

>> Peter Robinson: Welcome to Uncommon Knowledge, I'm Peter Robinson. Henry Kissinger served as National Security Advisor to President Richard Nixon, and as Secretary of State in the administrations of President Nixon and President Ford. In 1973 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for negotiating a settlement in Vietnam. The author of more than a dozen works of history and diplomacy, Henry Kissinger is now Chairman of Kissinger Associates. Iraq. You've recently said, I quote you, "The issue is, are American forces withdrawn as part of a political settlement, or are they withdrawn because America is exhausted by the War?" America is exhausted by the War, every poll indicates that, but a political settlement in Iraq remains illusive, at best. What is to be done?

>> Henry Kissinger: I can only give the answer in terms of reality. If we withdraw from Iraq without a political settlement -- in other words -- without a balance of forces that other countries and internal forces are willing to sustain, then they will move elsewhere, the war will not end. This is not a war over Iraq, this is a war over radical Shiite and it's resolved under the secular order as we understand it. They won't stop, so if we withdraw from exhaustion, the crisis will move to Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, maybe India, any place where there's substantial Islamic populations that become more radicalized.

>> Peter Robinson: The political problem. The political problem of sustaining support for warfare in a democracy, something of which you have direct evidence. Here are a couple of figures by which I'm struck. Dwight Eisenhower negotiated a settlement in Korea 3 years after the War broke out, and in -- overall, we achieved our objectives, we defended South Korea. You achieved a settlement in Vietnam some 8 years after the Gulf of Ton Kin, and we did not achieve our objectives, because by then Congress and the press had turned hard against the war --

>> Henry Kissinger: No, we achieved our objective. What happened then is that the Congress cut off the economic and Military aid to South Vietnam and if they had done the same to Korea, that would have collapsed also. If you conceive the ending of a war, simply America moving -- walking away and not enforcing an agreement, then that's a form of surrender.

>> Peter Robinson: Well, what I'm struck by here is the intervals. Three years, the democracy seemed able to fight in Korea, although, it was hugely unpopular and Harry Truman left office with approval ratings in the 20's. Eight years in Vietnam, we have now been in 5 years in Iraq. How you support John McCain? If he were elected, what would he have to do to sustain support in the country to engage in the kind of negotiation you would need to --

>> Henry Kissinger: What you would like to see is some kind of bipartisan agreement, which we haven't had. The best the President can do is to explain his best judgment of the situation. If, then, the Congress votes him out of the war anyway, then all one can say is one has to pay the consequences later on. I am sure, from what I know of Senator McCain, he will explain to the American public what is involved. I would not be

surprised if he put forward a negotiating scenario that describes an outcome as part of the overall strategy. I don't say that on his behalf, that would be just –

>> Peter Robinson: Right –

>> Henry Kissinger: my expectation. But, it's all a President can do in explaining the situation to the public, and he's, after all, conducting his campaign on that proposition; nobody can have any doubt what he's doing or what he's going to do.

>> Peter Robinson: He has said several times he would rather lose the campaign than lose the War.

>> Henry Kissinger: Right

>> Peter Robinson: That's a demonstration of his seriousness. As we prepare to choose a new administration, questions about how to evaluate the current administration. You've criticized this administration for invading with too few troops, disbanding the Iraqi Army, mishandling relations with certain allies.

>> Henry Kissinger: But, I favored –

>> Peter Robinson: You -- go ahead –

>> Henry Kissinger: going -- I favored going in.

>> Peter Robinson: Well, let me ask you about that, because I recall, this would be about 2 months before the invasion in March of 2003, hearing you say that you were concerned that the Bush administration was resting too much of the weight of its case on the possibility of weapons of mass destruction, --

>> Henry Kissinger: Right

>> Peter Robinson: and, too little on the underlying psychology of the region. You noted that ever since the end of the first Gulf War, Saddam Hussein had violated the agreement, in particular, the no-fly zone over, and over, and over, and after September 11th we could not permit an Arab regime to flout -- to stick its thumb in the eye of the United States of America, and that was sufficient reason for invading Iraq. Is –

>> Henry Kissinger: That was my basic reason, yeah.

>> Peter Robinson: That is your basic reason? So, what I'm trying to press out here is what did the Bush administration get right and what did it get wrong, as one thinks about what McCain, or Hillary, or Obama will find himself facing?

>> Henry Kissinger: I think the Bush administration got it right from the beginning, the nature of the threat that we were facing an assault that went beyond the 911 attack that

represented a fundamental philosophical and strategic challenge to the United States. The ultimate right that it could not be defeated in any one place; then some of the specific steps they took, I had a different view on.

>> Peter Robinson: Right. Europe -- I quote you, again this is from the interview you gave to Joe Spiegel [assumed spelling]. "The major events in European history were conducted by nation states which developed over several hundred years. There was never a question in the mind of European populations that the state was authorized to ask for sacrifices. Now, the structure of the nation state has been given up to some considerable extent, and the capacity of governments to ask for sacrifices has diminished correspondingly." Ever since the end of the second world war it has been American policy to encourage European integration. In applauding the formation and the crystallization of the European Union have we made a terrible strategic mistake?

>> Henry Kissinger: Well, the temptation is always -- you think you can have all the benefits of the changes and all the benefits of what you already have -- I think -- did we make a mistake? -- Probably not because Europe was strained by two world wars and the European nation state was no longer in a position to carry on -- out the global responsibilities which used to be characteristics of Europe. We over estimated, however, what would be achievable, we thought you could transfer the loyalties of the nation state to the greater organization that was being created, and that has turned out to be wrong or not feasible. So, Europe in a way, is now suspended between its past, which it has partially given up, and its future, which it hasn't yet reached, and maybe never reach.

>> Peter Robinson: The demographic argument. Mark Stein [assumed spelling] makes the following observation. If you have a country in which 10% of the population, let's say the Muslim population, has a birth rate 3 times as great as that of the remaining 90% of the population; the time in which it takes the 10% and the 90% to become 50/50 is two generations, and that is an accurate description of France today. Is the Europe that has been for -- throughout American history -- well, I shouldn't say throughout American history, but essentially has been the heart of the west and has been fundamentally an ally in the sense that it shares our values, is it simply disappearing?

>> Henry Kissinger: Well, the Europe that built the Europe we know, and that dominated world affairs for 200-300 years was a Europe of as neatly compact linguistically, cohesive states. If the demographic equation moves in the direction you've described then, obviously, the nature of the European state, as it has existed up to now, will fundamentally alter, and political debates will be conducted on more ethnic and fewer ideological minds.

>> Peter Robinson: A couple of figures here -- a quotation and some figures. I'm quoting you, yet again. "It is obvious that the United States can not permanently do all the fighting for western interests by itself." That's the quotation, here are the figures. Troops on the ground in Afghanistan today; the United States, over 32,000, all our NATO allies put together, under 26,000, and many of them in non-combat roles. What is to be done?

This is -- so far you've said Europe is in this kind of suspended state between the nation state and the European Union, the demography could be very bad for us --

>> Henry Kissinger: Well --

>> Peter Robinson: I'm -- I'm trying to -- not only am I giving you a softball, I'm on my knees -- I'm begging you to give me some --

>> Henry Kissinger: Yeah.

>> Peter Robinson: something encouraging here.

>> Henry Kissinger: Theoretically, only two things to be done. Either Europe changes its attitude or -- that is that -- our perceptions of the national interest become compatible, or the NATO organization will have to be changed in some manner that permits an alliance of the willing to be created from case to case, but a system in which the alliance as a unit votes to take an action, and then a significant percentage of the alliance opts out or limits its commitment, can not indefinitely continue.

>> Peter Robinson: Are we -- have we been correct in pushing for the expansion of NATO?

>> Henry Kissinger: I have been in favor of the expansion of NATO up to this point. I have questions on two issues. One is when you take in states like -- that are not likely to be directly attacked, like some of the Balkan states, you may expand it to a point where it becomes unmanageable. And, secondly, I was opposed to taking in Ukraine and Georgia, which isn't happening now anyway-

>> Peter Robinson: Mhmm

>> Henry Kissinger: because I believe the position of Ukraine, it's so sensitive with [inaudible] so much of Russian history is tied into it, that we have to divide the issue of western relations to Ukraine into two parts. One, Ukraine should be part politically of the west or, at least, should be -- and able to be part of the west and I would have no question, what ever, about them permitting it -- inviting it into the European Union. Secondly, its Military position should be more like Finland's, a country that is clearly independent, but is not, technically, part of an aligned structure that, because of its proximity, in Finland's case, to Saint Petersburg, in this case, [inaudible] of Russian power. I would have preferred that approach. I would not want to be -- have Ukraine free floating and subject to all the pressures of its geography.

>> Peter Robinson: China and India. Henry Kissinger again. "The rise of Asia will be an enormous event. The great states of Asia are not nation states, in the European sense, but large conglomerates of cultures." Conglomerates of cultures, why does that represent a particular kind of challenge for us?

>> Henry Kissinger: [inaudible] because they're much larger and potentially much more powerful than European nation states could ever be. In China, and I'm sure it's true in India too, there are provinces in China that are larger than the largest countries in Europe. Secondly, they are not formed by linguistic or even ethnic identity. They are formed because they have formed a cultural identity, so it is harder --the European -- with so many European states that you could have a fairly flexible balance of power because if somebody changed sides it was not a collapse of the whole system.

>> Peter Robinson: Right

>> Henry Kissinger: But, when you have only three or four players and in Asia, really, only three -- you have China, India and, I suppose, Japan, that makes their alignment much more complicated and it makes each individual unit, especially in the case of China and India, much more formidable.

>> Peter Robinson: Question on the English speaking world. Britain, Australia, Canada - - if you just look at the numbers of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan it is clear that, even though Gordon Brown [assumed spelling] may have decided that the term special relationship will no longer be used by his government, we have a special relationship with other nations in the English speaking world.

>> Henry Kissinger: Absolutely

>> Peter Robinson: Is it sensible to think of India as, potentially, an ally in the same way? Is it sensible to -- you spoke a moment ago of ad-hoc formations -- is it sensible to think-

>> Henry Kissinger: I think it's acceptable to think of India as a de facto ally in -- with respect of the Islamic world. It's -- I don't think the fact that it is a democracy is the primary fact or even that it speaks English, although it helps. The -- from my observation, India conducts foreign policy very much on the model that Britain used to conduct foreign policy in the 19th Century. With a balance of power its area is from Singapore to Aden, and that they were leading against us during the Cold War, because the Soviet Union was close to their border, because they had no direct Indian interest in the major issues like access to Berlin, but now they have a very large Islamic population, about 160,000,000 and they know they're fundamentally affected if the -- if a radical wave continues to sweep through the Islamic world. Shiite becomes the dominant motive of Islam, and India will, itself, be under pressure. So, in that sense, India has parallel objectives to the United States in that region from-, as I said, from Singapore to Aden. With respect to China, India wants to be independent, of course. So, it takes care of its security and we don't need to think of it in terms of military containment, because that's inherent in the nature of the state and we don't have to be very formalistic about it, it doesn't require for them to conduct parallel policies on issues, other than, their independence.

>> Peter Robinson: I sometimes, I know, tried out for you an idea that I discussed with no one else. I don't know why I should try it on you when it's as ill formed as it is. But, the idea is -- Iraq, Iraq, Iraq that's all anyone ever talks about with the regard to the Bush administration, understandably so, but the opening to India may turn out in 10 or 20 years to have been a major event. Am I right or wrong?

>> Henry Kissinger: No, you're right. I think that, actually, you know, in this town, and intellectual circles there's sort of compulsion to attack Bush --

>> Peter Robinson: Yes

>> Henry Kissinger: and to assert the principal that we're in trouble all over the world. If you actually look at it, we have good relations with China, we have excellent relations with India, we have adequate relations with Russia, and we have adequate relations with individual European states, so where exactly is the problem? It's in Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and I'm sure when a new administration comes in they will see how complex these issues are.

>> Peter Robinson: The inevitable question about China. It's scary -- 1.3 billion of them -- a growth rate of 10% for the last -- 10% a year for the last 5 years -- and, this is in a way even more staggering -- not since 1990 has the Chinese growth rate dipped below 7% -- query. You mentioned that India conducts its foreign policies the British Empire used to, that is to say, with quite a clearly demarcated zone about which it cares. Can we hope -- can we suppose that China will restrict itself to the zone to which it has historically restricted itself. That is to say, Asia and the Pacific most directly related to China, is that a fair hope?

>> Henry Kissinger: Well, we can't know exactly, but what we can say -- we can say a number of things. One is that it has never happened, that a country grew at a rate of 10% a year indefinitely. Secondly, the Indian -- the Chinese population, partly of the result of the one child family, is producing a demographic problem of its own, and it's very likely that China will become old before it becomes rich. That a larger and larger percentage of its population has to look after old people. Then you have the problem of a country that on the coast is like, let's say, western Europe and its interior, highly underdeveloped, and at any one point that about 100,000,000 Chinese on the road looking for jobs, so you can not project this as a world power that is going to be eager to project its power abroad. I think we have a number of decades in which we can see whether we can build cooperative relationships with China and the United States in such a way that it becomes second nature. Because it be a tragedy if Chinese nationalism and maybe some provincialism on our part produce a situation in which the two most significant countries in terms of economy, were clashing with each other, because one outcome might be like World War I in Europe that we drain each other for the benefit of third parties.

>> Peter Robinson: So, it's avoidable?

>> Henry Kissinger: We have to try to avoid it.

>> Peter Robinson: Alright. Nuclear dangers. Earlier this year you joined former Secretary of State George Shultz, former Secretary of Defense William Perry, former Senator Sam Nunn and some others, in writing an article in the Wall Street Journal entitled, "Toward A Nuclear Free World." Two quotations, one is from the article itself. The article called for a dialogue that would address "Turning the goal of a world without nuclear weapons into a practical enterprise among nations". Now, here's the second quotation from Margaret Thatcher not long after the Rakevet summit. "Nuclear weapons can not be disinvented. The knowledge of how to make them exists and the risk will always be that someone will make them or conceal them." In holding out the notion of a world without nuclear weapons, to the extent that it's taken seriously, isn't there the danger -- aren't you in effect saying that the United States and other responsible nations ought to eliminate their nuclear arsenals, thereby exposing themselves to the risk that some terrorist group or rogue nation will produce one or two bombs, which is all that it would take in that circumstance?

>> Henry Kissinger: First, I agreed with Margaret Thatcher when she made that statement. Secondly, I am told by my colleagues, and by many others, that it helps the process of nonproliferation to say it would be best to have a world without nuclear weapons.

>> Peter Robinson: But that's [inaudible]

>> Henry Kissinger: I believe -- If you ask me how to get there, I have no idea, and I have said this to all my colleagues, and I don't think my colleagues have a precise idea how to get there. We have put forward a number of complete proposals, I stand behind those proposals. --

>> Peter Robinson: Alright --

>> Henry Kissinger: and, there then maybe other things will occur to us, but if you ask me today -- the first thing we'd have to do is [inaudible] of Margaret Thatcher. We'd have to figure out how many weapons could be hidden, how many nuclear materials could be diverted, and we could never go in the most optimistic program below a capacity that enables us to deal with that.

>> Peter Robinson: Russia still possesses about 5,000 operational nuclear war heads. The Russian economy relies on old fashioned extractive industry as oil and natural gas, its Military -- its Armed Forces are spotty in many regards beneath the level they achieved in the Cold War. What can we possibly do to persuade the Russians to give up this arsenal that confers prestige on them? Is it obvious that they ought to reduce to 1,000 say or to 500? And, then, of course, the obvious pairing with that is 15 years after the Cold War we have more than 4,000 operational nuclear warheads and another 1,200 held in reserve.

>> Henry Kissinger: I think it will be possible to arrive at a number with the Russians -- 10 or 1,500, 1,000 I don't know what the right number is.

>> Peter Robinson: But, a lot lower? A lot lower –

>> Henry Kissinger: A lot lower than we have. I think that's relatively simple and I expect that to be achieved in the new – whatever the new administration is.

>> Peter Robinson: Alright. Iran, a harder nuclear question -- 2 quotations again. Vice President Dick Cheney, "We will not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon." Retired Army General John Abizaid, "There are ways to live with a nuclear Iran, let's face it, we've lived with a nuclear Soviet Union, we've lived with a nuclear China, and we're living with other nuclear powers, as well." Whose side is Henry Kissinger on?

>> Henry Kissinger: Well, I don't agree with the Abizaid statement for this reason; It's one thing to live with the Soviet Union that had calculations very similar to ours, because they were quite an advanced country, and because it was only a two power equation. When you have 10 countries, each making their own calculations, many of which in conflict with each other for causes that are not necessarily global, this produces a risk of nuclear war that, in my view, is intolerable, and it now so happens that Iran is at the cutting edge of this issue, because if they get nuclear weapons then a whole group of other countries are also gonna get nuclear weapons. So, it isn't of whether we can live with Iran. If Iran were the only nuclear country, we'd replace the Soviet Union, certainly we could deter them, but it still doesn't take care of another problem, namely, they're using nuclear -- a nuclear capability as a kind of umbrella over non-nuclear activities to deter us from intervening with them on nuclear imperialism.

>> Peter Robinson: Well, is it the logic of that argument then that absent adequate cooperation with our European allies, and I think I'd be willing to suggest that that cooperation has been pretty spotty as regard to Iran. It's up to the United States simply to refuse by military action, if necessary, to permit Iran to obtain nuclear weapons or nuclear capability. Is that the logic of the argument?

>> Henry Kissinger: The logic of the argument is certainly that we will reach a point, yet to be agreed on, at which one has to come to two conclusions. One, that Iran is clearly going ahead to build a capability that must lead to a nuclear capability, and secondly, that the present message are not succeeded. That's when then decide to go into a blockade of Iran or the real global sanctions over other steps, I would prefer to leave that until we're closer to that moment, but we have to face the fact that such a moment will be coming.

>> Peter Robinson: The long view. In his recent book World War IV, Norman Podhoretz writes about the extreme difficulty of attempting to prosecute the war in Vietnam in the face of elite opinion that was hostile to that war, something about which you're an expert. Administrators, bureaucrats, the entire apparatus in Washington, Norman writes, "All they needed to do was read the New York Times, or switch on their television sets, or go to the movies, and drip by drip the material was absorbed into their heads by this process, could a minority win out over a majority or to put it another way, could culture trump politics?" Question, has that changed? The internet, talk radio, outlets such as Fox News, have they created openings in, for example, have they created political openings

for the Bush administration that you never had when you were attempting to hold things together during Vietnam?

>> Henry Kissinger: But, there's more variety now due to the internet –

>> Peter Robinson: Yes.

>> Henry Kissinger: and, due to such networks as –

>> Peter Robinson: Fox –

>> Henry Kissinger: Fox News. It was almost totally uniform in the Vietnam War. Incidentally, since your audience is probably younger than I am which is not hard to be, I think one has to point out -- you keep talking about the Vietnam War as, sort of, our war, we inherited the Vietnam War. It had been going on for over 4 years when Nixon came in and one of our complexities was that several of those who got us into the war, then joined the peace movement.

>> Peter Robinson: What do you consider the beginning of the Vietnam War -- of the beginning of the American involvement in Vietnam? From what moment do you date it?

>> Henry Kissinger: Well, there was American involvement in Vietnam throughout the 50's, but we went across what we had done for other countries across the line in the Kennedy administration when we started sending, I think, 30 to 50,000 advisors there, because when you have advisors in that magnitude who need to protect themselves, that was certainly one line, and the next line was when President Johnson sent combat troops-

>> Peter Robinson: Right

>> Henry Kissinger: in 65 –

>> Peter Robinson: Right, then it becomes explicit. I don't mean to take you off your larger point. You said there's more variety now – you didn't sound as though you were going to say that the variety was all together acceptable or –

>> Henry Kissinger: The variety is acceptable but they're two things on the uniformity of intellectual opinion. It's still heavily weighted on the negative side.

>> Peter Robinson: Why is that? You have made your career, since leaving Washington, in the city of New York, one of the great glories of our civilization. Here we sit -- 911 -- and one would expect 911 to be a very recent memory -- it's only a few miles in that direction down the island of Manhattan and the entire elite opinion in New York is hard against the war in Iraq. What happened?

>> Henry Kissinger: Well, it isn't just -- first of all the debate of are you for a war or against war -- it's already a terrible debate, because nobody is for war. --

>> Peter Robinson: Right

>> Henry Kissinger: There are people who think that the consequences of defeat are worse than what we're fighting -- then what we're trying to fight for. So, what happened in the 60's may be as a result in part of the assassination of President Kennedy, but when I was a young professor in the 50's at Harvard where 99.9% of the people were Democrats -- I don't -- I can remember only one Republican -- the faculty of Harvard that I knew -- but, when we had faculty meetings on people in political science, but nobody attacked the government for being a criminal activity. Nobody said this is -- they like to go to war -- they're blood dripping. Sometime in the 60's the idea developed that the government itself was an evil enterprise that they lied professionally to the American public and that the purpose of intellectuals was to negate the government rather than to be constructive, and that makes it very tough. Because, I start from the assumption I have now seen every administration since Eisenhower, and, first of all, nobody lies deliberately to the American public -- half -- 9/10's of the time these accusations are when somebody was genuinely confused --

>> Peter Robinson: Right

>> Henry Kissinger: Secondly, everybody working in government goes through the long hours and all the other pressures, because he would like to make --he or she would like to make a contribution to a better world. So, nobody likes to be participating in enterprises that are destructive, so when the debate gets put this way that some evil manipulative people get us into wars, the administration genuinely believed, so did the Clinton administration genuinely believe, that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. It turned out probably wrong but it was not a deliberate lie.

>> Peter Robinson: Final question. Henry Luce famously called the 20th Century the American Century. What's your feeling about the 21st? Is this another -- another American Century or do we find ourselves in the position of Britain toward the end of the 19th Century in which our dominance is --

>> Henry Kissinger: Well --

>> Peter Robinson: fading?

>> Kissinger: It can be the American -- it can be a century in which we play a major role, but we have to understand our capacities, but we also have to understand our limits. We can not think that we can redo the whole world, but we should be able to protect free peoples against dangers and prevent a balance of forces to evolve that is very hostile to us. But, it requires, first, a more continuing approach to foreign policy than has been characteristic of America historically. --

>> Peter Robinson: Right

>> Henry Kissinger: Secondly, a clearer vision of what the American role is. Some think that [inaudible] and the world crusade, and it requires leadership groups that educate themselves on the substance of foreign policy. When we keep getting -- be told it makes no difference what anyone knows say -- can learn it on the job -- on the job in Washington, you can't learn. You can use up your substance but it's very hard to acquire it.

>> Peter Robinson: Henry Kissinger, thank you very much. I'm Peter Robinson for Uncommon Knowledge in the Hoover Institution. Thanks for joining us.