

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT

The Asia Chessboard Podcast

“The Chessboard: The View from Congress”

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Andrew Schwartz: Welcome to the Asia Chessboard, the podcast that examines geopolitical dynamics in Asia and takes an inside look at the making of grand strategy. I'm Andrew Schwartz at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. In a special joint episode, Mike is joined by Representative Mike Gallagher of Wisconsin, an up and coming voice on Asia strategy in Congress. The two discuss the role of Congress in policy-making towards the region and the domestic politics of China policy.

Mike: I'm joined by Representative Mike Gallagher, Republican from the eighth district of Wisconsin, a Marine, a scholar from Georgetown University, a policy wonk and all around good guy. One of the members of Congress really focused like a laser on Asian Pacific, Indo-Pacific security. Welcome Mike and if we could, I'd like to start like we always do, asking you how'd you get here? Why the Marines? Why Georgetown? Why Asia?

Mike Gallagher: From Green Bay, Wisconsin didn't really know much about the world outside of Wisconsin. 9/11 happened when I was a senior in high school, but I didn't rush to join the military. I didn't really understand the implications of it, but I became interested in foreign policy, went to Princeton undergrad and midway through my time there shifted from Latin American studies to Middle Eastern studies after working for a think tank. Really just started to learn the language, became fascinated by these big questions about why are we going to war in Iraq and Afghanistan? The more I went down that rabbit hole, the more I started to think about, "Okay, what can I do with Arabic skills, some knowledge about the region?" The more I asked those questions, I started thinking that the military, didn't know anything about the military. Luckily the Marine Corps is the world's greatest propaganda organization and it pulled me into its orbit. I liked the idea of a challenge combined with being able to use those skills that I was developing combined with being able to serve my country.

Mike Gallagher: Did that for seven years, deployed to Western Iraq a couple times, worked in the intelligence community in D.C., got out, worked for two years on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as the Middle East guy. I'm a recovering Arabist who actually knows very little about INDOPACOM, Mike. So take everything I say with a grain of salt. Then was the foreign policy guy on Governor Walker's presidential campaign before running for Congress myself, with a brief detour in the private sector in between those two things.

Mike: Was your MOS Intel in the Marines?

Mike Gallagher: I was a human intelligence, counter-intelligence officer. I got to lead a team of Marines. We were attached to an infantry battalion and we were in charge of collecting information from human sources. So a mix of interrogations and a much less sexy version of what the CIA does around the world in terms of source operations.

Mike: My son's still only in grade school, but he's thinking about the Marines because his uncle, his dad, his granddad was a World War I Marine. He asked me if I do

Intel, do I have to go through the crucible at Quantico? And I said, "Oh, yeah. Every officer goes to the crucible at Quantico. They're shooting at you, your face in the mud." Any regrets at that point in your career when you were face down in the mud at Quantico?

Mike Gallagher: It's funny, I didn't know what I was getting into. I had tried to prepare and study and learn how to do more than two pull ups and things like that. There definitely is that moment when your drill instructors start yelling at you at officer candidate school where you're like, "Oh my gosh, what have I done?" Then I remember being in Quantico for the basic school afterwards, the first night I was down there just thinking, "Oh my gosh. Where is this going to take me?" But once I got into it, I just absolutely loved it. You learn things about yourself. I played sports growing up and I wasn't particularly good at them. So physically I wanted to see what I was made of, and that ended up being something I was able to excel at in the Marine Corps and do well on the obstacle courses and the physical fitness test. I loved that aspect of it.

Mike Gallagher: And there's nowhere better just to get what I would call leadership test. I didn't know any other job right out of college, where as a 21, 22 year old kid really, you could potentially be in charge of 50 people in a very intense situation. So notwithstanding the challenges posed by the crucible and officer candidate school, it was absolutely the best decision I ever made with my life. Then on a practical career level, it opened up so many doors that I didn't even realize, I wasn't even thinking about. For example, I was able to get my PhD at Georgetown because I used the GI Bill. That was a huge benefit I didn't even think about. So I would encourage your son and anyone else thinking about it to go the Marine Corps route, you'll never regret it.

Mike: My younger brother, Matt, who's a Marine pilot officer now in business. Matt's introduction to the Marine Corps other than his own family, was when he showed up an officer candidate school 24 hours late. He pulled out his orders and his orders were wrong. My brother said to the drill instructor, "I'm sorry, the Marine Corps is wrong." He did a hundred pushups right in the spot, the Marine Corps' never wrong.

Mike Gallagher: I love that.

Mike: PhD at Georgetown, fine institution we both love. What did you do your dissertation on?

Mike Gallagher: I did it on presidential decision making. And my question was under what conditions will presidents make major foreign policy changes? I had three case studies; one was the shift from Truman 1.0 to Truman 2.0, from NSC 20-4, which was pretty much in line with Kennan's original concept of containment, to after the Soviet nuclear test Korean war, et cetera, et cetera, NSC 68. Then the shift from that to Eisenhower via Project Solarium, the new look. The third was the way in which Eisenhower responded to Sputnik in the latter part of his presidency.

Mike Gallagher: I felt like a amateur cold war historian trapped in a political science department. While my advisors were very kind in helping me out, I don't think I changed the academic landscape meaningfully, but it was fun. I liked the archival research. I spent a lot of time at the Eisenhower Library, a lot of time at the Truman Library and just have always been fascinated by that period of history. In some ways, that's why I've started to focus a lot on U.S./China competition, because I do see a lot of parallels between the two periods.

Mike: Well, you're like me in that you're a historian forced to dress up as a political scientist, but you think historically. Right now, as we deal with China competition, you could do a lot worse than looking at NSC 68, Solarium, some of the early cold war strategic thinking. Tell me about why Asia in Congress, why the Indo-Pacific? You started as a Latin America guy, you went to Africa, like the Marine Corps in the early 19th century. Worked with Africa, ended up eventually in Asia, but why are you focused on Asia in the Congress?

Mike Gallagher: I actually went to the middle East and spent all this time learning the language. My secondary MOS was as a regional affairs officer for the middle East and North Africa. It's funny, I remember this moment in 2007 on my first deployment where I show up and I meet a guy who was in my field, who was a fellow second Lieutenant at the time, named Matt Pottinger. I ended up taking over his team on the Syrian border, in a town called al-Khan. We were both human intelligence officers. But I remember getting to know him and thinking, "Why would anyone focus on China and learn Mandarin? Because it's obviously all about the Middle East. This is going to be the center of US foreign policy for all time to come." And oh, how wrong I was and how right Matt Pottinger was.

Mike Gallagher: It was really conversations with Matt that first started me down this road and why I chose not to specialize in the middle East when I did my PhD and do more broad foreign policy and grand strategy design. Then came to Congress, having worked on Middle East issues, Arab Spring, at a time when I really think there's the biggest reorientation of US foreign policy occurring since the end of the cold war. Pottinger was writing about this prior to the national security strategy, national defense strategy. But he and H.R. McMaster, I think did a phenomenal job in terms of framing the issue. Right now we're at a time where we're basically saying something remarkable, which is after two decades of prioritizing the Middle East and prioritizing countering Salafi jihadist movements in the Middle East, we now have to prioritize INDOPACOM and figure out how to compete successfully with China over the long term.

Mike Gallagher: Now there's a lot of mini debates within that, we still don't really know what great power competition means, but for me, it's following that Marine Corps ethos of riding to the sound of the guns. I mean, if INDOPACOM is going to be where it's at, I want to be part of that. I think it is the biggest foreign policy challenge we face. And by the way, it's still very much an open question as to whether we will win this competition. It's easy to look back on the heady days of the early cold war and think that our ultimate victory was inevitable, but of course that is not true. It took a lot of good men and women, patriotic citizens

working together to figure out how to do containment successfully over the course of decades. I think this is going to be the task of our generation.

Mike: We're doing, as we noted in the intro, a joint podcast. You have a podcast, The New Look, which is evocative of Eisenhower's strategy, but also somehow relates to Wisconsin. I'm from Maryland, so I don't get the Wisconsin reference- Yeah, go ahead quickly.

Mike Gallagher: Northeast Wisconsin, N-E-W's new, so we call it NEW.

Mike: And Northeast Wisconsin, got it. I'm a simple Marylander, I'm sorry. Because we have two audiences hearing our podcast and I hope people tune into The New Look because Mike Gallagher is one of the strategic thinkers, not only on the Indo-Pacific, but overall to watch in Congress. Everyone says that. But for people who don't know who Matt Pottinger is, who you met as a second Lieutenant in Western Iraq, he's now the Deputy National Security Advisor and the architect in my view, and maybe yours too, really the architect of the administration's China and Asia strategy. Love Donald Trump or hate Donald Trump, everybody in the field respects Matt Pottinger and is glad he's there.

Mike: Sitting where I am in the think tank world, the unemployed Bush policy wonk world, I have never seen more bipartisanship around Asia policy ever. And I've been doing Asia more than three decades. A lot of it's the rise of China, but it's not just about China. It's about people valuing our alliances, especially Japan and Australia, but all of them. I see that when I talk to Republicans and Democrats on the Hill. In the think tank world, six years ago when China started building its artificial islands in the South China Sea, kicking around the Philippines, Korea, opinion in the think tank world was split. About half the people said, "Ah, Xi Jinping's going to get his act together. The leader of China is the strongest one we've had in a while. He'll discipline the military, he'll work it out." Nobody thinks that anymore. He's a dangerous customer. Starting around 2015, '16, I saw in the think tanks, a convergence of thinking that China is a much bigger problem than we thought. We need our allies much more than we thought.

Mike: And in public opinion, 10 years ago, when Americans were asked in the Chicago Council on Global Affairs poll, should we improve relations with China even if it hurts relations with Japan and traditional allies, over half said, yes. When they asked that question in 2019, over two thirds said no way. Strengthen ties with our allies, even if it hurts relations with China. But I see this, I think, in the Hill and I'd be interested how you see partisanship or non-partisanship on China and Asia or Indo-Pacific strategy.

Mike Gallagher: I think it creates for extremely strange bedfellows. I mean that in the best sense possible. I think there is an opportunity to forge a productive bipartisan consensus, or at least bipartisan productive debate on China policy. As evidence of the fact that's true, I would submit two pieces. One is the fact that in the wake of the NBA scandal, when I sent a letter to Commissioner Silver criticizing

the way they cracked down on the Houston Rockets GM, Daryl Morey, and basically forced him to bend the knee to the CCP, the co-signers of the letter not only included hawkish Republicans like Tom Cotton and Ted Cruz, but also AOC. I mean, show me another issue in American politics that unites AOC and Ted Cruz. And similarly, and the second piece of evidence when it comes to the oppression of Uighur Muslims, Marco Rubio is effectively saying the same things as Ilhan Omar. In fact, Ilhan Omar to her credit, recently sent about 30 letters to the CEOs of 30 companies around the United States, asking them to re-examine their policy that relies in part on forced labor of weaker Muslims in China.

Mike Gallagher: I think people have different entry points into the debate. For some it is human rights and I think that's an area where European allies tend to get more involved in the discussion. For others, it's hardcore security issues, which is where I first came into it. But it does create an opportunity for bipartisan foreign policy conversations that didn't exist before. I'm actually struck continually by even Trump's biggest critics are not necessarily questioning the premise of his foreign policy or at least the national security strategy and the national defense strategy, which is to say, INDOPACOM is the priority theater. Now we're still going to have debates about how we compete and how we approach our allies and whether we tweet or we don't tweet. But I don't know, I see a lot of room for collaboration on these issues.

Mike: Win or lose, probably more continuity on China policy than most other policy areas, whether it's a Biden administration or a second Trump.

Mike Gallagher: I also would be curious because you know all these people better than I do. I also sense even among the Biden foreign policy aides or the Obama foreign policy officials, a hardening of the position on China. Now they may use different rhetoric, but it does seem like... And Biden himself is trying to correct early statements he made suggesting China's not a threat to us. I'd be curious your take on that.

Mike: Yeah, I think that's right. I think as a candidate, Biden's got a little bit of history with China he's going to have to explain, but so does president Trump, frankly. They neutralize each other in that sense. When Biden was vice president, part of his job was to know the new vice president of China; Xi Jinping and cultivate that relationship. There were people in the Obama administration who were big advocates of what Xi Jinping proposed at the time, which was that the US and China create a new model of great power relations. We would agree not to fight and win-win solutions and stuff like that. Every Democratic transition team has the vision of cutting defense spending by achieving huge diplomatic breakthroughs. A lot of people in the Obama administration at high levels thought, "Yeah, if we can cooperate with China on climate change, the global financial crisis, if we have deft diplomacy and a new model of great power relations where we didn't have to fight, we can save a lot of defense money and we can make history."

Mike: There were clear adherents to that, including people who are pretty prominent in the Democratic world. But I saw the Obama administration as very divided and I think people more associated with Hillary Clinton were more hawkish. Hillary Clinton started in Washington as a Republican. I briefed her a couple of times on Asia and I came away thinking, "Gosh, she could have been Condoleezza Rice or Bob Gates, or maybe not Rumsfeld," but she was pretty hawkish. So those people from Clinton world who are advising Biden are going to be tough and hawkish. And those who were more hopeful about China have what's the line about conservative is a liberal who's been mugged? They're going to be a little more... Yeah, they're going to be a little more realistic.

Mike: The business community has split on China. That's a factor too, because the donor class, which would be telling presidential candidates, "Don't antagonize China," is divided now. I think the big question mark in some ways on China, politics is ag[riculture] and you'd be closer to that than I am. We have a victory garden in our backyard in Bethesda, but that's about it. Because ag, I worked on the Romney campaign and the ag interest in Ohio, especially but also Wisconsin, asked the campaign to tone down the China rhetoric because they wanted to export soybeans and stuff to China. I don't know if they're part of this shift or not.

Mike Gallagher: A hundred percent. I mean, let's say you're a dairy farmer in Northeast Wisconsin. We are America's dairy land, we make the best cheese, we kick everyone else's butt. Don't even try California. Thirty percent of their business, their agronomy business could be soybeans. It's funny, and I'm generalizing here. I think most dairy farmers and most rural areas in Wisconsin tend to be more Trump friendly, but at the same time their economic interests did get hurt a little bit in the trade war. But it's interesting. I think they're willing to sacrifice a little bit for the sake of this broader change. What they were more concerned about were the 232 tariffs on some of our allies, which impacted them as well. I think the only way you can take a hard economic position on China or effectuate some version of responsible decoupling from China, is to grow even further united economically and politically and in terms of defense issues with our allies to cushion some of the economic blow that will come.

Mike Gallagher: In fact, I'd be curious your take, because I know these cold war analogies get abused to no end. I think it is useful to think about this through the lens of a new cold war, but obviously what makes it different is just the extent to which our economies are so thoroughly intertwined. Do you think we will have to do some form of economic decoupling and reduce our dependence on China going forward?

Mike: Yeah, we definitely will decouple. Someone in the Chamber of Commerce, the U.S. Chamber, told me they're tracking over 200 pieces of legislation in Congress right now that would in one way or another, cause decoupling. Either moving supply chains back to the U.S. or some kind of restrictions on imports. And they said it's exhausting. So there's definitely an appetite in the Congress for decoupling, but in large parts of the business community, especially tech or

certain parts of tech, depends on whether you provide content or make things. I think there will be decoupling and I think we already have decoupling with China in space. We don't sell them satellites, we strictly control that. But data from China can go over satellites that we've built. And I suspect that's where we're going to end up with 5G.

Mike: Maybe to some extent with medical after this crisis, where we'll have separate, secure, trusted supply chains and investors which will not be Chinese for the most part. But it has to be interoperable, whether it's 5G or medical, so that China, which is the second largest economy in the world and which will be providing 5G infrastructure and medical and bio to Sub-Saharan Africa, parts of South Asia, we have to find a way to have a separate but compatible economic system like we have with satellites. I think that's where we're heading no matter who wins the election. The biggest failing in a lot of ways in our China strategy right now, this is not where the Hill is in my view. But in the administration, the biggest failing is we can't get this right without allies. The 232 sanctions on some of our closest allies, Japan, Korea, it's nuts.

Mike: In opinion polls, especially after COVID-19, there's no love for China in places like India or Japan or Korea, even. And Korea trades more with China than with U.S. I think our homework is building coalitions on these technology and trade issues, which we're not doing very well right now. We have traditional military alliances. We're going to need technology alliances. You mentioned there's a lot of support for the administration's overall strategic competition with China and I think that's right and it's crossed the aisles. To me, the biggest failing is we're not using our allies the way we have to. We're still treating them like narrow military alliances. When you add together Japan and Australia and the US on 5G for example, and it's about 40% of the predicted market, we have throw-weight if we do things with our allies. We're fighting with them.

Mike Gallagher: That's such a critical point and I always go back to this moment. I don't know if it was 2018 or 2019, when I was at the Munich Security Conference and Pence gave the keynote and he had this great line. And by the way, I give Pence a lot of credit. He had this speech at the Hudson Institute, which I think was at the time the most comprehensive formulation of the administration's Asia policy and very clear eyed about the Chinese Communist Party. Fair to say, I think Walter Russel Mead then wrote an article the next day saying, "The new cold war is here." But he's had this line that was great. He said, "We can't ensure the defense of the West if our allies are dependent on the East." It was as beautiful as it was, I think not listened to in the moment. All the Europeans that were in the room were just so ticked off about other issues.

Mike Gallagher: Now Pence is right on substance and I don't even know if he was talking about Huawei specifically or if it was more a reference to the Turks and NATO cozying up to certain Russian missile systems. But the fact is when you have a situation where perhaps our closest ally historically and presently; the UK, is considering going into a dramatically different direction than us when it comes to Huawei, it's hard for me to see how we cooperate going forward and enhance our Five

Eyes Alliance if we can't agree on that fundamental issue. Now there may be, I think a sea change happening in the UK. But that is what really worries me because Five Eyes to me is where everything starts. That's the foundation upon which you build a free world alternative to the CCP's vision.

Mike: Five Eyes, and we should probably spell out; US, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand have been sharing the most sensitive intelligence and planning for long before you and I were doing this stuff. It is a problem that Australia is aligning with the U.S. on keeping Chinese 5G systems out and Britain's not. The special relationship seems a lot less special. I do think there's a change in Britain recently and in Germany as well, about China. I think the Chinese are overplaying their hand. It's a problem. I personally would like to see the Japanese play not a total full membership in Five Eyes, but more of a role. This is a big part of our homework, frankly.

Mike: If we can get NATO and our Asian allies more aligned on China, it won't be perfectly aligned. There are different alliances, different regions, but that's a pretty imposing front for China to try to take on. On issues ranging from the South China Sea to intellectual property rights then. The Japanese, and I'm the Japan guy, they're the key because they're in the G7 with Italy and France and Canada and Britain. The Japanese are just dying, Abe is just dying to try to get something going between the U.S. and Europe on China. He's not getting traction in Washington. He is on the Hill, I think the Hill's game.

Mike Gallagher: What would something be though? And just quick, shameless self-promotion, I actually had an amendment in last year's NDA, asking DOD to examine the prospect of a sixth eye; adding Japan to that alliance. I can't get into the response because it was mostly classified, but I think there's something there for sure.

Mike: There is, there are some areas where Japan has capability that can add, overhead imagery, for example. But look, although we didn't admit it, there were U.S. infantry soldiers fighting under Australian officers in the Battle of Hamel in 1918. General Pershing found out and made them leave. So the Americans started putting on Australian uniforms so they could fight under the Australians.

Mike Gallagher: A hundred years of mateship man, something to be proud of.

Mike: That's right, mateship. So we've been in the fight alongside the Australians for a long time and the Brits and the Kiwis and the Canadians. It's going to be hard for Japan or any other country to break into that club. But in one off special circumstances, for example, legislation I saw, maybe you were behind, it had an amendment saying on strategic investments, CFIUS, screening what the Chinese were buying in our countries, we ought to be sharing intel with Japan. So it will be step by step.

Mike: What would the Japanese like to do? They have started a trilateral trade ministers meeting to put out declaratory policy statements, basically saying we believe in data reciprocity, the Chinese do not. Part of it is just showing we're on the same side, that was a Japanese initiative. The Japanese would love for us to come back to TPP, but we probably won't come back to the Trans-Pacific Partnership. It'd be awesome for dairy farmers in Wisconsin if we did. But I think the politics are hard, you tell me. But bilaterally, the U.S. and Japan signed an agreement, which was a small bilateral version of TPP, but it had one cool new thing TPP didn't have, which is a digital trade agreement. For example, if we took that digital trade agreement, which is also I think, replicated in the North America replacement for NAFTA with Canada and Mexico, if we start putting that into transatlantic agreement, maybe we're not doing big trade agreements anymore. Maybe it's all about technology now.

Mike: The Europeans will always be harder. We can align with Canada, with Australia, with Japan, with Korea. Yeah, the Pence speech was good. Look, the Europeans love to hate Republicans. I worked for George W. Bush and it was during Iraq. Believe me, Europeans love to hate Republicans. The Asians generally love Republicans and are a little suspicious of Democrats. Our politics are all topsy-turvy now. But I'll tell you, our closest allies in Asia like the strategic competition with China, and I think the Europeans are beginning to understand it's the right way to go. The Europeans themselves put out a statement about a year ago on their strategic competition. They said Europe's in a systemic competition with China. So they're starting to wake up.

Mike Gallagher: I think you alluded to Germany before. I do think there's a potential sea change happening in the Bundestag at least on Huawei and 5G. A friend of mine, Tom Tugendhat, in the UK is leading a revolt. I think Boris Johnson is rethinking his position. That's all good news.

Mike Gallagher: In Asia, I think an under realized opportunity we have is we've done a lot of work legislatively to make this idea of a national technological industrial base a real thing. Then formally incorporate allies like Australia into it. It all sounds good, it's supposed to allow us to share technology, reduce export controls, things like that, but it hasn't really amounted to much. But I got to believe you could build off that framework. Not only with countries like Australia, but Japan, South Korea, Taiwan. I mean, semiconductors is a huge issue. Taiwan is a leader globally in semiconductors. Could we not have a joint partnership with them on semiconductors? The same is true for rare earth with Japan and Australia. There's got to be a way in the absence of a huge trade agreement, where you can start hitting these singles and doubles and put points on the board over time.

Mike: That is how we win. And for me, winning is not the collapse of the CCP necessarily, but a China that does now much malign, but in 2005, Bob Zella gave a speech saying China should become a responsible stakeholder and people thought that was awfully soft. But at the end of the speech he said, "And until China is a democracy, there will not be trust." I helped him write the speech, I

had a small role. When I read the draft I thought, "Man, this is tough for 2005." Because he said, "There will be no strategic trust with China until they're a democracy," to a business community in New York, Wall Street guys. Yeah, a bit hard. But in Washington, when he said China should be a responsible stakeholder, people thought it was wimpy and soft. I think what he meant, I know what he meant, was China has to move step by step towards giving more than it takes. Now that was 2005. China's not only taking without giving, it's doing real damage in a whole bunch of areas.

Mike: We win by creating such a phalanx of cooperation on norms and intellectual property rights protection and trade rules and opposing coercion and bullying with Japan and India and Europe. It's going to be like pickup football in my neighborhood, it ain't going to be pretty. And everyone's going to be able to run, but faced with that, China will modify its behavior. The administration gets an A+ from me for saying clearly for the first time in two decades, really longer. But for the first time in national security strategy in two decades, in a White House document, that we are a strategic competitor with China, A+. But in implementation, their biggest failing is they haven't assembled the team because USTR is fighting with our allies on trade issues. That's something we can do. I'll tell you, it is probably going to require Congress and that means both legislation, but also inter-parliamentarian consensus building with Europe and Asia. It's going to require business dialogue, it's going to require think tanks and the administration. It's not going to happen out of the administration without full push from other actors in this game.

Mike Gallagher: Well, the inter-parliamentary aspect of it, I didn't fully understand until I stumbled into being co-chair of The Friends of Australia Caucus and have now had an opportunity to develop personal relationships with legislators over there. Once you see the alliance up close and feel it, and you're right, in ways in which it extends beyond transactional cooperation and really is an alliance based on shared values, I mean, that's powerful. I mean, there's nothing more powerful in international politics, as far as I'm concerned.

Mike Gallagher: Mike quickly, just from the perspective of Northeast Wisconsin. I think it was easy for us here to understand the importance of fighting terrorist groups in the Middle East, because we had domestic terrorist incidents. Obviously we had 9/11, we had all this visible carnage in the middle East. But the threat from China is obviously much more long-term, it's more insidious, it's more gray zone. They're not for the time being taking Taiwan by force. How would you explain to someone who maybe doesn't feel it yet in their gut why we need to take this competition seriously? Why China matters and why China is the priority for our strategic planning?

Mike: The main reason is because China is the second most powerful economy in the world and aspires now to be the most powerful country in Asia. Xi Jinping, the Chinese leader has made that pretty clear in a series of speeches since 2014. China has the throw-weight, the power to back that up. They're building every year, a fleet the size of Italy's and we're not growing as fast. So there's a real

urgency to it. I personally don't believe we're in a gathering storm moment. Winston Churchill, when he was out of power in the late 30s, kept warning about the gathering storm with Hitler and Hitler's desire to conquer Europe. I don't think China's the same. I don't think China's trajectory is that clear. I think China is, would policy makers say, is shapeable, China is shapeable. I think we can moderate their behavior, but we're going to have to be very tough. We're going to have to make up for lost time. They've been pushing everyone around for the last five, six years, and we're going to have to push back and impose costs.

Mike: I'm not an advocate of containment. We will decouple, but there will be important areas where we cooperate. I think we've got to do it with allies. Why does that matter? Why the urgency? China's immediate steps to steal intellectual property rights, to engage in massive espionage, not just spy on spy, but spying on Americans online who were involved with human rights, China's interference in universities around the world and China's bullying of allies, imposing embargoes, boycotts on countries like Korea, and Japan. Pretty much every country in the world has been embargoed and punished by China except the United States actually. I mean, yes, there was some trade retaliation, but it was very proportional. Smaller and medium sized countries get kicked around by China. So that's our future if we don't stand up to them. Right now they impose some tariffs on exports of ag to punish us, but it was pretty small compared to what they did to the Koreans or the Philippines when they were mad at them. Or Australia now, they're threatening to cut off all trade with Australia.

Mike: So if we don't stand up to them now, these little coercive moves are going to become bigger and bigger and bigger. It's like any bully in the neighborhood, if they get away with it, they'll keep doing it. Then over the longer term, if China succeeds in its current strategy, which is to weaken U.S. alliances, to try to demonstrate American impotence, to try to neutralize American leadership in institutions like the United Nations or the World Health Organization. If China succeeds at that, the entire system that we bled and fought to build after World War II will start to unravel. Will China become the new hegemon in the world? I doubt it. I think China has too many internal weaknesses. That's exactly why I think if we push back hard now and very importantly, if we do it with allies and like-minded states, we can moderate China's behavior. We may not trust them because they are not a democracy, but I think we can start to push back and moderate their behavior in ways that on their current trajectory are really alarming.

Mike Gallagher: Very well said. I may have stole this line from Colin Dueck or somebody, or Pottinger, but the U.S. alliance system or what we often refer to sometimes lazily as the rules based global order, U.S. led rules based global order, it's like oxygen. You don't really notice it, but you're definitely going to miss it when it's gone. In the interest of maintaining and extending that alliance system, I would argue maintaining primacy internationally, or at least favorable balance of power where we can.

Mike: Congressman Mike Gallagher, thanks so much for joining us. One quick exit question for you. You've got a long and promising career in the Congress ahead of you. You've clearly staked out security in the Indo-Pacific as your issue, which is fantastic. You've got friends on the other side of the aisle, another Georgetown person, Stephanie Murphy, Democrat, who are working with you, it's all great. In terms of your role in Congress, what would you like to do to make our position stronger in the Indo-Pacific over the coming years? Is there some piece of legislation, some theme, where would you like to be making a difference, because I'm sure you will.

Mike Gallagher: Well, I do think increasingly and we've talked about it, I think the challenge for China hawks is to harness that hawkish energy in a smart direction and not in a dumb direction. I think if we go towards full on autarky where it's we're making everything in America, our allies are just as bad as China, then we lose. My thoughts are increasingly all along the lines of how do we jiu jitsu this thing into closer relationships with our allies in general, but our Five Eyes plus allies in particular? I think a lot of that is as you previously identified, in the realm of technological collaboration and innovation. I don't know, I just find that very exciting. There's a variety of pieces of legislation that I have on that. But then related to that on the hard military side, is I look at the geography of INDOPACOM influenced by your introduction of Mackinder and Spykman in your book. I inevitably conclude that we're going to need a bigger Navy and Marine Corps. I am an unapologetic advocate for American power.

Mike Gallagher: I would like in the short time I serve in Congress to leave an impact on how do we build a more modern, agile and lethal Navy, Marine Corps team in a way that can be successful in the unique geography and geopolitical environment. A combination of geography and international politics in INDOPACOM. We'll see if I'm successful, I'm probably not going to be there for a decade, but I'm just trying to have a small impact where I can.

Mike: Awesome, important work. Thank you. People can't see this. You've got a sweatshirt on with a G on it. I thought this whole time it was Georgetown University like mine, but it must be Green Bay Packers, right?

Mike Gallagher: It's Green Bay Packers, Titledown, USA. You want to talk about ways to win, all the wisdom you need to win this competition with China is in the writings and speaking of Vince Lombardi. Chase perfection, catch excellence. What's that?

Mike: You're telling me it's not Mahan?

Mike Gallagher: I think Mahan was a student of Lombardi if I have the chronology correct.

Mike: Probably right, probably right. Mike, terrific. Thank you.

Mike Gallagher: Thanks Mike, appreciate it.

Andrew Schwartz: Thanks for listening. For more on strategy and the Asia Programs work, visit the CSIS website at [csis.org](https://www.csis.org) and click on the Asia Program page.