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TRANSCRIPT

The Asia Chessboard Podcast

"Check Mates: ANZUS and the Chessboard"

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FEATURING

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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 the inaugural Australia Chair at CSIS, Dr. Charles Edel. The two start with an important discussion on the intersection of history and strategy, the strategic mind of John Quincy Adams, and the need for an Australia Chair in Washington.

Hannah Fodale: Mike and Charles also assess the Biden administration's new Indo-Pacific Strategy and Australia's role in increasing multilateral cooperation in the region.

Mike Green: Welcome back to The Asia Chessboard Episode 55. And for this one, we're joined by my friend and new colleague at CSIS, Dr. Charles Edel. Charlie, welcome.

Charles Edel: Thanks very much for having me on, Mike. I've been a longtime listener, so great to be on here with you.

Mike Green: Excellent. We're going to try to cover a lot in this discussion, you and your role as a historian, the Australia Chair, which you now run at CSIS, our new Australia Chair. And then let's talk a bit about the Indo-Pacific Strategy the administration put out. We try not to be a short-term, news-focused podcast, but this is a strategy document and deserves a discussion. So, how did young Charlie Edel gravitate towards history, statecraft, and, finally, Australia and Asia?

Charles Edel: Well, obviously, through John Quincy Adams.

Mike Green: Right.

Charles Edel: So, actually, Mike, you and I met, I don't know, 15 years ago or so talking not about the Indo-Pacific, not about Japan, not about Australia, but about John Quincy Adams because you were writing your magnum opus. I was writing my first opus and we started going back and forth on John Quincy Adams, which is a way to say that I've always been primarily interested in understanding the present through looking at it through the prism of the past.

Charles Edel: So I had taught high school history for a couple of years in the New York City Public Schools. And from there, I was really interested in what was happening. This is right after 9/11. I'm a New Yorker and ended up working at CFR. And I told my boss after a couple of years of abuse there that I was going to go back to grad school and get my PhD.

And he said, "Why would you do anything as foolish as that?" I said, "Look, if I have to subject myself to a couple of years of grad school, I find history just eminently more interesting and fascinating than anything else."

Charles Edel: So I studied something that will prepare you, of course, for a career in Washington, 19th-century American diplomacy. In the middle of that, I happen to, let's be honest here, fall in love with a US diplomat and moved to China in the middle of my PhD, which had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with my PhD. We were over there. I taught at Peking University for a while. We came back. I got a job teaching at the Naval War College. We moved back down here. I ended up working for Secretary of State John Kerry. Then we were over to Australia and now back here as the Australia Chair. That's a pretty good summary, I think.

Mike Green: So it's a very logical line from New York Public Schools to Chinese universities to CSIS. I see the connections. Your dissertation and your book was John Quincy Adams. And when we met each other through our friend, Will Inboden, we had a kind of a nerdmance, it's like a bromance, but a nerdmance over John Quincy Adams, who is the subject of your dissertation and book. Why was he such a great statesman? And why is it, unfortunately, his name has been coopted by restrainers who think we should be pulling back?

Charles Edel: Well, look, first of all, let me say, I commend you on your restraint for not mentioning John Quincy Adams in the first 10 seconds. All your listeners should know that every time I'm within, I don't know, striking distance, meaning 25 miles of Mike, the first thing he does is looks at me and says, "How would John Quincy Adams approach AUKUS?"

Charles Edel: Look, my dissertation about John Quincy Adams was he's generally remembered as one of our most successful secretaries of state ever. But I thought it would be more interesting to look at the entirety of his career because he really did so much to drive the initial unfolding of American Grand Strategy throughout the entirety of the 19th century. It was an interesting project. It was relevant and totally irrelevant when I went to work on policy. But I take great exception to the fact that John Quincy Adams should be seen as a restrainer. He was anything but.

Charles Edel: In fact, Adams not only kind of pushed and promoted American values and interests, pushed for the buildup of the American military, was unafraid about pushing America into unsecured spaces. And, unfortunately, in my mind, because we all love to cherry-pick random

quotations, it's that July 4th 1821 address, America shall not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. That has been coopted for John Quincy Adams being a living restrainer. And, of course, that was said in a very specific moment about a very specific action, whereas I think his view about what he was trying to do is much broader than that.

Mike Green: Instead of reading that, people should read his first speech to Congress as president, where he talked about a strong navy expansion in the Pacific.

Charles Edel: And talked about the resources that you would need for it, actually, commission the cutting down of forest to build up the timber stores that you would need to build out that navy and push it further out to the east.

Mike Green: Having mentioned John Quincy Adams about ...

Charles Edel: We can leave my mind.

Mike Green: ... five percent as we really want to, we should probably move on - the Australia Chair. Delighted to have you, really historic transition, the transformation in the US-Australia alliance. What's the goal for you in this new chair? How should Americans listening think about our alliance with Australia?

Charles Edel: Well, it's really exciting to be the inaugural Australia Chair here at CSIS, but really the first Australia program in Washington, DC. And it's, I think, a notable exception that there hasn't been one to this point. There are many Japan experts. We have the leading one, obviously, right here. There are many Korea experts. There are many China experts. There are no Australia experts in town or no centers actually built around them. And if we think about how Australia has really come to the fore on so many different issues, not only working with the United States but leading the United States on a number of issues.

Charles Edel: But when we think about the kind of the rise of strategic competition and the role that Australia plays within it, there needs to be more of a voice for how Australia thinks about this, but really what is the role that Australia will play in the region, both with the US and independent from the US. So that's really, I think, what this chair is going to do when we think about the raft of issues that it can take.

Mike Green: I was talking to a European diplomat from a country that will go unnamed, but said that UK has always had the most influence on

American strategic thinking. And I figure number two might be Australia right now in this European diplomatic grid.

Charles Edel: Well, it's funny, we just came back from living in Australia. We were down there for three and a half years. I'm relatively bilingual at this point. I can speak American and Australian somewhat fluently, specifically in the strategic kind of conception of this. And, it's funny when you have that conversation about the relative pecking order of American allies, right? Every ally wants to know where they stand, even if that's kind of a silly exercise to a certain degree.

Charles Edel: But when you talk about that with Australians in Australia, there's a downplaying of where they are. Consistently, they say, "Well, we're just a small country and we're not that high up." And the more you talk with officials, I think they understand that that's not quite right. And, certainly, over the last nine months after the AUKUS deal, certainly over the last three years, but probably over the last 10 years, we can see that what Australia has done, again, with the US but leading the US in certain areas has made it maybe not the loudest, but certainly one of the most influential, quiet voices on US strategy in the Indo-Pacific.

Mike Green: My time in the White House showed me what, in very concrete ways, Australia got by being at the pointy end of the spear as they put it. Not prevaricating, deliberating, but when there's a big, hard challenge, going in early, sharing the risk early, and then sharing the strategic planning and vision. But it's very rarely seen by the Australian public. And I'm not sure people understand.

Mike Green: Now, Australia's doing that fivefold, tenfold from what we've ever seen. I mean, the response to the Chinese embargo, the 14 grievances or 14 demands from the Australian public and body politic was to get their dander up to double down with the US and Japan with AUKUS and the UK, with the Quad. It's a contrast, frankly, to Korea. When Korea was pressured with this mercantilist boycott over the deployment of THAAD, US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense systems, which the Chinese didn't like, and the Koreans lost billions of dollars because the Chinese organized a boycott, the Koreans quietly sought compromise and backed down partway. And that was a bad precedent.

Mike Green: Now, Australia set a new precedent for how middle powers or allies or democracies deal with that kind of pressure. And it puts Australia in a leading position to define how you respond to that kind of coercion. But it also puts Australia at greater risk than any of our allies vis-a-vis China right now. Is the body politic up for that? We have an election in

Australia, are both sides up for that? This is a big move that Australia is taking. They're now the front line against Chinese coercion with enormous economic stakes in their relationship with Beijing.

Charles Edel: So, a number of things that you said, I think, are really interesting. So the first of all is Australia is a frontline state in a number of different ways. Generally, when we say frontline state, we think in our mind's eye kind of geographically, right, that they're closest to the competitor. And that's not true for Australia. I mean, it's close to China, but it's not that close. It's not a frontline state.

Charles Edel: But if we think about the number of areas where Australia's been the first to experience and, many ways, the first to respond to Chinese coercion if we're talking about foreign interference into their body politic, if we think about mucking around with their ethnic communities withinside of Australia, if we think about the hammer of economic origin to hit so many different sectors within Australia, they are, in fact, a frontline state. And how they are responding is shaping, I think, many different players, including the US.

Charles Edel: We can go down the line, but starting with even Huawei and 5G, they were the first movers to say, "We are not going to allow Huawei to build our 5G system." And that began to set a precedent. In Australia, there's generally an understanding that China is so angry at Australia, not because of the decisions that Australia has made on itself but the fact that the Chinese see Australia as potentially setting a precedent for other smaller states who align in different ways.

Charles Edel: Now, Mike, you had asked about where the body politic is on this. A couple of different things. We were down there from 2017 until 2020. And there was quite a revolution in how they thought about their security and really how they thought about China while we were there. No causal effect, I assure you. But, at one point, you saw a 20-point swing on favorability, negativity ratings towards Xi Jinping and towards China from the Australian public, a 20-point swing in one year. And that was before the economic coercion started intensely.

Charles Edel: So, in many ways, you can say that the public is leading the government and that is, of course, bipartisan. But, of course, we've seen the government leading as well. And one of the things that I found interesting when I was down there, my good friend, your friend, John Lee and I wrote a report on the future of the US-Australian relationship. And one of the things that we said, and we got a great airing where we got to talk about it right in Parliament House, was you can't be quiet about the competition with China because if you are, if you're not candid with your public, if you're asking your public

to both bear more risks, suffer more costs and you're not upfront asking them or telling them, rather, why you're doing this, there's no way that that is politically sustainable or that you're going to have enough resources for that.

Charles Edel: And I think that, yes, it's true. There's a Canberra bubble, just like there's a Washington bubble. Most folks down there understand the scope and scale of the challenge. But, frankly, we lived up in Sydney and when I was chatting with my neighbors, when I was out at the pub on the BC, before COVID times, everyone was talking about this fairly regularly. And, again, when you look at where the public is, in some ways, they continue, I think, even if it's not the forefront of their mind, to lead the government.

Charles Edel: The most striking number that I remember seeing was this past year, the Lowy Institute, which leads great longitudinal annual survey data, asked the public if they wanted the government to do more to diversify who it trades with. And they said yes by a margin of 92%.

Mike Green: Yeah.

Charles Edel: I mean that's really driving policy at this point.

Mike Green: I have to ask, did you ever talk about John Quincy Adams in the pub?

Charles Edel: I did. And I got an arched eyebrow and then we went right back to talking about our beers.

Mike Green: Just keep trying. Yeah. So, the Lowy polls are fantastic. And the time you were there, 2018-19, it was clear that the Australian public would tolerate Donald Trump because the alliance was that important. And at the same time warmed to Abe Shinzo. There were polls in Lowy where the prime minister at the time, Malcolm Turnbull, only barely beat out Abe as the most trusted world leader. And this Australia-Japan relationship is remarkable. It's not that long ago that feelings about Japan were very negative because of memories from the war.

Mike Green: 2004 or so, when the Australians took over the security protection mission around the Japanese deployment in Samawah, in Southern Iraq, the Returned Servicemen's League, the Australia's version of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, came out strongly endorsing it. A group that only a few years earlier had been preoccupied with holding the Japanese accountable for what happened to the Australian POWs. So, huge strategic cultural transformation with Japan. It seems that the Quad's important, but that US, Japan, Australia piece is really the

engine of how we multilateralize or perhaps, I should say, pluralateralize our alliances.

Charles Edel: Well, there's a lot to talk about with the Quad and actually with the bilateral Australia-India relationship, which actually has been growing with leaps and bounds, too. But to your point about the Australia, Japan and the Australia, Japan, US relationship, absolutely. One of the things that's striking is of the diplomatic core that is in Australia, probably the most ...

Charles Edel: Well, I was going to say the most outspoken is the Japanese ambassador because he's highly visible, talks a lot, and is very well received in Australia. But he probably only takes a second to the Chinese ambassador, who's even more outspoken and his deputy, too. In fact, this is where the 14 points came from about what Australia is doing to angering them. And, again, China continues to be the US and, in some way, Australia's best ally in the region because it is their actions, it is their words, which kind of push us forward together.

Charles Edel: But you're absolutely right in terms of the Australia-Japan relationship, been growing by leaps and bounds. You were talking about 2004, but we can talk about 2022 where we saw the signing after seven years of negotiation of the Reciprocal Access Agreement, right, that allows Japanese ships to come to Australia, vice versa, training logistics. And, again, this is kind of putting their foot in the door to open it much further about what their navies, what their militaries can do together and with the US. And when we begin to think about the facilities that are beginning to go into northern Australia, which points north up towards Asia, who can come there, who can dock there, who can be resupplied there, you really can see a different security architecture beginning to take hold in the region as these alliances become much more strong.

Mike Green: So the most ambitious thing we've seen out of the alliance in recent years is probably AUKUS, the Australia, UK, US agreement to build nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy, and also strengthen technology, cooperation, supply chain, security, and so forth. It's really important because it's an unequivocal signal that the UK is in the Pacific and it's in the Pacific with us. It changes, in the long run, the balance of power equation, especially where we have the advantage undersea warfare by adding 10 more highly capable submarines to the inventory that the PLA Navy has to think about if they're going to ever attack anybody.

Mike Green: It has a lot of goodness. The criticism is about the bubble. That's all great, but that's 10, 20 years from now when you get these

submarines. You've written about this, but is AUKUS something that you are thinking is going to be a reality for the next 10 years and 20 years, or are we just going to bide our time and then we'll have submarines?

Charles Edel: Look, AUKUS, from my understanding, is, fundamentally, it's a bet, right? It's a bet that by promoting, enabling, and further enhancing Australian capabilities, it reshifts the balance of power or it will reshift the balance of power in the region. It's a bet because we don't know if we can all pull it off. And we don't know once you build up Australian capabilities, once you build up Britain's role in the region, if that begins to tilt the deterrence question, level the playing field more.

Charles Edel: I think it's absolutely the right move. I think what Kurt Campbell, what President Biden have said is that this is one of the biggest geopolitical moves we've seen in the last several decades, but we don't yet know if it will pay off. They didn't say that part. That's me editorialize it.

Mike Green: Right. I don't remember them saying that part.

Charles Edel: So I think it's right. But one of the criticisms that you can hear running around in Australian political circles, and somewhat unfairly, too, is that why would we have mortgaged our present? We had submarines slowly winding their way here from France for a deal that may or may not ever materialize in 15 years' time. That's the criticism, right? Because what happens on this gap. Not to mention the submarines that they currently have, they're on their last legs. So, will the new submarines get there in time?

Charles Edel: And I think that that is fairly or unfairly asked. It's a valid question, obviously. So if AUKUS is understood solely in terms of nuclear-powered submarines, then we have a real problem here because it's not going to eventuate for 15 to 20 years. But I don't think that's what it is or what it's intended to be.

Charles Edel: We now know that AUKUS is running on two different tracks, right? It's got the submarine track and it's got the advanced capabilities track. And the advanced capabilities track is a whole slew of different things. Everything from underwater to AI, to quantum, to strike. But on top of that, and it's sometimes hard even for those who I think are running the process right now to aggregate and disaggregate what is in AUKUS, what is not in AUKUS, is AUKUS everything or is only a couple select things, are some other things that are coming along much sooner. Including, you can see hints of this in the US Force Posture Review that we're going to be dispersing US forces across the

region and into Australia in much greater numbers than they are right now.

Charles Edel: We see the buildup of a strike industry nascent, at this point, within Australia. So, I think that there's a lot of things that are being looked at right now that when they come on, some of them which can come on quite quickly, right, when you land aircraft there that are not there, which begins to change things much more quickly now than it might down the road.

Mike Green: And the further integration of US, UK, Australia and potentially Japanese and others' capabilities, especially for undersea warfare could happen much sooner in western Australia at HMAS Stirling and so forth.

Mike Green: The most accurate criticism I've heard of AUKUS is, we should have done it 10 years ago because then we'd be deploying these things in about five years. But when you think about it, we couldn't have done this 10 years ago. Ten years ago, George Osborne, the Chancellor of the Exchequer in London, was saying that London would be the renminbi capital of Europe. And it was a bestseller in Japan, excuse me, in Australia called “China Choice,” which essentially argued with a lot of support in the political classes that Australia's economic future with China would force recalibration with US and things like that. That's how much Xi Jinping has changed the equation for everyone, really, as a reminder.

Mike Green: What do you make of the other big move in Australian defense policy now, the sovereign missile enterprise? The vision of, as I see it, turning Adelaide or Brisbane into Huntsville, Alabama, major production of strike capability of missiles and rockets to basically turn Australia into a porcupine. But do it with US, with UK, maybe with Japan, another big ambitious move.

Charles Edel: I think it absolutely is the right move. The question just like with AUKUS is, how quickly it can get off the ground, who's going to build it and how much it's going to cost, ultimately. The prime minister announced that he was pushing a billion dollars towards building seed money to begin to turn this, but you've seen estimates already ranging from... And this will require another $100 to $200 billion within the next 10 years.

Mike Green: And that's Australian or US? We always have to ask ourselves, because there's a difference.

Charles Edel: It's a lot of money regardless of which one we're talking; it's Australian dollars that we're talking there, but this also is a bet that they need to change their strategy. I mean, you talked about the porcupine strategy. What we need to back up on a little bit, when you're thinking about Australian security, is if you're following this, a lot of people are tracking on AUKUS, right? This big deal. But the seeds were laid for AUKUS, I think, over a year ago. The prime minister came out with the Defence Strategic Update. This is the big muscle movement, I think, in Australia that they said, "Look, the strategic environment has changed and has changed so rapidly and more rapidly than any of us had predicted, and it's deteriorated so quickly that we need to fundamentally rethink about how we think about our security." So first of all, doing stuff in the Middle East important, less important than the region, we're going to reorient to the region.

Charles Edel: Number two, we no longer have 10 years runway to do our planning, right? We need to actually update our planning and our budgetary response much quicker than that, so, stand by, we might actually have another one of these updates sooner. And then third, and this gets to the strike, is we want to become more lethal, more capable of holding forces at risk further off. That means we want to have more abilities to strike and strike further as the Chinese, even if they don't say the Chinese, begin to push into our region. So we're going to harden ourselves into a much more hard target. We're going to be able to target more forces and therefore we're going to build up a strike complex, we're going to build up submarines and we're going to be able to begin to deal with things like hypersonics, but all to make Australia a harder target and push the Chinese further away. That's the idea behind all of this.

Mike Green: So one of the reasons Australia, and I would say this is true for Japan as well in different ways, is so important in our strategic debate is because, as we just were discussing, Canberra is putting out there some pretty bold visions for military capabilities, which make parts of their neighborhood uncomfortable. I mean, privately, the Indonesians, Malaysians and others have been quite supportive, but publicly they're not going to say it, many of them. And at the same time, they're muscling up to strengthen deterrence. The Australians are looking at the Pacific Islands, looking at Southeast Asia and saying “do more.” And saying to us, "do more." More infrastructure financing, more engagement, more support for democracy and governance, more diplomacy, and it seems like we're listening.

Mike Green: I want to transition to the Indo-Pacific Strategy because we've both read it. And we know the people who wrote it in the White House. This seems like a strategy that was almost written with Canberra and

large swaths of Southeast Asia and the Pacific in mind, that that was a primary audience. The part they wouldn't like, of course, is the almost complete lack of any economic statecraft or trade vision. They did say the US would lead on this Indo-Pacific Framework, but the rest of it... I've written these ... You worked in policy planning. You're always thinking about the audience. It seems to me that the number one audience for this Indo-Pacific Strategy, it's almost like it's Canberra or certainly Canberra and environments, Southeast Asia and Pacific Islands. When you read it, what'd you think about that aspect?

Charles Edel: You know, it's funny, chatting with some of our mutual friends who were working on this, I thought, first and foremost, this would be wholly aimed at Southeast Asia, lighter touch. And therefore, if you're aiming at Southeast Asia, you want to downplay strategic competition, you want to downplay China with the idea that if you talk about it less, therefore it's less scary. And that's not exactly where this document landed. I think you're right that it pitches itself to allies, Japan, Australia, India, not an ally but an important partner as much as it does Southeast Asia, because really China is the focal point of how and why this orientation is occurring.

Charles Edel: It's funny that you ask whether or not this is pitched towards Canberra exclusively. I'll note the thing that I found most striking in this is that look, for those of you fans who are following along at home, it's on page seven. I was marking this up over the weekend as I was reading this. It's only a 19-page document by the way, nice job in being brief and really precise here. Is that the White House says that for its strategy to take effect, for its goals to be achieved, which is continuing to keep the region free and open, remarkable, by the way, continuity from the last government here, it cannot be accomplished alone.

Charles Edel: It has to be undertaken with others. And so, it's interesting, you said, "Was this expressly written for Canberra?" No, it was expressly written for Canberra, Tokyo, Seoul and others. And in fact, on one of the first pages, you have a paragraph inserted, "We've learned from Canberra that we need to do this. We've learned from the Koreans that we need to do that." And so really, this is something that I think is attempting to really not only put allies and partners at the center, but push them to do more so that we can all do more together. That's I think the strategic conceit behind this.

Mike Green: And that's our strongest hand, is our alliances, our partnerships, and the one we can mobilize fastest, because as we're discussing with AUKUS, military systems, that's a long lead time before you actually deploy them. We can start to address the balance of power and the

debate over norms and the competition for influence quickly with good diplomacy, which this seems to point to. Alright, how would John Quincy Adams read this as a strategic document, Dr. Edel?

Charles Edel: You know, when I was working at the state department in Mahogany Row, where the secretary sits, where the undersecretary sits, where the deputy undersecretary sits, you have all the great portraits of the former secretaries there. In fact, JQA is held in such high regard by State Department predecessors that there are not one but three portraits of him.

Mike Green: As there should be.

Charles Edel: As well there should be. And so, if someone asked me and they said, "Look, when you go speak with the secretary," those very rare occasions when I would get to brief him," he said, "Do you start with JQA?" And I said, "No, and I don't finish with him either." John Quincy Adams is really interesting, but it's wildly different circumstances here.

Charles Edel: The one thing that I think might be useful here is Adams was very conscious all the time and this does go back to that July 4th quote that resources and objectives need to be aligned. And if they're out of whack, you put yourself in a world of hurt, reputationally, potentially even militarily as well. So, I think he would be really interested not in this Indo-Pacific Strategy so much as what does the budget look like that begins to help to align this? Strategy wears a dollar sign as we all know from Bernard Brodie, but the real question is whether or not the resources are being put or just waved as a flag towards that.

Mike Green: So, John Quincy Adams would read this and he'd say to President Biden, you need to chop down more forests and build up the Navy, basically?

Charles Edel: John Quincy Adams would read this and he'd be looking at his friends on Capitol Hill and saying, "What are you guys doing in terms of the budgetary resourcing for this?"

Mike Green: Right. A man of the House, of course.

Charles Edel: Indeed. It died on the floor of the House.

Mike Green: I did see in the document one, I thought, encouraging new element, which was commitment to work with Congress to fund the Pacific Deterrence Initiative. And of course, this has to get cleared in the White House, including with the Office of Management and Budget,

Congressional Affairs and the rest, so I found that encouraging. Problem's going to be, we could increase defense spending, and in fact, we probably will increase defense spending if the Republicans take the house, that's usually what happens. But we've got Ukraine, we've got, back to JQA, we've got to think about our ends, ways and means and aligning them. Are you worried about Ukraine undercutting the strategy? The Indo-Pacific Strategy slipped in before the National Security Strategy, which I suspect is on hold while they watch and see what happens in Ukraine. Can we do this? Can we still, as people say, walk and chew gum at the same time?

Charles Edel: I think we can. I think that's specifically why the Secretary of State was in Australia, then in Fiji, now in Hawaii on his way back to signal that we can indeed walk and chew gum, but this is going to be quite challenging to do. We're mugged by reality all the time. And we fall into a... There's not a playbook here that says, "Ignore Ukraine, so that you can focus on your primary theory." If you ignore Ukraine, which the president is not doing, you have all sorts of issues that are going to fall out from that. But the challenge here is spend too much time on Ukraine, and once again, we have an Indo-Pacific Strategy that looks great on paper but falls down in reality. Spend all your time on the Indo-Pacific and you watch the rules-based order begin to erode under our feet.

Mike Green: I strongly disagree with these arguments, these articles, these op-eds coming out saying, "Don't get distracted by Ukraine." There's an old Herblock cartoon from World War II, which shows MacArthur with George Marshall and he's got a globe and it's square, and he's got his theater, the Pacific on top, and General Marshall saying, "Here, we tend to prefer round globes, General. This is a round globe." And the reality is we do not help ourselves in strategic competition with China if we undercut NATO, because this is a global competition, and Putin and Xi Jinping are as thick as thieves. And we would be foolish to divide the world up by alliances and not look at this as a global problem and not work on alliances globally as much as possible. I think that JQA, John Quincy Adams' lesson is resource it. Resource it. Recognize you have a problem. And push your allies to do it. Where Australia's stepping up, other allies are well below their potential in terms of spending.

Charles Edel: Actually, if you don't mind my cutting in, Mike, one of the interesting things about Australia, I think, for others in the region to watch as well, is this Defence Strategic Update that I talked about, which came out in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, right? It came out, or maybe I should say, the beginning, it was only in July of 2020 when it came out, but it made an argument that I think is widely held across

the world, that we are in a deteriorating strategic situation. And therefore, we need to do more on our own. Therefore, they really double down on their defense budgets and with others, hence AUKUS, and we need to do more creative diplomacy, which is what you see Australia doing. Yes, with the United States, but we talked about with Japan, we haven't talked about what they've been doing with South Korea, no less with India, no less across the Pacific, which they've really funded. That's been a priority for this prime minister.

Charles Edel: So, to my mind, what's interesting is to look... The success of what the United States does in the region is ultimately going to be predicated on where its allies and partners choose to go. And you see Australia, I think, pushing a really interesting model that we see what's happening and we're not going to wait. We're going to start moving and it's a bet that we hope that we can take action on our own, which will arrest the situation, potentially even encourage others who are also smaller to do more, too.

Mike Green: So, let's go back to Charlie Edel and the life of a historian in policy. The most important strategic thinkers, the most important grand strategists are almost always historians. John Quincy Adams was a historian of course, Theodore Roosevelt, Churchill, Kissinger, you name it. And historians tend to make good grand strategists, but history as a discipline is going in another direction. You yourself pointed out that you weren't going to go into Secretary Kerry's office and start talking about John Quincy Adams. For people out there listening, who are embarked on a career in history, how should they think about the role of history and statecraft in pragmatic terms? You don't go around quoting John Quincy Adams in the State Department, so how do you use history?

Charles Edel: By reading an awful lot of it. It's ammunition for you about how you think of things. So, look, when I debate endlessly with my friends, I'm talking to one right now, who is a political scientist, there are different ways that you approach the world, and I actually think both have real value. Teaching at the Naval War College taught me this, that you have historians and political scientists mixed up together. And where I came out is historians, we know the context better and that's useful. And we probably have a repository in our minds of more examples, but political scientists actually ask better questions. And so, making sure that you can use those two together and we all hear this, that how you think about the present is really more than any kind of two-by-two that you have is predicated on what example you're drawing from.

Charles Edel: So the more that you have the ability to look at a diversity of historical examples, the more it is that it informs you how you think about this. I'll give you an example. My favorite thing that I got to write when I was in policy planning was a furious email response that I'm sure was mostly unread, like many of my emails. But someone, a very prominent person, said, "Mr. Secretary and Mr. President, there had been an email that launched in. I've been talking with our Chinese friends and you have to be very careful because they're reading Barbara Tuchman's “Guns of August” and therefore dot, dot, dot, World War I, we should all be really careful."

Charles Edel: And this was forwarded to me and so I wrote my furious response and said, "Yeah, if you only have World War I as an example, this is indeed a worrying situation about where we're heading. But if you broaden the scope of what we're looking at, if you begin to look at the early Cold War, not that this is a cold war, but where you push back, where you begin to understand what deterrence looks like as we head into strategic competition, this is not something that we necessarily worry about tripping us into World War III, but rather where we get to a cold peace by pushing back as hard as we can."

Charles Edel: History, with the great Harvard historian, Ernest May, actually, I think said, should be liberating. The more that you know about, the more examples it gives you to draw from.

Mike Green: That 2014 year was horrible. It was just completely overblown with “The Guns of August” and one data point, which of course is, as you're pointing out, not how you do a good policy. You need a menu, a very, very vast menu in your head of data points you can draw on to understand contingency and uncertainty. Part of the problem, I think, for historians and political scientists and policymakers working together is, I think it was Richard Neustadt who said that you need to use history by thinking in time. You need to understand the evolution and the contingency behind problems.

Mike Green: Political scientists generally don't like that. They want theories to be generalizable and a historical narrative, a dialectic, that's not what they do. They can pick any point in history for a case study if it has certain variables they want to test, and that's how they think.

Mike Green: Historians increasingly, I think in the field, at least professional historians and academics, are less and less interested in thinking beyond the texts that they're analyzing about the larger questions and the implications for state-to-state relations for policy. And then you have the problem that diplomatic history is elite history, which is unpopular in the field. Is there a way to, I guess think tanks may be

the answer, but is there a way to bridge these two worlds? Our friend Will Inboden does it pretty well at UT Austin, and some are trying. These are two fields that should be like an Oreo cookie, but the disciplines are diverging. Is there a way to fix that other than people like you and me doing it ad hoc and think tanks?

Charles Edel: There is, but it's not been taken up, which is taking a hybrid approach to things. Because again, it's really my belief that historians do things that political scientists can't, political scientists do things that historians can't. Putting the two into conversation is really useful. I'll give you an example. When I was teaching up at the Naval War College, I was teaching in the wonderful strategy and policy department. Now, I know I'll anger a lot of friends here when I say it like, "What the hell is strategy? How do you teach strategy?" And the answer that we had up there was, "Well, it's really hard to define. That doesn't mean it's undefinable." And so, you have a bunch of things that you do. You teach some theory and you teach a lot of history and you put them in conversation with each other.

Charles Edel: So yes, you can do Clausewitz and Sun Tzu and Jomini, but you also look at historical case studies. And the most fun I ever had was with a wonderful colleague, who was trained as a political scientist, also happened to be a naval officer. And it was funny because, generally, professors, the civilians, me, would start ranting for a while and then your military partner would say, "Okay, let's bring this back to reality." My dear friend would talk about theories for a long while. I'd say, "That looks nothing like what actually happened in this situation, so let's bounce those two off of each other." I think putting them in conversation looks a little closer to what the world looks like and is a lot more fun, too.

Charles Edel: Will Inboden, our friend, always the story that when he was working on the NSC for President George W. Bush, he was at a Camp David retreat and George W. Bush, who was a big reader, would always start his meetings when he was up there by saying, "What are you reading right now?" And Will says that 19 of the 20 answers were always histories, generally, biographies. The one exception was a brave cabinet secretary who shall go unnamed, who said Harry Potter.

Mike Green: Well, we better stop because we've now mentioned Will Inboden almost as much as John Quincy Adams, which would violate our principles. And to those who don't know, well, look up Will Inboden and for those who don't know John Quincy Adam, read Charlie Edel's book on John Quincy Adams and American statecraft. Charlie, thank you. A lot more to follow. Look forward to it.

Charles Edel: Thanks, Mike.

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.

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