



ENGAGING WITH CHINA AND EAST ASIA: DEVELOPING AN AMERICAN STRATEGY

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INTRODUCTION NANCY KARIBJANIAN

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Transcript of Event

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Place: Mitchell Hall, University of Delaware



MS. KARIBJANIAN: We're so glad you're all here this afternoon, here at Mitchell Hall and, ah, we take a lot of pride in this event. I'm Nancy Karibjanian, I'm with the Center for Political Communication, and we, along with the Department of Political Science and International Relations are hosting this event with Senator Coons and a panel times two that will bring you much information about what's happening for us globally. I do want to remind you there are photographers present. We are documenting this event so do know that at some time you might actually be through a photo or in a photo or a video. So, do be aware of that as well. So, it is my pleasure at this moment to step aside and introduce the Provost of the University of Delaware, Robin Morgan, who will get us started. Enjoy today's program.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Nancy. And welcome, everyone. It's a great pleasure for me to be here today to welcome you and our special guests to Mitchell Hall. Here at UD we foster lifelong learning, we work to cultivate passion in our students and our entire community to seek knowledge and understanding. So that's why I'm proud today to be part of this program with Delaware's United States Senator Chris Coons. Senator Coons recently traveled to China and East Asia visiting with dignitaries, business leaders, and heads of state. His quest for a greater understanding continues today when he will speak with experts from here on campus and with former National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon. Mr. Donilon is now chairman of the BlackRock Investment Institute and is considered one of the nation's foremost and most experienced policy advisors. Mr. Donilon has advised three



presidents and today he will share his knowledge with Senator Coons and with us. Now, the way today is going to work there are going to be two panels; um, Mr. Donilon will be on the second panel. There is no break between them, so this is, this is from beginning to end. Um, but before, so before we hear from Mr. Donilon we're going to use some, to, to present some insight into United States relations with China and East Asia. And so, we're going to use UD experts to get us started. Dr. Alice Ba – many of you may know her – from the Department of Political Science & International Relations will bring her insight and expertise to the discussion. Dr. Ba noted in her 2017 Fulbright lecture that the status of U.S. - China policy is to a degree predictable, often subjected to the swings of the United States election cycle. It's a very opportune time to hear from Dr. Ba. Dr. Yanchong Wang, of the Department of History specializes in modern Chinese and East Asian history. He spent five days last summer in North Korea. Dr. Wang traveled from the border to the capital to the DMZ. And moderating this discussion is Dr. Dave Redlawsk, Chair and James Soles Professor of the Department of Political Science & International Relations. And finally, rounding out this first half of the discussion is United States Senator Chris Coons. Senator Coons' position on the Senate Judiciary Committee has of course grabbed many headlines in recent days and months but its his position on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that brings him here today to the University of Delaware for the topic we'll discuss. Please join me now in welcoming our first panel to the stage.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.] [Greater applause as panel enters stage.]

DR. REDLAWSK: Thank you and welcome, ah, to the University of Delaware and our roundtable. Over the weekend President Trump shocked



many observers by tweeting threats to increase tariffs on Chinese goods, even as the White House has indicated trade talks are moving to a smooth conclusion. Not surprisingly, markets across the world reacted negatively including in the U.S. this morning. Time will tell if the talks themselves are negatively impacted. But the challenges facing the U.S. in dealing with China go well beyond these important trade issues and it is some of those other challenges we'll focus on in this particular roundtable this morning. I have a couple of questions to get us started with conversation, but I hope it will be more of a conversation than a Q and A. My own research is American politics. I've been fortunate though in recent years to visit China several times and have been struck by the vibrancy of the cities that I visited and the confidence of the people that I've met; mostly academics about Chinese future place in the world. To me this confidence is also expressed by China's belt and road initiative, the infrastructure and investment in many countries well beyond Asia including sensibly in Africa. The U.S. has important concerns about this initiative but clearly belt and road responds to the infrastructure and development needs, well at least from my perspective the U.S. seems to have turned inward. In effect China seems to be moving in where we appear to be moving out. So, let's start by asking Professor Ba to tell us a bit about her perspective on the belt and road initiative, its importance to China, to East Asia more generally, and I assume as well there are real national security implications for the U.S.

DR. BA: Thanks, Dave. Um, so, um, my work has focused mostly on, um, the politics and strategies of China's and Southeast Asia's expanding relations. Um, and since time is short I'm just going to focus on

three points. Um, the first is that, you know, while there is considerable, ah, concern and questions about China's initiatives in Southeast Asia I would also argue that most and, ah, that, that they also respond to an important regional demand in Southeast Asia. Ah, infrastructure has long factored into development strategies of both China and the Southeast Asian states. In the current [indiscernible] economic moment as well we have a global slowdown, we have protectionists pressures of course in core economies including our own, um, and of course U.S. - China trade tensions also threaten global supply chains that will destabilize growth, you know, across the region. Um, in addition, right, I mean, if we look at the, um, the assessments, more than one assessment in fact by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, only about five percent of those infrastructure needs will be met by existing sources. Um, and meanwhile, climate change which effects maritime Asia in particular will create additional demands in terms of infrastructure. My basic point here is that there is tremendous demand in, in Southeast Asia, ah, in response to some of the initiatives that China is putting forward. My second, ah, point is to simply say is that despite the interest, and there is broad interest across the board in Southeast Asia, that there are concerns and risks. Um, Southeast Asian states are extremely concerned about the perceived U.S. retrenchment for example, and disengagement. Um, and they're especially concerned about over reliance on anyone partner and that's historically been the case, not just in terms of China but it's only China raises a lot of questions currently. And then my third and final point is simply to say that there, that means that there are opportunities for the United States to engage the region on this front as far as I'm concerned. Um, but I think that we also have to be



clear-eyed I think about what we're able to do. Again, only five percent of those infrastructure needs are being met. Um, and so, um, the United States has put forth some important proposals, um, um, but given our own political and material constraints I think, um, we also need to think more broadly about how to engage those, those needs as well as serve our own interests.

Thanks.

DR. REDLAWSK: Senator Coons, you have just returned from a, a, a trip to the area: Japan, Korea, China. And I'm wondering whether you see opportunities for the U.S. to pursue work and collaboration with China to address our concerns but also significant developmental needs in developing Asian, and, and African countries, um, as well as thinking about China's own developmental insecurities. Can we address our own national security concerns while we're doing this?

SENATOR COONS: Well, that's three different questions.

DR. REDLAWSK: Yeah –

SENATOR COONS: Let me see –

DR. REDLAWSK: – I know that's why –

SENATOR COONS: – if I can touch on each–

DR. REDLAWSK: – I threw a bunch out there.

SENATOR COONS: – in order [indiscernible] –

DR. REDLAWSK: I know. [Chuckle.]

SENATOR COONS: Um, I was in Beijing during the belt and road, ah, forum, and it was striking to me, this is the second, ah, but second annual and likely to be first of many. There were at least forty heads of state, ah, who came to participate. It was very well produced. It was very well attended, ah,

and it is a very ambitious, um, economic development and projection of power initiative by the People's Republic of China. Um, I do think it's possible that we could cooperate. Um, while there I met with the head of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the AIIB, a relatively new multilateral institution that a number of our G-7 partners are also participating in. Um, and there's a key difference here. One of the core criticisms of belt and road projects, those that have already been done, is a lack of transparency, ah, lack of a real, um, development outcome, and then a concern about the possibility of debt traps, meaning these projects end up being terribly costly and then end up compromising the sovereignty of the countries in which they're done. Um, those are broad critiques of BRI projects that the United States and many others have leveled. And President Xi Jinping responded to that directly, ah, in his opening remarks at the Belt and Road Forum. Um, the head of the AIIB insisted that they are intending to function according to international standards, to only finance development projects that are done transparently, ah, with good labor and environmental metrics, um, and in ways that actually serve the needs of the people in the countries in which they're being done. As you mentioned, there is a huge need, ah, not just in Southeast Asia, but also, I mean throughout the world – in the Middle East, in Africa, um, in Central and South America – there are trillions of dollars of potential infrastructure and development projects that could be done. I am concerned about the tenor, ah, of conversation in Congress and in Washington towards belt and road. It is being highlighted as a belt, road, and cellphone tower, ah, initiative that is seen as a way of sort of paving, um, the, ah, digital highway for Huawei and, ah, China state security to dominate, ah, the developing world. Um, that may



be a little overblown. And frankly, the numbers may be a little overblown. Ah, while there have been, ah, very breathless press releases about hundreds of billions of dollars of projects, um, there are, there's much fewer than that actually underway and actually on the ground. So, to conclude, I do think it is possible for us to partner, ah, with our allies in the region, ah, and in Southeast Asia using the new development finance corporation that is the result of the Build Act, ah, which a number of us worked on in the last Congress is now a law and is strengthening America's tools in this area. I think it is possible for us to partner with the development finance entities in South Korea, in Japan, in Australia, and elsewhere to demonstrate what a truly global development standard project looks like and then to talk with the Chinese about modifying belt and road, um, so that it actually meets the very aspirational standards that the head of the AAIB (sic) was laying out. There's more than enough need in the world. The United States has one of the deepest, most, um, capable capital markets. Ah, we have an enormous amount of private capital that is looking for investment opportunities in the developing world. Um, our new development finance corporation really could lead a multilateral effort to not just raise the standards of development, ah, but to also engage China in a constructive and collaborative way, um, in lifting, ah, hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and modernizing their infrastructure in dozens of countries just as China has done within its own country.

DR. REDLAWSK: So, we're, we're obviously here in a university and many universities including the University of Delaware are seeking to build relationships with Chinese educational institutions, providing significant opportunities for Chinese scholars to come to the U.S., and for U.S. scholars

to lecture there. Student exchanges have been developed as well. We're doing some really interesting things here in our department and the Department of Sociology and some other areas. I've been told by counterparts at Chinese universities, in fact, there's often a mandate that professors go abroad in order to be promoted. So, they're, they're really pushing outward in that sense and the long-term benefits to having Chinese academics experience the American educational, cultural, political environments seem fairly clear to me. At the same time, there are clearly legitimate concerns about the potential for spying, particularly for intellectual property theft and that perhaps not every Chinese scholar visiting the United States is really doing so as a scholar. So, I'm going to turn to Professor Wang and ask, you arrived in the U.S. as a young scholar to work on your PhD because of the reputation in the U.S. among your teachers. All right, you've noted that Chinese scholars in the U.S. have served as a good and often unofficial channel for communications between the two sides. Um, you also have noted that since the 1980's these scholars who come here and go back may be the most substantial implicit ally that we could have in authoritarian China. So, I'm wondering if you could tell us a bit more about how Chinese intellectuals and elites have viewed the U.S. particularly in recent years and whether the perspectives that you felt from your teachers are now changing because of circumstances?

DR. WANG: Sure. Thank you, David. As a noted in this current ongoing U.S. - China conflict, more and more Chinese scholars, especially my colleagues who teaches in Chinese university back in China, they have, ah, noticed that an increasing number of Chinese scholar (sic) [indiscernible]



scholars leave us [indiscernible] constrained or directly cancelled. So, that also caused – they had already caused a ripple effect and we can see that point pretty clear now. So, to me, I think, my generation, my [indiscernible] generation, the majority of the Chinese intellectuals, their perception about the United States, their perception about the bilateral relationship have been quite positive especially after 1989, the Tiananmen event. So, but the current situation changing I have to say that the majority of my friends, ah, they stay positive about situation and they regard the current conflict as a short-lived and can be abnormal. But at the same time, we do have a great concern over this scenario. You reach confrontation going to replace friendship and confrontation will become normal. And the U.S. might gradually close its door to the Chinese intellectuals. And nobody wants that to happen. Ah, many friends of mine, they seem very [indiscernible] this policy is being established. So, exactly on that part I want to hear our senator's comments because I see them as good channels, as the bilateral, ah, the channels of bilateral contacts so they can provide us with many things that are beyond official rhetoric around official lines. Thank you.

DR. REDLAWSK: And I, and I, I wonder how we address this, right? The benefits of having this kind of intellectual exchange but the risks to the United States national security when we know that in fact at least in some cases there is more than meets the eye.

SENATOR COONS: First, um, my approach towards U.S. - China relations, ah, begins with humility. Ah, I think the United States, ah, as a culture and a country needs to recognize that we have a lot to learn, that while there are I think 325,000 Chinese students and scholars in the United States roughly,



there's something like ten percent of that in Americans who are in China.

DR. WANG: Right.

SENATOR COONS: Um, our own Governor Jack Markell, um, launched, ah, Mandarin education in our public schools. I just happened to have, a, an intern in my office, ah, last week when I met with the ambassador from China, um, and he speaks Mandarin because of going to Conrad High School here. Um, so I think we can be proud of having had state leadership that recognized, ah, the value, um, the, the validity of a need for Americans to better study, better understand, ah, better connect with, um, China's culture which is deep, um, complex, and ancient. Ah, I am very concerned, second, um, that what I'm hearing in my colleagues in Congress, we are casually sliding towards, ah, a genuine confrontation with China and the framework, the frame of reference being used, ah, is our cold war conflict with the Soviet Union. Um, the PRC and the Soviet Union are fundamentally different. We are in a different place in terms of our inner, inner connected economies; we're in a different place in terms of the academic, intellectual, and cultural exchanges that have happened over our 40 years of, ah, open diplomatic relations, and we're in a different place in terms of China's strength and role and trajectory in the world, um, that what the Soviet Union ever was. So, I'm very concerned that we're approaching this with the wrong attitude and the wrong mindset. Ah, and frankly, as a result, I'm concerned that we in the United States are very ill prepared, um, for if a conflict should come, um, what we would be preparing for and what it would look like. Um, so, last, um, I think that Chinese students and scholars in the United States play an absolutely essential role in continuing, um, to strengthen and nurture, um, the, this vibrant, um, culture to



culture intellectual exchange and relationship. Um, I have had some briefings that have led to real concern about the role of state security, um, in the current generation of students and scholars. Um, I do think, ah, under Xi Jinping and the current leadership of China there's been a, a turn, um, towards a somewhat heavier hand by, um, government in terms of what they're asking of students and scholars. And I frankly think we need to be very careful in the United States, um, to not play into, um, really truly regrettable nativist or racist stereotypes to not, um, over criminalize, um, the few investigations that may be appropriate or necessary of scholars. There have been some really tragic cases; very badly handled, ah, that have sent ripples of fear and concern, ah, in the academic community here in the United States, um, that I've been made well aware of. Um, universities are not adept at addressing national security and intelligence issues. That is not the background of most heads of most departments is –

DR. REDLAWSK: Not what we do.

SENATOR COONS: – you know, someone sends you an interesting paper and says they want to come be a visiting professor, wants to participate. How are you supposed to know, um, this person's background? How are you supposed to be fully prepared to do relevant vetting? So, I think, um, the federal government, our intelligence community has to step up to this role. These conversations have to be held very carefully, um, because I think there is very real risk of lasting harm. Um, the United States has a well deserved reputation in China for being an open and welcoming society, um, that although young, ah, is vibrant, um, and I really think the possibilities of partnership with China; the ways in which we really could team up to tackle the



greatest challenges of this century from climate change to pandemics; from nuclear proliferation to more resilient and sustainable infrastructure. There is enormous promise there. And we need to be careful that we don't casually push that aside and barrel towards conflict without really reflecting on the costs and consequences for the whole world should that happen.

DR. REDLAWSK: So, so you get a sense there are multiple issues of course between the U.S. and China; multiple things that we're concerned about and we're touching very briefly on just a couple of them here. Um, I, I'm going to switch again, now to the, the question of fentanyl trafficking. Senator Coons, I know that this is –

DR. BA: [Chuckle.]

DR. REDLAWSK: – something that you spent some time –

SENATOR COONS: Yes.

DR. REDLAWSK: – talking about in China and meeting with people in China about it.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum

DR. REDLAWSK: And I also know that, um, ah, China announced a ban

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SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

DR. REDLAWSK: – but there are questions about the actual implementation of that ban and, and how well it's going to be –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

DR. REDLAWSK: – ah, ah, monitored. So, I'm curious if you could tell us a bit more about what you've learned, what –

SENATOR COONS: Right.



DR. REDLAWSK: – you think the situation is.

SENATOR COONS: Um, first, let's just be clear what fentanyl is. Um, it is, um, an incredibly powerful, um, ah, compound, um, I think developed as a horse tranquilizer initially, um, that is being, ah, used mixed with, ah, opioids, heroin, ah, and other addictive substances, ah, with tragic impact. Um, I think something like 60 percent of the overdose deaths in Delaware, um, in the last two years were related to fentanyl. It gives a cheap powerful additional kick, as if heroin wasn't powerful and addictive enough, um, and a, a significant amount of the fentanyl that is coming in to the United States is coming in through Mexico or directly through China. Um, China does not have a fentanyl abuse problem anything like the United States. Ah, and so, ah, I was traveling with Senator Maggie Hassan, she represents New Hampshire. West Virginia and New Hampshire are the two states in the United States most decimated, um, but Delaware frankly also, um, is really struggling with this. We had 38 Delawareans die in the 31 days of August last year, um, just to give you a sense of number in a very small state like ours. Um, to have more than 350 people a year dying from, um, opioid overdoses is quite something. Um, we first have a responsibility to get our own house in order to deal with the demand side, to provide, ah, the treatment, the interdiction, the public health response in the United States that is appropriate. Um, second, in the meetings I had with the, I think it was the national counter narcotics, ah, center, ah, this was in the Ministry of Public Safety, um, in, in Beijing. Um, Senator Hassan and I expressed our gratitude, um, to the initiative taken, ah, by China to list fentanyl and some of its precursors and components, which means making them illegal, um, and then taking, we hope, um, very strong



steps to enforce that listing. Um, it, it is something that has a significant negative impact, ah, on America's perception of China. Um, there have been some legislative initiatives in Congress that, ah, I hope will now, um, slow down or change course to recognize this positive step by China and that we could work in partnership, ah, to try and slow, um, the flood of, of fentanyl coming into our country. You know, part of what's happening here is the way in which modern trade is so different. Trade of 10 or 20 years ago was whole container-loads moving from a manufacturing plant onto a ship and then, um, to a dock and then to a receiving factory. Today there are literally millions of packages, tiny packages, ah, being shipped directly from small producers, um, to small consumers. Ah, and we haven't developed the systems yet with our postal service, ah, with our, ah, customs and border patrol, um – although we have passed the legislation to do so, and Senator Hassan played a central role in that. Last, let, let me just remind you, um, there was a tragic chapter, ah, in Chinese history where, ah, western powers, ah, really pushed opium and opium addiction, um, in, into China in a way that was profoundly debilitating. Um, modern Chinese leaders are well aware, ah, of this very difficult, um, chapter, ah, in China's relations with the West. Ah, as a state, China is very aggressively opposed, ah, to narcotics, ah, and I think can and, and will be a good partner in working with us. Ah, and I think we've moved past a period where there was a lot of finger wagging on both sides – you know this is your domestic problem; no, this is your problem – ah, and I'm very optimistic now that, ah, having taken this strong step the United States and China will together do more to tackle this very real challenge that is affecting the people of Delaware and the entire United States.

DR. REDLAWSK: So in, in a very brief last minute or two here, I'm, I'm going to turn to our, our academic colleagues, ah, and just ask each of you very briefly to give us some sense of what you think are, are critical issues that China and, um, other countries in the area or China and Taiwan; some very, sadly, some very brief sense of that if you could. Professor Ba?

DR. BA: Um, sure. I mean, I think the, the biggest challenge I think has to do with U.S. - China relations in Asia as far as I'm concerned. And I, I'm very heartened, actually, to hear [chuckle] from Senator Coons that there are these avenues for cooperation on various fronts. You know, um, and I'm going to just be very brief, but you know I've been part of a three-year dialogue between, a, a small group of U.S. and China scholars and, you know, there's been real concern that dialogue mechanisms are being cutoff –

DR. REDLAWSK: They are.

DR. BA: – right?

DR. REDLAWSK: Um-hum.

DR. BA: I mean, like, when we have tensions, our response is to cutoff talks. [Chuckle.]

DR. REDLAWSK: Right.

DR. BA: You know? I mean, that's ridiculous. So, I'm, I'm very heartened to hear that. So, I'll just leave it at that.

DR. REDLAWSK: Professor, Professor Wang? Some final thoughts generally?

DR. WANG: Yeah, I will just say, U.S. and China can cooperate in sort of, a couple of very important issues next to China, mainland China. Why in North Korea and now the Taiwan. So, I think this is a cooperation to me is



the only way that we can find. It's very brief.

DR. REDLAWSK: Okay [chuckle.] It was very brief.

PANELISTS: [Laughter.]

DR. REDLAWSK: Well, thanks. I believe our time is up for this panel but there is much more still coming. Thanks to the panelists for being here and giving these important insights. And thanks to you in the audience for taking your time, particularly for those of you from the University at the end of a very busy academic year. We'll take a brief moment to set things up for the second part of the program featuring Senator Coons and former National Security Advisor, Tom Donilon. Please stay turned for Part 2.

MS. KARIBJANIAN: Please thank them for their contributions to our first panel. Thank you so much.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

SENATOR COONS: Thanks.

DR. BA: Thank you so much for coming.

DR. WANG: Thank you.

MS. KARIBJANIAN: So, we're going to do a very quick reset of the stage here. So, stay, stay put and as we do so you will see that we will also be viewing a continuation of the bio that we, ah, heard from Provost Morgan for our keynote guest in the second half of our program. And that is coming up as soon as, ah, we have everything all set and ready to go. We will continue the conversation. One of the things that we are pleased about is that we are able to offer you both the primer on the topic with the academics from the University of Delaware and now, have the opportunity to hear from two insiders, being the Senator and also Tom Donilon who is the former National Security Advisor.



He was Security Advisor during the Obama administration. And, you can see some of the tweets that were from the Senator's recent tour of East Asia and China.

[PANEL 2]

MS. KARIBJANIAN: So, gentlemen, I want to welcome both of you to our stage and we will continue the conversation and learn so much more. Thank you all so much.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

SENATOR COONS: All right, I want to thank Nancy, ah, for the introduction. Some of you may know that she was the moderator for a little debate that happened right here in 2010 –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. REDLAWSK: [Chuckle.]

SENATOR COONS: – that, ah, was truly, ah, delightful. Um, I've known, ah, Tom Donilon, ah, I think 30 years, ah, since, ah, I had the great joy of being a summer associate at the law firm of O'Melveny & Myers where he was a practicing partner. Um, and he is the most brilliant brief writer I've literally ever met, ah, and also a very capable and insightful leader, ah, in politics, in national security, ah, in foreign policy matters. Ah, you got a brief introduction to his biography; that I am genuinely thrilled, Tom, that you were willing to make some time for us, ah, here at the University. Ah, Tom has a long and close relationship with our former Vice President, ah – and this is an editorial comment on my part – I hope our next President.

MR. DONILON: [Chuckle.]

SENATOR COONS: Um –



AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

SENATOR COONS: – and I think having his insights on this most important area, ah, is really critical. Um, I took a week in East Asia, um, before launching back into this coming 18 months because I think the U.S. - China relationship is the foundational relationship for this century. But I'm a newcomer to this. Tom was giving, um, really central important speeches on U.S. - China relations and the United States and East Asia, um, I think in 2011, 2013, 2015 and played a central role, ah, in the Obama-Biden Administration's policies. So, Tom, why don't you kick us off, ah, by bringing us up to date. Um, you gave very thoughtful, very well-grounded speeches, um, that I relied on in preparing to go to East Asia. How have things changed? How does the field look different today, um, as we head into, barrel into, careen into the second year of the Trump Administration?

MR. DONILON: Ah, thank you. Senator, it's great to be here and great to be here with everybody, ah, this morning. Ah, Delaware is fortunate in its Senator –

SENATOR COONS: Thank you.

MR. DONILON: – ah, who is I think rightfully seen as one of the most thoughtful senators serving today, ah, in a whole range of areas. Right? From foreign policy as well as, as well as the Judiciary Committee and the challenges that we've had in that [chuckle], in that area where you've been really one of the most thoughtful leaders that we –

SENATOR COONS: Thank you.

MR. DONILON: – that we have. Ah, my brother Michael, my younger brother, actually teaches here. Ah, and is the director of the Biden Center, ah,



on the campus of the University of Delaware. So, it's a great, it's a real pleasure to, ah, it's a real pleasure to be here. Ah, on China. I think you're exactly right. I think that U.S. - China relations will be the most important challenge for U.S. diplomats and policy makers and for as far as the eye can see and it's the most important relationship in the world right now bar none given the geopolitical, the military, and the economic interactions between the United States and, ah, and China. I think that, you know, we, ah, as you referenced in the Obama Administration we came into office in 2008 and during the transition President Obama asked a question; ah, how are we doing on our footprint in the world? Ah, where are we underweighted and where are we over weighted in the world? And the conclusion we had during the course of the transition in 2008 into 2009 was that we were significantly underweighted in terms of our attention to Asia across almost every dimension, whether it be diplomatic or military, mindshare, um, ah, and economic. Um, and we decided to engage in a rebalance, right, both in terms of the attention that we pay to the region and the resources that we allocated, ah, ah to the region. Ah, difficult to do because we were also in the midst of, um, ah, wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq and, and also running the most aggressive anti-terror effort that the country had ever, ah, had ever run. So, but I think we made a lot of progress on it. Um, um, moving, um, moving, moving forward. Where are we today getting directly to your question. I think that we can debate this. I'll lay out a proposition and see if you agree. Um, ah, I think when we look back on 2018 that it'll be seen as the year when U.S. policy, particularly by the United States government today, and I think agree across, across bipartisan, ah, a group of institutions, ah, and, and



organizations, 2018 will be the year when the United States policy moved from one of strategic cooperation –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – really which had its roots in Richard Nixon’s trip to, ah, Beijing in February of 1972, right through, ah, every president since then, and will be seen more as moving to a strategic competition model. I think that’s where, I think that’s when we look back on 2018 I think that’s what we’ll, that’s what we’ll think about where the U.S. - China policy, ah, has, ah, ah, ah, has gone. I think the relationship has changed more, ah, it’s in the process of changing. To a greater, greater extent there’s been more changes than we’ve really seen since the late 1970’s when China opened its economy for the first time and began to open it to the world and when the United States established formal relations with China in 19, in 1979. There are a lot of reasons for this. Ah, some are natural. Ah, ah, you know, as, ah, with the rise in power, you know, challenging a, ah, an existing power. We’ve seen that through, ah, through history. Some of it has to do with President Xi’s approach, um, which is more aggressive both domestically and internationally. Ah, the old Deng Xiaoping saying of –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – China should hide its time and bide its capabilities is, ah, as we would say in politics, you’re no longer operative, right, in, ah, in, ah, in China. Third, I think, it’s interesting that the story we told ourselves about China –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – which was that as China became richer it would



become more democratic in its political institutions. This turned out not to be true.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: And in fact, the current leadership of China, ah, has as its highest priority the maintenance of the monopoly power of the Communist Party of China over the society in every dimension increasingly. We can talk about that; we can talk about some of the –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – the human rights aspects of that, right? But in every dimension. Ah, and they see that as a superior system for the development of China. Ah, and see it as a system that's, that's really delivered one of the great economic stories, um, ah, in history. And I think the last thing that's happened is the United States withdrawing to some extent particularly over the last couple of years. Ah, and China has moved to fill that vacuum. And I think that's happened earlier and faster than they expected. So, I'll finish up by saying, I think that's caused a significant rethink, don't you think, on U.S. - China relations and the United States?

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: And it includes Republicans, Democrats; it includes the intelligence community, the military –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – the Congress, business –

Sc Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – and, ah, NGO's who are interested in, ah, values issues. And its seen most directly in trade but I don't think that's the main



game over the long term. And I'll finish up on this. I think this is a more strategic set of competitions, um, to, again, economics is front and center because of the trade, ah, conversation and, and negotiations that the president has launched. A trade negotiation, by the way, is not a strategy for Asia.

SENATOR COONS: Right.

MR. DONILON: Ah, that's a, that's at best a piece of a strategy for a, a, for a, for Asia. It's a much broader thing and we have really significant issues like who is going to have the commanding heights in terms of, ah, technology leadership in the world. And the last thing I'll say is this about it which is your point in the earlier conversation, Senator, and I think it's exactly right. Ah, it is easy to point to, and these are important issues, the rivalry aspects of this, um, we have to be careful that it not squeeze out any discussion of the cooperative aspects –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – which are necessary going forward.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: So that would be my summary –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – of where I think we, we are.

SENATOR COONS: Can we give a round of applause to Tom for the really remarkable, quick survey of a very broad range of topics. Ah, let's start small and then work our way big.

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: Um, it's small but it's important. Um, you know, President Trump tweeted, um, the, a threat to raise –



MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – 25 percent tariffs on another 325 billion dollars in American goods, a cost he keeps misdescribing it as, ah, tariffs that are paid into America’s coffers when in fact these are costs born by American companies and American consumers. Um, it’s a bold move. Um, he ran on being an unconventional president and he has certainly over performed in that category.

MR. DONILON: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

SENATOR COONS: Um –

MR. DONILON: Right.

SENATOR COONS: – and, so, I’ll ask a question about trade but put it in a context.

MR. DONILON: Um-hum.

SENATOR COONS: Um, I traveled, ah, with a delegation, ah, led by Senator McCain to Singapore, ah, to the Shangri-La Conference, ah, in early 2017. Um, and it was part of, um, a series of security conferences I went to. It was striking how many of our vital allies in the region were concerned, as you say, about our retreat.

MR. DONILON: Hum.

SENATOR COONS: It was that exact day, um, that President Trump withdrew us from the Paris Climate, ah, agreement. So, there’s a whole series of multilateral agreements that the Obama-Biden Administration put in place, whether it’s the JCPOA, ah, to constrain Iran’s, ah, illicit nuclear weapons program –



MR. DONILON: Yes.

SENATOR COONS: – and the threat that Iran poses, or it was the Paris Climate talks. President Trump has switched from a multilateral strategy to a bilateral strategy. And I think you can reasonably debate which is better. I'm a Democrat, I like multilateral; I like friends and allies. I think that's important. Um, but it's not necessarily a bad idea to pursue bilateral strategies. Where I am concerned it's had real consequences is the ways in which we have retreated on human rights, on the things that make our system different I think and admirably so, um, and in the reduction, um, from a menu of things that makes America special to just a narrow, um, index of interests. The National Security Strategy talks about the renewal of great power competition even confrontation where it's really seen as a zero-sum game of interests. What do you think is the best possible outcome of the current trade conflict with China? What would a good deal look like?

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: What would a good deal be that, um, Democrats and Republicans in Congress should cheer and that business should be satisfied with and what's really possible out of that, A; B, how much lasting damage do you think has been done to our core alliances with countries like Canada, Germany, the UK, um, South Korea, Japan, who have complained pointedly and bitterly that President Trump imposed national security justified tariffs on some of our closest allies and then see what sort of advice would you have for a future administration about multilateral versus bilateral mechanisms? I don't think the next chapter in American history is as easy as throwing the switch back –



MR. DONILON: No.

SENATOR COONS: – to the approach, um, that Obama took. I think it'll take a new strategy. What should it look like?

MR. DONILON: Yeah. Well it's a, it's a, [chuckle], okay –

SENATOR COONS: I can ask good questions.

MR. DONILON: Well, yeah, we'll start – right, yeah.

SENATOR COONS: [Laughter.] I don't have any answers, just good questions.

MR. DONILON: [Laughter.] Look, look, I'll try to address a couple of those things. And I, I want to come back to get your sense of the current reaction to the U.S. policy in the region –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – [indiscernible] a, a week, a week ago. Um, so, on, um, the current trade negotiation, um, the president has brought trade front and center in his foreign policy.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: You know, he's the first president we've had with no elected political experience –

SENATOR COONS: Right.

MR. DONILON: – and no military experience. But that doesn't mean he doesn't have views. Ah, and he's had [chuckle] –

SENATOR COONS: [Chuckle.]

MR. DONILON: – and he's had views on trade for a long time, ah, since the, since the 1980's and his view has been that the United States has taken the, it's gotten the, the, kind of the raw end of the deal, basically –



SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – on trade, ah, on trade, um, negotiation of trade agreements. And he’s, ah, been opposed to them. Obviously he’s trying to undo them. His view is, um, essentially it’s a zero-sum view which is that if you have a trade deficit with a country, ah, you are a loser; if you have a trade surplus you’re a winner. Now there are no economists that I know of who actually view that –

SENATOR COONS: Right.

MR. DONILON: – and has a strange view of tariffs. Ah, he started on the tweets last night when the President threatened the, the additional, ah, tariff percent, tariff tax, taxes essentially, on Chinese imports, he asserted that China was paying those, ah, those, those, those tariffs, those taxes into the U.S. Treasury and of course that’s just not correct, ah. You know, the tariffs are paid by the importing U.S. company –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – and ultimately by the U.S. consumer, ah, in the, in the United States. So, there are, there are some fundamentals, ah, ah, you know, essentially you have a kind of a, a very old economic view trying to solve some 21st Century problems.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: So that’s the first, the first thing. So, what would a good trade deal look like? It would be good to have more reciprocity.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: There is no doubt, and if Hillary Clinton had gotten elected president or Donald Trump is the president, either was going to have



to deal with this, ah.

SENATOR COONS: Yeah.

MR. DONILON: We had had a series of economic disputes with China that were, that were building up, ah, over the years and needed to be addressed. And they really are fundamentally around fairness or reciprocity that a U.S. company or another foreign company doing business in China should be treated as well as the Chinese company doing business in the United States and that's not the case. So –

SENATOR COONS: Right.

MR. DONILON: – I think progress on that would be a, would be an important thing, ah, and important thing to do. Um, and then there are the enforcement mechanisms, ah, that, ah, that are important, and I think the Congress obviously will take a close look and see if this is real, right?

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: Ah, and then I think the president is interested in it because he has this theory about deficits and surpluses, he'll be interested in large purchases from, ah, ah, from China. And we'll have to see how it all, how it all fits, how it all fits together. My own view, ah, is that intensive bilateral negotiation should have been accompanied by a multilateral layer.

SENATOR COONS: Framework.

MR. DONILON: Right, or we would have, we will have more success working with allies and markets that the Chinese need to change Chinese conduct than we will just in a bilateral, ah, bilateral setting. Um, this rejection of, of multilateral trade negotiations also means that we're going to be disadvantaged. We already are. You know, there's a, the Trans-Pacific



Partnership which was a multilateral trade negotiation that the Obama Administration completed including about 12 countries and about 70 percent of world trade. Um, the President rejected it. In line with rejecting the Paris Accord and the Iranian deal, this trade, this Trans Pacific Partnership was also rejected. Well, that, the, the other 11 countries –

SENATOR COONS: [Indiscernible.]

MR. DONILON: – said we're going ahead – and you were just in, you were just in, ah, Asia and you saw that – we're going ahead. That puts U.S. companies at a, at a disadvantage because there's no tariffs among those countries and our companies have to pay –

SENATOR COONS: That's right.

MR. DONILON: – the tariffs. It would have been much better to go ahead, ah, with multilateral efforts to get China to change its, ah, ah to, ah to change it's, ah, policy. So that's on the, on the trade stuff. But the, um, and to, the two other aspects of your question, um, ah, which is the price that's [indiscernible] with this approach. That is a really, really important question that doesn't get enough attention I think.

SENATOR COONS: [Chuckle.]

MR. DONILON: So, we, ah, for example, spent over a year, the United States government, really pressuring Canada and Mexico over a revision of the NAFTA agreement.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: The NAFTA agreement was ready to be updated and I think Canada and Mexico were prepared to update it. But the president entered into kind of an all-out assault, ah, on these countries to get what is

essentially very modest changes.

SENATOR COONS: Yeah.

MR. DONILON: So, what's; let me see if I can quantify the price.

Modest changes in the agreement, but if you look at polling data, for example, in Mexico and at the end of 19, 2016 if you asked the Mexican public, "do you have confidence that the U.S. president will do the right thing?"

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: Right? It was at 60 percent or so. Ah, that, that's pretty high given the history between the United States and Mexico in the last hundred years, right? Today, that, that number is five percent.

AUDIENCE: [Murmuring.]

MR. DONILON: Five. Yes. And that's real damage and it was –

SENATOR COONS: Wow.

MR. DONILON: – and it's in my, in my own judgment, again, you know, it's easier to kind of throw presents from outside – I've been inside long enough to know that, right? But this has been real damage. If you look at the cost benefit analysis I think, I think we'll see a similarly kind of high cost for what, whatever we get –

SENATOR COONS: I, Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – in the trade, ah, trade, ah, ah, deal. And um, and the last piece I'll say on this is, the piece that nobody's really discussing is, um, we have this discussion about China focused on trade and we're really hyper-focused on trying to change their conduct –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: Right? And we, we'll have limits on our ability to change



Chinese conduct. Some of this is, is, is what the Chinese Development System looks like.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: Some of it is bad behavior and it's going to be difficult to change it, but we should try and [indiscernible] we can. But we're not asking ourselves what we need to do –

SENATOR COONS: Yes.

MR. DONILON: That it seems to me, Senator, is kind of the missing piece of the China strategy thus far.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: What is the United States going to do to meet the competitive, the, the competition and, and its real competition. Now you know this theory that somehow China, um, you know, it's, its just a copying things –

SENATOR COONS: Yeah.

MR. DONILON: – and ah, that's not where Chinese development is right now as you, as, as you know. And I think that that's a question to ask ourselves. Where are we investing? Where are we in terms of our own research and development? The budget the president put out, ah, in February, right, has a five percent overall reduction in R and D and we have a tremendously negative kind of path on our research and development like this, right to the last over a decade. Um, and he had a 13, 15 percent cut of the National Science Foundation which was where a lot of this basic happens. Ah, we had a two trillion-dollar tax cut that we, ah, passed last year. Not a single discussion that I know of in investments, ah, associated with like infrastructure and things, and things like that. We need to focus on science. So, that, that's

a, kind of a, a, my answer to the, some of the key questions that you asked.

What do we, what are we doing –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – right, in order to meet this challenge because we will only be able to change this conduct in other countries –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – ah only so much, don't you think?

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum. Absolutely. Um, in fact, I, I just published an editorial I think maybe 10 days ago in which, ah, my argument was, um, there is this emerging conflict, there is this emerging competition, ah, between our models. Um, for most of the last four decades, um, China was pursuing its own domestic development and making a, just astonishing accomplishments. They've lifted more than 500 million people out of poverty. Ah, I hadn't been in China in 25 years –

MR. DONILON: Um-hum.

SENATOR COONS: – and I was stunned –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – ah, at the scope and reach and complexity of their economic development. You can read about it but it's entirely another thing, ah, to be, you know, arriving in a state of the art modern airport and whisked along on a highway that looks newer and better than any highway in the United States and to see building after building after building that looks as if it was just built because it was. Ah, we went, ah, to Hangzhou (phonetic spelling) to visit, um, Alibaba and

Jack Ma – who is a fairly well-known entrepreneur, one of the richest men in China – um, and he, they put on a really impressive display about, um, the companies that he’s launched that are essentially the Chinese equivalence roughly of eBay and Amazon but with 750 million customers internally and with, ah, intentions to grow externally. We need to stop thinking about the rise of China and China as a future competitor and; they are, they are here. They have arrived. Um, last year was a year where there were as many patents filed in China as in the United States, as many peer-reviewed scientific articles published in China as the United States. You could quibble about quality, ah, but frankly, ah, the number of engineering students, the number of inventors and innovators, the amount of invention being done, ah, China is our competitor. A peer competitor. Your point about how much are we investing is the central run. Um, as many of you know – I can see Dr. Riordan is here – um, I am a fierce advocate on the Appropriations Committee for strengthening how much we’re investing in NIH and the National Science Foundation in this amazing constellation of national laboratories we have, and in particular in the manufacturing USA strategy that led, ah, to NIMBL being headquartered here, ah, at the STAR Campus of the University of Delaware. We need to double down our investment, ah, in next generation technologies in things from communications, ah, to clean power, um, to how we’re going to buildout the

next generation of infrastructure for the world. If we want to compete the first thing we ought to do, ah, is invest in our own capabilities to be able to compete. One of the concerns many have identified strategically is that in parts of the world like Africa, ah, where there is development underway and where democracy after a decade of great advances seems to be somewhat on the back foot. Um, China is now exporting not just, um, manufactured goods, ah, but it's model and is beginning to offer, um, the tools and the means of state surveillance, ah, to monitor, manage, and control populations. Um, to put it positively, China's view is, um, they have a principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries, um, and they will go to African heads of state and say "do you really think the United States has the right to ask about how you treat your press, ah, your minority political parties, ah, your own environment? Don't you think they should respect your sovereignty and stay out of those issues?" Ah, and I frankly think that our commitment to promoting democracy and open societies is a lot of what has won us a global constellation of allies, ah, not customers, not client states, not nervous neighbors, but genuine allies based on shared values. Um, I think there are millions of people trying to get into the United States because of our deserved reputation as an open society, ah, which I don't think, um, is the parallel in China. Ah, but we have to think about this competition in models. And to your point, Tom, the best way for democracy to be a more appealing model is for our own democracy to work. We shut down about half of the federal government of the United States for 35 days in a largely pointless fight over the difference between border fence and border wall at the end of last year. If you're in a developing country and China shows up and says "here's our



model for lifting people out of poverty and for running a society” what about our current conduct in Congress and in Washington seems admirable, seems uplifting, seems like the sort of model, ah, you should follow.

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: This is why I’ll come back to human rights and what role human rights, um, ought to play in our role on the world stage. Um, I’ve been struck at the number of people I’ve met around the world who listen to Voice of America, um, and heard the call not just of American jazz although that seems to be enormously influential –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – um, not just American culture, ah, our music, and our, and our conduct towards each other, ah, but who were drawn by the idea of liberty. The idea of being able to live your life as you see fit, ah, and to carry out God’s gifts to you in the way that you would pursue. We had lunch with North Korean defectors when we were in Seoul. And to meet with people who had literally risked their lives repeatedly in order to leave, ah, the gulag of North Korea and make it through China into South Korea or into the, ah, into the broader region and who are now dedicating their lives to trying to help others get out of North Korea was really inspiring. What role do you think, Tom, um, human rights ought to play? Um, I really think it has, um, gone down the list in terms of priorities –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: It does upset, um, the Chinese when we raise issues like the Uyghurs, ah when we raise internal issues like the treatment of, ah, Falun Gong or Tibet, um, and they do resent, ah, our raising questions about



internal matters. Um, how do you think we ought to strike this balance in terms of the strategic priority of cooperation –

MR. DONILON: Um-hum.

SENATOR COONS: – and structured competition versus continuing to press the very thing that makes us an admired world leader?

MR. DONILON: Well, I think you had it exactly right. I mean, it, it, it seems, seems to me, you know, we, we talk about the decoupling of the tech sectors, right, and this, and this, ah, economic, ah, competition that we're in with, ah, with China, and there is some decoupling that's going to go on because we are going to, we are going to as you had discussed in the earlier panel, there are, there are tough questions around this particularly at the universities but we do have to protect our intellectual property and –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – be smart about how we, ah, about how we do it. And, um, we do have threats against our companies and against our, our, our intellectual property and other, and other assets. So, we have to, there may be some decoupling there. But it seems to me the broader decoupling that's going on in the world is the one you described which is really, um, a competition between governance systems –

SENATOR COONS: Uh-huh.

MR. DONILON: – ah, where you have state centric authoritarian, ah, nations with their approach to governance, um, and liberal democratic nations with, with our approach to governance –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: Um, we've had a lot of pressure on the democracies



frankly –

SENATOR COONS: Yeah.

MR. DONILON: – ah, particularly since the financial, financial crisis. And the performance of the democracies is really going to be critical going forward here I think. Um, um, because I do think that at the end of the day it's the most attractive system, it's the place where people want to, ah, want to, ah, um, want to live and, and raise their families and, ah, and thrive. An essential part of that competition though is not to give up the values asset that we have.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: And it seems to me that, um, I think as you were saying, we have, we've, we, it's a tremendous strength. I mean, one of the great, as, as, as you talked earlier, you know, the, um, it's a real mistake for the United States to portray itself as just another nation.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: Ah, we're not just another nation and our, our style of leadership, particularly since World War II, has been distinct and it has been, it has been focused on win-win solutions, it's been focused on, um, it hasn't been focused on, um, you know conquering or, ah, or, um, winner take all solutions; ah, public goods –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – um, and the ideals that were represented have been tremendously in our interests ultimately, ah, over the last, over half a, over half a century. And it seems to me we don't talk about it enough and we're giving it away to the extent that we don't use values as part of our foreign policy. To



the extent that we don't use values as something that it brings us together in terms of our alliances and partnerships around the world, we are missing, don't you think, our real strength –

SENATOR COONS: Absolutely.

MR. DONILON: – and asset and we, and today it is nowhere to be found in American foreign policy as best I can tell. Um –

SENATOR COONS: That is Tom, one area where I think there's real bipartisanship in Congress, ah, in pushing back on the ways in which the current administration has really reduced, um, the visibility, the forcefulness of its advocacy on human rights. I'm the cochair of the Human Rights Caucus in the Senate with Senator Tillis of North Carolina. We're in the midst of an effort to rename that after John McCain, ah, in no small part because I think the most admirable part of his long record of service was the ways in which he advocated, um, for human rights, um, you know, particularly, um, in advocating against the use of torture in the treatment of detainees based on his own experience as a –

MR. DONILON: Right.

SENATOR COONS: – POW, um, among many other things that he worked on. I do think, as you put it, remembering what makes us exceptional, remembering what makes us, um, an extraordinary and a unique country in world history, um, is I think one of our greatest strengths –

MR. DONILON: Sure.

SENATOR COONS: – and something that we walk away from, um, at our own peril.

MR. DONILON: And the other systems that are kind of merging right



now are really – and again, um, you know, you, you, you spent time with the Far East, I spent an enormous amount of time in China talking to leaders about; and yeah there's a, there's arguments that get made about why their system is right for their country. But it's interesting –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – that system which, as I said at the top of the remarks, really is, in China at least really is driven by the imperative for the maintenance of the, of, of monopoly power by increase monopoly power by the; and continuing monopoly power by the communist party of China in every aspect of life, is now being, ah, enhanced and enabled by technology.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: and that's becoming, and that, that's; it's interesting, that's becoming a, that's becoming an export.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: Ah, that system. Don't you think you see it around, around the world where basically, you know, the, the technology which allows, ah, a nation-state –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – to essentially monitor vast numbers of people –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – ah, through, um, ah, facial recognition and, ah, data mining and, you know, powered by automated intelligence, artificial intelligence, right, ah, it makes these nations very powerful, right –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – in their, ah, their; it's sold as a way to maintain



authority –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – and power and to keep out bad influences.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: But I think it's, I think you see it around the world –

SENATOR COONS: I do.

MR. DONILON: It, it, it, it's now becoming an export.

SENATOR COONS: I do, and one of the more challenging recent meetings I had was with, ah, the president of Italy. Ah, as, as, as I suspect many know, um, in the deployment of 5G, ah, which is the next generation, ah, of wireless communication, um, the United States has picked a fairly pointed fight, um, with China's, ah, leading provider of, ah, both the hardware and the systems for 5G. A company called Huawei. Ah, we've now insisted that we not procure Huawei components for anything that is part of, um, the American telecommunications infrastructure, um, and we've pressed our key national security partners, ah, the so-called Five Eyes, ah, to follow our lead in this. Australia and New Zealand have agreed with us. The United Kingdom has not. Um, the United Kingdom just reached a conclusion that they think, um, they can keep the core of, um, the 5G communication system, um, free of Chinese spying or interference, um, and that they, they don't see it the same way we do. Um, Italy has recently signed up for Belt and Road, ah, and was represented at the Belt and Road Conference and also, um, shares a skeptical view of our assessment of the security challenges posed by 5G.

MR. DONILON: Um-hum.

SENATOR COONS: Back to your core point –



MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – um, which I agree with that the United States needs to get its own house in order and look to our own conduct first. As I've talked to allies and partners – Japan and South Korea – about this vital issue one of the core questions is, is there a competitive offering that is comparably, ah, integrated, robust, and ready for deployment and it's cost competitive – I'll remind you, China subsidizes –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – Huawei's offerings fairly significantly. Samsung of South Korea is the closest. Um, there are American companies that are trying out 5G deployments on a large scale in the United States. Ah, but in terms of building out the, the, the material, the network, um, that makes the backbone of 5G possible, um, arguably Nokia – there's two Scandinavian companies and one, um, Asian company, Samsung – that are from countries with which we have close security partnerships. Um, this is – and forgive me for referencing back to the Cold War; I said earlier this is exactly the wrong frame of reference –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – but, um, I don't have a more powerful metaphor than this. Ah, it is a Sputnik moment, ah, for this generation, meaning, a moment where we look and realize, um, that we have a competitor that is ahead of us.

MR. DONILON: Um-hum.

SENATOR COONS: And I think the most important piece of the Sputnik moment that I'm trying to reference is that we significantly increased investment in the United States, in our own research capabilities, in our own

education. American public education was refocused on being competitive, ah, in the space age after Sputnik was launched. Um, and Russia continued to be ahead of us in the space race for a number of years. I was just at an event at the Library of Congress celebrating the anniversary of the first landing on the moon. Um, and looking back on what made that possible in some ways I, I want to, and I, I want to leave you with this, ah, image. Ah, I'd never heard of this incident before. Um, as Apollo 11, as the two astronauts of Apollo 11 who landed on the lunar surface were preparing to leave, Neil Armstrong said "did you leave the package?" Um, and his colleague confirmed, "yes, I've left the package." And then they took off. The package was a group of medals honoring the American astronauts who died in the space race. Ah, the three who were killed on the launchpad, um, of an earlier Apollo mission that blew up before it could take off, ah, as well as others. But there were also medals left behind honoring the Russian cosmonauts who died in the space race –

MR. DONILON: Um-hum.

SENATOR COONS: – in a recognition that that competition pushed both countries to be better than they otherwise could have been. One of the questions I'll ask is whether competition between the United States and China must inevitably turn into conflict or whether we could avoid the so-called Thucydides Trap and instead find ways that we order and structure our competition such that it is that a vibrant competition while emphasizing unexplored areas of cooperation. Ah, I spent a lot of time in Africa. I was chair of the Africa subcommittee my first four years then my friend Jeff Flake succeeded me. So, Senator Flake and I took a number of trips, ah, to Africa together. It is a continent of immense potential and it's got a lot of challenges

where Chinese and American cooperation with our African partners, ah, really could have an enormously positive impact. It instead we see China solely as our competitor, even a country with which we are in conflict for the loyalties of African client states – not my phrase – um, I think that is ultimately a negative –

MR. DONILON: Um-hum.

SENATOR COONS: – for the people of Africa as well as for the United States and China. Do you, Tom, think it is inevitable that we will end up in a military confrontation or in a conflict with China or is it avoidable and if so, how?

MR. DONILON: Yeah. I don't think it's inevitable. You know, the Thucydides Trap, um, analysis has been, ah, you know, put forth by Graham Allison, a friend –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – of ours up at Harvard University. And he analyzes 15 incidents over the last 1500 years where you had an existing dominant power, re: the United States in this case, and a rising power, re: China. In Graham's analysis, 12 out of the 15 times it ended in war. Ah, now the advantage that we have is we know that –

SENATOR COONS: Right. Right.

MR. DONILON: – going forward, right? Number one. And Number two, ah, is that we do have an awful lot in common and at stake I think moving, um, moving forward. You, you, you're exactly right, this is not the Soviet Union in the Cold War. We didn't; we have a 600 plus billion-dollar economic relationship between the United States and China.



SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: We have tens of thousands of people who go back and forth, ah, all, all the time. We have billions of dollars of investment in China; none of that existed with the Soviet Union.

SENATOR COONS: Right.

MR. DONILON: So, I think that we have to recognize the areas of competition. We have to, as a country, rise up to those, ah, areas, but also, but, but also understand the really profound responsibility that leaders have in the United States and China, ah, not to have it descend into something that's inevitable, inevitable conflict. You know, on the 5G point you make, and I think it's a, it is a game changing technology. It'll, it's going to take a while by the way, this is all not happening tomorrow, tomorrow, and there's various aspects to it if you, if you lay it out. Um, but it's something we need to focus on as a, as a, as a country, you know. And ah, and artificial intelligence more, ah, more, more generally. You know, I think that these conversations with allies would go better if we had better relationships with our allies.

SENATOR COONS: Yes.

MR. DONILON: I, I, I believe, I believe that. You know, we've had such an unnecessarily – we talked earlier about cost and benefits of various approaches and, and you can have absolutely good goals but the way you get there, um, matters, I think, in national security and foreign policy. And so, um, we have had, um, really, ah – and, and you're frequent, you were a frequent attendee at the Munich Security Conference – um, our relations with our European allies are unnecessarily tough at this point.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.



MR. DONILON: Ah, and it, and it costs us. It costs us in these kinds of conversations because the conversation that we're having about 5G is this, we know they're going to under bid because they're subsidized. We know they have, ah, significant installed bases on the 4G, ah –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – platforms in these countries. But there are real security long term issues that you need to take into account, and we need to work together on it. That conversation only really works if you're in a positive overall relationship –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – I think. Because you're asking people to sacrifice, ah –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – um. One last thing I'll say on the, on the moon, on the moon shot. There is a, it's a book recommendation. Doug Brinkley, the historian –

SENATOR COONS: Yes.

MR. DONILON: – from, ah, from, from Texas, right, has a – um is he at Texas? I don't know where he is; Rice maybe – but Doug Brinkley, the historian, has a, has a terrific new book out called *Moon Shot*, right –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – um, where he does the history of the space race and there's a really terrific, ah, history of kind of the Sputnik moment and what it meant for the, what it meant for the country.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum. That's who was speaking at the Library of



Congress.

MR. DONILON: Oh really, oh, great.

SENATOR COONS: [Indiscernible] –

MR. DONILON: Okay.

SENATOR COONS: – and so I was listening, listening to last week.

MR. DONILON: Yeah. Excellent, yeah. Great.

SENATOR COONS: Um, let me, you asked me an earlier question I didn't quite answer which was, how are our allies responding –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – in this current moment? Um, you know, one of the great joys of the work I get to do on your behalf is, ah, I got to meet with, ah, the Foreign Minister, the National Security Advisor, the Finance Minister, the Defense Minister in, um, a, a mix of those, ah, in both, um, Japan and South Korea, ah, and, and Taiwan. Um, and in every country I've been to in the last two years, um, that is a close ally of ours, ah, there's, ah, there's an anxiety, ah, there's a concern about where are you going really. Um, you pushed us so hard to come to the table for TPP and we made sacrifices and we put things on the table, and we were ready to sign and then you walked away under a new administration. What does that mean? Um, so there are, there are bigger picture strategic questions about where is the United States in terms of our relationships. Then there's, there's also, um, just anxiety about frankly President Trump's style. Um, he is unpredictable. Um, there is some concern that sitting across the table from Kim Jong Un, ah, a brutal dictator, ah, who has been lavishly praised, ah, but our president. Um, they worry that he might, ah, make some big deal that has significant regional –



MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – strategic consequences. Obviously, North Korea would like to see American troops, ah, off the Korean peninsula. Their definition of complete and irreversible denuclearization will almost certainly include some drawdown in our force posture, um, and in, ah, our role in the region. Um, what might that look like? Ah, it is important that we continue to coordinate closely with our South Korean and Japanese allies, ah, on those ongoing, ah, negotiations. There's also inevitable tensions that happen due to regional history. Ah, I was struck, um, at just how tense and distant, um, the current, um, South Korean and Japanese relations –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – are. Ah, over two tragic chapters, ah, in Japan's occupation of South Korea, the so-called Comfort Women, ah, and coerced employment in industrial settings that happened in the 1910 and 1945 period which the Japanese consider, ah, closed. Things; chapters were, ah, there have been negotiated settlements and payments and apologies offered, um, and where current politics in South Korea, um, have led to them being reopened. There's enormous tension between these two vital allies. Um, typically an American role here would be helping pull our allies together, helping them bridge some of this –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – distance and helping them see a common challenge in the DPRK and in regional security. Um, we have very able ambassadors in both countries, ah, who were tremendous. And very good diplomatic, ah, and



defense teams who we met with in both countries. Um, but I just don't see, um, the level of engagement –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – in the, the centrality of our role, ah, in the region. And frankly, some of our most vital allies around the world are hedging. Um, they're looking at whether its Russia, um, in eastern and central Europe or its China in east and southeast Asia. Um, some of our sort of second tier allies who are not as close and, and long, ah, in standing, is Japan and South Korea. Some of our other regional allies, um, are beginning to hedge because they don't know whether we're going to come back and be as fully engaged in the region as we have been.

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: Let me tell; reiterate a, an earlier question I had which is, um, how do you think a next administration might formulate, um, a, a policy towards, um, China and –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – and East Asia? Um, and what do you think our best, let me not put it in the framework –

MR. DONILON: Yes.

SENATOR COONS: – of a next administration.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

SENATOR COONS: Um, what do you think –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – ought to be the policy formation process –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.



SENATOR COONS: – because as you pointed out, um, a, a trade war is not a strategy.

MR. DONILON: Right.

SENATOR COONS: We don't really have a strategy for China, for Asia for this century. What do you think it ought to be –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – and how do we get there?

MR. DONILON: Yeah. A couple, a couple of points, then, just a, just on, on what you, what you've; a comment on what, what you were just talking about in terms of allies, though, before I get there. This is so important. The, the um, again, if you look at, at kind of the global place of the United States and you do, ah, kind of a balancer sheet analysis of the assets and liabilities that a country might have. Do a net assessment. One of the terrific and most important assets we have is alliances.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: You know, China doesn't have anything. None of our competitors has anything like the U.S.

SENATOR COONS: Right.

MR. DONILON: – alliance system, ah –

SENATOR COONS: Right.

MR. DONILON: – that was put together as a, you know, kind of in the course of the Cold War but serves now, really, as the, as the major mechanism by which we engage in these recent (sic), regions right? Ah, they're the, really the force multiplier for our positions around the world. They're really kind of the joint advocates for our system, right, and our values –



SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – around the world.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: And under, kind of, you know, undervaluing them is a huge mistake but that needs constant attention.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: Ah, and I don't think – you know, for example, you've referenced it, ah, freakily earlier, Senator, you know, putting steel and aluminum tariffs on our closest allies, the rationale for which is national security saying in a, in a time when we might be under national security pressure we couldn't rely on them –

SENATOR COONS: Yes.

MR. DONILON: – to supply those, um, to supply those, ah, commodities really feels insulting to these countries, I think, you know.

SENATOR COONS: It is insulting.

MR. DONILON: And, and, and, ah, and so it's a; we're not, we haven't done a great job. And I think the next president, right, um, the next administration should work very hard on alliances as a principle –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – ah, ah, ah, a principle thrust of the next administration is kind of rebuilding those alliances and rebuilding that trust and addressing the hedging behavior, ah, that we, ah, that we see. But two other things and then I'll, I'll, I'll talk about the China policy – is that on, it points, I think, on, um, in a world where the United States doesn't, um, affirmatively go out and try to solve problems, right, rather than just pursue the same kind of,

these transactional one-offs, ah – is a world where, that’s, that’s less peaceful, less prosperous and less secure and it becomes pushed apart, right?

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: And that’s essentially, I think, and it’s an important role, I think, for, for the United States.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: And you see what happens, right, when the United States doesn’t kind of, um, it, it, it kind of intervene – I’m not talking militarily – but it can intervene diplomatically, right, intervene in terms of expectations, ah, what, how you, how you should act if you want to have a good relationship with the United States and we’re not really doing that.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: Then we can talk about the whole world, ah, examples of that. And the last thing before I get to, is, is you mentioned the history between Japan and South Korea, right, which is very real. It’s interesting that, um, this is a hobbyhorse of mine, and now I’ll make an editorial comment it, which is, um, we really need as a nation, particularly in the policy area, to understand history.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: And its, um, you know, we, it’s, it’s a, it’s a, it’s a, ah, you know, it’s a major, for example, that it’s in, in colleges which has been decreasing in terms of numbers, right, you know? And that is a really big mistake.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: Ah, if you were to ask me what the, kind of the, the, I

think it's a few things but what, what is among the most important things that you should do to be prepared to be a senior policy maker?

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: Ah, you know, to, to, to reach a, a, your goal of really impacting policy in the Executive Branch or the Legislative branch, I think studying history is the most important –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – thing you can do –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – ah, because you're, you, certainly; you know, we have a phrase in the United States, well that's just history, right? That's not the way the rest of the world works, right?

SENATOR COONS: Um-um.

MR. DONILON: History is a very real thing and you really can't be effective I don't think –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – um, unless you have the kind of understandings that you were, you, you were displaying kind of understanding the history, ah, between us and other parts of the world and among, and among the, in those regions. Don't you think?

SENATOR COONS: Absolutely.

MR. DONILON: And it's –

SENATOR COONS: I, I discovered, ah, a whole chapter in history, ah, that I knew nothing about while I was there. Um, I didn't realize that Japan's, um, colonial administration of Taiwan, um, was relatively positively viewed –



MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – by the people of Taiwan.

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: Something I was oblivious to.

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: And accounts for some of their, um, ah, developmental

–

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – and security and, ah, and cultural, ah, aspects –

MR. DONILON: Right, yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – that I was oblivious to.

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: There are chapter and verse dozens of other things that I'm sure –

MR. DONILON: Yeah, yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – um, I'm unaware of and insufficiently informed about, um, but as I mentioned earlier, um, the, the incredible richness and complexity

–

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – of China's very ancient culture means that I think everybody who is trying to be, um, a contributor to policy making has a lot to study –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – and a lot to understand. Um, it is, ah, a, a, a culture that, ah, back to its Confucian, ah, roots –



MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – ah, or its roots in Confucius philosophy, um, has privileged, um, stability and order, uh, over individual self-expression and accomplishment unlike the United States –

MR. DONILON: Um-hum.

SENATOR COONS: – it was not formed by individuals, ah, fleeing religious persecution or seeking economic opportunity from other parts of the world; it doesn't share that tradition with us at all. Uh, and visiting the Great Wall of China, ah, for the first time, it was an interesting visual symbol.

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: Um, a very ancient, ah, impressive, um, edifice that was designed to keep out, ah, the barbarian hordes and to allow China to be safer and stronger and more secure. Um, the striking thing about how China has pivoted under Xi Jinping is that having been a land power for millennia, it is now seeking to become of naval power. Um, having had relations of trade in generally, you know, sort of positive commerce with the region, ah, it is now asserting itself much more clearly and much more, ah, forcefully, um, and I think that raises questions for us about how well do we understand how the Chinese understand their place in the region, their place in the world and their place in history. Um, most Americans have grown up in an era where China, ah, was a developing country; ah, where China was a mostly poor country that was rapidly ascendant.

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: Um, that chapter has ended and China is now back to a place of being, ah, one of the most significant, most developed, ah, countries



on the planet; a country which is really going to be central to the future of economics, politics, security and stability in this century. Um, let me ask a last question if I could because I know we're going to run out of, ah, time here in a few more minutes.

MR. DONILON: Um-hum.

SENATOR COONS: Um, part of how we practice politics in the United States, um, today is more tribal and more inward looking than it's been –

MR. DONILON: Um-hum.

SENATOR COONS: – in much of my lifetime. Um, China, um, has a deep and rich history, um, and has been internally focused, ah, for much of its –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – recent history but is now really global, really looking out, really looking at the world, ah, as the stage on which it intends to make its mark. Um, how do we best help the conduct of American politics, um, return to a time when it was, ah, as much about character and values as it was about shirts and skins, team red, team blue, um, and how do we help make real to the American people the consequences for their prosperity and their security, our engagement in the world? Sadly, most presidential campaigns in our history, um, foreign relations have played almost no role at all.

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: Um, how do we help the average American recognize the validity of the point you made which is this global network of alliances, NATO, um, and, um, our alliances with, ah, South Korea and China. They haven't drained us. We are not the chumps of history. Um, we built these alliances and these systems in a way that has actually led to our security and



prosperity. How do we fix our politics in a way that elevates foreign policy?

MR. DONILON: You know, it's interesting, if you look now at the, um, um, Ivo Daalder who was, was, was the investor in NATO, you know –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – uh, in the Obama Administration now runs the Council of Foreign Relations in Chicago.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: And they do polling, ah, of American, the American people on national security and foreign policy issues. It's interesting in the past couple of years support for international engagement, for trade, for NATO has increased –

SENATOR COONS: Right.

MR. DONILON: – you know, ah, as it's been under pressure. It's an interesting dynamic, right, that, ah, you know, as, ah, you have the president really questioning whether or not we should be, um, ah, we should adhere to our commitments in NATO; ah, ah, um, talk about trade the way he, he, he, that he talks about it. Um, it's actually had a difference; it's, it's had, it's had an interesting impact I think for people to kind of realize that in fact that's not how the United States is stronger. Ah, I don't, there's, that's not the direction the United States is going, should, should go in. That's the first point I want, I wanted to make. The second is that it's all about leadership at the end of the day.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: Um, and, ah, you know, the American people rely really principally on their president, ah, to articulate a vision and to guide the



ship of state in international affairs in the interest of the country. You know, we've had some bad decisions that were made, frankly –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – over the last, ah, 15 years or so. Um, ah, the Iraq war for, for example, which was exceedingly costly for the United States in so many ways, right?

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: Um, obviously in terms of blood and treasure and lost lives and, and difficult lives coming out of, ah, coming out of those wars. Um, um, but it cost just in terms of our international, ah, kind of our international leadership, ah, as well. And so, these decisions make, make, make a big difference but at the end of the day it really is about leadership, ah, I think, ah, for, ah –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – you know, for the United States to guide. So, there's a sense that the American people have that we are not just another country; ah, that if the world descends into chaos, right, that's not a good thing for the United States; ah, if in fact, you know, the United States has had tremendous – think about the, think about the economic and security advantages we have had because we have been the technological leader in the world.

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: This has repaid us, ah, as a country, you know, many, many fold, um, and I think understanding that these challenges are here in a globalized world and we need to rise to, rise to meet them, I think the American can understand that if their led and given appropriate policies and,



and, ah, and if politicians make sense. The overall issue that you raise is beyond my, it's beyond my ah –

SENATOR COONS: [Chuckle.]

MR. DONILON: – my brief which is you know how to, how to decrease the kind of polarization, um, in ah, ah, in society. I think at the end of the day I've been involved in; I've worked for three presidents and have been involved in every presidential campaign in the last 40 years or so, um, you know, at the end of the day there's a mechanism in the United States for addressing these issues and it's, and it's elections.

SENATOR COONS: Well, I've got a, a suggestion that I've been working on I'll just mention.

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: Um, as we, as we come to a close in our time in the next few minutes, um, and that's national service. Um, it's something that, ah, both Presidents Bush and Clinton, ah, championed. It was President Clinton who actually signed into law, um, the program known as the Corporation for National and Community Service that makes AmeriCorps possible. Um, we have hundreds of thousands of young Americans who like to be able, ah, to spend a year with Teach for America or with City Year or with the Peace Corps. Um, there are four or five times as many applicants as there are slots. Ah, we are struggling as a country with the cost of higher education. Ah, we have far too many young people, um, going to college or university, leaving with a, a significant burden of, of debt. Um, and frankly, healing our sense of, um, what it means to be an American and this sense of tribalism, ah, I think is most directly and best addressed through service. Um, men and women who



serve in our armed forces come back with a heightened sense of our place in the world and our commitment to each other across differences. Ah, my own father served as a sergeant in the First Infantry and long said to me that it was time he spent, um, responsible for a group of other young men – at that point it was all men – um, but from different, ah, different races, different religions, different regions of our country, really gave him a sense of what it meant to be an American for the first time. Um, I had the honor of helping lead and train a group of 150 AmeriCorps members from 15 cities, ah, and was struck at how much they learned about –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – our country and each other in their time of service. So, I've, I've introduced a bill with Jack Reed and Amy Klobuchar and Kirsten Gillibrand and a couple of other senators, um, that would give you, um, four years of state university tuition in exchange for two years of full-time service to our country.

MR. DONILON: Um-hum.

SENATOR COONS: You'd still have to work out room, books, board and other fees but it would make higher education essentially tuition free for those young Americans willing to step forward and serve our country –

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: – for two years in a civilian role. It's one small suggestion, ah –

MR. DONILON: It's a big idea though. I –

SENATOR COONS: – but it's one I hope [indiscernible.]

MR. DONILON: – I think; you know who would, you know who, and you



know who I, I, I, um, having spent a lot of time in, in, in the, in the world of national security and in the military, I think that the, I think if you had the Joint Chiefs on the stage with us here with us today, ah, I, I think they'd be willing to recommend to President Trump that that, that's, because this is not that expensive of a, of a proposition.

SENATOR COONS: Yeah.

MR. DONILON: I think you could get the leadership of the Pentagon to recommend that they fund it out of the Pentagon.

SENATOR COONS: [Chuckle.]

MR. DONILON: I do. Now that –

SENATOR COONS: That'd be great, though, wouldn't it? [Chuckle.]

MR. DONILON: I do because I think it would, I think it really, I think that our military leadership and national security leadership sees exactly the things that you're talking about, Senator, which is the, the importance of focusing on service to the country. Um, I would be for mandatory, ah, teaching of civics in every, ah, high school in the, in the United States as well. But, I think you'd find, ah, don't you think –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: I think you'd find the, and I think you'd find the uniform military, ah, ah, at the front of the line, um –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – ah, seeing it as a way to, um, ah, enhance the country's, um, character –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – and to, um, better protect this democracy which I

think this is a whole new, we could do a whole another discussion on the, on the sentence –

SENATOR COONS: Um-hum.

MR. DONILON: – I'm about to say now. Which is, I do think that democracy is under more pressure it's be under since the '30's, and this would be, I think, exactly the right way to go about addressing some, some of that.

SENATOR COONS: The, the core concern I have about the functionality of Congress today is that the underpinning; the, the sort of definitional basis of democracy is compromise. If you don't respect the idea of compromise it is very hard for Congress to work.

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: And we have a Congress today where the proposals on each side are increasingly, um, unilateral and extremist, meaning we're proposing things that not one Republican sponsors or supports, they're proposing things that not one Democrat proposes or supports. Legislation is only ever successful or sustainable if its genuinely bipartisan. My hope as we engage with China, as we look towards this century and our role in the world, Tom, is that we will get back to a practice, ah, of being genuinely bipartisan.

MR. DONILON: Yeah.

SENATOR COONS: Um, and of reflecting the best, ah, in our traditions, um as we try and formulate, ah, a sustainable and a successful U.S. - China policy. Tom, let me thank you for being a part of this and, um, I know we got some –

MS. KARIBJANIAN: I'm here to interrupt and call time.



SENATOR COONS: – concluding comments from Nancy.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

MS. KARIBJANIAN: Please, join me in showing our appreciation for –

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

MS. KARIBJANIAN: – this wonderful conversation.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

MR. DONILON: Thank you.

MS. KARIBJANIAN: It's been our privilege at the Center for Political Communication to host this event along with the Department of Political Science and International Relations. Do not forget, that if you want to revisit this event or any of our other events, we do provide YouTube videos, a podcast of the event, and a full, complete transcription of the event that is available on our website. So, you can't escape the CPC at all. And, to continue on with this theme, stay with us next Fall. Our theme for Fall 2019 is Direction, Democracy. And I think the last part of the conversation certainly set that up beautifully. So, check our website. Join our email list. And make sure you join us for National Agenda 2019 when we take a look at the direction this country is heading, has been, is now and heading towards. Thank you all so much for joining us this afternoon.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

MS. KARIBJANIAN: Thank you so much.

MR. DONILON: [Indiscernible.]

MS. KARIBJANIAN: Really a wonderful conversation. Thank you.

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