

JOHN F.W. ROGERS: It's my honor today to welcome my friend and former colleague Dr. Richard Haass. Richard is the President of the Council on Foreign Relations, a role that he has had since 2003. Richard's latest book is called *The World: A Brief Introduction*. Which covered an incredible amount of ground on the history of the world and foreign policy in just over 300 pages.

So Richard, thank you very much for being here with us. I'm really excited to talk about this book. You write that World War I did not have to happen. That World War II, ultimately, did. Why is that distinction so important to the way we think about the outcomes of those wars and the lasting impact of those outcomes?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: World War I, even when I go back and study it, and I've now studied it at several times in my life, I spent a lot of time at Oxford working on it, it's a whole cottage industry about the causes of World War I. Every time I read into it; I end up scratching my head. It wasn't inevitable. There really was a failure of statecraft. There was a failure of diplomacy. There was a recklessness. I think in the book I called it a careless war. But it really was careless.

Yes, you had certain dynamics, including imperial Germany and so forth. But it didn't have to lead to war. So, but essentially, the politicians lost control of events. And I don't think there was a cause of the war that was so fundamental that it couldn't have been managed to a decent extent by diplomacy.

That, to me, is fundamentally different than World War II. The differences were so profound. The ambitions were so great that by the time you had the rise of Nazi Germany, imperial Japan and so forth, by then no amount of diplomacy could have avoided what became World War II. The only question was exactly what was going to be the chain of events. There, if there's a failure of diplomacy, was allowing things to reach that point. And that's where you go back into the '20s and '30s, everything from the settlement of World War which sowed tremendous seeds of resentment in Germany, to the lack of seriousness on the part of the western democracies in terms of maintaining adequate capabilities, to the belief and feckless diplomacy from the so-called Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact outlawing war, to appeasement, to protectionism, and so forth that, again, another way to put it, World War II wasn't inevitable in 1920 or 1925. It became inevitable probably by 1935.

JOHN F.W. ROGERS: Well, in the book you move on to the Cold War. And though as you pointed out, the seeds of the Cold War, they were not sewn during World War II. You write that the Cold War was the result of its own dynamic, one that grew out of the rise of the United States and the Soviet Union. And so, why did this rise lead to what would be, you know, for four decades, a competition between those two powers?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: The Cold War came about, I think, in part for reasons of ambition, and in part for reasons of nature, in part for reasons of ideology. But the United States and the Soviet Union really did represent very different world views. They had very different views, in particular, of the structure of Europe. The Soviets had a rather large view about what they needed in order to feel secure. The United States wasn't buying it. Similar competition in Asia.

So, I think you had a situation where you, in particular given the Soviet Union, I put the lion's share of the responsibility on the Soviet side, was anything but a status quo power. Soviet Union had a definition of success that put at risk American strategic physical interests, as well as American economic initiatives, as well as American values. So, I think in that sense it was inevitable given the nature of the Soviet Union.

What wasn't inevitable, and really was a remarkable achievement, which too many people take for granted, was two things. One is the Cold War stayed cold. When else in history have you had that kind of a great power competition that didn't erupt into a major conflict? Quite extraordinary. And I think, ironically enough, nuclear weapons get more than a little, quote/unquote, "credit" for that, as well as some very good foreign policy on the part of various American presidents.

And also, it's remarkable that it ended peacefully. So often, eras in history come to an end, almost like operas, with great drama. There wasn't that. It ended peacefully. The wall was dismantled. And you ended up, among other things, with a united Germany, democratic, inside NATO.

JOHN F.W. ROGERS: Why do you see this current period of history as one that could lead to accelerating global disorder, as you write in the book?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: Yeah. Now I'll admit, my default posture is pessimism. Just to be clear, pessimism is not defeatism. There's nothing inevitable. But I'm worried for a couple of reasons. One

is, you have in terms of great power relationships, you've got a Russia that really is an outlier, that's willing to do things using military force, whether it's in Europe or the Middle East, using cyber tools and so forth. It really doesn't buy into the status quo in any way. In that sense, it's much more of an outsider than is China.

China is a challenge of a different sort which is that it's less of an outsider, but it's also got far more capability. It's far more dynamic economically. China's a real competitor. And the question is how are we going to manage that? And how are we going to deal with its gradual translation of economic might into military might, and its greater goals to realize some of its ambitions, vis-à-vis, the South China Sea, Taiwan, what have you?

You then have in this era, this whole overlay, because everything I've described is the familiar stuff of history, what's so different about the era we're living in is that on top of that you've got this whole set of global issues from climate change, to how you're going to manage cyber space, to proliferation, to terrorism, to global health, you name it. And in every one of these instances, the arrangements in place fall far short of what is needed. People constantly use the phrase, international community. I hate to break anybody's bubble, but there isn't one. It's an aspirational idea. It's not a reality.

And then on top of the return of geopolitics and great power rivalry, in addition to this global set of challenges that the world hasn't come together to meet, you have the United States, which for the last, what, three quarters of a century has been the principal pillar of global order as we've known it, the United States is having second and third thoughts about whether the game is worth the candle. This is not a partisan comment. We saw elements of it in the Obama years. We clearly saw it in the Trump years. We'll see what happens with Mr. Biden, though I think he represents more of a traditional return. But the question is, to what extent is he supported in that by the Congress and the country? And also, the four years of Biden, what follows that? Is this, if you will, a prolonged return to the familiar? Or is this a four-year exception? And then we go back to some version of American retreat? I don't have the answers to that. But I simply say, so on top of great power rivalry, these global challenges, we've introduced a degree of uncertainty about America's willingness to play the outsized role that it's played for the last 75 years, I would argue, unbalanced, with tremendous effect.

JOHN F.W. ROGERS: One of the questions in the last section of the book, you pose this question is, why does world order matter as much as it does? So let me ask you, why does the world order matter as much as it does?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: World order is a bit like oxygen. It matters because it's the foundation or the framework or the scaffolding, use whatever image works for you, that allows everything else to happen. It not only helps prevent violence and conflict, but it allows commerce to happen, investment to happen. It allows people, essentially, not just to live their lives free of physical threats, but it allows our lives to become much more productive. And we've seen world order has been the prerequisite or foundation of the fact that people are far wealthier now than they were. And they live a lot longer than they did.

So, to me, world order is a prerequisite, or again a foundational element of so much else in the world. Put it another way. Imagine we're living in a world in which countries are constantly warring, and also to take a modern approach to world order, where countries can't come together to deal with global challenges. We could actually have a terrible experiment about climate change. The inability or unwillingness of governments and others to come together to deal with it. We could, essentially, collectively experience the cost that will flow from that.

So, world order matters, both in the traditional sense of a war avoidance. It matters in the sense of setting rules for economic interaction, trade, investment, for people moving. And I think increasingly it matters, and again I don't think we focus on enough, for dealing with these global issues, including things like public health.

JOHN F.W. ROGERS: Well, we're in the midst of this pandemic, and we certainly should address, you know, a question to this because you put the case forward that this could be a threat. But also you describe it as an issue that should be looked at through the lens of national security. So, why and how will that help us confront the virus?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: You know what's so interesting about who's doing well and who's not? It has almost no correlation to the nature of the political system. So, China after a slow start is doing well. Some other authoritarian countries are doing well. Like Vietnam has done remarkably well on COVID from the get-go.

Iran is doing terribly. Russia has done really badly. Some democracies have done great in Europe and in Asia in particular. Some, including our own and Brazil's and India have done terribly. So, it's really interesting that the nature of the system does not appear to be the critical variable. Much more to do with the nature of the leadership and the ability to execute. Just as a political observation.

The reason I think it's a national security issue is in part by choice in the sense that it's a way to galvanize response. This is affecting our national security in every sense of the world. Lives. The economy. Our ability to function as a country. It's a major drain and distraction. So, I think it's important to portray it that way.

Obviously, there's a big domestic dimension. But in the future, we're going to want to have in place a much stronger global health regime. So, the kind of thing that went on this time with the country not responding and reporting as it could and should have does not happen again. In the immediate future we're going to want to have the mechanisms in place for production and distribution and funding of a vaccine. We don't want to have large pockets of the world's population continuing to suffer from this, because that also could have follow on security consequences in terms of failed states and things like that. So, I think it is a human challenge, it's an economic challenge, but it's also a security challenge. And we're going to want to, by the way, put into place arrangements, domestically and internationally, so if and when there's COVID-22 or COVID-27 or some other virus or some bacteria emerge that are resistant to antibiotics, that we're better positioned to deal with this.

I don't like the phrase that this is a once in a century event. We've had any number of viral outbreaks over the last couple of decades from MERS to SARS to this, HIV, AIDS. This is the stuff of globalization. And I just think that we have got to be prepared for them. We need some mechanism out there that can stand up to sovereign states and blow the whistle. Know what's going on and saying, "Hey, you've got an outbreak in your country. You're not dealing with it. It's a threat to everybody." The World Health Organization either has to change its spots, or we need something else to do that.

JOHN F.W. ROGERS: If you were writing the next chapter of this book, given what you know of the course of this year, when you're putting in the next chapter of the history of the world, what would you say?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: I think the challenges the world faces, whether it is the revival of great power rivalry, how to narrow the gap between global challenges and responses, the question of what the United States will do, those are still to me the big question marks. And I come down to what you and I have been talking about, and it's really a challenge for the United States and the world, is how do we adapt the notion of order and sovereignty for the 21st century? How do we have a world dominated by these sovereign entities called nation states that want to protect their prerogatives, at the same time they act in ways in which, well, they recognize the reality that what things that go on within their borders are not just their business alone? We have yet to break that code.

And countries like China, Russia, India, and the United States at times, are, you know, for understandable reasons, extraordinarily protective of their sovereign rights as they understand them. And my point is simply, well, what about their obligations? Because we want others to feel obligated to us. We want the Brazils of the world not to burn down the rainforest. We want the Chinas of the world to deal better with viral outbreaks. So, a real interesting question is, where would we be prepared to open up what we heretofore have considered to be our sovereignty? Where would we accept certain responsibilities towards the rest of the world and in the interest of creating an order that is adequate for living in a 21st century where globalization is a phenomenon? That's kind of what I'm wrestling with. And it just seems to me that foreign policy, there's a big lag between where the world is physically and where the world is politically. And I'm beginning to think about how does one try to deal with that gap?

JOHN F.W. ROGERS: Well, that is really great because that gives us an opportunity to extend an invitation to come back at Talks at GS so we can discuss your next book. And on behalf of my colleagues in the audience, virtual audience, I want to thank you for being with all of us today. Thank you all. And goodbye.

DR. RICHARD HAASS: Thank you, John.

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