National Democratic Institute Holds Virtual Discussion With Sen. Warner

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SPEAKERS:

 NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE PRESIDENT DEREK MITCHELL

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE CHAIRWOMAN MADELEINE ALBRIGHT

SEN. MARK WARNER (D-VA.)

[*]MITCHELL: All right, we'll give it about a minute or so as we allow participants to join. So I think about one minute we can start the session. So welcome everyone, as you are able to patch in.

Okay, let's begin. Good morning everybody and welcome to NDI digital. My name is Derek Mitchell, president of NDI. Welcome to our audience in the United States and around the world, including members of the global NDI team, representing our work in over 70 countries. I want to thank you all for joining us for a quite timely and important conversation today on Democracy, Technology and China: U.S. Strategy for Innovation in the 21st Century, featuring Senator Mark Warner of Virginia. I thank you, senator, for this opportunity for NDI. I'd like to send a particular shout out to your staff with whom we at NDI have worked very closely to make this event happen.

And, of course, a good morning to NDI's chairman, the one and only Madeleine Albright, to whom I will turn in a moment.

Yesterday, marked International Democracy Day. I don't know how many of you out there celebrated or even aware of that but I'm sure many of you are aware that democracy is under some stress right now. Authoritarian states have sought to take advantage of dissatisfaction in many struggling democracies to promote their alternative governance model, ignoring the glaring problems of their own systems, which they are careful to hide from not only international eyes but their own people.

These authoritarian states and their allies thus consider new digital technologies and platforms as less an opportunity for free speech and individual empowerment than a way to survey, subvert, and control others to expand their power and ultimately seek to shape a world according to their own illiberal self-interest.

As we become a more digital world, therefore, we are entering even more dangerous period for democracy, one that requires careful consideration and united effort among free peoples worldwide. That is why in June, Secretary Albright and I joined hundreds of politicians, diplomats, civil society leaders, journalists, and activists from around the world in a global call to defend democracy in the COVID-19 era.

It's what continues to animate NDI in our work, with thousands of citizens in and out of government, struggling to develop democratic practices and norms in their countries and resist malign authoritarian influence from abroad. And it is why in particular, the institute established a new democracy and technology or Demtech, as we call it, the division to help ensure digital technologies and platform support rather than undermine democracy and dignity worldwide.

And as we do so, we had NDI continue to be inspired by the leadership of a woman who has been a tireless advocate and leader for democracy and human dignity for her entire life, Madam Secretary, Chairman Albright, thank you for joining us this morning. Let me turn to you for some words and introduce Senator Warner.

ALBRIGHT: Thank you, Derek. And good morning, everyone. I welcome you to this special discussion on defending democracy in the digital age. I was proud to serve as America's secretary of state in what I now call the pre-digital era. Today, I could not be prouder than to serve as chair of the National Democratic Institute. And NDI has an outstanding leader and Derek Mitchell. Thank you for everything that you're doing, Derek. You're remarkable in what is a clearly challenging time.

Our staff is dedicated, hardworking, and skilled. We have a record of accomplishment extending back nearly 40 years and we have a compelling purpose. NDI excels at helping countries to succeed democratically. We do so not by lecturing are trying to sell a particular ideology but by sharing knowledge and offering lessons learned both good and bad, from democratic experiences around the world.

In carrying out these activities, our work increasingly depends on a keen understanding of the topic at the center of our discussion today, technology and its impact on democracy. We began seriously exploring these issues at a time when many believed that new digital tools such as social media could only benefit democracies cause by helping empower and inform citizens. But those views turned out to be too optimistic because like so many other things, technology is a double-edged sword. In recent years, we know that democracy's enemies have become adept at polluting social media platforms with rumors, disinformation, and anti-democratic propaganda. But authoritarian leaders have also been pioneering new tools for monitoring and controlling their populations.

No country has been more active on this front than China, which is steadily turning into the world's leading pioneer of what we call techno authoritarianism. China's efforts are not confined to its borders. The Chinese Communist Party has been investing heavily and effectively in efforts to undermine democratic norms and institutions abroad. And it is increasingly using its economic and technological muscle to make the world safe for autocracy.

The United States is waking up to the challenge this poses to our security, our prosperity, and our freedom. The question is how we respond and few people in government have been thinking about this more deeply than our featured speaker today, Senator Mark Warner of Virginia. Senator Warner is a longtime friend of NDI, having served on our board following his successful tenure as governor of Virginia in the early 2000s. As I saw firsthand during his time on the board, Senator Warner possesses a remarkable blend of public and private expertise, drawing upon the 20 years he spent as a successful technology and business leader before entering politics. You hear a lot of political leaders throwing our round term such as 5G but Senator Warner actually knows what it means because he founded a cell phone company and invested in hundreds of other technology startups over the years.

He was elected to the U.S. Senate in November 2008 and reelected to a second term in November 2014. Senator Warner serves on the Senate Finance Bank and Budget and Rules Committees, as well as the Select Committee on Intelligence where he is the vice-chairman. What I appreciate most about Senator Warner is his desire to learn and to really dig into tough subjects. In recent years, he has been squarely focused on better understanding China and its growing global technological influence. He and I've had many conversations about how the United States

can best compete with China, not only economically and militarily, but ideologically as well because the Chinese Communist Party is offering up its system as an alternative to democracy.

Organizations, such as NDI need to consider how we can better equip small-d Democrats around the world to succeed in this political competition. But as we debate our best approach, I want to make something clear. I was asked by an Australian newspaper about what the West should do about China, and whether it should be contained or tamed. I responded that China is not a fluid to be contained or an animal to be tamed. It is a country like any other. And like any other, it is accountable to international standards in its relationships with states and treatment of its own people. There is no doubt that the government in Beijing has sought to influence world opinion in its favor. But it is also becoming evident that this goal has been set back by China's role in the COVID-19 pandemic and its repressive policy towards Hong Kong and its harsh treatment of the Uighur and Tibetan minorities.

The best way to ensure that China is held accountable for these and other actions is to maintain unity among the nations that care the most about upholding global norms. We can enhance our leverage not by treating the country as an enemy but by reiterating our support for human--human rights, political openness, fair dealings, and peace through strength. We should also attach prudent limits to our economic reliance on China and to sharing of sensitive technologies. But above all, democracy should strive to speak with a common voice. And that is what today is really about.

So with that, I'm delighted to turn it over to Senator Warner. We look forward to his remarks and the discussion. Thank you so very, very much for joining us.

WARNER: Well, thank you, Madam Secretary. And let me first of all say thank you to NDI for hosting me for this very important discussion. I'm particularly appreciative that so many NDI staff are joining in. As Secretary Albright mentioned, I was very proud to have served on the board of NDI for a couple of years and have long admired your work. A special thank you as well to my good friend, Secretary Albright, thank you for your friendship. Thank you for the--the conversations we've had about this subject and so many more over the years and thank you for continuing to lend your voice in terms of American leadership on global issues. And lastly to Derek Mitchell, thank you for coming in and taking the helm, the third--third president of NDI. And Derek, I know you've done a lot of work in Asia. And I look forward to our conversation after my--after my comments.

For the better half of the last century, the United States lead in scientific research and development of transformational technologies. Our leadership, translated into decades of economic success for U.S. companies and garnered prestige for American universities and advanced America's military capabilities. But one component of this success, which is often underappreciated is that our technological leadership enabled us to set global standards and protocols governing the use of this new technology whether it be software, satellites, telecommunications, all examples. And since we set the standards, our values were embedded throughout values, such as transparency, diversity of opinion, interoperability, and respect for human rights. Values that have made the public sphere so fruitful for innovation, and in turn, help drive America's economic success.

But over the last 10 to 15 years, our leadership role has eroded and our leverage to establish standards and protocols, reflecting our values has diminished. As a result, others but mostly China has stepped into the void and advance standards and values that actually advantage the Chinese Communist Party. Today, we see China flooding ITC-standard-setting bodies to set communication protocols and tech standards for mobile technology equipment. And it's not just in telecom. As seen in the CCP's upcoming China standards 2035 plan, China's leaders aim to influence the whole suite of next-generation technologies, including, for example, artificial intelligence and facial recognition.

Particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many were convinced that our values, democracy, transparency, individual rights would be naturally triumphing. That America would always succeed so long as we stuck with those values and that our adversaries would ultimately fail because of their rejection of them. Unfortunately, recent years have served as an opportunity for reassessing those long-held assumptions. We face a starker reality. A challenge from non-market, state capitalist, authoritarian regimes led by China that have deftly exploited and undermined the rules-based international trading system that we would long thought would actually bring greater openness. And the

CCP has harnessed new technologies for illiberal uses, even as its own regime backslid on earlier advances towards economic liberalization.

I focus on China because like so many, I was wrong. I assumed that integrating China into the liberal international order and interconnecting it with liberal economic systems would lead China to open up and democratize. Instead, China has shown that the development and use of cutting edge technology and economic expansion are indeed possible within authoritarian state capitalism. Let me be clear though, my issue lies squarely with Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party, not the people of China.

Communist Party leaders are developing a model of technological governance that should worry all of us. They are pursuing this as one of the world's strongest economies with a set of technology tools that would literally make Orwell blush. The party is using new technologies as a means of surveilling and controlling their population and as tools for repressive foreign influence campaigns worldwide. These technologies enable them to eliminate dissent, restricting religious groups, media, human rights activists, and lawyers. We have seen these measures taken to the extreme and Xinjiang province where CCP leaders have--have taken social control to a new level - cameras on every corner detentions of more than a million Uighurs, forced labor camps that support China's control over global supply chains.

Across the whole nation of China, the Communist Party's social credit system collects data on individuals and companies to determine their trustworthiness. Think about that. And to regulate their behavior. This is coupled again with their surveillance infrastructure, ubiquitous cameras, facial recognition, phone tracking, that has been deployed across the whole country, and now is being used to crack down on protests in Hong Kong.

On the technology front, China's Great Firewall has defied all expectations, effectively stifling dissent and free inquiry at scale and facilitating extensive sophisticated surveillance. I think we all thought, the long-standing consensus was that the Chinese people would balk at these kind of limitations and that China's innovation would suffer forcing the Chinese government to adopt greater openness, if only out of self-interest.

That consensus about the Great Firewall and that immediate need to then open up was clearly wrong. Instead, China has reared a generation of innovative technologies and in many cases have launched new products and services ahead of Western competitors. We need to think about what this means for global standard-setting and liberal values again, of openness, transparency, interoperability, and respect for human rights.

China's all-encompassing political system sees its businesses and citizens as instruments to achieve the party's ambitions. This ideology is mirrored in Chinese law. Recent legal changes require all citizens and companies to act in support of national security. Ultimately, that means that China's private sector can be forced to serve as an extension of the state. And we see those ambitions beginning to swell. The Communist Party recently introduced a national security law in Hong Kong. Wielding it as a cudgel, the CCP has conducted arrest of democracy activists and created a dramatic chill in online speech. The risks being that Hong Kong will fall into China's Great Firewall.

They are also exploiting these tactics and values abroad through infrastructure investments. Think of the Belt and Road Initiative or the digital Silk Road. They have used their growing global infrastructure and investments to expand their spheres of influence, gaining allies bolstering their leverage and increasing votes in international standard-setting bodies. And they are doing this all with a huge emphasis on state-owned enterprises, government subsidies, and industrial policies that actually stifle free market open competition. China is hoping to control the next generation of technological innovation and digital infrastructure and impose its values on them. All of this puts into question, again, our principles of transparency, accountability, and sovereignty, and free and fair reciprocal relations.

So what do we do? Well, our government's complacency on the global stage under President Trump and with, where I work, Congress, either unwilling or unable to formulate smart policy responses to the challenges we face. There is the potential that our position as a global leader on technology research and scientific development may be permanently harmed. Governments around the world, not just China can begin to fill this vacuum identifying

solutions to address many of these challenges that traditionally would have been addressed by American leadership.

But the truth is the need for U.S. leadership on pragmatic, tech-savvy policy has never been greater. This moment offers us an opportunity to reassess and restate our values and priorities, ensuring that our strategies actually reflect and extend those values, both domestically and abroad. A successful U.S. strategy should be built on openness and accountability. And it should be centered on competition and innovation by the United States and our democratic allies. That starts with investment at home.

So first, we need to be in this together, the private sector, the U.S. government, and private citizens all need to work together to stand up for human rights, as well as civil rights and civil liberties guaranteed to Americans under our Constitution. We need help from the private sector to support our technological leadership and national defense and hold the Chinese Communist Party accountable. United States companies should not benefit from or facilitate state-sponsored regressive efforts. That requires the U.S. government to lead a rigorous information campaign with the private sector to do this.

For the past two and a half years, I've worked on a bipartisan basis to convene CEOs from a host of industries and university presidents to share with them in classified intelligence briefs on the CCP strategies and tactics. So in American enterprises can make better informed, risk-based decisions about collaborating with the PRC and its state-directed companies. We also need clear prohibitions beyond the slow and convoluted export control regime on U.S. companies facilitating state-sponsored repressive efforts. U.S. companies and researchers should not be collaborating on biometric profiling, facial recognition, AI, or other anti-democratic efforts by CCP affiliated companies and research institutions.

Second, we need global allies, especially democratic ones. We cannot counter Chinese internal governance in international objectives solely on our own. For years, we've assumed that we'd lead and our partners would simply follow but we've seen that when the United States fails to layout a clear vision, our allies chart their own courses, whether it's building international norms on cybersecurity at the UN, or the Paris call, or establishing sensible rules of the road around social media abuse and exploitation, the United States should prioritize striking common ground with our allies around the world.

Amazingly--amazingly, the United States is the only member of the G7 that hasn't joined the Christchurch call. We should be embedding our values by pursuing technology development agendas built around shared rules, standards, and permissible uses. That means not just working with NATO or Five Eyes partners but also with countries like Japan, India, South Korea, and Israel to ensure that we don't lose the technology race with China.

Third, we need to set up our country to stay competitive in the future. We need to lead with standards again, based on our values of open competition, privacy, freedom of thought, respect for human rights, and accountability, particularly when it comes to technologies that undergird wider innovation systems. 5G is a case in point as that underlies critical--critical technology of the future because if we have autonomous vehicles and augmented reality, it will ride on a 5G network.

The issue of 5G security goes beyond Chinese hardware. If security is not taken more seriously, 5G raises a series of concerns related to network management, network complexity, and network security more broadly. 5G networks are going to provide connectivity for an unprecedented number of connected devices, each of those additional IoT devices, each presenting its own security challenge. For this reason, I've worked for several years now to ensure that IoT devices, at least purchased by the federal government ought to meet basic minimum security standards. And that means we need to take the security of 5G networks and devices that run on them much more seriously.

Over the last several years, the Senate Intelligence Committee has again on a bipartisan basis, focused on supply chain security amid the threat posed by state-directed companies like Huawei. This is not about finding backdoors in current Huawei products. That's a fool's errand. Software reviews of existing products are not sufficient to preclude the possibility and potential probability of malicious updates enabling surveillance or sabotage in the

future. It's not just about keeping Huawei out of our networks. If Huawei's market share alone grows, it will jeopardize the stability of any Western alternatives that remain.

I think we've seen that if Huawei is able to gain 50 percent of global market share, regardless of what the United States does, it will send some of his best-known competitors, companies like Ericsson and Nokia, probably in the longer term into a tailspin. Imagine the resulting vulnerabilities for our entire economy if we were totally dependent on a single Chinese source technology for--for 5G. That means agriculture and medicine but also would indirectly affect our very military capacity.

Huawei is just one example of Chinese new policies where they allow initially enormous competition in their domestic market until a single national champion emerges. That national champion then garner's close to 75 percent of their domestic market, which translates into a sizable percentage in the global market. And then that national champion receives enormous benefits, subsidies from the Chinese government as it tries to compete around the globe.

The real--the reality is that we've got to take this on. That is actually meant something I think very positive but unusual is actually happening below--below the top lines right now in Congress. There is a growing bipartisan recognition that the United States might need to start bringing out industrial policy tools of its own to foster competition and give non-Chinese companies a more level playing field against these state-based, state-backed champions.

I've led efforts in Congress recently introducing a bipartisan 5G bill, the USA Telecom Act devoting over a billion dollars to what we can do to change--to change the terms of competition in order to encourage innovation and challenge Huawei's advance. Part of this bill would also set up a multilateral telecommunications security front, laying the groundwork for the type of international coalition and consortium with our allies to develop a competitively priced alternative to Huawei. Our approach, using terms like ORAN (SP) plays to U.S. strengths, like software and network virtualization. If we make this move in this direction, it would mean we would have a wider set of firms, including a whole variety of American firms able to compete against Huawei.

Let me give you another example. In core technologies around semiconductors, the U.S. still remains in the lead. But our leadership may be in jeopardy. That's why I introduced the CHIPS for America Act with Senator Cornyn which would commit at least $15 billion real money towards R&D and help ensure that semiconductor fabrication facilities are actually built in the United States. But there's so much more to be done.

Fourth, we need a vision of technology that reflects our values and evaluates technology in a risk-based way. When we see--when we draw lines to prohibit certain technologies that don't meet those principles from entering the U.S., it must be done honestly or else it smacks of the kind of protectionism that we fought against in managed economies. To this end, the Trump administration's Clean Network Initiative and haphazard actions on TikTok fail that test and will only invite retaliation against American companies.

More importantly, American credibility on what constitutes a national security threat is beginning to wear thin following policies that invoke actually national security Section 232 concerns on tariffs on aluminum and steel on some of our closest allies. I don't think most of us think of Canada or Mexico as a national security threat. Those actions undermines the clarity and cogency of our arguments against technologies in firms that do represent very grave national security threats, firms such as Huawei or Kaspersky.

We have to chart a reasonable course, between the hands-off approach to technology governance that is long characterized American administrations and the erratic, reactionary approach that treats everything as a threat. We have to strike a balance putting forth with our allies, a technology vision that enshrines again human dignity, openness, privacy, and accountability and evaluates form products that run counter to those values based on a transparent, risk-based criteria.

Finally, fifth, rather than evaluating technology only in the terms of global risk, we need policies that put human rights in our individual dignity at the forefront of our approach. We have to stand up for the people--for the Chinese people, whether in Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Xinjiang, and others who have become victims of CCP's illiberal use of

technology. We need to continue to attract the best and brightest, including students from China and Hong Kong and offer visas to those who face persecution back in their home. And when people come here to choose and choose to live by our values, we need to treat them with respect. This includes the Chinese diaspora who have contributed significantly to our society and innovation ecosystem.

So when we raise concerns about Chinese intellectual property theft, we also listen--need to listen to those in those communities that are most affected. To this end, I've been meeting with Asian American leaders to ensure they are engaged in these conversations and connected to those agencies working hard to counter Chinese government tech transfer operations. I facilitated meetings between Asian American leaders and the Office of National--the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, ODNI. And recently had conversations and wrote FBI Director Ray urging him to meet with Asian American leaders. In this year's Intelligence Authorization Act, I also required statutorily that the FBI strengthen relations and build trust with these communities.

We need to work together all of us to charge a more inclusive and transparent way ahead. At the end of the day, our path lies not in rejecting those values that foretold America's successes in the 20th century but doubling down on our values to ensure success in the 21st century. I firmly believe in our possibility and potential to succeed and thrive but only if done with our values front and center. We must look to our strengths, our diversity, innovation, competitiveness, transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights as we face these enormous challenges going forward.

Thank you, again to NDI for the opportunity to make this presentation and I look forward to our conversation.

MITCHELL: Thank you so much, senator, for that extraordinarily incisive talk, or really a call to action, I would call that, a comprehensive overview of the landscape. You laid out not only the problems at hand but a series of very practical steps for addressing them. So very grateful and also what's at stake and our failure to do so. So very grateful for that.

I would say if there's one addition to what you've said, you listed the private sector of the U.S. government and private citizens as those who can add to this conversation on global technology standards and norms. I would modestly--or modestly add civil society and NGOs to that mix. Maybe you were--it was implicit in what you said. NDI, among others, works with many groups around the world who are aligned with us in this effort and can help shape global technology standards. So we look forward to--to assisting that effort. And I'm really grateful for all that you said, which I think is extraordinary--extraordinarily important for people to hear.

We're now going to move to conversation, but also the Q&A. I know folks have already started to put Q&A in the queue, as it were. I will assert the prerogative of as the host to start by asking a question or two if I could.

You layout here the need for us to get our together in the United States and with our allies, which I think is exactly right. The question is, are we equipped right now to do that? It is great that you have, as Secretary Albright mentioned, you have a background in 5G as a technologist and that's extremely valuable right now in the government. But do we have--are we prepared as a government? Is the Congress prepared to engage in this normative competition in a very particular arena? Do we need to restructure? Do we need different personnel? And further to that, how do we prepare the American people for this? Is there more that we need to do on that front?

WARNER: Well, great questions. Derek. Let me just say there's--you know, give me the good and the bad, at least in my view. I do think--you know, the technology expertise levels amongst many members of Congress is fairly limited. And I think it is a real reflection on that. Let's take, for example, social media and those platforms. We saw in 2016, how they can be abused, in that case by foreign entities to directly assault our democracy.

And while the social media companies have gotten better and while our intelligence agencies are more attuned to bad actors trying to intervene on social media, the United States Congress has not passed a single law to try to put even--you know, traditional guardrails. We still have not passed even privacy legislation. A lot of that is due to the reluctance of this White House to acknowledge what happened in 2016.

And, frankly, the reluctance of the current majority leader to let any legislation from requiring basic disclosure rules for political ads on Facebook the same way we'd have political ads on television or even something that should be totally low hanging fruit, such as requiring a presidential campaign that has been contacted by a foreign government with dirt on the opponent have an obligation to tell the FBI. I think things would pass with 90 votes each.

But we've not been able to vote on those items and our failure to come up with any standards, not just directly political related things like data portability and interoperability. Things that now even the social media companies are supporting, as lead now to individual states like California, which has passed and other states are looking at privacy legislation. The EU has passed privacy legislation, data portability are being discussed in other nations. Something called Section 230, the--the requirement that basically says no matter what you put on any of these platforms, the platform owes no obligation to any type of that content. That is being re-examined in other countries.

I think we would do better in America if we actually set those policy frameworks and then work with our allies in a--in a common sense way. Maybe under a new administration, we'll get that opportunity. So that's the negative side.

On the other hand--you know, I see a number of my Republican colleagues, as we look at this Chinese model and the model I refer to where they allow domestic competition until the national champion arises, that national champion then is protected and gets 75 percent of the domestic Chinese market, which oftentimes equates to about 20 to 25 percent of the global market. And then that national champion gets tremendous backing--you know, hundred billion dollars roughly from backing Huawei. There is no single, Western-based standalone company, American or otherwise, who can compete against that kind of heft.

So there are a number of us in both parties who realize--you know, I use the term industrial policy which would not have been often used in the last 15 or 20 years. But we are recognizing that the government has to weigh in at least in sectors and I mentioned my bill around 5G and ORAN and my bill around semiconductors, where there is a great deal of bipartisan consensus. So I think the moment, if we--if we can layout this vision, and it's gotta, again, be reinforcing our values, I do think there is the ability to build that kind of broad-based coalition to put some of these policy changes in place.

MITCHELL: Right. Well, thank you. I actually got--I'm looking down. I'm looking at my text here from--with questions. There was one from New York Times' Julian Barnes, who actually asked that question of what tech sectors should we bring back to the US? You sort of answered that. I don't know if there are further--others and said, "Can we bring back high-tech manufacturing to the United States?" Is that possible and how would we do that?

WARNER: Well, the CHIPS bill is a major effort and that was included in the recent defense authorization and Senator Cornyn and I, Senator Schumer and Senator Cotton so it surely spreads the ideological gulf in the Senate. It makes a substantial investment and we're seeing now TSMC, one of the most innovative chip manufacturers, actually a Taiwanese company looked at building a fab facility here in United States. So maintaining that lead in semiconductors from the manufacturing to the development is one area.

I think big data is another area where we need to make the kind of investment in basic research and then there'll be lots of outgrowths out of that. We will have, again, challenges when we look at things like big data, artificial intelligence, they oftentimes rely on how much data you have and how much compute power what we've seen from the Chinese is a willingness to suck all that in using their great tech companies, the Alibabas, Baidus, Tencents, and others as in effect arms of the state. I think we would be very reluctant and should be very reluctant about having the United States government suck in all the information from Amazon, Facebook, and Google.

But part of the challenge, here again, is in the world of AI, and in the world of big data, he or she with the most data often wins. And how we grapple with that juggernaut of Chinese accumulation of data in a way that still is privacy protected for both America and the West, is something that I don't have a full answer to. But boy, we need to be spending a lot of policy and thinking time sorting that out.

MITCHELL: Yeah, that's right. I mean, you mentioned that--you know, we need to be working with the EU, we need to be working with Japan and harmonizing the rules, and that they're charting their own course. Aside from

American leadership, I mean, is there simply a matter of-- is it simply a matter of U.S. leadership? Or do you think there are some fundamental differences that we have with allies? And do you talk to some of these folks? Do you have a sense of where they're moving? Where you see the main challenges ahead in trying to harmonize these shared rules and standards?

WARNER: Well, I think--I think there is a great possibility of working together. You know, I think oftentimes our friends or even our non-friends around the world, they might grumble a little bit about American leadership or America big-footing things. But at the end of the day, they still thought we would have our values reflected in the rules, standards, and protocols. And this--this is a--this is something I don't think most policymakers fully understand.

When you set the spectrum standards, when you set the protocols, when you set the rules of the internet, you can either reflect our values or you can reflect authoritarian values. And I think we have--we took it for granted for so long, kind of an almost post-Sputnik. Every major technological innovation, even if it was not invented in America, we got the set the rules, and generally speaking--you know, these are often set on international forum where countries vote and then the Soviet bloc would vote. Our block would always have more--more countries involved, we would win over those votes. And I think we just kind of presumed and took it for granted, not just under Trump, but even under Obama and Bush.

Our participation in a lot of these international standard-setting entities started to decrease. And it was only I think it really came to point around 5G when we suddenly saw, oh, my gosh, this standard is not being driven out of America or out of the West but it's being driven out of China, because the Belt and Road, the digital Silk Road, China had suddenly accumulated a whole host of countries where they had invested in that they suddenly got their boats in the standard-setting bodies. And two things have happened. One is I think the world has woken up to that. I think a new you, Secretary Albright, in your opening comments, there is a reexamination about China, post-COVID. And, frankly, its unwillingness to share information with the rest of the world in a fully transparent way.

So I think there is a great opening right now to reestablish American leadership and I think there's actually a great yearning for that American leadership. I think that will only come because even--will only come though with a different president. Because as we've seen, even if President Trump has directly called out China the right way, his complete inability to build an alliance undermines our ability to get it right. And there's a lot of conversation going on in America but also particularly from--from allies around the world, that in the 21st century--you know, alliances may not be simply based upon military or economic, there may be this opportunity to build technology alliances around a coalition of the willing. And boy, I think there would be most of the major technology leading countries in the world would join that kind of American-led but American--not dominated but American-led technology alliance.

MITCHELL: Well, I've said for some time myself that the defining challenge of our moment of our time are the norms, standards, and rules of the international system in the coming century, in the coming decades. There are interstate challenges. We certainly have geopolitical challenges with China and other countries. But it's--it's more than that. It's about the norms and standards, which you said we had set since World War II. There comes a democratic standards of various types, international aid standards and investment standards and they're up for grabs now because of the rise of illiberal states and their desire to expand resources in order to shape things according to their illiberal desires.

So you're absolutely right. It's about finding an alliance of norms, alliance of standards, and rules so that we can continue to shape things for the greater good rather than their interest, which is really purely self-interest, their own illiberal self-interest. Rather than what we've done for 75 years--you know, we have self-interest but broader interests have been pulled along in process. So there's an enormous amount at stake and technology you say I think is at the center.

WARNER: And, Derek, I would just add, I think and this is something I think we've--we have to honestly grapple with, and that is, I think, following the fall of the Soviet Union, we kind of thought--you know, our values had won, and that everyone would continue movement towards a more liberal democracy, a more market-based economy--

you know, it would be the champion of individual rights that people's regardless of where they were would demand that kind of freedom.

MITCHELL: Right.

WARNER: And we've seen in China, and again, I was wrong. I was part of the conventional wisdom thought that the more you bring China in the more it's going to liberalize, the more it's going to democratize. You know, China's created a very successful alternative model. But boy, the price you pay, I don't use the term lightly--you know, they've got techniques that would make George Orwell blush in terms of surveilling their people, controlling thought, the idea of a credit card system based on your trustworthiness.

You know, that becomes an attractive model that be-- that China can use as a exploitable or an exportable type of governance to authoritarian leaders around. If you can say, "Hey, I cannot not only build you a bridge or build your road," China coming in, "but I can offer you, authoritarian leader, the chance for you to monitor and surveil all of your dissidents." That's a pretty patent powerful tool.

MITCHELL: Yeah. Now, as you said, I mean, history is never over. And it's the reason why Jefferson said that--that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. We always have to be vigilant to those who want to control always be such, always be present. John Harris at Politico asked a question about Beijing thinks that any challenge is a mortal threat. Will it take the technology race to define the entire relationship with China? Or can we still cooperate on other things like climate and non-proliferation?

WARNER: John has always asked a smart question. I think we don't have any alternative but to cooperate. There is no America-only solution on climate as we see wildfires break out in the West. Let's remember--you know, it is America that actually walked out of the Paris Climate Accords, not China, at least under this administration. And proliferation issues--you know, we think about nuclear but boy, oh boy, that, as we've now seen some of the challenges, around pandemics as we see the development of hypersonic weapons, there are so many different ways that man can kill other man that we have to find ways to work with China.

And I think it is so incumbent, this is why my last point that we've got to work with everyone and when we speak about China, I always try to make the absolutely clear that my beef is not with the Chinese people. It is with the CCP and Xi Jinping and I think we have to constantly reiterate that because--you know, it's not just here in America but some of the reports, for example, the Chinese diaspora in Australia. Some of the Chinese government threats for its Australian--Chinese students in Australia. And we have to be clear that our beef is with the party, not with the people.

And I know, the incidents, for example, of anti-Asian and anti-Chinese American and particularly rhetoric and actions, I can again exacerbated by a president who--you know, calls COVID the Wuhan flu or uses other disparaging terms really goes against not only our short term but our long term interest in terms of being able to build that international coalition and find ways where we continue to work with China.

MITCHELL: Let me extend on that because as you say that beef is not with the Chinese people and they in fact are the objects of this surveillance state. Hundreds of millions of surveillance cameras, you mentioned this in your speech. Things are being tested in Xinjiang. But they're going to be spread around China and control people there. The question is when you say that they have, they have sort of gone along with that so far but I'm not sure they really experienced the full breadth and depth for the surveillance and the control that will be enveloping them.

To what degree do you see and this is sensitive, working with--working in China somehow or finding ways to find Chinese people, not just Chinese Americans or Asian Americans or people outside or Asians but the Chinese people as allies in the effort to manage the threat of an Orwellian, as you say, an Orwellian future?

WARNER: I think this is an area that again, civil society groups like NDI and others play such an important role. When government to government relations become as frosty as they are, it really is this third sector civil society that can maintain these open ties. And I think this is an area that we really--I need to learn more, we need to think more about, like, I can tell you what to see and not all, I can't share all of this, but--you know, the ability the Chinese

government had to do a level of lockdown and Wuhan after the virus broke out, was both amazingly effective and absolutely terrifying from a civil liberties standpoint. And one of the things I still don't think we have, I don't at least have a good feeling on--you know, do the Chinese people in Wuhan feel that was a price worth paying.

Clearly, you have--you know, the people of Hong Kong standing up very strongly against CCP's attempt to restrict their freedoms and I think we and our allies need to do more--more to stand with the people of Hong Kong. I also think and let me be on--the question about civil society, I think we really need and this is where I've been doing these roadshows with my intelligence committee in classified briefs. We need to have a real heart-to-heart with American business and not just American business but I would say most western business, everyone for so long, had the idea that they couldn't miss getting into the Chinese market. That American company after American company and a European or Japanese company all did the same thing they gave up on their values. As part of the price to get into the Chinese market. When American Airlines that fly in China have to take Taiwan off their global map that is giving up on their values.

When Chinese--when the NBA is afraid to speak out or sanctions its own players when they speak out about what happens to the Uighurs that is giving up on our values. And I think there's a growing recognition from many American corporates. That the price of going into China when people are demanding more responsible business leadership and the price of going in China may be a price that's too high, particularly when time and again, they've seen their intellectual property stolen, and then simply replicated by a Chinese state---state-run enterprise. So this piece, civil society, real engagement, and fully making sure that companies don't help the CCP build a more greater surveillance state. And--and candidly continuing to find ways to open up actual dialogue--dialogue people to people is should all be on the agenda.

MITCHELL: Jean Whalen of The Washington Post asked the question of how well do you think the administration's campaign against Huawei is working? And why--why have we gotten so much resistance? How do you overcome that among allies and partners overseas given what's at stake?

WARNER: Well, let's--let's, first of all, acknowledge we were late to the table on Huawei and we didn't come to the table with clean hands. If you look at the number of Huawei systems that have been sold into America, particularly smaller telcos and frankly, I've never looked at where those telcos are located next to our ICBM and our missile capability, that's a really frightening overlay but because Huawei looked like it was good equipment and it was a lot cheaper.

And so what we did was--where we, I think initially made the mistake was we went out and said, "Huawei's bad Huawei's bad," but then didn't offer the reason why. As I tried to make clear in my talk, it's not about finding a current backdoor in Huawei equipment but when Huawei at the end of the day, has to be--has to answer to not its shareholders but the Chinese Communist Party. And when you have a 5G network, that's so software-based that what have literally thousands of upgrades every day, you can't predict--you know, the fact that while we may be safe today does not preclude Huawei from being vulnerable tomorrow because of a dictate of the Communist Party.

And I don't think we were straight enough with our allies about walking through that process. I think we've gotten better. And I think you're seeing countries reconsider. And I think you're seeing even nations that--that we're presuming to go Huawei we're starting to really think do you want to be--do you want your whole 5G system of which IoT and everything ride upon to be sole source to a Chinese vendor? People are rethinking that. The alternative right now--I don't want to go too far down this rabbit hole, are --you know, Ericsson, Nokia, Samsung. But where we've been trying to push as if we can move to a more open architecture called ORAN that will even move faster towards software and will have a much more--many more American companies and other Western companies could play in that field.

MITCHELL: Let me ask a slightly sort of parallel question to the standards though it is standards. We talk about social media. And in the news recently was Facebook and a woman at Facebook who wrote an internal memo that got released publicly that stated how disappointed she was that Facebook is not taking seriously the disinformation challenge as it should. They're not putting the resources towards it. They're looking at large markets, rather than

smaller markets. They're treating different countries differently in that they're just not putting the money--the money and the attention to it that they need to.

How do you--what is--what can Congress do on this? What can anyone do in partnership to try to encourage or enforce social media companies to step up to the plate?

WARNER: Well, I think all of the social media companies, including Facebook, have made better efforts. I think, frankly--you know, Twitter is probably made the best, Facebook and Google not so good. I also think Facebook's policy, current policy, which allows any political candidate for me to any of the presidential candidates, if you're a political candidate, to lie with impunity, and tell a blatant lie, and then allow that lie to be amplified by bots is a huge mistake.

But I also think you have to recognize that--that is the volume of disinformation that's going on out there--you know, it's going to be hard for any enterprise to always be chasing that. So I would argue there are two things that we could look at. One less restrictive, one more expansive. Less restrictive is this. And I was a telecom guy back in--in my business career and some people may be old enough to remember when it was really hard to change from one long-distance company to another. We then created number portability and a lot more competition.

We need to have data portability. So if we're tired of how we're treated on Facebook, we can easily with a--you know, a single computer click, actually transfer all of our data to a new company that might have different kind of privacy and other restrictions and still be interoperable with my friends who remain on Facebook. That is a pro-competition move.

The other move and other nations are moving on this is really looking at Section 230. I strongly favored Section 230 at the--when these social media companies were in their infancy. But when America today--65 percent of Americans get some or all their news from Facebook and Google to say they bear no responsibility for any of the content that appears on their network, I think needs to be re-examined. And I think again, this is a place where--you know, it's not happening here in America but most of the rest of the industrial world is rethinking that provision.

MITCHELL: Thank you. I think we're running just about out of time. Let me ask one final question. Just sort of wrap up. If we have a new administration in--in the New Year, what would you suggest it do on day one to support democracy to win the competition of values and to counter the influence of China?

WARNER: Well, maybe two things. One, on day one, I would hope a President-elect Biden would reach out to those Americans who supported President Trump to once again show domestically, and for that matter, send a signal to the world that you--we may have differences of Americans but we are united as a people and start that healing process that is so desperately needed. Number one.

And number two, I think a President Biden on the international stage needs to say that America will still stand for our traditional values of openness, accountability, transparency, respect for human rights, and invite those--that coalition of the willing to say technology offers enormous, enormous possibilities. But to recognize--you know that the kind of techno-optimism that we had kind of in the first decade of the 21st century where I think we thought all technology was only going to bring good, it has brought good but there's also a dark underbelly.

I think we need to reinforce the idea that there will be valued that comes out of this technology advancements. But we look, bringing our values to work with our coalition of the willing of nations around the world that want to advance technology with a clear-eyed approach about its upside and downside with that advance of technology has to be laden with our values.

MITCHELL: I think that's spot on. Okay. So we have to conclude are right at 10 o'clock. Senator, thank you so, so much for this, for taking the time for allowing me to host and for really a remarkable conversation and speech and vision for how the United States can compete effectively and really, maybe one of the defining challenges of the century of how do we shape technology to affirm rather than undermine democracy as technology continues to move forward. It is not static.

It is not something that is we're just we're looking today to get out in front of tomorrow or next week and next month next year, particularly as other liberal states are looking to shape things along their illiberal line.

So thank you so much for your leadership on this. Thank you for the conversation. Let me also thank Secretary Albright for joining, my chairman. And thanks to everyone out there listening and watching. Speaking of social media platforms, we will post this video on YouTube and on our website, NDI.org. So keep a lookout for that. And please also keep a lookout for our podcast series next month as part of our Changing the Face of Politics Campaign, where we will have leading women from around the world, including our chairman, interviewing one another about progress towards achieving gender equity in 2030.

So with that, again, thank you, senator, and everybody. I hope everyone stays safe and well, and everyone, have a very good day. Thank you.

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