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TRANSCRIPT

The Asia Chessboard Podcast

“Dead Draw or Winning Position? Reassessing U.S. China Strategy on the Chessboard”

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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.

Hannah Fodale: This week, Mike is joined by Ashley Tellis of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to reevaluate U.S.-China strategy and determine what makes a successful theory of victory. The two start by going back in time to when Ashley was working on the rise of China in the nineties, when he argued that China's rise was not a fluke and would impact Asia dramatically in the future. Given that competition is inevitable, the US must maintain multipolarity in Asia, create constraints on Chinese action in the region and work with allies and partners like Japan and India.

Mike Green: Welcome back to the Asia Chessboard. I'm joined today by a good friend and one of the big strategic thinkers of our time in the United States, Dr. Ashley Tellis, Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment and the Tata Chair for Strategic Affairs. We served together in the Bush NSC, where he was one of the original architects of the strategic partnership with India, worked on East Asia, South Asia, strategic affairs, and we'll get to all of that. But first Ashley, welcome. And people are always curious on this podcast, how did you get here? Not in the studio, in your house in Virginia, but how did you get to be Ashley Tellis, working on strategy, working on Asia, at Carnegie?

Ashley Tellis: Well first let me start by thanking you Mike, for having me on this podcast. It's a pleasure to be here. And let me also pay contributions to all your work in public service, particularly with respect to U.S. relations with Asia.

Ashley Tellis: On the question that you ask about, you know, our life trajectories, it's interesting because I went to the University of Chicago with the intention of becoming an academic and I wrote a PhD dissertation that was really an academic's dissertation. As my advisor, John Mearsheimer used to say, it was the only thesis on international affairs that he had come across at the time, which did not have the name of a single country in it. Which tells you something about the kind of life that I was preparing for. Except that our best laid plans often fall by the wayside.

Ashley Tellis: And I ended up at the RAND Corporation after completing my dissertation at Chicago, and RAND took me in a very different direction. So, instead of working in theoretical international relations, I got deeply embedded into policy and I worked a good deal actually at RAND in the nineties on what would later become the central issue facing us, which is the rise of China and the challenges that China poses to the international system. In fact, in the mid-1990s, we did a substantial body of work on China long before China was perceived to be the challenge that it is today.

Mike Green: When I think of University of Chicago, I think of John Mearsheimer, I think some of the purest theoretical thinking about international relations you can find in

the United States. Structural realism, but I guess RAND is a good place for detoxing and getting into policy because Herman Kahn who founded RAND was a structural realist. And when you got to RAND, your dissertation was on strategic nuclear strategic stability and issues like that. And as I recall, one of your first books, that was not your thesis.

Ashley Tellis: No.

Mike Green: Okay, what was the thesis?

Ashley Tellis: The thesis was on a realist theory of domination. And what it attempted to do was to show that the logic of domination applies all the way from individuals to the interstate system. It was really an attempt at unifying Waltz's three images using Machiavelli's logic of power in human relations. And it did it in a very, very abstract way. And the core argument was that competitive systems, whether they exist at the individual level, whether they exist within the state or across state boundaries, there is a unifying logic and that logic is the logic of domination. And so it really was an attempt to look at the first principles of realism in a very abstract way. And when you look at that dissertation in comparison now to my work since, it almost feels like it was done in a different lifetime, on a different planet, in a different galaxy, because I never got back to doing theoretical IR in that way ever since.

Mike Green: But it added an obvious rigor and discipline to your work on the region. I didn't know that, we first met the nineties. I always thought your early work on nuclear issues was your dissertation, but the detoxing at RAND, that's a place where you can go from being a theoretical structural realist into working on real policy problems and that's sort of the whole point of RAND.

Ashley Tellis: Absolutely. Absolutely. It was good preparation for the work at RAND, in a way that I did not anticipate.

Mike Green: Yeah. I'd be hard pressed to think of people who did theory or structural realism at Chicago or a school like that who became regional strategists. You, I think, had an advantage because you grew up in the region, right?

Ashley Tellis: Yes.

Mike Green: You're from the Indo-Pacific.

Ashley Tellis: Yes. I grew up in India. And so that was sort of second nature to me. What I had to learn at RAND and I managed to do that actually, because of brilliant colleagues that I was surrounded with, was China and the broader Indo-Pacific space. I didn't have any intellectual background in that area, but RAND was doing a lot of work for the Army, for the Air Force, and for OSD. That naturally took us in that direction. And remember the timing, this is the nineties, the Cold War has ended. It's the unipolar moment and all the services are struggling to

figure out what lies over the horizon. And so we naturally gravitated to the Indo-Pacific space and that was a fabulous opportunity.

Mike Green: Yeah, you and I began working, I think we probably got our PhDs around the same time and began working around the margins of the Pentagon and the national security world, spanning academia and policy. But it was a really interesting time. There was so much strategic drift and uncertainty and I want to transition to your work with the National Bureau of Asian Research. You've edited the annual volume called Strategic Asia for 18 years of 20. I've done a couple of chapters over those years. It's a really brilliant product. Hats off to NBR. I'm jealous as a CSIS guy.

Mike Green: If people haven't read it, it's an annual companion of essays, usually by theme or country, but around an issue or a trend that year. And it occurred to me, someday historians may look back at two decades of NBR, Strategic Asia reports and see in that the arc of American strategic debate. And since you've edited 18 of them, I'm sort of interested, how would you characterize the evolution of strategic thinking as you've seen it in these annual reports, which bring together the best thinkers on Asia each year? Different group every year, but the best thinkers. What's the storyline for those 20 years?

Ashley Tellis: Well, it's been a fabulous product, almost entirely because of the quality of the contributions that we have been able to secure year after year and the discipline with which the volume has appeared. And as you pointed out, Mike, you've contributed, our friend, Victor Cha has contributed over time. We've had a galaxy of American scholars who do Asia. But I think the core axial theme that runs through all the volumes was really set out in the very first volume. And it was provided by Aaron Friedberg and Rich Ellings. And that very first volume started off with the premise that China's rise is not a fluke, that it was going to be sustaining and that it would impact Asia dramatically if for no other reason, because of geography, because China is located in a place where it straddles both the continental and the maritime spaces of the broader Eurasian landmass.

Ashley Tellis: And so that was the insight that we sought to develop year after year, either focusing on specific functional areas or specific geographic areas as the opportunities provided. Soon after the series was launched, which was in 2001, we were confronted by the realities of the war on terror because the United States was attacked on 9/11 and for the entire first Bush term, which you know intimately, we were struggling with the issues of what terrorism meant for international stability and global politics. That of course lasted for a while. But then the issues of trade became prominent. Is the global trading system capable of surviving at a time when WTO reform was proving to be very difficult? And were partial free trade agreements the solution to stifle the WTO reform? At some point because of North Korea and India and Pakistan, issues relating to nuclear proliferation became prominent.

Ashley Tellis: We went across these 20 years, examining themes like trade proliferation, strategic culture and national strategy. But when one looks back, when I look back 20 years at the series, I think there is one question that sort of runs through every volume. And that is how do states benefit from China's economic ascendancy while still protecting their interests vis-a-vis China's ambitions? I think that is the core question. And whether the subject at hand is proliferation or trade or culture or military strategy, everyone in Asia seems to be grappling with this issue. There's China, it's a gigantic magnetic pole. There are benefits that it brings to the Indo-Pacific community and yet very serious threats to the national interests of various states. And so how do you manage to sort of walk this tightrope where you benefit from China's rise, while still immunizing yourself against the ill effects that come from expanding Chinese power? And I think that's the theme that has run through the last two decades of work.

Mike Green: That's interesting. I'll tell you another theme that I see because I'm a reader every year. I use it in class. I recommend it to everyone who's listening. The other theme I see in it, I don't know if you would agree, is one of the real contributions of NBR is that at this time of a rising China, that annual product reminded American and regional strategic thinkers, that this is not a bipolar region. This is not a U.S.-China structure of power. It's got attributes of unipolarity, bipolarity, but the most important piece for us is multipolarity.

Mike Green: And so every issue or every other issue you're talking about Indian strategic trajectory, Japan, Korea. That I think has been hugely important in our debates. And 20 years, it always makes me catch my breath. It makes me feel old, but you think about 20 years, that's 1921 to December 1941. 1921. In 1921, Americans were trying to outlaw war and cutting naval armament. They wanted to cut naval armaments and all the rest. It's really a remarkable span of time. And I think that the subtext that comes out is strategic competition with China. Yes, there are benefits but that's clear. And here we are, I think there's a broad consensus.

Ashley Tellis: And I agree. I agree with your judgment entirely. And I would lodge the question of the complexities of Asia's geopolitics on the side of the solution, which is when states are struggling with the issue of how to protect interests, then you immediately start looking at the various modalities of polarity within the Indo-Pacific. And of course, the U.S. has a certain preference, which is we want a multipolarity that helps to balance China and shape it in the right direction. The Chinese have a certain version of unipolarity, which is they want to be at the top of the Asian hierarchy. And of course, all the other states want to be able to profit from their relations with us, the United States, while also maintaining some equilibrium in their relations with China. That is absolutely true. That comes across all the volumes looked at as a collectivity.

Mike Green: I would have said, up until about five years ago, that China's goal is bipolarity for the foreseeable future. The new model of great power relations was a construct designed in Beijing to get us to agree to that bipolar structure, which is why the

Japanese and the Indians, as you know well, hated it. And which is why it's so important that Joe Biden is not going to accept it. But I think now I would put it the way you did. I think that under Xi Jinping's China today, this is a grab for unipolarity. They're no longer interested in bipolarity.

Ashley Tellis: I agree with that.

Mike Green: Do you agree with that?

Ashley Tellis: I agree with that completely. I always thought that the Chinese acceptance of bipolarity was a transient acceptance of reality. That they understood that in the near term, a hegemonic China in the global sense was beyond reach. And in any case, getting to a hegemonic China with global reach required them to go through the phase of bipolarity, where they would become the peer of the United States, compete for the United States and then eventually supplant it, assuming their economics permitted that kind of a trajectory. But you are absolutely right that Xi Jinping has made it quite clear that the notion of restoring Chinese centrality is no longer an objective that is confined to Asia alone. That Chinese centrality really has to be understood in a global sense, which is his imagining of China's location as it once was in historical time, where China was truly the center of the known universe.

Ashley Tellis: And that is for a realist, is to be expected because this is an ancient civilization with great potential power. And so I'm not surprised that he has articulated these ambitions so transparently. I am surprised that he has articulated them at the moment that he has, because I don't think China's quite there yet. It's not quite there yet at the moment of sort of global hegemony, but he left us in no doubt about what China's ultimate ambitions are.

Mike Green: I'm increasingly coming to the conclusion that we are in a moment of real peril because of what you just said. The risk tolerance that Xi Jinping has demonstrated in every direction except Russia. Which means in our direction, in India's direction, Japan's direction, all at the same time, not taking on, this is not Bismarck. This is not a revisionist power that takes on one small country at a time, beats them into shape and then reassures the other. This is closer to Japan in the thirties. It is not as militaristic, it's not war yet, but it's a revisionism in all directions. It's quite problematic. I think it's driven by a combination of both overconfidence about American decline and the disorganization of the democratic powers and insecurity about China's moment of opportunity before demographics and other things hurt them.

Mike Green: This is a big, big problem. And you and Bob Blackwell wrote a pretty hard hitting China strategy five years ago, I think. But I think in some ways a problem that's even harder than when you and Bob wrote that. Let me get your reaction to what I said, but also, what is your theory of victory in this competition? Are we talking about George F. Kennan by time, the long game? Are we talking about Ronald Reagan rollback? We're talking regime change in the Chinese Communist

Party, which is sort of how Pompeo is sort of talking about it in the last two years? How would you describe the Ashley Tellis theory of victory in strategic competition?

Ashley Tellis: Well, let me just say something by way of context and then I'll address the question of what the objective should be. When we wrote the CFR report, we were very concerned that the conventional wisdom, that China would become eventually a responsible stakeholder in the Western liberal order, was still the dominant view in the United States. And we saw the foundations of that view being undercut dramatically every day, both as a result of Chinese behaviors and Chinese ambitions. And so we wrote that piece in order to sort of sound the toxin and alert people to the fact that the conventional wisdom about China as a stakeholder is absolutely wrong. That China has different ambitions and that its ambitions for restoring its centrality would actually collide with our own interests and that competition was inevitable. And therefore we had to wake up and adjust our policies to deal with that reality of competition. I think today that's the conventional wisdom, but five years ago it was still a novel idea. And I remember we got quite a bit of pushback.

Mike Green: You upset quite a few people, as I recall.

Ashley Tellis: I did, we did. We got a lot of pushback, especially from the Sinologist community because we made that argument. But so let's look ahead. What is it that the United States essentially has to do? My view is the best we can do is not to try and change the Chinese regime, however desirable that may be because it takes you in the direction of essentially unmanageable competition. Rather I think our objective has to be the creation of sufficiently durable objective constraints on China's freedom of action in Asia. I think that is a more realistic objective and it's an objective that we can actually succeed at, precisely because there are other partners in Asia who also want to see China constrained, who also want to see China unable to push its way around at their expense.

Ashley Tellis: And so my view and this goes back to structured realism in some sense, that is if we can create objective structures of constraint on Chinese behavior through the resuscitation of our alliances and partnerships, in a sense, pursuing an Asia first policy as opposed to a China first policy, then our core strategic interests are advanced. Which is: we allow China to grow and we welcome its growth in some ways, but it's a growth that is necessarily contained by the fact that there are other centers of power on its periphery which are capable of balancing it and preventing the most egregious behaviors that China may pursue. And I think that is a sensible grand strategic objective for the United States. It's the way to ensure the multipolarity in Asia that allows us to preserve unipolarity at the global level. And I think that's essentially what we need to be pursuing as a matter of national policy.

Mike Green: You and I are on the same page on that one. Let me take it one step further and try this on you. I'm less confident about this than I would have been a year ago, but I still think it's true. We do what you're saying, India and Japan are critical to that. And we'll come back to that in a minute, but we embrace the multipolarity, we build a geometry of partnerships and alliances. We empower states, vis-a-vis China. We shine a light on China's egregious behavior. We give alternatives for infrastructure, we create, and we're not good at this right now, but we create multilateral trade agreements so that 60, 70, 80% of global GDP is now signing onto rules.

Mike Green: The next piece is that within China, the consequences of the current trajectory become apparent to constituencies that over time start to advocate for reform and opening. I think in Belt and Road that's possible, on intellectual property rights it might be possible. I'm less confident about that than I would have been a year ago, but I still think it is not the outcome we can count on, but it's a possible outcome with the strategy. Would you agree with that? Or do you think we're beyond that?

Ashley Tellis: I agree with that. And I think we should be open to that as a possibility, but there is a difference between an ideological grand strategy, which says that that should be our primary objective, which is essentially upsetting the Chinese applecart within, versus a grand strategic objective that says, let's work on protecting our interests and the interests of our friends. And if that strategy ends up creating a churning within the Chinese political system, that's fine and good. We don't set out to stimulate churn within Chinese politics as the principle objective of our actions.

Mike Green: I think that's right.

Ashley Tellis: And that's the difference I would frame. That's the way I would frame it.

Mike Green: I felt that Secretary Pompeo and some others around him in the administration, previous administration, in the last year or two, we're going a little too far in that direction. And one of the consequences of that is it's harder to keep allies on board, even Japan, even Taiwan, they're not signing on for regime change. It makes the coalition building and the multipolarity harder.

Ashley Tellis: Absolutely.

Mike Green: To me, that's the biggest consequence. It also gives Xi Jinping an easy excuse for social mobilization against the United States. It goes back to TR, speak softly and carry a big stick.

Ashley Tellis: Absolutely. And I think it comes from what you believe is the core objective of American foreign policy. If you believe that the Chinese regime itself is the problem, then of course you're left with no consequence but to say, "We need regime change in order to restore the equilibrium." I am happy to concede that

the Chinese regime may be a problem in some essentialist sense, but at the end of the day, I don't care about the regime. I care about its actions and the consequences of those actions on others.

Ashley Tellis: And so if I am able to box this regime in by essentially balancing it through the creation of countervailing power, then the character of the regime is a liability that the Chinese people have to deal with. It's not my problem. And the Chinese people can choose to do whatever they want for their regime. I will just focus on the external consequences of its actions. And as you point out to my mind, one, it's a strategy that we can actually execute. And two, it's a strategy that gives us greatest leverage with respect to our allies because our allies are actually frightened about the idea of a U.S. government pursuing regime change in China. In fact, that's the fastest way to get them out of the room if that becomes our national policy.

Mike Green: And that goes for some of the allies and partners most deeply concerned, including India and Japan. You and I discovered each other in the nineties because while we were working on the whole region, the countries we understood best were, you understood India the best and I understood Japan the best and we kind of discovered each other. I think we discovered each other's work and strategic thinking about a decade before India and Japan rediscovered each other. It's now an amazing partnership, by the way, Tokyo and Delhi. As one scholar puts it, "Who would have thought that sushi and samosa could go together so well?"

Ashley Tellis: Well said.

Mike Green: And we had the pleasure of briefly being the co-chairs of Governor Jeb Bush's Asia campaign, with that very premise in mind, so it's been a real pleasure working with you and the Japanese and Indians have now got it. They don't need us. But tell us a bit about your thinking about India. You were brought into the Bush White House, or I guess the embassy in New Delhi for the same reason I was brought into the NSC, build the India card, build the Japan card. It's been up and down, but there are big, big things happening with the Quad, your friend Foreign Minister Jaishankar is incredibly strategic and understands India's role and India's limitations. The strategic independence theme will not go away, but India's poised to do big things, but there are also complexities. Democracy, there's a growing concern in the United States about Prime Minister Modi's approach to a variety of issues domestically. As one of the original architects of U.S.-India relations in the modern era, what do you see as the next opportunities and pitfalls with India, particularly vis-a-vis China and geopolitics?

Ashley Tellis: Let me start by saying that our broad strategic approach to India has been an extraordinary success. And the contributions that President Bush made from 2001 all the way to 2008, were really critical in sort of making that partnership alive. He vivified it in ways that were really impossible to imagine before he came on the scene. The great advantage we have is that Indian objectives and

U.S. objectives are fundamentally convergent on China, which is we both want to see an Asian space where China simply cannot get away with murder. That it uses its power responsibly. And India becomes a critical portion of that solution because along with Japan and Australia and other smaller Asian countries, if India can play the role of becoming part of this concept that balances China, that serves our interests. And I think Dr. Jaishankar understands this completely.

Ashley Tellis: Now we sometimes get carried away in Washington because we think that must eventuate in India becoming an alliance partner of the United States. And I constantly have to remind people that that is simply a bridge too far. That India is not going to play that role. And for the success of our strategy, we don't require India to play that role. But we do need an intimate relationship with India where we have high levels of strategic coordination. We don't need an alliance, but we do need high levels of strategic coordination. Can we get there? I think at the level of geopolitics, we can and the last several years have shown that India is in fact willing to come close to the United States with respect to coordinating its policies, vis-a-vis China. But there are two looming challenges on the horizon. One of which you flagged which is the India that we had reached out to in the Bush years was an India that we saw as being robustly liberal and democratic simultaneously.

Ashley Tellis: And there are many questions now being raised in the United States about whether India will continue to remain liberal, even though it will remain perpetually democratic. I have no illusions about the latter, but there are questions being raised about liberalism. And that poses a challenge to the U.S. and this is the challenge. In the past, India was seen as an unvarnished opportunity. The question for the future is, will India be increasingly seen as a dilemma? That is, it is important to us on the geopolitical level, but we seem to have a wider and wider space between us with respect to the conduct of democracy within our own societies. And if that were to actually grow roots and if Indian liberalism would actually become ascendant, I think that would create problems for the United States. And I think this is an issue that the Biden administration is grappling with as we speak. And only time will tell whether we will be able to overcome it.

Ashley Tellis: And from my vantage point, as someone who was born there, I think it would be unfortunate if an India which we saw as an unvarnished opportunity, now begins to be seen as a dilemma where we sort of work with it because we need it, but we're not entirely enthusiastic about it because its political regime seems to deviate substantially from the ideal of what a liberal democracy should be. These are the questions that are hanging out there.

Ashley Tellis: But I would flag a second issue that I think is going to be just as important. That is India's economic direction in recent years has become much more inward looking. We had assumed that India would slowly integrate itself with the global trading system, with the United States, with other Asian partners. For a variety of reasons, the Indian economy today is not doing as well as it did in years gone

by and the economic strategy direction that Prime Minister Modi has pursued runs the risk of making India more autarkic. And the danger with autarky of course is that first it signals slower growth rates, which is bad for India as a balance of China.

Ashley Tellis: But what is more important is that it prevents us from being more tightly integrated with the Indian economy as we would like. And the less integrated we are in the Indian economy, the lower the stakes we have in India success. And that's really not a good place to be in. I would say between the challenges posed by values and the challenges posed by the growing Indian comfort with autarky, I think we will have significant challenges that we will have to overcome as we work towards deepening the relationship.

Mike Green: It's really, really fascinating. I recall you may have seen it as well, our friend, C. Raja Mohan, wrote somewhere that the people who shepherded the transformation of U.S.-India relations to a more of a strategic alignment, not an alliance, but an alignment, in the early 2000s with the exception of yourself, were almost all experts on the U.S.-Japan Alliance or NATO. It was Nick Burns, it was Phil Zelikow, Condi Rice, Steve Hadley, Torkel Patterson and myself coming from U.S.-Japan experience who were suddenly put in charge of this relationship. You were the only one who really knew India. And I think that might've been a huge advantage because the rest of us were imagining the possibilities, whereas a lot of India while I was in the State Department and the Pentagon were so worn down, I think. It's a little bit unfair, I know, but so worn down by what was the difficulty of working with India.

Mike Green: I don't know if you have seen this in my book, I referenced a National Security Council decision memorandum from 1982 from Reagan that I got declassified for my book and in it, the Reagan administration concluded that India's power in itself was our objective, not alignment. That was important, but ultimately the most important thing was that India could sanitize the Indian Ocean, keep the other powers, China and Russia, focused on them and not just us. And what do you think of that? Should we be thinking more about capacity than alignment? We obviously want both, but maybe we shouldn't worry too much about issues of alignment.

Ashley Tellis: I think the Reagan decision memorandum actually got it absolutely right. And this was the one thing that I think distinguished Bob Blackwill and his advocacy from Delhi, from the other expectations that were present in the U.S. interagency process where after the years we spent in India, we were quite convinced that alignment, you push towards it to the degree that you can. But if you make that the objective, you would always fail.

Ashley Tellis: On the other hand, if you push to strengthen Indian power, we could become beneficiaries of that achievement. And so we were always sort of comfortable with the idea that there would be a gap in Indian aims and our aims, but as long as the broad direction that we were pursuing was complimentary and

convergent, we were happy to live with those gaps. Now this meant that U.S. diplomacy would always have a role, because we would always have to manage disagreements. We would always have to find ways of better coordinating our policies because the kind of automaticity that one could assume in an alliance relationship was simply not going to be there with India. That was the task we had but the end objective was strengthening this country to stand as a robust pole in the Asian galaxy and work with us as closely as possible in order to be able to sort of confine China into reasonable and moderate behaviors that served the common good.

Mike Green: Yeah. I should have mentioned Bob Blackwill in my list. Of course he was absolutely instrumental as ambassador to Delhi with you at his side and with the notable and very important exception of yourself, it was NATO. It was the Bush 41, George Herbert Walker Bush, Europe director at the NSC with a few stray Japan guys like me and Torkel. It was Bob Blackwill, Condi Rice, Nick Burns, and Phil Zelikow, all NATO people. It's really quite interesting. You can tell me later if I should edit this out because you and I are both good friends with Bob Blackwill, but he told a story at enough dinner parties that I think I can say it, that when he brought his team in to meet President George Herbert Walker Bush, Condi Rice, Nick Burns and Phil Zelikow, he said to President Bush, "Mr. President, I always make it a policy to hire people who are smarter than me." And without missing a beat, Brent Scowcroft said, "Well, how do you narrow the field?" But Bob's role in this is really important historically.

Mike Green: Ashley, what's next for you? What's the next big project? Or the next big NBR issue? Or the next book? What are you focusing on next?

Ashley Tellis: Well I'm completing two fairly substantial reports. I'm looking right now at the transitions that have taken place in the nuclear weapons programs in China, India and Pakistan since 1998. This world sort of opened up after the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests. And China of course began its nuclear transformation long before '98, but there are real effects of the Chinese program on India and also in Pakistan. I'm working on that, trying to understand what the impact of all this is on stability. And then the second project is looking at the character of Sino-Indian Naval rivalry in the Indian Ocean. Beyond just the broad geopolitics, because there's a lot of arm waving on that subject. But I'm looking at very granular issues like for structure, the capabilities that both sides can bring to bear and all that with the view to understanding what the United States can do to help India actually take the lead on providing stability in the Indian Ocean. I have never forgotten the piece that you wrote, I think that Andrew Shearer in the Washington Quarterly a few years ago.

Ashley Tellis: And the point that came across from that piece, which to my mind is the lodestar for my research is that the Indian Ocean will always remain at least for the foreseeable future, an economy of force theater compared to the Western Pacific. And so the question for us is how do we leverage India's capabilities so that India can take the lead on the Indian Ocean in order that we may be able to

concentrate more effectively on the Western Pacific? And so my research on the Sino Indian Naval rivalry project is really focused on understanding that issue at a very, very granular level of force structure, force employment and so on and so forth. Those are the two things that will occupy me over the next couple of years.

Mike Green: Those are exciting. Andrew Shearer is now the Director of Intelligence in Australia, but we looked at the Indian Ocean strategy problem historically, what have the U.S. and Australia or Japan and other powers historically done to safeguard their interests in the Indian Ocean? And we didn't really answer the questions you're now addressing. Really, what do we do now? We just sort of set up the historical record. Really interesting work. I look forward to it. Ashley, we could spend hours and hours because you bring the discipline and rigorous structural realism, deep knowledge of the region and a really impressive technical understanding of some of the cutting edge issues from nuclear weapons, to maritime security, but we'll end here and I'll encourage people to read the NBR Strategic Asia and your forthcoming reports. As always, really enjoyed it. Thanks very much.

Ashley Tellis: Thank you, Mike. It was a pleasure as always. I look forward to staying in touch and talking further about these issues.

Andrew Schwartz: Thanks for listening. For more on strategy and the Asia Program's work, visit the CSIS website at csis.org and click on the Asia Program page.