

Interview with Kevin Rudd

The Honorable Kevin Rudd served as Prime Minister of Australia from 2007 to 2010, and again in 2013.



What motivated you to write your recent book, *The Avoidable War: The Dangers of a Catastrophic Conflict between the U.S. and Xi Jinping’s China*? What need did you wish to fulfill, and which questions did you want to answer?

My friend and colleague from Harvard University, Graham Allison, 4 or 5 years ago wrote a book called *Destined for War*, looking at what he called the “Thucydides trap” and its application to the future of U.S.-China relations. I have been a strong supporter of Dr. Allison’s academic research. Where my book takes up in terms of the “avoidable war” is how do we construct a framework for what I call “managed strategic competition” between the United States and China, given where the relationship stands as of 2022.

My view is pretty simple. You either have unmanaged strategic competition with no strategic guardrails, no rules of the road, which always runs the risk of escalation, crisis, conflict, and war; or you have managed strategic competition, which means there are some minimum rules of the road mutually understood by the administrations both in Beijing and in Washington, which go to each side’s granular understanding of strategic red lines. It goes to non-lethal areas of strategic competition—military growth, foreign policy influence, economic competition, trade, investment, technology, talent—as well as a great battle of ideas between authoritarian capitalism à la China and the liberal international order run by the United States. The third element of managed strategic competition is mutual acceptance in those defined areas where strategic collaboration is still in each country’s national interest. For example, on the future of climate change, the next pandemic management (hopefully better than what we did the first time around), and even on global financial stability. So, these constitute the three elements of the argument that I advance called managed, strategic competition. And finally, the book also seeks to explore in some depth Xi Jinping’s worldview and how he looks at reality today.

The interview was conducted by Michael Miklaucic on March 29, 2022.

Let's talk for a minute about President Xi's world-view. How would you characterize the difference between the so-called liberal world order and the emerging China-centered world order?

There is a fundamental difference. If you read carefully the Chinese ideological literature, which is widely circulated within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for the consumption of its 95 million members, it is pretty clear what is different about it.

Number one, the Chinese wish to supplant the United States as the dominant power in East Asia both militarily and economically. And not just with the view to securing China's unrealized territorial aspirations by recovering Taiwan to Chinese sovereignty, asserting and concluding the expansion of Chinese maritime interests in the South China Sea, securing the disputed territories it has with Japan in the East China Sea, as well as having a position in—let us call it—the Asian Hemisphere, where China is regarded as the principal economic and political power.

Beyond that, China has an interest in becoming the undisputed dominant global power. If you look carefully at the text around China's grand national rejuvenation dream for 2049, the centenary of the founding of the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), it is very much along those lines—that is, to become the dominant power globally—politically, economically, and, in my judgment, looking at the literature carefully, militarily, as well.

The final element is when it comes to the “world order” itself. The early sketching of the architecture of the international system that would have China at the center and providing strategic ballast for the order it would seek to create is one that is deeply mindful of China's national interests, one where China's own authoritarian values are incorporated into the institutions of the order. It would represent a significant rewriting of what the United Nations stands for, the global financial institutions created at the Bretton Woods Conference back in July 1944,

and finally, newly created Chinese institutions which are unapologetically Sino-centric. So, for those three sets of reasons, it represents a big change.

Do you believe the Belt and Road Initiative is a fundamental part of this vision?

It is certainly part of the third category I just referred to in China's unfolding system in the world, in which Xi Jinping used the amorphous phrase, “the community of destiny for all humankind.” China's influence grows in existing institutions and is supplemented by those it has rolled out over the last 5 years or so, including the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which is not a United Nations or Bretton Woods institution, and the New Development Bank. And if you read their literature carefully, now the Belt and Road Initiative. But the question, I think, will be much broader than the Belt and Road Initiative itself. It is essentially an expanded infrastructure program. On top of that, it sets up the infrastructure for the emergence of a China-centric digital economy, a digital commerce world, which feeds directly into China's giant tech platforms rather than being routed through Wall Street or the United States.

China's 5G company champion Huawei has been a central element of the global digital campaign. Do you think that the Western response to the Huawei challenge has been adequate?

As Prime Minister of Australia, some time ago we denied Huawei permission to even lay out hardware into the Australian National Broadband Network. We did so in close collaboration with our American and British allies. The British made a mistake early on by allowing that to occur in their own broadband system; then, when you come to the application of 5G, it becomes even more problematic. Therefore, we have to be deeply sensitive to our long-term national security needs, the robustness of our telecommunications infrastructure, and, frankly,

the possibility of it ever being shut off at a time of national security crisis. For those reasons we must have a robust approach. That is why I support the general conservative view on the part of your closest allies, including Australia under the current government, to oppose participation in Huawei's 5G global network.

And yet, the West does not have a viable alternative to offer countries that are, for example, within the Belt and Road Initiative and seeking 5G applications. What can we say other than “Say no to Huawei?”

You are absolutely right; this has been an extraordinary failure of what I describe as American industrial policy. How America could lead in the development of so many leading-edge technologies over several generations and then drop the ball on 5G is a failure of government, in my judgment. This is not a partisan comment about America's Republicans or Democrats. It is just a failure of government. Of course, one of the reasons that the United States produces the world's best, brightest, and sharpest technological innovations is that you seek to keep government's hand well out of it. But on key national security infrastructure, you do need a framework of industrial policy. You do see that emerging through the recent legislation in the U.S. Congress, the CHIPS for America Act, and other such enactments to ensure that there is national economic capacity to deliver the key technologies of the future. Catch-up will have to occur in relation to 5G technologies. There are, as it were, some candidates on offer, but there is going to be a time lag before they will become available at scale.

And bear in mind, the Chinese have been exceptionally patient at rolling out their overall 5G infrastructure. They have been planning this for a long time. If you look at China, which first established its 5G plan for its own country and for the rest of the world, the architecture of it was laid out

in Chinese industrial policy probably 15 years ago. On these critical technology categories, the United States, mindful that it is a robust capitalist system, needs a parallel framework of industrial policy around critical technology systems for the future.

As you know, the idea of industrial policy is somewhat neuralgic in the United States. Yet, as you have observed, this issue is being raised in Congress and various other venues. When you look at China's full suite of policies—Made in China 2025, China Standards 2035, military-civil fusion, among others—it does raise the question, “How can liberal democratic countries compete in this global competition with autocratic, command-based economies in countries like China?”

So far, the competitive stakes have been pretty good because we allow entrepreneurs to innovate and we allow our technological innovators to go and do what they do best. We have a vibrant venture capital industry that gets a lot of these products to market early on. But that is not incompatible with what I describe as a sector-wide rather than firm-specific approach to industrial policy. Industrial policy sets frameworks and provides support mechanisms in critical sectors for the future without getting into the business of picking individual firms as winners. That is the key difference we see emerging in the United States and a number of its allies. This is opposed to China's version of industrial policy, which is much more like the return of Leviathan, with the state controlling anything and everything.

There is a further point as well. If you look at the level of financial waste in the Chinese system, as bucketloads of cash get rolled in one window of the state-owned enterprise and get chomped up with very marginal output on the other end of the enterprise in terms of new technology, if you were the Chinese ministry of finance you'd have to ask the question, “Is this a smart way to go?” I think the United States can meet the challenge; it has done it

before, and I think it is certainly within our collective gene pool to do it again.

How should we think about private sector companies that do not feel like playing along, that stand aside at arm's length from national or international security issues?

On core issues of national security there is not really an opt-out factor. We are all members of a robust democratic capitalist system, whether it is in this country, my own, or other parts of the collective liberal democratic world—and not just the West, but also the liberal democracies of the East and elsewhere. Therefore, on critical questions of national security as it impacts intelligence, as it impacts security of critical research laboratories, as it impacts the security associated with key products—bearing in mind the central role in semiconductors right across the fabric of the 21st century economy from A to Z—the bottom line is that there is no option for a quiet opt-out by a firm that is engaged in these sectors.

Second, if there is a predisposition on the part of an individual firm not to cooperate, it raises a whole series of interesting questions for U.S. security agencies, and at a minimum level it would also perhaps preclude such firms from being able to provide products or services to government in any form within the country. You can sort this out on your own time and in your own way, but I think there is certainly a way to get through this, to get most firms on board.

Given the recent focus on space and cyber and the rapid pace of global tech advancement, do you foresee the United States keeping up with Chinese capabilities by mid-century?

If the question is about space, rather than cyberspace, the capacity of the U.S. space program to continue to reinvent itself has been demonstrated in the past. Ultimately, this is a question for the U.S. Congress and is less about capability than about the

investment the Congress will choose to make in the revitalization of the space program for the future. The Chinese program has made large advances in recent times. If you look, for example, just to one classic illustration—the number of independent satellite launches undertaken by the Chinese in a given year—the Chinese are setting up their own satellite navigation system around the world with their own satellites, which provide 24-hour coverage across all the world's regions. This new BeiDou system has been quite an extraordinary achievement by the Chinese over the last 20 years. But the United States, again, has this enormous technological depth and flexibility and ability to innovate, which I still do not see alive in the Chinese system. However, if the Congress does not allocate sufficient funds to sustain this extraordinary piece of public research activity and maintain America's leading-edge, and support continued manned and unmanned programs into space, then, inevitably, the Chinese will catch up; but I don't see that as probable.

What are the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the Chinese strategy that the West is exploiting well, and what weaknesses is the West failing to exploit at this time?

That is a critical question, and, obviously, a sensitive question as well. If you were to look at the world through Beijing's lens, and if you were sitting around the table of the Standing Committee of the Politburo this Tuesday morning in Beijing, it would be useful to ask yourself analytically what keeps them up at night and what causes them to worry. That is a very handy list to have in mind.

The key thing at the top of the list on the part of the CCP is instability within the Party itself. We are moving toward the Twentieth Party Congress and not all leadership questions have been resolved at this stage. There are considerable tensions and fault-lines in the leadership over, for example, the future of economic policy, over being too forward-leaning

in support of Russia, and failures in the COVID-19 pandemic management.

If you were sitting in Beijing at the moment, your lens is very much focused on these internal policy and political tensions. I often think of one of the aggregate failings of U.S.-China strategy is its preoccupation with the external manifestations of Chinese power and pushing back against that in various theaters around the world, while missing the domestic and internal dynamics of Chinese power. U.S. strategic analysts should spend more time on these domestic and internal types of power to understand where those fault lines are and to what extent they can be worked on.

Am I correct in remembering that one of the predecessors of Xi Jinping said that what keeps him up at night is the challenge of creating millions of new jobs every year?

That is true. Multiple Chinese leaders have said that. But remember this: while the employment challenge in China remains real, they now have a shrinking labor market and probably the beginning of the decline in the aggregate size of the Chinese population as well. The essential economic challenge for the leadership now is to ensure that living standards do not drop, that per capita income continues to grow, that the Chinese middle class continues to have opportunities, and that if someone goes out and creates a new private sector firm they will have a lot of opportunities to play with and not be threatened by an impending government crackdown. That is all necessary in terms of keeping the economic growth momentum going, of which employment is a part, but not the exclusive part. And if you would again go to the list of the problems faced by the Chinese leadership at the present, beyond overreach on Ukraine and Russia, beyond the pandemic, it is also the question of Xi Jinping's adjustment to the Chinese domestic economic development model,

which has resulted in a slowing of Chinese economic growth over the last couple of years.

What do you make of the recent crackdown by the Communist Party on certain sectors of Chinese industry; for example, on the education and real estate industries? What should we take from that?

I have spent a lot of time in the last couple of years researching Xi Jinping's ideological worldview and reading what Xi Jinping has said and written on the question of Marxism and Leninism, the galvanizing ideology of the CCP membership. There is always a temptation in the West to push all that to one side and simply say, "They pretend to be Communists, but really they're capitalists in disguise." The more I read, though, and see the direction in which Xi Jinping is taking the country, the more I reach the conclusion that the ideological leanings of the Party's membership are in fact hardening. I see this reflected in two or three quite specific ways. Xi Jinping in the last decade has pushed the center of gravity of Chinese politics further and further to the left. That is, there is more dependence on the central leader and the party itself over the professional institutions of the Chinese state, more restrictions on what individuals can do, and a crackdown on non-governmental organizations, among others.

In the economy—which goes to the core of your question—there has been a parallel shift to the left as well. A preference for state-owned enterprises over private firms. A crackdown on the private tech platforms. A new doctrine of common prosperity designed to bring about income redistribution and income equality in a country that has had the highest inequality rate of the last 30 years. And so, this change in China's economic policy settings, in my judgment, proceeds from an underlying ideological worldview on Xi Jinping's part that shows he does not want the private sector to become so powerful in China that it generates alternative role models and alternative centers of power in Chinese politics. Of

course, if he does that for ideological and political control reasons, then there is an economic policy cost as the economy ceases to be as productive as it was before and growth begins to slow; but that, I think, is precisely where we have landed at this point in China's history.

Do you think these internal political dynamics will predispose China toward a more aggressive foreign policy?

When I talk about Chinese ideology, the way I use and describe it in the piece I'm writing at the moment on Xi Jinping's worldview, I describe it as a worldview of Marxist nationalism. It is an odd term, but I think it most accurately describes what Xi Jinping has sought to do. I said before, because of his Leninist predisposition for party control, he has taken the Party and politics to the left. And because he is a Marxist on economic questions, he is taking the center of gravity and the economic policy debate and policy settings of China to the left—pro-state and anti-private. But there is a third element to the ideological shift. He has taken Chinese nationalism to the right. Therefore, he has provided the underpinnings for a much more assertive Chinese foreign security policy in the region and in the world. These three changes are unfolding simultaneously. And you might ask, what is the inherent connection between the three of them? The first two are logically explicable, moving to the left on economics and politics; that is a Marxist-Leninist frame. But on the right—remember this on nationalism—nationalism is a very handy additional tool for sustaining political legitimacy in a country like China when you risk losing some of that political legitimacy by removing people's individual political freedoms, or by beginning to reduce their economic freedoms as well. So, in my judgment, there is a synthesized view of this three-part dimension of Xi Jinping's ideological worldview of Marxist nationalism. That, in turn, is reflected in a more assertive Chinese policy in

the world. One final point is, of course, that a more assertive Chinese foreign and security policy would not be possible unless China's material and military power is simultaneously increasing. And as this audience in particular would understand, that has been well underway for some decades.

How would you characterize China's vision for its long-term relationship with the United States? Is it one of dominance, first-among-equals, or a stable competitive balance of power?

My conclusions are based on what I read from the Chinese system internally. If I look carefully at the ideological language used by Xi Jinping about where he wants China to be by 2049—that is the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation—and where he wants China to be by the midpoint, 2035, what he wants to see is the completion of the Chinese military modernization by 2027. It is pretty clear from the Mandarin literature that Xi Jinping does not want to be co-equal with the United States; somewhere between 2035 and 2049 he actually wants China to become the dominant power both regionally and globally. And frankly, it is that understanding which makes explicable what China's current set of behaviors in the world are today. Therefore, whatever China says about the U.S.-China relationship, in my judgment it is a position of deep strategic competition with the United States. The Chinese prefer not to use that term, but since the National Security Strategy of 2017 was published the United States has used that term. I think it is a fair description of what is unfolding in both military and foreign policy terms, economic terms, and technological terms, but also in ideological terms, with competing views of the nation and of the rules-based system for the future.

So the question I keep coming back to as someone who has worked in politics and policy on China in multiple capacities over time—and I have now lived in the United States running a think tank the

last several years—is should we have strategic competition between the United States and China which is unmanaged, or should it be managed with some guardrails and rules of the road which prevent crisis, conflict, and war arising by accident?

In the United States we have a binary understanding of war; we are either at war or not at war. We like things to reach closure. Wars should end, competition should then become friendly competition; but from what you are describing, we might be in for a future of permanent aggressive competition—managed if we are lucky—but it is not something that is going to resolve happily. Is that correct?

I love the United States. I have lived here a long time, have a stack of American friends, even a lot of Chinese friends as well, and I speak Chinese. I have lived and worked in Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taipei, and various points around the Chinese world. But I think that geopolitics is not simply a feature film which runs for an hour and forty minutes and has an innate conclusion at the end, happy or sad. That is not how geopolitics works. I would say to my American friends that, given a level of what I describe as political impatience, often the efficacy of national strategy is that you guys have done this before.

While it is not exactly a replicable model, the United States deduced that containment was the appropriate approach to the rise of the USSR, with George Kennan's seminal piece in 1947 during the Truman administration, and that this framework for dealing with the USSR remained in place for another 40 years across multiple Republican and Democratic administrations. Think about it. The ability of the strategic concept to survive through Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon (and Watergate), and through Ford, then Carter, Reagan, and George H.W. Bush, until the Berlin Wall came down. You prevailed. You actually stuck

to it. There were ebbs and flows on the way through, and there was the near-death experience for us all during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, which I would argue provides a second lesson from history. After 1962, the Soviets and the Americans, in my analysis, reached very basic rules of the road about how not to blow each other's brains out by accident. So, you had a long-term strategy of containment as well as what I describe as a joint framework for managing the nuclear question with the Russians. Yes, it got very close from time to time, but the extraordinary thing is that by the time you got to 1989–1991, the Warsaw Pact and the USSR dissolved, as Kennan predicted it would back in 1947. So, as I have said, though containment, as such, is not a replicable model given the nature of China today, a sustainable, long-term and effective strategy for dealing with the China challenge over several U.S. administrations, I think, is possible if there is political will.

How would you assess Chinese-Russian relations given Putin's war in Ukraine? It seems that Xi would be much more cautious in tying China to someone willing to take such unwise risks.

I wrote about this a little while ago in the *Wall Street Journal* after Xi and Putin agreed on that extraordinary joint strategic framework signed in Beijing and released on the eve of the opening ceremony of the winter Olympics—only three weeks, therefore, before the launch of the invasion of Ukraine. My analysis is that the Chinese have enormous underpinning national interests in a benign, positive, productive relationship with the Russians. As a product of history, over three or four hundred years, this has been a pretty unhappy relationship. Tsarist expansion, slicing up bits of Chinese territory, the rise of the Bolshevik Party in 1917, the period of Sino-Soviet collaboration through 1959, then the Sino-Soviet split for 30 years when daggers were drawn, thereby providing the opening for Nixon and

Kissinger in the early 1970s, through to the present period.

But the overall Chinese state view and the Party view today is that it is far better to have a benign relationship with Moscow because it enables them to concentrate their military and their full strategic resources on dealing with the United States, the country they wish to supplant in the race toward both regional and global dominance.

Secondly, from Xi Jinping's perspective, the Russians provide an additional value added, which is that they can be permanent disruptors of the United States in other theaters of the world beyond the Indo-Pacific, whether it is the Middle East, North Africa, or, as we currently see, in Ukraine. However, by supporting Russia today, China has incurred huge reputational damage, particularly in Europe and other parts of the international community, by effectively tacitly condoning what Putin has done in Ukraine. So I think you are going to see some crab-walking in the Chinese system soon as they try to shuttle to a new position that is less embracing of Putin's military debacle, as it seems to be at present on the battlefields of Ukraine. But do not expect any fundamental realignment on the part of Beijing, particularly under Xi Jinping, for the underlying strategic reasons I referred to before.

As an astute observer and student of Chinese thinking, what lessons do you think the Chinese have learned from Russia's current experience in Ukraine?

I think there are two, but the Chinese system internally would say, "Yeah, we knew that anyway, and pity the Russians didn't think it through." The first is this: invading another country is a hard thing. It is not Poland in 1939 with a blitzkrieg from both directions when both Hitler and Stalin attacked Poland nearly simultaneously. Overcoming a country of 44 million people in a vast geography and with strong political leadership, as we have seen through

the extraordinary talent of President Zelensky in Kyiv, is a very difficult thing. But Ukraine is a land operation across a common land border. Flip to Taiwan. If you think of the amphibious dimensions of what would be involved in a full-scale military operation against Taiwan—as our friends in the military would know far better than I—many degrees of additional logistical complexity arise from that. The D-Day landings in 1944 might look like a cakewalk compared with what the Chinese would face: a huge island, a long way off the Chinese coast, with a population of 25 million people, with a significant bastion of support in the international community because Taiwan is no longer a military dictatorship. It is a robust liberal democracy.

The second thing that the Chinese would have looked at and said is "We would never do that—roll out our military campaign against Taiwan—until we had undertaken fundamental financial insurance. That is, made our system no longer vulnerable to U.S. dollar-denominated sanctions. We would hope that by the time we move on Taiwan we will have ensured that the renminbi has been floated, that the Chinese capital account is opened, and that there is a much greater degree of resilience to the Chinese financial system than is currently the case, where as of 2022 China remains vulnerable to U.S. dollar denominated sanctions." I think those are the two main lessons.

Given that our threats of comprehensive financial sanctions against Russia did not deter Russia from invading Ukraine, what do you think of the wisdom of the current American policy of strategic ambiguity toward Taiwan?

I fully support it, and there is a reason for that. I have lived and worked in Taiwan and I studied there as a student, so I have a deep affection for the place. It is now a liberal democracy whose internal politics are beyond our control. And because of that, you are going to have political primaries and elections

in Taiwan that will throw up multiple candidates who in the future may start to say some politically irresponsible things, from Beijing's perspective, such as recommending a formal unilateral declaration of independence from China—that is a movement toward establishing an independent Republic of Taiwan. This fundamentally crosses a Chinese red line in terms of China's claim to sovereignty over the island. The danger with removing strategic ambiguity in the American position is that you would provide succour and support potentially to political actors within Taiwan itself to become more ambitious in what they say about the future status of the island. On the broader question of deterrence—that is, how do you best deal with the Taiwan challenge for the future—there are two core factors involved: what the United States does to restore the military balance across the Taiwan Strait and across the broader East Asia and West Pacific. I know people in U.S. Indo-Pacific Command are working on this together with the Pentagon. The second factor is this—and I know that the United States is working on this as well—making our friends in Taiwan understand that there is a huge lesson coming out of Ukraine about the resilience of your national defense and your national defense deterrence against a Chinese military, including all forms of asymmetric warfare. Had Ukraine fallen in 3 days as the Russians had planned, would we now be in a position where you see the successful marshaling of global military and political support for Ukraine? Probably not. So the lesson for the Taiwan administration, in my judgment, and the future of American and allied interests in Taiwan, is to maximize the deterrent factor—not just the United States, but in Taiwan domestically as well.

You recommend that we focus more on China's internal party dynamics, but how well can we really see through the opacity of party factionalism?

There is certainly opacity. Even if this were an internal discussion within the Chinese system, there would be opacity. We are a bunch of “foreign barbarians” having this conversation offshore about a system that is designed to be opaque for the likes of us. However, given that caveat, I believe we know enough about where the fault lines actually lie. The fault lines in the Chinese system are, number one, about the nature of the Chinese economic model. Xi Jinping's ideological preference for a more state-centric economy, a more party-led Chinese economy, has a massive fault line dividing it from another group that we might describe more broadly as liberal economic reformers. They are not all necessarily lovers of the United States, but they actually have a different view of an appropriate economic model and international economic structure and China's pattern of engagement with it. Therefore, that represents a fault line.

A second fault line lies under Xi Jinping's breach of the two-term limit for Party presidents, which comes up for final review and decision at the Party Congress this November. That is a clear fault line because many do not want to see the demise of what Deng Xiaoping put in place as a preventative mechanism to avoid a return, in the future, to a Mao-like figure.

If there is a third fault line, it is along these lines: the Deng Xiaoping school of foreign policy was to hide your strength, bide your time, and never take the lead. “Hide and bide” is the way we usually describe it. And that is not because Deng did not have a vision of China becoming a great power. If you read what Deng wrote, that was his vision for the distant future. What Xi Jinping has done, however, is accelerate the timetable. He has turbocharged the trajectory as a result, and has made China infinitely less adherent to Deng's cautious doctrine of foreign and security policy in favor of a more adventurous, more assertive one. This fault line divides Xi Jinping from those who are still Chinese nationalists but

believe that Xi has declared China's ambitions and become assertive far too early in the process.

This has attracted massive geopolitical reactions from around the world. Look at the recent Korean election, the election of a center-right president on a campaign platform of being tougher on China. Look at Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Japan, now taking a more assertive posture in relation to Taiwan. Look more broadly at what is happening with India—the emergence of the Quad at summit level, and the emergence of AUKUS, involving my own country, Australia. There is a gradual hardening of European attitudes toward China. That is a third fault line in Chinese politics. That there are those who think Xi Jinping has gone out too far, too hard, too fast, and too early on China's assertiveness. These three areas provide rich fault lines within Chinese domestic politics, which the United States and others should be very mindful of as we respond to China.

What is interesting for those of us who study the tea leaves in the Chinese system is that, over the last 2 or 3 months, there have been a number of dissenting articles in the Chinese official media about China's current course. It is not a dominant presence in the central media, but Chinese scholars, researchers, and others are saying publicly and openly that Deng's posture of reform and opening is the only way to the future. That is not part of Xi Jinping's doctrine within the ideological framework of Xi Jinping thought. We have also seen scholars and researchers published in the official media saying that Deng put in term limits for good reasons. Now, this gets pretty close to the wire in what is permissible to say in Chinese politics.

There is already emerging in Chinese social media a much broader discussion about China's support for Russia in Ukraine—in part, critical of Xi Jinping's posture—which has remarkably been allowed to stay online. Not for very long. So what do we read from these tea leaves? That there is a

range of views in the Chinese system rather than the monolithic worldview that I described before of Xi Jinping's China—and that is politics to the left, the economy to the left, and nationalism to the right. The more assertive posture in the world is not universally shared, but right now Xi Jinping is the master Machiavellian politician of Chinese domestic politics. He still controls the levers of internal power through the security apparatus, the intelligence apparatus, and, importantly for their system, the ideological apparatus.

Is Xi Jinping's drive to unseat the United States as the leading global power rooted in feelings of pay-back for the century of humiliation China suffered at the hands of Western powers?

It is difficult to discern precisely what the internal motivational structure is for what I have described clinically before as China's national aspiration to become the dominant power both regionally and globally and supplant the United States. But, having said that, you do not have to be a Rhodes Scholar to work it out reading the internal texts of the Chinese Communist Party since about 1921; the CCP is not a big fan of America as a political movement right through the 1920s and 1930s. You see this searing critique of the United States in Party literature, particularly by Mao himself, who always saw the body of ideas represented in American liberalism, liberal democracy, and liberal democratic capitalism as representing an ideational threat to Marxism and Leninism. This has always been the core of the Communist Party critique of the United States. It is, in my judgment, the fear of that body of ideas. Therefore, I think that it is a big motivating force for the Party at the level of Chinese nationalism. There is not just a view about the century of humiliation from the First Opium War through to the exit of the Japanese in 1945. That has also punched through in the propaganda system into the classrooms of every child who goes to a Chinese school, who gets shown

the images of the Chinese being treated badly by foreigners, particularly during the time when Shanghai was divided into quarters between various foreign occupying powers. There is a view, a deep nationalist view, that transcends the ideology of the CCP, that China has historically been a great nation, a great civilization, and that this period of temporary Western ascendancy, first with the British and then the Americans, is a historical aberration, and China is now returning to the historical norm. That is also part of the consciousness. I think, however, it is those two things—national consciousness of China's natural state as a regional and global great power, plus an underlying ideological reservation about the nature of American liberal democracy, which they still see as a threat internally to the CCP's hold on power.

To change the subject, some have called Chinese theft of intellectual property from the West the largest transfer of wealth in history. How do you recommend that the United States and its allies counter this practice?

It is an interesting question. I do not have the quantitative data to back it up, but I have seen scholarly work on another piece of intellectual property transference, and that is what the Soviet Union did for the Chinese from 1949 to 1959, which economic historians have described as the single greatest transfer of intellectual property and economic assets from one country to another in history. It led to all sorts of bad blood between Moscow and in Beijing about the historical nature of the China-Russia relationship. On the question of intellectual property theft, there is a body of literature in the United States that chronicles various efforts through espionage—commercial espionage or state-sponsored espionage—to secure the keys to the kingdom. In my judgment and assessment, the Chinese intelligence apparatus would be doing anything and everything to secure what can be secured in technologies that are critical

to sustain or secure economic preponderance, but most particularly, given civil-military fusion within the People's Republic of China, those technologies which provide China with a leading military edge. This program will continue to expand, and, of course, the Chinese will be targeting not just the United States on this question but its principal allies as well, both in Asia and in Europe. What is to be done about it? Here is a complex challenge for American public policy. Here is the dilemma. On the one hand, America benefits and has benefited: Silicon Valley has benefited from the arrival of legions of Chinese students and other foreign students into American universities, graduate schools, research and development programs in critical laboratories, not just in information technology, but in the life sciences as well. Against this reality, there has been a sustained campaign led by the Chinese security apparatus to secure control of critical technologies. So how do you arrive at the public policy balance between those two competing tensions? My argument is that America would be undermining its own national economic and national security interests to shut the door on Chinese students and researchers. What the United States should be doing instead is providing a very large-scale continued increase in the resourcing for our security, intelligence, and vetting agencies, so that each of these institutions is properly surveilled by the United States authorities. I think that is far and away the better approach. It is also one that maximizes American economic and technological long-term interests. It is not terribly popular politically; it sounds much more hardline and draconian to just shut the door, but America's power in the world has drawn from this avalanche of people who have come from China, India, Korea, and elsewhere into American schools, and who have provided so much of the talent that is alive and breathing in Silicon Valley today.

During the Cold War, there were two camps. There was the United States and there was the Soviet Union, basically. It was largely a bipolar competition. Today, we have the United States, the People's Republic of China, and we also have Russia, which some people describe as a declining country—albeit possessing the largest nuclear stockpile in the world. So we have something like a three-body problem; if we take action against Russia it pushes them toward China. If we take action against China it pushes them closer to Russia. How do we navigate that three-body problem effectively?

There was a period, in my judgment, from about 2001 to, maybe, 2015, after the initial Russian invasion of Crimea and the Donbas in February 2014, when there was an opportunity for the United States to reach a better strategic modus vivendi with the Russian Federation. Most of the Russian specialists that I know in the United States would object that true rapprochement could not have happened because the Russians have always been bad. Look at Georgia, look at Ossetia, look at Russia domestically. But I know, having spent some time speaking to Russian think tankers from 2014 to 2015, that as of then, there was no automatic embrace of the People's Republic of China. As the first round of sanctions hit following the invasion of Crimea, then remained in place, Putin and the Kremlin moved at speed and scale to embrace China as their long-term strategic partner. This was reflected most graphically in the February 4, 2022; joint declaration in Beijing between the two leaders. I do not think that relationship is now redeemable from an American perspective. The wise course of action now is to regard the Russia-China relationship as a fixed strategic entity for the foreseeable future. The United States should have that as a clear analytical frame, and its long-term China strategy should take that as one of its assumptions. To pretend somehow that a China card could be played in order to isolate the Russians or a Russia card

could be played to isolate the Chinese, I think now is the stuff of political fiction. We should assume that we are looking at the same entity that we looked at between 1949 and 1959. PRISM