

tbws - stephen bryen

[00:00:00] **Bill Walton:** Welcome to the Bill Walton show. I'm Bill Walton. Russia's seeming conquest of Ukraine, Zelensky's refusing to negotiate, Hamas slaughtering Israeli citizens, anti-Semitism erupting on campuses in America. China's attempt at displacing the United States in the Middle East and its looming attentions in Taiwan.

[00:00:26] With world events seemingly out of control, I've asked my national security guru and frequent guest, Stephen Bryen, back for an overview of what's happening and what could happen next. Stephen is Senior Fellow at the Center for Security Policy in the Yorktown Institute. And has over 50 years experience in the arms trade and national security, including several stints in the Pentagon.

[00:00:51] Stephen, I'm worried. I'm worried that the United States long history of mismanaging our national security interests has [00:01:00] squandered our ability to control, or at least influence, events around the world.

[00:01:04] **Stephen Bryen:** Thoughts? Lots of thoughts. This is a tough one, can we influence? Yeah, we can, to some extent.

[00:01:13] We're a nuclear power. We have a strong air force, a less strong army and a less strong Navy, except for submarines, where I think we're still strong, but we're being challenged by Russia. We're being challenged by China. We're being challenged by countries like Iran, and we're letting them get away with it.

[00:01:33] So we've, we're in a mess. We're not controlling events. Events are controlling us. And we're doing some things which are reckless. For example, we're emptying our arsenal to support Ukraine, leaving NATO exposed, very exposed, if the Russians really chose to be troublesome in Europe, a very dangerous thing to do.

[00:01:56] In Asia, we're weak. I think there's no doubt about [00:02:00] that. The Chinese have been building up and building up, and we have failed really to set up any kind of defensive scheme or alliance that works, that can give us any hope of Europe. putting pressure back on China. The only real hope for the future of China is that internally, it can't compete.

[00:02:19] It's got troubles, economic problems, political problems, clashes of interests in the country. So maybe it'll implode, but if it doesn't, we're in for a hard time.

[00:02:31] **Bill Walton:** You mentioned. I'm sorry, go ahead.

[00:02:33] **Stephen Bryen:** No, I was just going to say, I think that it's a situation where we're not well prepared to deal with these contingencies which are growing in importance.

[00:02:43] **Bill Walton:** We don't have the equivalent of NATO in the Pacific. You mentioned our inability to put together strategic alliances. That seems to be a blunder at

[00:02:53] **Stephen Bryen:** best. Also that they don't... The players who are impacted either [00:03:00] don't ask for an alliance or a strong alliance anyway, or in one case, Taiwan is simply left out of the equation.

[00:03:07] So Taiwan is like a non person. How can you defend Taiwan if it's a non person? You can't. At the end of the day, you've got to decide what you want to do about Taiwan. You can't keep this mythology one China, they have to negotiate some result, and then they never do, of course. China wants to take over Taiwan.

[00:03:25] That's clear. And we, if we're going to help the Taiwanese resist that, we'd have to somehow put them into an alliance arrangement. Where we can do it. We're not doing that.

[00:03:38] **Bill Walton:** Shifting back to NATO and what's happening with Ukraine and Russia. You and I have talked, oh gosh, many times about what's happening there.

[00:03:47] What's the, it looks like Russia is on the verge of a victory. But you're not reading about that much in the mainstream media in the United States. Which your take on what's happening there?

[00:03:59] **Stephen Bryen:** In the war [00:04:00] itself, let's talk war first, the actual battlefield. The Russians are now starting to advance slowly.

[00:04:06] Very slowly, conservatively. The question is what they're, what are they trying to advance to? Where are they going? on One, at least at the

moment, it looks like they're trying to straighten the line to cover Luhansk and Donetsk areas so that they can actually protect those areas in the future.

[00:04:27] And that's why you did it.

[00:04:28] **Bill Walton:** That's the eastern portion of the

[00:04:29] **Stephen Bryen:** country? That's the eastern portion from the north to the south. aNd so they're concentrating, particularly the big battle right now is Avdivka, where the Russians are really pushing hard to try and push the Ukrainians out. It's like a salient that sticks its nose right almost to the capital of Donetsk itself.

[00:04:49] So it's a very important piece of territory for the Russians. And I think they'll take it, but it may take some weeks. So on the battlefield, the Russians are making gains. [00:05:00] Meanwhile, we're running out of ammunition. We just don't have it. Our European friends don't have it either. We scraped up what stuff we had in Israel, unfortunately bad timing, and scraped up what we had in Korea, again bad timing, to send to Ukraine.

[00:05:17] Why is Ukraine so interesting to the United States? What are we trying to achieve there? It seems like what we're trying to achieve is to put NATO in Ukraine and push closer to Moscow, which is essentially what successive administrations have been doing. And I think it's reckless because it's a red line for the Russians.

[00:05:36] There wouldn't have been a Russian invasion if we hadn't tried to do that. So now we're faced with some bad choices and I think it's going to get worse. Because at some point, they could, the naked underbelly of NATO is going to be visible. And that's not good because it could crack the alliance.

[00:05:55] It's not happened yet, but it could happen. And I think that's coming. Didn't we,

[00:05:59] **Bill Walton:** You were a [00:06:00] weapons expert. You were you head of procurement at the Pentagon or some

[00:06:03] **Stephen Bryen:** job? No, I did technology security.

[00:06:06] **Bill Walton:** Okay. You say we've scraped the shelves bare in Korea and in Taiwan to help support, or Israel rather, to help support Ukraine.

[00:06:15] What do we mean by the arms? Is it, are they, are we talking ammunition? Are we talking tanks? Are we talking what kinds of equipment are we without now that we had

[00:06:25] **Stephen Bryen:** before? The big losses have been in precision equipment. Things like anti tank missiles, ground to air missiles, that sort of thing, we've run out of those.

[00:06:35] Even Patriot missiles, we just redeployed a bunch of Patriots to the Middle East because of the crisis there. But I'll tell you a little secret. We don't have any missiles. After a while, we can do the initial, but if it got heavy, we'd have a problem. The Saudis had to beg and borrow and steal to get some extra missiles because they get hit all the time by the Houthis.

[00:06:57] So we have scraped the bottom of the barrel on the [00:07:00] Patriot. We've run out of anti tanks, we've run out of artillery, 155, 155 millimeter, standard ammunition, nothing special, which is used in the tens of thousands of rounds in Ukraine. We're out of it.

[00:07:16] **Bill Walton:** We're trying to make it now. Who manufactures that?

[00:07:19] Who makes that? Is that here in the United States? Yeah, it's made in,

[00:07:22] **Stephen Bryen:** I think four arsenals in the United States. And two private companies.

[00:07:29] **Bill Walton:** With that... With that, at the risk of being even gloomier Haven't we learned that we've been fighting wars against insurgents, guys with bandanas on their head, and AK 47s, and guerrilla warfare, but we've never really, we haven't fought a conventional type war.

[00:07:47] Until Ukraine and Russia went at it. And haven't we learned a lot of our equipment didn't fare all that well in the battlefield?

[00:07:55] **Stephen Bryen:** Some of it worked for a while, but like any other battlefield, the enemy figures out [00:08:00] how to counter it. So they'd like to take the HIMARS, which is a very good system.

[00:08:05] I think very effective, but limited in quantity again, there's not enough of them, but the Russians now have learned to shoot them down. So you know, you have to move on to the next thing. So the problem with war today is

if you're going to have a conventional war that takes a long time, and I think Ukraine is now taking a long time, you're going to run out of stuff.

[00:08:27] You're going to run out of stuff and stuff that you have not going to perform up to snuff. Take the German Leopard tank. The Leopard tank was considered the best tank in the world, better than the U. S. Abrams. It's so good that you didn't have to put applique armor on it because it was so capable of self defense.

[00:08:47] They've been destroyed. A lot of them have been destroyed in Ukraine already by the Russians.

[00:08:51] **Bill Walton:** Appliqué armor

[00:08:52] **Stephen Bryen:** is what? Appliqué is a level of reactive armor that you put on the outside of the tank to try and deflect an incoming round[00:09:00] by breaking its force. It's for every reaction, there's a reaction.

[00:09:05] So if you have a reaction against an incoming, you push it away and it loses its velocity. But they never put it on the Leopards because the Germans said you don't need it. It's, we have such great armor and internally that nothing can penetrate it. Guess what? Something did. More than something.

[00:09:26] A lot of things did.

[00:09:27] **Bill Walton:** It, let me infer, what I'm hearing is that you really can't fight a real conventional war. Unless you gear up to do it properly and you can't do it with one arm tied behind your back. You can't do it casually. The United States national defense and nation and foreign policy establishment seems to assume our hegemony and omnipotence and our ability to do things almost, if we at a whim, we can take over this country, remove this dictator, et cetera, et cetera.

[00:09:57] As I mentioned at the outset our ability to do that[00:10:00] Is vanishingly small anymore, even if we never were very good at regime change, but now I think we're even worse at it than ever.

[00:10:09] **Stephen Bryen:** mAybe you shouldn't try.

[00:10:11] **Bill Walton:** That would be, I'm in that camp.

[00:10:16] **Stephen Bryen:** I think overall, the attitude in the Pentagon was we had superior capabilities.

[00:10:24] To anything the Russians could put in the field and that by using those superior capabilities, network systems, high tech, lots of sophisticated communication, satellites, drones, the whole package that we could stop the Russians actually didn't work. And the great proof was this big offensive. that the Ukrainians launched back in June, which now is over.

[00:10:49] The fight to the south in Zafiritsa and over Baikirsen. The idea was that we would overrun the, what are called the Surovikian defenses that the Russians put there, [00:11:00] and that we would then break the connection of the south of Ukraine to Crimea, and then isolate Crimea, and then the Ukrainians could go on and launch a war against Crimea.

[00:11:12] And meanwhile, we would bomb... The Kirk Strait bridge that connects Russia to Crimea and knock that out so that the Russians couldn't use it to resupply. That was the plan. This was run through all kinds of simulations. NATO trained our, the Ukrainian troops. A lot of NATO people were in the field supporting them.

[00:11:33] Everything you can imagine we threw into that pot, and guess what? It failed. Not only failed, but it was extraordinarily costly to the Ukrainians. They lost thousands of dead, 25, 000 or more were killed, lots of equipment destroyed. And how much did they gain? They gained nothing. They didn't break the Sorovikian defenses.

[00:11:54] **Bill Walton:** I'm beginning to think we're, we've got something I'm going to become calling governments by [00:12:00] simulation. And the, the Defense Department simulation sounds

[00:12:03] **Stephen Bryen:** The simulation shows that it must be right.

[00:12:05] **Bill Walton:** As it's the same simulation models the climate change people use and Also, the Federal Reserve has got some pilots, got some models that have been equally good at predicting

[00:12:15] **Stephen Bryen:** Garbage in, garbage out.

[00:12:17] Yeah. That's so you put in a bunch of assumptions about the performance of a weapon system and it doesn't meet those performance standards, then the whole simulation is junk. Waste of time.

[00:12:29] **Bill Walton:** Now we're brought up short by reality. And Zelensky, who has been, who's loved his role in the world stage, and his wife shopping in Paris refuses to negotiate.

[00:12:41] **Stephen Bryen:** Does he have a little extra cash?

[00:12:43] **Bill Walton:** He does. I want to ask you where the money went, but my first

[00:12:46] **Stephen Bryen:** question is. It's not my specialty.

[00:12:51] **Bill Walton:** The shopping in Paris, where the money went. I'll do

[00:12:54] **Stephen Bryen:** that if you give me some money. I'll be very

[00:12:58] **Bill Walton:** happy to go do it. [00:13:00] Now, the word is, and you've written about this, is that

[00:13:05] our geniuses in the State Department now think it'd be a good idea if Zelensky went. Victoria Nuland overthrew the, what, the Ukraine government in 2014. do it again. Zelensky doesn't want to go and Zelensky doesn't want to negotiate. So where does that leave us?

[00:13:27] **Stephen Bryen:** There's a thing called a rock in a hard place.

[00:13:29] We are in a mess because first of all, Zelensky is the symbol of the Ukrainian resistance. Let's say that. And if he goes, what next? There's no democracy and, put away all the propaganda. There's no democracy in Ukraine. It's run 100 percent by Zelensky. He controls the media. He's a media guy.

[00:13:56] He controls the propaganda. He puts his [00:14:00] opponents in jail or worse, if they're outside of the country, has them assassinated. It's a tough bunch. Now he's in a fight with his military commanders. That's the thing to know. Zoluchny, who's the commander overall of the armed forces, Sierski, who's the armed.

[00:14:17] ground forces commander, are at odds with Zelensky on the war. They realize that they're in difficulty, that they're losing too many troops, that the end game is bad. They want to pull back, build a defensive perimeter very much closer to the heartland of the country, Kiev, in that area, and then make a deal with the Russians.

[00:14:39] I think that's their, what they prefer. Zelensky does not prefer that. So the fighting in Bakhmut again, and the fighting in of Dikha, Uh, is all Zelensky. He wants those places taken. He's trying to push the Russians out. They don't think they can push the Russians out. They think they're getting their, they're losing.[00:15:00]

[00:15:00] **Bill Walton:** wOuldn't his next move be to try to pull NATO in? Zelensky might try to do something to get Poland, somebody involved with... And spark a wider war to take pressure off

[00:15:10] **Stephen Bryen:** of him. There's been that that claim. I don't put much credence in even the Poles who don't like the Russians.

[00:15:18] Not at all. For a good reason. They don't want to get into war. They understand the risk.

[00:15:25] **Bill Walton:** We seem to have gotten to a place where we don't have that many options. What do you, I want to, I do want to talk about Israel, Hamas and that, that catastrophe in a moment. But let's finish up.

[00:15:37] The

[00:15:38] **Stephen Bryen:** problem we have now is that. We need to talk to the Russians. Today I don't know when you'll broadcast this, but today is the 13th of November. Schultz in Germany said I'd like to talk to the Russians. I want to talk to Putin. Now, he had nothing to say, but he wants to talk to Putin.

[00:15:59] it's a, [00:16:00] you're starting to see The Danish foreign minister said, yeah, we've been talking under the table. There's movement. It's not a lot yet, but there's movement. And I think that's where we have to go.

[00:16:11] **Bill Walton:** With the

[00:16:12] **Stephen Bryen:** Russians think the only way to make a deal is with Washington.

[00:16:17] The Putin

[00:16:18] **Bill Walton:** thing seems to be all tied up in domestic politics. Going back to the 2016 election and the loathing of the people in the Biden administration of all things Trump. And Trump was supposedly Putin's captive.

Or captive. Yeah. Trump, vice versa. I don't know who was in each other's arms, but because of their loathing of Putin they refused to talk with Russia.

[00:16:42] At what point do they have to

[00:16:44] **Stephen Bryen:** They tried to kill him. Yeah. Multiple times. Yeah. Let's be honest about it. Including Prygosian. I think Prygosian was a creature became a creature of the West and made deals with Western intelligence through Budanov, who was the [00:17:00] Ukrainian chief of...

[00:17:02] **Bill Walton:** He was the Wagner group? Okay.

[00:17:05] **Stephen Bryen:** Yeah. Yes, he was. He's the one that got killed outside of Moscow and when his plane mysteriously blew up. One of those bad days, but He didn't drive the

[00:17:17] **Bill Walton:** mechanic.

[00:17:20] **Stephen Bryen:** But the Purgosian operation, it seems to me, was a Western intelligence operation. Yeah, to try and get regime, they're desperate for a regime change in Russia, which is madness in a way, because Prigozhin's an outlier, but the typical potential replacements that we know about, if someday, if Putin stepped down, or he got sick, or something happened.

[00:17:44] They're not going to be any better than Putin, and maybe worse because they're not as smart.

[00:17:51] **Bill Walton:** tHe thing that I said at the outset is that we've squandered our ability to influence events. It seems like what's happened, and you and I talked about this a year and a [00:18:00] half ago, month after month, we've continued to pursue aims which we were not able to achieve.

[00:18:07] And so we've emptied our shelves of of weaponry and ammunition, which has made us much more vulnerable in the Middle East. And I know you've Everywhere. Everywhere. Everywhere. Yeah. And China, Taiwan.

[00:18:20] **Stephen Bryen:** And let's talk about You take three aircraft carriers and send them to the Middle East, what do you got left in Asia?

[00:18:28] What do you have left in Europe?

[00:18:30] **Bill Walton:** And China already has almost as many naval ships in that area as we do.

[00:18:35] **Stephen Bryen:** So Not anymore. Not

[00:18:37] **Bill Walton:** anymore? No, they have more. Oh, they have more now. Okay. We'll see. That's why I'm not sure they're as good, but they have more, but they've got more. Okay. So let's shift.

[00:18:46] Okay. So we've got an issue. We have not figured out a resolution for in Ukraine. Let's shift to what do you think, how you see things happening? And. In in Gaza Strip and Israel and Iran and Saudi [00:19:00] Arabia. Oh my gosh, the whole crew. And now we've got China in there negotiating deals. I wouldn't count

[00:19:05] **Stephen Bryen:** China as very much of a player there.

[00:19:08] Okay. At least not yet. They don't have enough of a blue water Navy to really. Insert themselves in any way of no basis near and no, they have one on the Red Sea, but not really. We're right next to them. So if they tried anything, we squash him. No I think the situation is that the Israelis have set their minds to cleaning out Hamas.

[00:19:34] And getting rid of it and making it a non factor in terms of threats to Israel. That's what they're after. They're, they've got a pretty interesting strategy to bring this about, which is cutting Gaza in half. So there's a northern part, the southern part, and they've split them. And now they're working on Gaza City, which is the stronghold of, the main stronghold of Hamas.

[00:19:57] Not the only one, but the main one. [00:20:00] And of course, everyone's got their eyes on al Shifa hospital, which is underneath there is where the Hamas headquarters are, and we'll see what happens. But, the Hamas has no hesitation to use human shields. To operate out of schools and mosques and hospitals.

[00:20:18] They build their headquarters in the hospital, that's true. They haul missiles around. They're very difficult. That's what they do. They don't follow what we would normally think of the rules of war. The rules of war for them is you either win or lose. So they're gonna, they want to win.

[00:20:34] So they do anything. It's a horrible crimes that they do. Horrible crimes. thIs,

[00:20:39] **Bill Walton:** this administration seems to be fond of regime change now. Their idea of regime change is getting rid of Netanyahu.

[00:20:48] **Stephen Bryen:** Yeah, it's still at it. And Hillary has joined the course. Yeah. It's madness. First of all, there won't be any change in the government.

[00:20:58] in Israel until after the [00:21:00] war, for sure. Then there will be an inquiry, there has to be, uh, as to how come this happened. Because the policy that Netanyahu was following is exactly, until this disaster, is exactly the same policy that every Israeli prime minister has followed going all the way back to, I don't know when, Rabin, maybe.

[00:21:22] It's... They thought, they call it mowing the grass. The idea was if these guys become too threatening, they would mow the grass, knock them off, push them back, and carry on. That's Iron Dome, and it's a brilliant system. Brilliant system. But Iron Dome alleviated for them the problem of having to deal with Hamas.

[00:21:45] Because when they shot off all these missiles, Iron Dome would shoot them down. So everyone said, that's great, let's go back to work not worry about it. And I think that overconfidence that Iron Dome could save them [00:22:00] didn't help when the terrorists came across the border and came in by sea, came in even by gliders.

[00:22:05] And raped and killed and murdered innocent people, thousands of them, 2, 000, something like that. That's an awful thing. And wounded another few thousand. So it, it was a crime, but it was also a wake up call to the Israelis that this policy that they've long followed and supplemented with Iron Dome and things like that wasn't good enough, didn't work.

[00:22:27] Now the inquiry is going to try to find why intelligence failed. And why they were able to pull this off, because when they pulled it off, most of the reserve forces weren't there in the south. And the regular forces were mostly on leave. There was almost nobody covering the south when this happened. Yet there was a lot of intelligence that said these guys are planning.

[00:22:54] Getting ready to do something big like this, and basically they discounted it. And [00:23:00] I think that's where the inquiry will be. Now, probably after that, Netanyahu will probably have to resign. I don't think there's any doubt about it. There will be some form of a new government. So he'll,

[00:23:12] **Bill Walton:** He'll take the blame for the intelligence failure?

[00:23:16] He'll

[00:23:16] **Stephen Bryen:** have to. Yeah. Same as Golda ended up, luckily as hell, taking the blame for the Kipper War.

[00:23:25] **Bill Walton:** So what should the United States be doing now, except for calling for strategic pauses or whatever euphemism we've we've trotted out at press conferences? What should we be doing?

[00:23:36] **Stephen Bryen:** The United States has a legitimate interest in, in, in getting the hostages out because a lot of them are Americans. That's a legitimate interest. The United States has legitimate interest. In Israel being strong and secure, that's part of our interest. The United States has an interest in keeping its relations with the other Arab countries, Saudi Arabia [00:24:00] most importantly, but others too.

[00:24:02] Jordan being on the rocks at the moment. And the United States has an interest which is not fulfilling, which is to deal with Iran. Because the long hand of Iran is behind all this and everyone

[00:24:16] **Bill Walton:** knows the Iran is a mystery because talk about people hating their own regime. The regime in Iran is loathed by most of the people in the country and.

[00:24:28] And the people here, some of the state department types have shipped tens of billions of dollars to Iran. And six, there's a six billion everybody talks about, but there's 20, 30, 40 billion over the last period of time that's gone in Iran's direction. And yet that has not seemed to buy us any influence there whatsoever.

[00:24:49] **Stephen Bryen:** Because that's not their equation is different than ours. They think in terms of how they can destroy Israel, how they can take over that whole crescent of territory [00:25:00] from Iraq, Lebanon, Syria,

[00:25:03] **Bill Walton:** Israel. What do we think we're buying when we send money to Iran? I don't understand.

[00:25:07] **Stephen Bryen:** Biden. He thinks he was buying. They had, I think our government's infiltrated to be honest with you. And I think there's increasing evidence that our government's infiltrated and its policy decisions

affecting Iran are. Or twisted, really twisted. We're not following our national interest. Our national interest is not to allow Iran to conquer nearby countries.

[00:25:35] And to destabilize the Middle East because it's not in our interest, it's not in Europe's interest, it's not in the world's

[00:25:40] **Bill Walton:** interest. You look at our relationship with China and we talk, and the notion of elite capture comes up and Joe Biden has a controlled asset because of all his dealings with China and they really have his number when it comes to bank records.

[00:25:56] Emails and check deposits and that sort of [00:26:00] thing, they could take him out in a heartbeat. I hadn't thought that there was influence from Iran or other Middle Eastern countries in the State Department. I know there's been the there was some term for the people in the State Department who love the Arabs.

[00:26:14] I can't remember what it was. You believe we've been influenced by that? We know that there

[00:26:20] **Stephen Bryen:** are people in the State Department and in the Pentagon and in the White House who are. Pro Iranian. Very strongly pro Iranian. Some of them are people with Iranian names. So we have

[00:26:36] **Bill Walton:** Iranian partisans in our government.

[00:26:41] We have Palestinian partisans in our government. We have Chinese partisans in our government.

[00:26:47] **Stephen Bryen:** Yeah, they call them bear huggers.

[00:26:49] **Bill Walton:** Bear huggers. As I said, I've, it's, I've, you've been called the Yoda of the arms trade. I'm looking, I'm calling you my national security guru. [00:27:00] So where does this leave us?

[00:27:02] Where do we, where

[00:27:02] **Stephen Bryen:** do we go to be cleaned up, but it's not going to be cleaned up in this administration. That. This administration isn't going to do anything.

[00:27:11] **Bill Walton:** So for us to get control of our national security, we need a new administration, period. And we need an

[00:27:19] **Stephen Bryen:** administration. Oh, yes. Okay.

[00:27:21] We need people that have clear heads and understand that they have, there's some malevolent actors in the government and outside of the government that need to be dealt with. Okay.

[00:27:32] **Bill Walton:** I want to go overtime here. We were originally going to do 30 minutes, but I want to talk with you about China and the Chinese Communist Party and what's happening there and how you, you've been in the view that they're in trouble.

[00:27:45] They're on the ropes and that that's a bullish sign for us. And yet, when I look at events today, they don't, regardless of all the problems they've got, they seem to be acting just as aggressively, if not more so than ever.

[00:27:58] **Stephen Bryen:** Well, Biden wants to bail [00:28:00] them out. Economically, at least, and he's going to meet with Xi.

[00:28:07] And we'll see what comes out of that, but it'll probably be reading this week. Yeah. More money for China. It's crazy, isn't it? Internally, China has a whole bunch of problems. Economic ones the banking system is a mess. The healthcare system doesn't exist. It's virtually dead. Most people can't get healthcare in China.

[00:28:32] There are no pensions. It's just, you're on your own. So there's a lot of unemployment. Growing amount of unemployment. And a lot of companies, are being threatened by this made in China approach that Xi is taking. So they're moving some of their capabilities like Foxconn outside of China as quickly as they can and get away with it.

[00:28:56] The Foxconn employs a million people, more than a million people.

[00:28:59] **Bill Walton:** [00:29:00] The foreign direct investment in China dropped in negative numbers for the first time since 1998, which was I think when we started tracking. And that's always looking

[00:29:08] **Stephen Bryen:** ahead. I'm looking back, and I'm saying, who's there now, and are they going to stay, are they going to reduce their profile,

because, if you're a Western executive, you can't go to China right now, you might get arrested.

[00:29:23] That's one dimension of the problem, it's not the only one. The other problem is that there's a fight going on inside the Chinese Communist Party, between factions, there are at least three known factions, and, and the latest, the death of the former Chinese premier who mysteriously had a heart attack.

[00:29:45] How old was he, 64 or something like that? People don't believe that in China. They think they poisoned him somehow. There's a lot of strain going on and Xi is trying to consolidate his power, not only with these factions, but also [00:30:00] with the military, because he's been ripping apart the military, especially the rocket forces.

[00:30:05] and firing their leaders. So we don't know enough to be able to say how much of a threat it really is to Xi, but it must be enough for him to want to take fairly draconian measures of getting rid of officials, getting rid of military guys, uh, maybe assassinations, who knows. To make this to solidify his position.

[00:30:28] And that's what dictators do.

[00:30:32] **Bill Walton:** Instead we've got Biden going to have this meeting with Xi. I understand they're going... Xi, the great

[00:30:37] **Stephen Bryen:** humanitarian, yeah.

[00:30:38] **Bill Walton:** I'm going to, I understand they're going to meet alone. We'll have translators, obviously. But Biden one on one with Xi is a very scary thought. And he's going with tough demands like we'd like to talk with you more and we'd like you to be more open and we'd like you to care about the climate more [00:31:00] and we, we'd like you and so all the things like fentanyl and human rights abuses and massive trade crimes are going to go unmentioned.

[00:31:09] So my theory is

[00:31:10] **Stephen Bryen:** that the script is already written. In other words, this the fact that Biden's going to sit there with Xi and have his little three by five cards means nothing. He could say, he could speak in any language he chooses. The deal's made, the deal's made and they will come out with a 14

point or 18 point, 20 point, whatever is going to be summary of their conclusions, which have already been made.

[00:31:38] That'd be nice if we knew what they were, but that's, it will all be fluff, I think, because it will hide the fact that what we're trying to do at least economically is to be helpful to China. And I don't know how we can do that. We're broke. We haven't

[00:31:56] **Bill Walton:** got any money.

[00:31:57] **Stephen Bryen:** Yeah. I don't know where we're going to [00:32:00] find any cash to give the Chinese and I don't know why we'd want to give it.

[00:32:04] But I think this is already cooked, cooked deal. Xi wouldn't meet with Biden unless they had a cooked deal. He's not going to take a chance on a negative meeting. And neither is Biden. So I think it's already done.

[00:32:19] **Bill Walton:** This meeting burnishes Xi's power in China.

[00:32:23] **Stephen Bryen:** Exactly. And so that's why it's a mistake.

[00:32:25] Yeah. I don't think it's a good time to do that because, it's not clear where things are going.

[00:32:35] **Bill Walton:** I don't like, I don't like to think, I don't want, I don't like to think of a line of action as having just to hang on until the next election, but it looks like that's what I'm hearing.

[00:32:42] **Stephen Bryen:** I don't see much hope right now for any major policy shifts. Yeah. Not from the U. S., maybe from the Europeans who are getting very antsy. The Russians, no. China, no. [00:33:00] So we're going to see more of the same. And as I said, as far as Iran is concerned, it leaves them in the catbird seat when they shouldn't be.

[00:33:08] wE should be putting real pressure on China. Now, some will say we are, we've sent our fleet to the eastern Med, but that's not the Persian Gulf. We sent our fleet in there, so we're putting pressure on, we're bombing things in Iraq when these, or Syria, when these crazy people bomb our bases.

[00:33:27] The problem is, when the Houthis launching ballistic missiles at Israel, there's two now, and cruise missiles, I don't know how many, but probably six or eight, um, that's Iranian. So Iran is making war on our, uh,

client, our country. ouR country, our ally, um, they're making war on our ally and we're saying nothing.

[00:33:55] There's not been a single complaint from the White House or from the State [00:34:00] Department or from the Pentagon about what the Houthis are doing and what Iranians are doing, helping the Houthis do it. Not a word. Now that's not diffusing the crisis, that's deepening the crisis. So I think that something needs to change.

[00:34:14] That can be changed relatively quickly without great difficulty. And it would send a good, strong message to the Chinese and to the Russians and anybody else. If you mess with us, we'll mess with you. That's all.

[00:34:29] **Bill Walton:** oN that note Steve and I, we've got to wrap up. I I,

[00:34:33] **Stephen Bryen:** I guess I could make you happier, but...

[00:34:35] I don't think you know, you almost never do. I

[00:34:40] **Bill Walton:** asked myself, I really want to, I really want to learn about what's really going on. I do, even if the moment is sometimes

[00:34:48] **Stephen Bryen:** it's better just to watch football. Yeah.

[00:34:52] **Bill Walton:** aNyway, thanks again, Dr. Stephen Bryen, who's Center for Security Policy and 50 years experience in the national [00:35:00] security and national defense business and as always filled with wisdom.

[00:35:03] And next time we're going to come back with a raise of hope, I hope, and we'll follow events and we'll talk, I'm sure we'll be talking in the next few months. So Stephen, thanks again. And we'll talk. Thanks for having me. Thanks again. Yeah, great. So this has been the Bill Walton Show. I'm Bill Walton and I hope you've enjoyed this.

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[00:35:41] So good talking with you. Thanks.