I actually think more broadly, whether it's Ilhan Omar criticizing the CCP for its human rights abuses in Xinjiang province, or AOC joining me on a letter to criticize the NBA for bending the knee to General Secretary Xi, there's just a lot of interesting coalitions being formed in Congress right now. Perhaps this is the only issue that can unite AOC on the one hand and Tom Cotton on the other hand. So with that, I'll stop talking.

Rebeccah Heinrichs:

No, that's great. Thank you so much. And then that leads me to my next question then. Today is the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square. Can you talk about that particular issue and how we should think about that in today's context of how we were competing with China, and then tie that into specifically ... How does that reflect on modern CCP? Or are they different, and maybe that's something just to be left at history?

Congressman Mike Gallagher:

Well, the first thing I would say is, it's easy to think about this competition militarily, or even economically, or diplomatically. I think where perhaps our thinking is weakest, or in its earliest stages, is on the ideological competition. And I've at least been thinking about the anniversary of Tiananmen through that ideological lens. I think there is a naive temptation to believe that frictions in the US-China relationship are just a product of the Trump administration's more hawkish approach and that ... once Joe Biden is in the White House, we can simply go back to the status quo ante. I think that's extremely naïve and I think part of it is related to how we underestimate the way in which Xi and the CCP look at this through an ideological lens.
In fact, I would submit they really do care about the battle of ideas and are fully committed to defending communist ideology. Xi has spent an inordinate amount of time studying the Soviet collapse and his most interesting conclusion is that the Soviets were insufficiently dedicated to ideology. And as a result, his signature policies, whether they're One Belt One Road, Made in China 2025, are designed to help bolster the ideological faith of the Chinese people.

A former Australian journalist, John Garnaut who's written about this very effectively in a speech called Engineers of the Soul, that I would recommend to everybody, but the basic point is that when faith in the party flags, the entire system risks collapse, and Xi's challenge to continually convince 1.4 billion people that the CCP should remain in power and that foreign governments should partner with his ethnocentric totalitarian government is no small task. And it would be great power competition malpractice for the United States to fail in making Xi's efforts more difficult.

Now, to relate it specifically to what happened 31 years ago today, when PLA tanks rolled into Tiananmen Square and murdered 10000 or more Chinese protesters who'd rallied around the Goddess of Liberty, a 30-foot statue resembling the Statue of Liberty that had been constructed out of plaster and foam in the shadow of Mao's portrait. Well, I think that was the day when the CCP told the world what it truly was. A very tyrannical and at times murderous regime that would exercise extreme violence to maintain its grip on power. And though its methods may have gotten more subtle in the intervening decades, I think the same is true today and I don't think the CCP has changed. But in some ways I think they've changed us.

While the world was shocked at the brutality of the Chinese regime in 1989, no one can claim surprise today, which is why the looming National Security Law in Hong Kong is so troubling. It's a flagrant violation of the '84 Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Hong Kong Basic Law. It seems as though they're trying to extinguish the last flame of independence in Hong Kong. And, of course, look at the concentration camps in Xinjiang and forced labor of Uyghur Muslims to understand the fate that could befall a Hong Kong democracy activist and anyone the party deems insufficiently loyal.

So, final thing I'd say, as we reflect on Tiananmen and the nature of this ideological competition, again, this is an area where there's an effort in Congress to do some solid bipartisan work alongside my colleague John Curtis, what we're calling a Hong Kong airlift to provide priority refugee status to Hongkongers facing CCP persecution. We're working through the details right now, but with the potential Tiananmen-like purge looming, I think we need to step up and save as many Hongkongers as possible. I was encouraged to see British Prime Minister Boris Johnson suggest something similar.

Hong Kong is one of the most educated populations in the world with high-tech skills, love of freedom, hatred of CCP, and any nation would be lucky to have Hongkongers. And so I think that's one thing that we can do. And then, I think it should also force us to look at our relationship with Taiwan and figure out how we can enhance that relationship. Because I do fundamentally believe, and you would know better than I, because, again, I'm not a regional specialist, but as I just read what he's written and what he's said, I do think for General Secretary Xi, that is ... Taiwan will be the legacy issue. Unification of Taiwan with the mainland
will be his legacy issue and that's obviously something that we need to stand in the way of and deter, and that will be a very difficult thing over the next decade.

Rebeccah Heinrichs:

And that brings to mind, too ... Curious, whenever you go back home to the district and now you're home there, because everybody is back at home during the pandemic, what is your sense that whenever you talk to normal folks from Wisconsin, the people that you represent ... Do they understand the threat from China when you have these conversations? Is it something that they're thinking about and that they can absolutely understand, and that they are ready? Because you mentioned that there is going to be some economic pain to Americans if we are going to have this, even if it's responsible decoupling, it will come at a cost to the American consumer. Can you speak to that a little bit?

Congressman Mike Gallagher:

Yeah, that's a great question. I always think back to this moment in the 2016 campaign, which was my first campaign. I had never run for anything since ... student government in high school. And those campaigns were very embarrassing. I hope no one has pictures that would show my campaign strategy back then. But there was this moment, if you remember, there were a series of attacks by Salafi jihadist terrorist groups. There were some domestic attacks, obviously San Bernardino and others. But that was part of this broader trend throughout Europe and the Middle East. And there was this almost palpable sense, even in the Midwest and in Northeast Wisconsin, that ... just the general environment was less safe. In fact, I remember someone coming up to me, and this was in August right before ... right as pre-season was ending, and saying, "Hey, is it safe to go to a Packers game this year?" Just because there was that almost palpable feeling of like, "I don't know what's going to happen."

I don't think we're there in terms of the threat posed by China, and I'm not trying to suggest that the threat posed by China is identical to the threat posed by Salafi jihadist groups. So I do think we have a long way to go in terms of explaining why we need to make further investments in INDOPACOM, why we need to pay the cost of responsible decoupling from China, why it's important to wage ideological warfare, why it's important to convince our social media companies to at least not enable CCP apparatchiks that leverage their platforms.

But I do think something is changing. And I think the recent polling suggests that ... at least as long as they've been doing polling, negative views of China are at the highest levels they've ever been. That's not just true in the United States. I've seen some recent pulling out of Canada that suggests a similar shift is underway. Once you've pissed off the Canadians, who are exceptionally nice, you know you've done something wrong.

I think this wolf warrior diplomacy, that we've seen around the world, has been very ham-handed and is turning off a lot of our European allies. So, I think we have an opportunity to convince the American people of the need to invest heavily in a deterrence by denial strategy against the Chinese Communist Party and the PLA, but we're not there yet.
To the extent people in the Midwest think about it? I think they think about it in two dimensions. And I should say this is just me speculating, this is actually not based on polling. This is just kind of the vibe I get from talking to people every day. And I've been confined in my basement, so my usual vibe is not as strong as it is, normally.

I think economically the threat is obvious. I think it's both intellectually sound to say and economically obvious to point out that China's ascension to the WTO was an economic disaster for the Midwest, and I think people feel that. And there's a sense that China doesn't play by the rules and we're not competing on a level-playing field, which is why the polls I referenced before also say that Americans support ... They support Buy America as opposed to Buy China. But the second dimension I think is just, you know, Americans don't like to lose. And there's a sense that China is bullying us and our allies, and it almost offends our patriotism or pride, is how I always put it. And I think that's getting more palpable.

So we're not at a point where people are mobilizing against the commies and the fascist, but we're definitely, I think, headed in the right direction.

Rebeccah Heinrichs:

I would say from my own experience, I'm from the Midwest too. I'm from Ohio. And I try to constantly make sure that when I'm writing, even though I'm writing as a think-tank analyst, that I'm writing in such a way that normal people who have normal jobs, living their lives, can understand what I'm saying, and I like to get feedback from them. And I would say, from my perspective too, the other thing that's been helpful is the NBA issue and the censorship. The kind of bend-the-knee that Americans ... they're repulsed by. And then the chilled speech, I think, in American universities, having to do with the Chinese Communist Party dollars. And then the intellectual property theft and some of the espionage that is coming to light more, I think. I think normal, everyday Americans are beginning to see the extent and the long reach of the Chinese Communist Party and the influence it has on us.

I like the point you made that, in some ways, we've changed, and this ... it gets to my next question. the Chinese Communist Party hasn't changed, but it's almost like the United States ... Well, not almost, it is, the United States hasn't really appreciated the ideological struggle and the commitment that the CCP still has to communist ideology, and that they're not here just to get rich with the United States and kind of rise together. That they are trying to replace the United States as the global preeminent power.

And I think that it was based on this idea from policy makers that we would liberalize them, but instead there have been Western countries that have kind of seeded, over time, some of their censorship and that kind of thing. Can you just speak to that? How, for years, this idea of engagement ... And this was a bipartisan, this isn't just one party or one person. This was a bipartisan belief that our Western values would win the day, and that it would be okay to have traded engagement and outsourced critical health supplies, pharmaceuticals, and that kind of thing, to the Chinese Communist Party. Can you speak to that? Why that was the case and how hopeful you are now? I mean, you've spoken, just a little bit, about the change of heart and why this is going to be hard, and it's going to take a long time and a bipartisan effort to disentangle responsibly.
Congressman Mike Gallagher:

I think it's such a great question. Well, first of all, I think you have to concede that there is a logic to that view of the world, right?

Rebeccah Heinrichs:

Yeah.

Congressman Mike Gallagher:

I mean, the reason there was so much bipartisan consensus around, what I would call, the Responsible Stakeholder theory ... Which is almost unfair to Bob Zoellick, who coined the phrase, because there are parts of that speech that, where he originally used it, that are actually pretty tough. But he did recently defend it or at least argued against the idea of a new Cold War with China, which I'd love to get into that, in the Wall Street Journal. But there's certainly a logic to that, right?

Rebeccah Heinrichs:

Yeah.

Congressman Mike Gallagher:

The idea that closer economic ties would result in political liberalization. But the problem is it didn't work out, right? So I almost don't blame all of the bipartisan foreign policy scholars who made the wrong bet on China. And honestly, it wasn't until ... First of all, I was myopically focused on the Middle East and I now have told the story too many times that it's not cool anymore. But the moment I realized that I needed to expand my aperture was when I deployed to Iraq in 2007, and one of the first people I met on the ground was my fellow CI HUMINT officer, First Lieutenant Matt Pottinger. And I remember thinking, "Why did this guy spend so much time learning Mandarin? Why would anyone think that China is going to be important in the future? It's all about the Middle East."

But, in becoming good friends with Matt and taking over his team in western Iraq, he kind of sent me to a sort of impromptu, separate graduate school. And he wrote a lot that made me realize I needed to understand the way the Chinese Communist Party operated and its long history of United Front Work, which I would submit is now global United Front Work. And I do think that's what the Responsible Stakeholder proponents got wrong. It wasn't so much that the logic of their theory didn't make sense, it was just ... It was based on a misunderstanding of the Chinese Communist Party.

But I wonder, and again I'm speculating as a non-expert, if it's also based on a misunderstanding of the audience to which the CCP is playing domestically. I do think we start ideological competition right if we start it from the idea of, "We're trying to counter the CCP and not the Chinese people." We don't have any problem with the Chinese people. In fact, they stand to benefit from a world in which Xi isn't this aggressive.
But let's face the fact that the wolf warriors, for example, which we may ridicule, and make fun of, and think are just crazy conspiracy theorists, they're certainly giving not only Xi what he wants, in fighting for China, but also a lot of the Chinese people. And as evidence of that, I would just encourage you to watch the Wolf Warrior movies where they got the nickname. Wolf Warrior 1 and Wolf Warrior 2, they both end in the exact same way, where there's an arrogant, American, ex-military mercenary who's gloating. And in fact, I think in the second one, which is the highest grossing Chinese film of all time, he says something like, "People like you will always be inferior to people like me. Get used to it, get effing used to it." Sorry if I'm not allowed to say that. And then the hero turns things around and beats the evil American.

Clearly, there's a reason why those movies are so popular. And I think by aggressively pushing back or throwing their weight around, they're getting positive feedback from people domestically. And just sending the message, which is in one of those movies, which is, "Those who challenge China's resolve will have no safe place to hide in." And so, I guess that's a long way of me saying the reason our previous theory of the case went wrong is because we didn't really understand party dynamics and, I think, domestic dynamics in China. And perhaps that's part of a broader trend of not investing heavily, at least I saw this in the military, in true regional specialists and language specialists and people that could understand the nature of United Front Work.

And to this day, I still am not convinced that the military and intelligence community have a sophisticated understanding of United Front Work or even the ability to map it. And I think some of the best analysis we've gotten on that has actually come from outside the government, and in some cases outside of the United States, from Australians like Alex Joske and others. So I think that's an area where we still need to improve our understanding, or I should say at least I do.

Rebeccah Heinrichs:

And always say, too, I'm not a China expert. I'm actually ... I sympathize with you feeling like you're coming on a little bit late to the game. You know, my area of expertise is in strategic deterrence. It's in missile defense and nuclear deterrence. And my focus, for many years, has been on the Russian Federation. Deterring Russia, watching what the Russians are doing, making sure that our nuclear modernization is up to speed, and that we are adapting our deterrent forces to deter Russia. And China, for the longest time ... I used to work on Capitol Hill and then left Capitol Hill, and China was just something that people didn't talk about a whole lot in the context of threats, because we still understood them as this very integral trading partner. And that, if anything ...

But the idea, though, I think, was that because we were so integrated and so dependent on one another and they owe them so much debt, that would actually prevent us ... Almost like mutually assured destruction, it would prevent us from actually having a larger conflict of interests, that we're now seeing, that is really, as you pointed out, an ideological struggle.

That they're not interested in coexisting peacefully, that they are interested in replacing the United States and our Western values, that have underpinned the free market and free trade ... and safe tribe.
Congressman Mike Gallagher:

Can I add one thought to that?

Rebeccah Heinrichs:

Yeah.

Congressman Mike Gallagher:

I think part of this too ... It wasn't just a misunderstanding. It was maybe a blissful ignorance based on the enormous profits that were reaped from our engagement with China. Let's make no mistake, Wall Street made a ton of money off our economic entanglement with China, and continues to do so. In some ways, I think, the biggest resistance we're going to get for responsible decoupling won't come from the Capitol. Our resistance, it will come from Wall Street types. You've had former Secretaries of the Treasury, like Hank Paulson, call decoupling dangerous and a delusion. So that's one thing.

And also, I think that explains some of Hollywood's behavior and the NBA's behavior. It's, "Hey, there are a ton of people in China. We'd like to sell things to China." And maybe there's a bit of a ... something where we all need to look individually, internally, and realize, "Hey, we've all benefited from consuming cheap Chinese stuff in the last few decades, and there will be costs associated to reversing that trend." Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt but you made me think about that.

Rebeccah Heinrichs:

No, that's great. I think that that is so important. And I think that that actually explains some of the political challenges that we're going to be having to face domestically as we move forward. There are still a socioeconomic classes of Americans that haven't felt the pinch of the Chinese Communist Party. And there's still people, plenty of people that want access to that Chinese market and want to get rich. But now, and this brings me to my last ... But, of course, manufacturing. It has hit working class, manufacturing Americans harder, earlier on, and I don't think it was appreciated like it should have been earlier on, which we're beginning to kind of grapple with that now.

But that brings me to my last big question, that I kind of want to untangle a little bit, is the COVID pandemic. Because it seems to me that the pandemic has laid bare some of these problems with China and has really given us a little bit of a taste of what a world would be like if China was at the helm, the leadership helm, and what it would be like in terms of their irresponsibility, they're lying, and their obfuscation. And, so I want to talk about that. And then I want to specifically talk about how they have responded to the West, the United States and Australia, in particular, our efforts to get to the bottom of the origins of the virus, and how we can cooperate with partners to handle this problem and push back on the Chinese aggression.
Congressman Mike Gallagher:

Well, I think it's a very important question. I think the most obvious thing would be ... If you look at the way they handled the early outbreak of the crisis, the way they did not provide data to the WHO, the way they corrupted the WHO, and the WHO, in some ways, covered up lies of the CCP. Although the Reuters ... the AP report from this week kind of suggests that the WHO was doing that because they were trying to coax more information, unsuccessfully, out of the CCP, which lied about the nature of human-to-human transmission. Did not allow travel from Wuhan, within their country, but allowed it to the rest of the world. And then, took advantage of the chaos of the ensuing crisis to do things like violate their agreement with the UK relative to Hong Kong.

I think it suggests they can't be trusted to uphold any international agreement going forward. And I think it's really brought the threat the CCP poses into stark relief, not just in United States but across the free world. And I think there's been some fascinating polling, that's come out of the Henry Jackson Society, a conservative UK think tank, that speaks volumes about the current debate.

According to the poll, about 80 percent of Brits want the Johnson government to push for an international inquiry into the Chinese government's handling of the coronavirus. 74 percent think that China is to blame for allowing the virus to spread. 71 want the government to sue China for damages if it breached international law. And in fact, that's the same poll that found that, by a margin of about 40 to 27 percent, Britons oppose Huawei's inclusion into their 5G network, and conservative voters oppose it 51 to 24 percent, which is why we've had this positive story of Boris Johnson reversing his policy on 5G.

You look across the Five Eyes alliance, in Canada ... we saw announcements from a leading Canadian telecom company that Huawei would not be building Canada's 5G network. We've seen our friends in Australia push for an independent inquiry into the coronavirus' origins. And, to your point, they've experienced China's wrath as a result.

I just think it's kind of telling that wolf warrior diplomacy, that we talked about before, is now something of a truism, which ... expresses the way in which they're trying to drive wedges throughout the free world but, I think, are actually uniting the free world. At least the Five Eyes, I sense is pulling closer together on this issue. We have a long way to go, but I've always thought that Five Eyes is the beating heart of the free world, and that it's the core of our alliance system. And that ... we can build upon a very proud history within that alliance, to have a long-term, smart, and successful strategy to deter and counter China.

I don't know. Again, I don't know if I'm optimistic or pessimistic. I do think people are waking up and it's sad that it took a pandemic to do it, but I think it's happening.

Rebeccah Heinrichs:

I would agree with that. From my own perspective, it definitely seems that more of our allies are standing up and being more open about these problems and pushing back. You even have smaller countries like Vietnam speaking out and not putting up with some of the Chinese military
aggression. Obviously, I think the Taiwanese have been phenomenally politically courageous in standing up to China during the coronavirus. And then, what we’ve seen with the Chinese Communist Party threatening the Australians economically, as the Australians seek to get to the root of the coronavirus pandemic. That China did the same thing with South Korea when South Korea accepted our THAAD battery, our missile defense battery.

China really punished the South Koreans economically for accepting that THAAD battery. And this is going to continue, that China is going to punish countries like that for their actions. I want us to talk to this for just a moment, and I do want you, if you could, talk to us a little bit ... You've done so much work on countering Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific, and I think that that's important too, because I don't think enough people appreciate the threat that the Chinese military is posing to the INDOPACOM theater.

But my last point is just the importance of public diplomacy, and giving cover and support to countries like Australia. You had this great bipartisan letter that you initiated, I think that was very important and encouraging, and how important that is to be able to move forward as an alliance.

Congressman Mike Gallagher:

Yeah, it's such a great question. Just quickly on the South Korea THAAD example, if I'm remembering correctly, I think the company that got punished ... Was it Lotta? Latta? L-O-T-T-E? I forget. I never know how to pronounce it. They actually had a variety of businesses within mainland China, that the CCP subsequently shut down, citing a bunch of bogus fire code violations or something like that. And I think, kind of to an earlier question you raised, that gives us a preview of what ... I think there are a lot of people that still think, "Well, why is it a problem if China ... " I mean, "China is a big country, it's going to be powerful, if we just cede a sphere of influence in the first island chain in INDOPACOM? Why is that a big deal?"

Well, I think we're getting a preview of why that's a big deal, because it won't stay contained within their near abroad. They will flip the script on export controls against us, and demand compliance with their preferred policy, and shut off access to their market. And indeed, this is the constant argument I have with some of our American companies who want to continue to sell things to Huawei and ZTE in the short term, and make the argument that, "Well, if we don't do it, they'll make it domestically or someone else will." Well, they're going to eventually! I mean, that's the essence of Made in China 2025.

So, you could either take the short term pain and keep non CCP-dominated telecommunication companies and pharmaceutical companies alive now, or you can be forced to just comply with everything they demand by 2025, let alone 2045. That gets, I think, also to your other question, how do we explain why this matters a little bit better? Now I've forgotten your original question ... On Australia! Right?

Rebeccah Heinrichs:

Yeah.
Congressman Mike Gallagher:

First of all, I sort of stumbled into co-chairing the Friends of Australia Caucus with my good friend Joe Courtney, who's ... awesome guy, Democrat, we work together on these issues. And I think it's the Australians that were really the canary in the coal mine for the nature of CCP influence and how it can infect a democracy. And there was a great book by Clive Hamilton, called Silent Invasion, that really shaped my thinking. And my participation in the caucus really resulted in a unique friendship that I've developed with a young politician from Australia named Andrew Hastie, who's a military veteran, who has taken a lot of criticism in recent years for saying true things about Communist China's coercion in Australia, and now he's looking pretty prescient as a result of the steps that China has taken against Australia.

And so I think it's really hard to overstate how important those direct legislature-to-legislature links are between our countries. We're lucky to have strong allies like Australia. And then to connect it to your point about military presence, I just think we're going to have to get really creative going forward, particularly as I project a more constrained budgetary environment after we've magically spent 3 trillion dollars on coronavirus. Particularly since we're no longer constrained by the INF Treaty, and this gets to your area of expertise.

I think we have an opportunity to get really creative with ... What does our presence look like with our allies in INDOPACOM? Who can host INF non-compliant ground-based missiles so we can hold Chinese carriers at risk, very cheaply? In the way they hold our carriers at risk right now. I think that's a very exciting conversation.

There's been some very forward-leaning members of our military establishment, the Commandant of the Marine Corps Berger, who sees that opportunity, but we still have a long way to go. But I don't know a way to counter China effectively on the ground unless we do it with ... what I believe is our secret weapon. It's our allies. There was a Chinese academic who wrote something in the New York Times, I think, in 2011 and he said, "The core of competition will come down," between the US and China, "will come down to who has better quality friends." We start from an enormous advantage in that area.

China doesn't want friends. It wants vassal states, and it views other countries as barbarians to be handled. Barbarian-handling is a long tradition. So I think we have an opportunity, really, to unite the free world in opposition to a common threat. We'll see if we're able to do it, but the opportunity is definitely there.

Rebeccah Heinrichs:

I couldn't agree with you more. And one of the things that I've been arguing for is ... which is why we want to have strong sovereign allies. And the United States needs to be a good ally to them too, which is why some of this very public support for our allies and making sure that our rhetoric is supportive of the things that they're doing. That really does take a lot of political courage, for some of these politicians, to stick their neck out when it still can be kind of unpopular even domestically. It's going to take a lot of leadership for them and so making sure that the United States is doing our part to provide them with some diplomatic cover.
And then, if you could just flesh out a little bit, because I think you talked about INF. And for me, this is one of the most consequential ... positive things that this administration has done, which is to withdraw from the INF Treaty. Of course, that was just a treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation. The Russians were cheating on the treaty for many years, and that was a problem in and of itself. But, while they were cheating on it, the Chinese were exploiting the fact that the United States was constrained by this treaty and it was developing a massive missile arsenal.

I read that, I think it's something like 85 to 90 percent of their missile arsenal would have been in violation of the INF Treaty had they been party to it. But China has stayed out of arms control treaties. It's not in their interest to be part of them, in their view, and so they have been building this massive missile force. And it's really only happened in the last couple of decades, where now they're able to hold at risk our bases in the region, Guam, and our carriers, obviously.

Can you just, on the last note ... Because I believe the hard power part of this is really the thing that is the backbone of everything else they're doing. Economically, diplomatically, they're very confident right now because they do think that they have us a little bit, they have us in the region, and it's not so clear that the United States has the strategic advantage in all of these military domains that we used to have. Why is it so important that we now ... Guam, that we're building up our defenses of Guam? That we are trying to make sure that our bases in Japan are better protected and prepared? And, from my perspective, it's about deterrence.

We are trying to prevent that active aggression. That the Chinese Communist Party might think that they have an opportunity here because there is this ... an inequality of who has the advantage and who doesn't, in the region.

**Congressman Mike Gallagher:**

I think getting out of the INF Treaty was maybe the most important thing we've done in the last three years. At least if you'd look at the geography of INDOPACOM and care about that. And I am prepared to take full credit for that ... since I authored the amendment in NDAA, two years ago, that forced the administration to report back to us on how they felt about the INF. Although, I must confess, I was but a Manchurian Candidate for Tim Morrison's work, and I think he was also channeling some work that Harry Harris and Eric Sayers had done recently. But, long story short, I saved the Republic and you're welcome.

So, theoretically, and this is ... There's a whole team of warrior nerd Marines out there that are providing the intellectual foundation for what the Commandant is trying to do. Particularly in a fiscally constrained environment, if you're able to field a bunch of INF non-compliant missiles, intermediate range missiles, and constantly shift their location throughout the first island chain, and work with our allies on shifting the location of the people that we need to man those missile systems, what are you doing? You're just complicating the OODA loop, the decision-making cycle of the PLA Navy every day.

And so, to the point of your question, why is that important? Because we don't want to go to war. And so I associate myself fully with your remarks. It's all about deterrence. It's about the avoidance of war. And there is a paradox inherent to deterrence, that you need to convince the
other guy you're willing to go to war. But, as I read the National Defense strategy, I actually think we're not really putting all our eggs in the basket of deterrence by punishment. Actually, this is sort of the difference. This isn't strategic nuclear deterrence, "If you do something bad, we may fire our nukes." It's deterrence by denial. It's, "How do we field the systems that the CCP and the PLA know ... know, in real time, can delay, degrade, or deny their objectives?"

Particularly any forced military takeover of Taiwan, as outlandish as we may think that is, but it could happen more subtly. Even their ability to project power from islands that they're building in the South China Sea. I just see a combination of intermediate range missiles and small ships, a lot of small ships, hopefully unmanned ships, as the way to start pushing back smartly on what their military is doing, and ultimately achieve the objective of deterring them and avoiding war.

And the final thing I'd say is, I think it's really important to remember this, that that strategy, that deterrence by denial strategy, our strategy, is fundamentally a defensive strategy. We are just trying to hold the line, protect our interests, and protect our allies and their sovereignty, whereas the CCP is trying to upend the balance of power in the region and undermine the integrity and the sovereignty of a lot of our closest allies. And I have to believe that even a fiscally constrained environment, even as American politicians spend all their time on cable news tearing each other apart, we can successfully implement such a defensive strategy. It just takes a few key things and we're slowly getting there.

Rebeccah Heinrichs:

I think that that's right. We're trying to complicate their calculations all the time, to give them more dilemmas, make it harder, because we don't want to give them cheap shots because that can tempt aggression. And so we're trying to close those ... what Dr. Keith Payne called Deterrent Gaps, that they might be able to exploit, and so that we can hold off war, prevent war. And we're the ones that are trying to make sure that we have peace. We, the United States, with our allies and partners. I think that that's exactly right and, of course, just for our viewers, Tim Morrison is now a Senior Fellow at Hudson Institute too, so we're happy to have him ... have landed at Hudson after he left [crosstalk 00:41:32]-

Congressman Mike Gallagher:

You guys are scraping the bottom of the barrel, jeez! No, Tim is awesome. Tim is doing really great work. I rely on Tim for a lot of my analysis, and he's been really helpful to me.

Rebeccah Heinrichs:

He is, I think, a very ... The country is very fortunate to have him and to have his mind and his contributions. And we're also fortunate to have yours, Congressman. Thank you so much for your leadership on these issues, for your bipartisan work, for your commitment to actually getting some progress done, and for making sure that when Congress does kind of get back into the swing of things in earnest, that we make sure that even with this pandemic there's going to be, I think, some challenges. People are going to want to cut different programs. Making sure that the defense programs that we have, that are in the military, in the DOD, get preserved, that we preserve these.
Some of the advanced capabilities that Secretary Esper wants to do, but also some of these other more legacy programs that are still going to be necessary, I think, to handle some of the rogue threats like North Korea, Iran, and that kind of thing, even as we shift our focus towards deterring the major powers like China. So thank you, sir, so much, sir, for your work and for spending some time with us here today.

**Congressman Mike Gallagher:**

I really enjoyed it. Thank you, Rebeccah. I appreciate it.

**Rebeccah Heinrichs:**

Thank you, sir.