

Ryan Morfin: Welcome to Non-Beta Alpha, I'm Ryan Morfin. On today's episode, we'll be interviewing General Stanley McChrystal, retired four-star general who led coalition forces in Afghanistan, and was a commanding officer of the Joint Special Operations Command. Today he's going to talk to us about leadership, he'll talk to us about the future of the U.S. China relationship, and he'll talk to us about the 2020 election. This is Non-Beta Alpha.

Speaker 2: I guess I didn't know. I guess I didn't know.

Ryan Morfin: General Stanley McChrystal, welcome to the show.

Stanley McChrys...: Thanks for having me, Ryan.

Ryan Morfin: Well, we appreciate you joining us today to talk a little bit about leadership, a little bit about geopolitical risks we have as a country and a little bit about maybe the 2020 election. Why don't we start with leadership first, you've talked about this inverted experience that potential leaders have today and how they may need to be more transparent about what they do, and do not know. Maybe you can talk a little bit about that in your experience about how that builds trust across the organization from the bottom up.

Stanley McChrys...: Absolutely. An interesting dynamic happens when you have rapid change in technology or anything to do with society because ... leader, typically we want technical competence, sometimes mastery, and we also want experience, the intuition that grows from the fact that you've seen things before. What we have when we have rapid change though, is the expertise, and the mastery is often lacking because the more senior person, the one who's got experience that is experienced in life, but it's not specific experience in the technology because they typically have not been involved in that at the user level. They may be aware of it, they may have introduced it in their organization, but they didn't use that particular equipment or they didn't use the tactics and processes around that.

So, at first it seems very uncomfortable for the senior leader because you feel as though you're telling people to do things without the requisite expertise, to really tell them how to do it, but it's actually a healthy dynamic because the person with experience and wisdom that comes from time is still a good person to lead the organization. But the humility that comes from recognizing the fact that you're not the expert in everything, because you're never the expert in everything in an organization, although you may think you are. The humanity that comes from that gives a new rule to junior people, it gives them a new stature, they are the experts in something, they get to teach the boss about something. It creates a very healthy dynamic, and it requires information to flow up if the senior people are interested and have an appetite for that. That makes everything a bit stronger in my view.

Ryan Morfin:

Especially today's world where technology and social media and video contents are all changing, I think people are digesting information differently. Especially as we're in this new environment with coronavirus where people can't travel for business, and so I think it's going to be critical for business owners to find new ways to communicate with their clients. Can you talk a little bit about connectivity? I mean, given that we're all now living in purchasing products in a digital environment, what does connectivity mean today in today's world and what do leaders need to think about as they think about how they network going forward?

Stanley McChrys...:

Yeah, this is something I've given a lot of thought because it's very interesting. I took part in a Zoom hosted birthday celebration for a young man who was at Yale University when I started teaching and then became an early intern at McChrystal Group and then worked for us for several years before, now he's got his own startup company. We took part in that, and afterward he wrote my wife and I note of thanks, and he said that, "You all, he was talking about us, have this extraordinary network of people who think they have a close relationship to you, and in fact, they do."

He was comparing that to people who have a big Rolodex and think that they've got this network of people that they're close to, but reality, those connections are pretty superficial, and he was being overly kind to us. But it made me think about what a real network, a person's network or a person's connections are, because many of us have very loose ties to a lot of people, we've met them, we could call them, we have false bonhomie when we were at an event, we hug him and say how great it is to see him, but it doesn't go to the level of real ties or passion, real information that matters, and it doesn't go to relationships that have to send you to give you deep trust.

I got a friend of mine who has what he calls the 495 Club, and he's referring to the beltway around Washington D.C. He says, "There are a group of people, if they call me at 2:00 in the morning and ask me to go stand on the shoulder of 495 in golf shoes and in a loincloth, and a light coat of oil, I will do it." Now, then he says, "It's a small group, but the reality is there are some people in whom I trust and my relationship is so strong, I won't question anything they ask me to do."

So, now I think particularly as we've gone to work from home, it's time for all of us to think about what our connections really are. We say, "Okay, we've got our family members that are close and they're automatic." And they may or may not be really close, you may not talk to them very much, you may love them but who is it we actually interact with? Who can we go to when we need to make something happen? Who comes to us when they need real information, advice or something to happen? I think that the fact that we are going to the somewhat awkward digital tools that we've got in organizations are going to be very interesting ways for us to measure that and to measure how influential someone in an organization is, we've got Microsoft Workplace Analytics and

other tools where we can actually measure some of that. Then we've got our own experience with that.

So, I think we're going to look at what real networks are, because again, real networks are not just a physical technological ability to connect, it is the fact that we do connect. When a network is actually working, when it's actually creating energy, the network itself has a power, all its own. The fact that suddenly every part of that network leverages some other part of that network or all of that network at times, giving them much greater influence, power, knowledge, and all those things. So, I think we are going to find increasingly creating those networks, maintaining them, understanding them, is going to be just as essential.

Ryan Morfin: Well, and you really did a great job especially JSOC and then running ISAF, understanding that we were fighting a different type of war and we needed a different type of architecture for management and creating a networked organization. Are other militaries, maybe Russia or China, are they focused on doing similar types of decentralized empowerment or is that something that's unique because of the war on terrorism and our allies have figured this out? Is this a competitive advantage as well?

Stanley McChryst...: Well, it's only a competitive advantage to the extent to which we use it, because I think military is particularly because there's a geo-strategic importance to everything that a military force does, even a small force can create quite an incident or an issue in the world. There's this constant tendency to want to centralize things, and with the technology now, there's a constant desire to pull it higher and higher, in the fight on terrorism, there was this constant pull to pull decisions on strikes into the White House. And I understood that because some of them were extraordinarily sensitive, but at the same time, nobody in the White House is going to understand that operation well enough to make a decision on the operational side of it.

What they have to do is try to make a judgment of one, is the operational argument convincing, and can they put it against the context of the geo-strategic and political backdrop? I think that's happening, that tension is in every country, particularly autocratic countries. So, I don't think we'll find that our major force are more decentralized and therefore faster than we are at that thing. So it could be a competitive advantage, but it's not a competitive advantage unless we nurture it. Because as I say, it's not in my view, the natural state of things, it has to be forced and understood to be a key attribute we're looking for.

Ryan Morfin: How do you think the future warfare is going to evolve? It's going to be more urban, more operational door to door or is it going to go back to industrial revolution type of moving large amounts of people and equipment across different land masses? I mean, do you think it's changed permanently or is a future in the 21st century where we'll go back to the 20th century mindset of Cold War strategy.

Stanley McChryst...

Yeah. That's the multi trillion dollar question. Here's what I'd say, one, right now we don't have a clue. The reason I say we don't have a clue with all those, there's been conflict in the last few years and there's been a huge conflict. So we really don't have any idea of what the impact of truly all out cyber warfare would be, the potential use of weapons of mass destruction of all kinds by either potentially nation states, but more likely groups that would be either in the conflict or adjacent to it and want to affect it in one way or another, the effect of hypervelocity weapons.

This typically happens when you have enough period between major wars, people want to develop new technology and people have theories of how that would work. Then when you get in the war, it's always a bit different, and right now, I don't think we have very clear view at all of how much it will be, and then how much the information side, which is influencing your population and other populations around the world is going to play. So I hate to dodge the question that way, but it's a little bit of blind man's buff. We've got to be boxer stance to be prepared to go in the direction that the war goes.

The one thing I would say is, for the United States, because everybody's watching us and we spend such a disproportionate amount of money on defense. The next war we're in will not be the war we're prepared for. And you say, "Well, wow, we do all this effort to prepare for it." That's because any enemy we face will, I think, be rational, the last person to fight our kind of war, Saddam Hussein did it in 1990, when he put his army out in the desert and he led the most advanced army coalition in the world, literally spend six months getting ready in front of a golf ball on a tee and then pound them. No one else is that stupid. So, what they will do is they will look and see what kind of war are we prepared for? What have we built out? What have we trained for? What is our inclination? And then they will fight a different kind of war.

I mean, it's just rational, and if they're intelligent, like Al Qaeda was, Al Qaeda basically fought judo against the United States. Osama bin Laden stated strategy was to strike the United States in a way that would inflame us, we would react and in so doing, we would overreact and we would go into the Arab world and we would irritate everyone in the Arab world, we would create resentment and we would bankrupt ourselves in the process. And he got it pretty damn close to right. So, I think we need to think in those terms that what rational opponents are likely to do, and then assume that we can't by definition, therefore have a perfect preparation.

Ryan Morfin:

Yeah [inaudible 00:13:26] counterinsurgency war, and going back to where things are evolving today, I mean, hyper war with hypersonic missiles and AI driven weapons systems, do you think that the pace of decisions is going to evolve to a position where it's going to be too fast for a chain of command to have to take control of the situation? Is it going to be a domino effect in the future?

Stanley McChryst...: Yeah, actually I do Ryan. We always say that we'll never put machines in the lethal loop. He will never let machines make the decision to do lethal operations. We go back to some of the older movies like Fail Safe, with a failure of a computer system, almost produces nuclear war, and it does produce nuclear tragedy. But if a hypervelocity missile is coming at U.S. navy warship, there is not going to be time to have a human in the loop on the defense mechanism, there are American weapons systems that being developed some pretty good ones that can reach out pretty far and shoot and even shoot multiple shots to try to engage them. But it's going to have to be driven by a machine, because the only way it can take in the information, make the decision to fire, do the calculations and execute is going to be faster than having a human in the loop.

That's disturbing, from the standpoint of one, we hate not being in the loop, and two, if someone was able to bait or spook our system and they could get us to be shooting when we didn't want to, then you get back to the Fail Safe scenario where you suddenly end up in this fight that you really didn't want, and you might've even caused it unintentionally.

Ryan Morfin: Well, you bring up a great point. Having a cyber attack spook our systems and then kicking off that chain of events that we may not want to happen. At what point in your mindset from a cyber doctrine does some hacker or organized crime or a nation state crossover to a point where they generate actual attack or counter attack in the physical dimension?

Stanley McChryst...: Yeah, Ryan, this is something we haven't figured doctrine for, because if you go back 30 or 40 years, if a nation struck the United States or any nation, and they did economic damage and whatnot, that would be physical, and it would be determined to be an act of war and it would generate a response. However, if somebody attacks the United States and hits SCADA systems for power or for banking or for things like that, they could do massively more damage to us, and yet it's in that gray area. We're not a 110% sure, we think that's an act of war, that's just some espionage slash screwing with your enemy. I would argue that what happened in the 2016 election, there's clearly enough data to show that people trying to influence the American people, not change voting machines, but set it up enough misinformation to affect the election.

I think that runs right on the edge of attacking the sovereignty of the United States and the integrity of what's important to a democracy, which is the electoral process. Yet we haven't talked about bombing anybody because it's hard to know, we can know it is coming from Russia or whatever, but is it the Russian state or is it groups inside it? It's because that deniability, that ability to cloak it put just enough doubt on it is there, that makes it even more dangerous than the normal?

Ryan Morfin: Now, that's a great point. Not knowing attribution makes it so difficult to put fingerprints on an attack. Well, one question for you, one thing that's changed over the last few years is that, there's been a move towards U.S. space

command, and as a new domain space, what are your thoughts on how it was organized and rolled out, and what are your thoughts about the future of a new domain opening up?

Stanley McChrys...: Yeah. I'm not hand over either way, that the thing we have to remember is what the navy does on the seas, what the air force does in the air, what the army does on the ground, are not isolated things, as you know from your experience. And you say, "Well, space, that's another domain, so we're going to have a separate force to go fight up in space." On the one hand, you have the ability to do better training, professional development focus, create expertise in that space force, and you have budgeting capability for Congress to determine its relative importance by focusing resources at it. But if you create silos in the process, like we've always struggled with our military, if we create silos that wrestle against each other, then we've actually made ourselves weaker because we've created gaps and seams.

Space is important because it integrates with all the other parts of how we might fight. So, the same with the others, we spent a tremendous effort in the 80s trying to increase the joint nature of United States military operations. Then in Iraq and Afghanistan, we struggled with some success and a lot of failure at creating that whole of nation gap across outside of military, including other parts of the government. Anything that pulls away on that and even gives the impression that we've got separate entities that are going to be able to succeed or fail alone and create cultures that are harder to integrate would be bad. Now that doesn't have to happen, but that's the caution I throw out.

Ryan Morfin: That's a good point. You're bringing up budgeting of armed forces. So you were the commander of ISAF in Afghanistan and coalition NATO countries, maybe some leadership tips, running a large organization cross-culturally, any takeaways because you grew up in the military and obviously you had force relationships, but now as the ISAF commander, you had to command generals from other countries, any takeaways from that?

Stanley McChrys...: Sure. I had been for the previous, I'd been on the Joint staff before, so I had some experience with it, but then I was five years in special operations. So when I took ISAF, first time I was formerly in a NATO command and a lot of people warned me and they said, "Well, you're not going to like [inaudible 00:20:29] coalition, you're going to like NATO because nobody wants to work, nobody wants to fight, et cetera, et cetera. That really wasn't what I found, what I found, we had 46 nations in the coalition, NATO nations and obviously many others. They generally wanted to contribute to the cause as best they could.

Now, what I had to understand and I try to communicate to people is, first, many of those countries have completely different capabilities in terms of equipment, training and whatnot. So you can't put them next to American units, we are incredibly well funded, we've been at war show many times since World War II, there's a lot of operational experience. That's not true of many of the partners we had, doesn't make them bad people, it's something you have to

understand. People used to say, "Well, the only people fighting in Afghanistan are Americans." Because we had the biggest force, but actually the per capita casualty rates, the highest was Estonia. And you say, "I didn't even know Estonians were there." Yeah, they were there and they were fighting and they were dying.

So, it was important to remind people also the level of experience ... we had a German force that was in the North of Afghanistan and great people. They got in a fire fight one day and lost four guys, and we sent American medevac in to get them under fire, and the Germans were deeply appreciative because the medevac went in and got shot up in the process, but didn't back off and pulled their comrades out. But I went up to see the company, the Germany company who lost these four soldiers that afternoon, and they were deeply impacted by it. Now, losing four comrades is always impactful, but they were deeply impacted. Then as we talked through it, I learned that this was the first four German soldiers killed in combat since World War II.

So none of these soldiers had experienced that, none of their fathers had experienced that, maybe their grandfathers had. Then you go now, wait a minute, of course. If you are willing to have some empathy for your partners, don't start by saying, they're suck because they're not me. You say they've got different frame of reference, different political limitations. We had military units in Afghanistan led by Lieutenant Colonel who would get called by the president or prime minister of their country about once a week. Imagine the pressure of that. So, when I put all of that into context, then suddenly I go, the first thing is if you're trying to build coalition, build a coalition, treat people like you want to be treated, develop empathy, try to make them fit. Don't start with the idea that everybody's got to be the same because we want to be the same, it's just not, at the end it's a fool's errand.

Ryan Morfin: Well, that's, I think, great advice for anybody who's doing a JV or working on industry wide project as well. So, one other question that I think is going to be a hot topic going forward, is the just geopolitically, is the Arctic, and there's been a lot of things moving in the last two years. I don't think the media has really been paying attention, Russian Special Forces, just did an exercise over the Arctic, and there's a lot of submarines hanging around there. What are your thoughts about the geopolitical importance of that?

Stanley McChrys...: Well, it's funny, most people of my age, think of the Arctic one way, but it ain't that way anymore. Global warming has changed it, there is navigability in the Arctic so that it is a different location, has different geopolitical import. Also, there's technological ability to operate there in a way that we couldn't before. We used to think of the Arctic as this frozen place and Soviet bombers and missiles would fly over the Arctic but other than that, it was not that important. I think it's now a hugely important, and so I think we need to step back and say, "All right, what parts of the world in terms of resourcing, in terms of navigation, transportation are going to matter?" We can't seed any of these to anybody.

I'm not saying the United States has to go and rule an area, but we can't give away freedom of access or movement or trade or interaction with local nations anywhere. We can't give it away under threat of force, and we shouldn't give it away simply because we're looking at the other way and the Chinese are investing in Africa and South America, that sort of thing. It's not a global chess game that has to be a war, but it is a global competition. Think what large corporations you've got to do, and we have got to, in the United States in my opinion, get a much more coherent economic manufacturing policy that underwrites that because our competitors are doing that.

Ryan Morfin: Well, you bring up ... I wasn't going to go there, but you brought up a good point about global competition and Africa. I mean, AFRICOM stood up, I don't know, almost a decade ago, but I probably ... it's right to assume there's more deployments into Africa. It's becoming more competitive environment. What are your thoughts about Africa in the next 20 to 50 years as either a place for conflict or a place for economic opportunity?

Stanley McChryst...: Yeah, I think it's both. I looked at projections for Nigeria, I think they're going to have 750 million people at 2050. If the cost of the price of oil continues to stay low, and I think there's a natural cap on the price of oil now, simply because of technology to get it has improved so much. So a place like Nigeria has got an existential question front of it. How do you run that kind of country with an oil based economy and limits with that many people? That applies to across, particularly Southern Sahara. I think Africa has got huge potential, it's got a population that is getting increasingly educated, getting increasingly focused. They had decades and decades of pretty weak governance. Some of that is improving pretty significantly, so that will change the dynamic, but they still got a ton of challenges.

Some of the challenges are things like terrorism and particularly up near the Sahara Mali and things like that. These have to be dealt with, but those, I don't think are existential threats. Boko Haram, again, they're problems, but they really are symptoms of larger problems of governance and economics. I worry more about a couple of potential. I think COVID-19 could hit Africa south of Sahara incredibly hard. I think that if we have a depression like economic downturn and there's potential if that's the way this is going to play out, it will hit up developed companies hard, it will hit those with less even harder, and so there will be the potential to have all kinds of famine and challenges and the unrest that will come with that. Then you've got literally predatory actions by nations like China in there.

Now, I'm not saying that China is irrational, I actually think they're fairly strategic. They have a view that you need to be engaged around the world because it's a long term game. You've got to do the investments, you've got to build relationships. They're better at parts of that than other parts of that. But we are still in the postcolonial era hangover. So there's still resentment to parts of the West for the perception of that. But we have got to get off in my opinion, we've got to get off the fence and we've got to get in these areas and we've got



to understand that we need a deep relationship, we need influence, we need trade, we need all of those things over time because you can't afford not to be there.

Ryan Morfin:

Yeah. Now, it's one of the fastest growing parts of the world and very gifted for natural resources, so I do think it's going to be a center of influence in the next 50 years. Going back to something you just mentioned though, with COVID in Africa. I mean, someone, I was talking to a doctor, I said, "Look, it could be worse given the current situation." He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Well, this could be Ebola everywhere." Then he's like, "Okay, you're right, this could be worse." So, as people are moving into the urbanization in Africa, the potential for more dangerous types of viruses to go global, I mean, we saw how fast it's got out of Wuhan and all over the world. How do you think the government's preparedness is going to have to change for pandemic posture going forward?

Stanley McChryst...

Yeah, I think every government and I'm talking about local as well, are going to have to be much more wired to responding to threats, not just the pandemic but wider threats that are viral in nature [inaudible 00:30:11] have to share information to make decision making. There's a great quote by Italian diplomat or not diplomat, bureaucrat, referring to the challenge that Northern Italy had, and he said, "The virus was faster than our bureaucracy." So I think the first thing we have to change is how we respond decision-making and coordination wise, get any emerging threats, and that's economic threat that's pandemic and whatnot.

The second thing is we have to not think about it as a local problem. Not a local problem where we are and not a local problem where the pandemic emerges from or eventually goes to. Something like a pandemic and actually in an economic depression around the world, there's no place that doesn't matter to every other place. If people are dying in droves in Africa, there is going to be an attempted migration, Europe would feel first, but it would be painful like we saw a few years ago, there would be movement of infected people, there would be beyond the humanitarian crisis, there would be a stoppage of supply chain of critical resources. There would be all kinds of things that impact everybody. So, nobody can afford to say, "Well, it doesn't matter that much because it's happening over there."

Also, for a virus like COVID-19, you're never defeated anywhere until you're defeated everywhere, because it comes back unless you have a vaccine, in which case you can protect populations, but the reality is as long as populations have vulnerability, as long as the embers exist anywhere like polio, it can show up and it can become deadly. I think we need to start thinking more globally about it. We need to start thinking about how do you deal with this kind of problem on a global basis. I think that it's true of our economic challenges as well, and I don't think international structures are strong enough to deal with those as effectively as they're going to have to be going forward.

Ryan Morfin:

It's a great quote by the Italian politician. I wrote that one down. It's funny, it's true unfortunately. So moving over to China though, so you said they're very strategic and they're good at some things and not as well poised at others, but they have figured out this concept of economic warfare, in my opinion, there's military and civil fusion. And right now, I mean, the state of play, I'd love to hear your perspective, is the defense industrial complex healthy in this country? Does it need to evolve? What does it need to evolve to? How do we, as Americans start to wrap our minds around what we're dealing with in terms of a competitor that is hyper focused on certain results, which would put us in the backseat of the car, if you will?

Stanley McChryst...

Yeah. Now, Ryan it's great point. I'm going to expand the definition of military industrial complex to include a lot more things than most people think. We tend to think of building weapons or something like that. It's really our industrial capacity to feed ourselves, to build what we needed and all the different parts of it. I think that as we try to allow capitalism to do what capitalism wants to do, which is to produce the most efficient turn of resources, to produce the best outcome, and as we got global in many corporations, people start making decisions for rational capitalist regions.

They have something built in China because it's a little bit less expensive and the supply chain can bring it somewhere, but that is not taking into account the reality that the supply chain can be interrupted or you might be giving away technology to another nation that then is going to become much more critical. Because most of our corporations and even some privately held ones, take an extremely short term view, quarterly or annually, it makes us very, very vulnerable. So, China takes a longer term view, they're still young coming out of the communist era. They take a much longer term view, they've got an ability to do that because they're essentially like a privately held company. You've got an autocratic leadership that can drive it, but it gives them the ability to push.

Now, we always argued that communism and socialism didn't work because centralized economies weren't efficient enough, not responsive enough, and there's some truth to that. They can't be as nimbly opportunistic at the lower level, and we need to try to keep that, but at the same time, we need a much stronger American understanding of what it is we're trying to do, a military industrial policy that says, "Okay, we can't have a supply chain for penicillin entirely dependent upon China as it is right now. We can't stand that, and therefore we've got to force the shaping and in the near term, sometimes that costs money, sometimes that makes things slightly less competitive. Sometimes you are subsidizing certain industries. "Okay, so what?"

Our military, I mean, our civilian aviation industry got a huge boost because World War II we built so many military aircraft, and then during the Cold War, we did, that it became this machine that could also develop and produce commercial aircraft very well. So, I think we're going to have to get a much more coherent and sometimes more controlling national policy.

Ryan Morfin: Yeah. Now I think we're going to need a new game plan or a new playbook to defeat communism in the 21st century, because they've adapted, right? Like a virus, they've brought in some parts of capitalism and fused it with their old system, and we've got a new model to compete with. Would you say that we've entered into a new period of like Cold War 2.0 with China from a technological standpoint? I mean, where does that go? How do we adapt different type of [inaudible 00:36:44]

Stanley McChryst...: Yeah, I think we have, it's probably more, we use Cold War, it's probably more like the multi-polar competition of the 19th century among the big European powers, in those days they were fighting for empires trying to build those up an economic power. I think it's closer to that, but it's absolutely competition, it is not war if we consider that physical, but it's going to be very aggressive competition. I think that we need to understand it that way. I think it's China, I think it's Russia, but on any given day, one of our ... someone who we might consider more of an ally, might find in their interest not to be on that side and we need to be open to that.

Ryan Morfin: I'm just curious, have you read or are you familiar with that book that the PLA put out called Unrestricted Warfare? Could you maybe talk a little bit about that and what the military's view is to ... I mean, when you guys picked that up and you're like, "Well, that's a playbook that we can't abide by."

Stanley McChryst...: Well, Unrestricted Warfare basically admits that when you're in a war, you're going to do everything you can, and it's going to use every part of national capacity to do that. So you look at economic warfare, you look at cyber warfare and you put all of that in there. We have heretofore such that warfare follows rules of war, and we try to operate in a certain way, but the competition hasn't, the competition in the last 20, 30 years to information warfare, economic challenges and all. If you amp that up, which I think there's every likelihood that it will be amped up, you get closer that we're on restricted warfares.

The other thing that jumps out from that book, if you read it, is the confidence within the Chinese military professionals, that given a few years they can take on the United States easily. If we look at what they've done on just basic things, they've already raised using existing weapons. They've already raised the stakes so that the American fleet can't go off and contain China like we once did. We could get off the coast and we could say, "Do the wrong thing and we will strike you." They now can strike back to the point where it's not a realistic possibility. Now, they can't reach out as far as they might because we're there and we've got allies in the region, but they are pushing all the time.

So, I think we've got to understand, they've got a lot more confidence about the future than we probably ascribe. It is hard for us to get out of our minds, was it early 1972 when President Nixon or 71, when he went to China, we're still locked in thinking that they're that plus a bit more and they are miles different from that.

Ryan Morfin: Well, and it's interesting because to tie it back to your NATO comment about the Germans, I mean, I know the Chinese have been deploying assets, like deep water Naval bases in Pakistan and Djibouti and places like that, horn of Africa, but they really haven't had a PLA in a land war or a peacekeeping mission that they've lost troops and so is going to be a bit of ... the confidence is going to get shattered a little bit once they get punched in the face or I mean, is it a hubris you think or it is a reason for us to really buy into the fact that they're taking this egocentric approach?

Stanley McChrys...: Yeah. I know for a long time America ... and in the American military, we convinced ourselves that was the case. You remember when the Chinese went into Vietnam, 1979 and they got a bloody nose from the Vietnamese and we looked and we said, "Look, the Chinese, they got a lot of people and they talk a lot, but they haven't been in combat like we have, so the difference in experience." It goes back to what we said earlier in the conversation. I think the future wars can be so different from anything we fought, even in the last 15 years, that that relative experience isn't going to have the same value, because we're going to be in such a different kind of conflict. So, if we make ourselves feel better because of that, I think we are doing so at great risk.

Ryan Morfin: Yeah, and I'm worried, the conflict that they want to have with us, isn't really a military one, it's more economic and information option, we haven't woken up to the fact that we're in it. But you mentioned something about the election earlier and I'd love to maybe tie it back to that. So, in today's world misinformation, fake news, information operations from competitors coming in to try to cause havoc or chaos, Europe just made a comment and sanctioned China for fake news about the coronavirus. How real is that? Is it happening in the U.S. and how do we combat that as a country?

Stanley McChrys...: Oh, it's incredibly real, it's incredibly dangerous. It's dangerous on many levels, it's dangerous because people can reach in and do that. But also it's dangerous because we still don't have a population that is experienced enough in this, none of us are, to be able to parse that out, to be able to really see it for what it is and understand when an influence operation is affecting us, because they're at all of us, now in marketing for things like this. I think that this is so much more dangerous than we give it credit for, that we need that to have a stop, everybody have a time of reflection nationally and decide what we're going to do about it because the people who want to influence make it in the interest of certain people to leverage it.

If you are an opposition party that wants something and you get this influence operation that is going to produce greater political power for you, then, okay, you're good with that. That can be from any part of the spectrum. The problem is once you corrupt the process and it's always been challenged, democracy is challenged with that kind of thing. But once you corrupt the process, you're not sure where it's going. I think that we're in that danger right now.

Ryan Morfin:

Yeah, no doubt. It's unusual timing for this virus to be coming out right after a trade war, arm wrestling, right? During an important election year to come out of Wuhan China, it's just very suspect timing, but what are some of your thoughts about what are going to be the key issues for this upcoming presidential election of 2020?

Stanley McChrys...:

Yeah, I think in the United States, this is just a ... I'm not a political guy, just my guess. The first thing is, because we're so polarized at a national level, there's just this hard wiring of certain parts of the population to vote left or right, and it's going to be much more visceral and emotional than logical. So I don't think there's going to be a big case made to a big group of people in the center who are then going to make a thoughtful decision. I think most people have seen that and said, "Well, I feel this way or I feel that way." I don't think that's good, because the idea of a democracy should be opposing side making an argument, and whoever makes the best argument wins. I think it's much more emotional and almost tribal right now, and that's of course dangerous.

I think the things that are going to hit most people biggest will be, one, there's this tribal sense that certain parts of the population have been getting screwed by other parts for a long time, and again, it's both sides. There are people on the left and right, who think they'd been getting a bad deal for longer than they should, and so they're going to be fighting for those kinds of things. I think the economy is going to be a much bigger deal than some people might realize, we've had 30 million people put out of work, we are going to be to Depression-era, unemployment in probably the next time they produce statistics. We all can say that, and we can go, "Yeah, Depression-era and unemployment. Whoa, we didn't live through the Depression."

We don't understand what happens when 20 to 25% of America that doesn't have a job, and therefore probably doesn't feel tethered to the existence of the American political system, and the economic system. Why would you want the system as it is to continue along if you're in a place where you don't have a job and it doesn't look like you're going to get one, why wouldn't you want radical change of any kind? So the fact that we say, "Well, we have great social cohesion in America, because we all believe in the American dream." That's assuming people think that they've got some part of the American dream available to them. Once you think you don't then I think that part of the population are free agents. That's going to be a big deal on this election. Now, the question is how people respond to it.

Typically, if the election is bad, the incumbent is punished, and voted out of office. I'm not sure if that's an automatic this time, it could be that the country's in a bad place. So a very simple argument resonates, the argument that you're getting screwed, support me because I'll fix that, that becomes much more attractive to all of us in a time of great turmoil. So, I think that is a potential to make the original part of it, the idea that just because the economy's down, you're going to vote for the other party, at least question.

Ryan Morfin: That's a great answer and a great conversation for the country to be having, I'm hoping the sound byte circus of the media doesn't take it into strange parts when we should be really having really important conversations about economic future. Have you ever thought about throwing your hat in the ring and maybe running either for president or some higher office?

Stanley McChrys...: Yeah. Ryan, you're kind to ask. Like probably half the population in America, I had people come to me and talk to me and say, "Yeah, you should do this." It's funny, my wife Annie, we've been married 43 years and I said, "What do you think of that?" She goes, "No." I said, "No to what?" She said, "No, ain't happening." And I said, "Well, what if it's for the good of the nation?" She goes, "Hey, it wouldn't be for the good of you." Then I asked her, "What's the problem? Don't you think I'd be a good president?" And she goes, "Oh yeah, you'd be a great president, you'd be a terrible candidate." I said, "Okay, fair point, I'm probably better to do whatever I can from my vantage point."

Ryan Morfin: General, I think we're going to see a new generation of archetype, because it's going to hopefully be more executive leadership from the military because the military has got such a high trust factor with general population. I think it's going to be probably entrepreneurs, Mark Cuban just came out and said, he's going to probably run in 2024. I'll leave you with maybe one or two final quick questions. What books are you reading right now? What of interest from your strategic mindset?

Stanley McChrys...: Yeah. I'm bifurcated, I love to read history. When I want to relax, I read biographies, I'm reading a great, like 800 page book on Charles de Gaulle, which is an awful lot about Charles de Gaulle, that will be more pages than you need, but I'm also writing a book on risk right now with a couple of people. So I have been reading Radical Uncertainty and a number of other books, Joel Peterson's new book, Entrepreneurial Leadership, and some others, because I try to keep forcing my mind into what is changing in the world, just like our conversation. If I read just history, I start to think of 1945, and that's good, it's relaxing, but I really try to push myself with those newer books as well.

Ryan Morfin: The final question for you would be, what is your view of what's going to happen in America in the next three to five years? What are some silver linings about America that you are excited about?

Stanley McChrys...: Yeah, it's interesting because I'm actually optimistic. I know in the conversation, I point out these things. The Depression was pretty horrible, but when we went into the Second World War, we were already a better nation than we had been in 1929. What I mean by that is America had gone through this tempering process and had done the new deal, and a lot of people had gone to CCC camps and done things. So, America was better, and then we went to World War II and we came out stronger, even though 400,000 Americans lost their lives in the effort, because we had bound together. I think what's going to happen in the United States right now, this is just my guess [inaudible 00:51:10] that we've

gone through the first phase in this crisis and we all go, "Wow, it's been bad, but we seem to be getting through it."

Then it's going to be like Hurricane Katrina, that the hurricane was bad but the rising waters were going to do the damage, so that's going to be the economic impact. So, we are going to have an economic tsunami that is going to happen and a lot of things, on the bad side, a lot of people are going to lose jobs, a lot of companies will fail. But the good thing is that, one, we will come out of it, two, it's going to force a lot of individuals and companies to overcome inertia to make some changes that they need to show it will, it will be a little bit Darwinistic or maybe a lot Darwinistic, but it will pull and push things forward.

Then the last thing is, because this was a equal opportunity pandemic, or has been, I mean, It will hit anybody, it's old people more than young, but still it'll hit anybody and devastate areas. Maybe it'll remind us that we are a society together, and I think that'll happen. I think we are going to be reminded that we succeed or we fail as a group, and it's not all about just getting what it is for me, it's about us getting what really matters, and part of what really matters is having a society we want to live in, where other people have enough.

So I think there's every likelihood we're going to go back to some basic American values, we're going to revisit those and say, "That was what was really important." I don't know about most of the people who hear this, but I've now spent five or six weeks at home, I live next door to my son and daughter-in-law, so my three granddaughters are in my house every day. Suddenly I realized that's much more important in many ways, and the close friends I have that I stay connected with, that's much more important than ... I might've said they were before, but I'm reminded they are now. And nationally, I think that's where we're going to go.

Ryan Morfin: Now, I think that's right. Maybe this curse is a blessing because I don't know what other strategies we have as a country to get past this partisan moment. But that might be it, as going through this pandemic will bring us closer together. Well, General McChrystal, thank you so much sir for being on the show, we appreciate your thoughtfulness, your leadership, your book Team of Teams is required reading at my company and I appreciate your intellectual framework and your leadership. Thank you, sir.

Stanley McChryst...: Well, I really appreciate it, Ryan, and thanks so much and have a great weekend.

Ryan Morfin: You too sir. Thank you. Thank you for watching Non-Beta Alpha, and before we go, please remember to subscribe and leave us a review on Apple podcasts and our YouTube channel. This is Non-Beta Alpha. Now, you know.

Speaker 2: [inaudible 00:54:16]

Speaker 4:

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