

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / A World Spinning Out of Control

If you're in LA or have plans to be this winter,  
I want to tell you about a couple of live performances  
at the American Contemporary Ballet.  
ACB's season opens with the world premiere of *The Right*,  
a chilling story of a tribe that sacrifices one of its own  
based on a 1913 score that caused a riot in Paris.  
Only in LA will you go to a ballet in a skyscraper.  
Yes, the company performs 300 feet up  
with sweeping views of the entire city.  
*The Right* is paired with a journey into the world of Berlesque  
and I don't want to ruin the end.  
Then, starting in November,  
you can see ACB's *The Nutcracker Suite*.  
This show reshapes the holiday favorite  
and takes you inside a snow globe with dance and music  
that both children and their parents will love.  
I'm told it sells out every season.  
At American Contemporary Ballet,  
the end of every performance  
is the beginning of the after party.  
So get tickets to *The Right* and *Berlesque*  
and *The Nutcracker Suite* plus other season premieres  
by going to [abcdances.com](http://abcdances.com).  
If you're looking for entertainment that's smart  
and actually entertaining,  
you should know American Contemporary Ballet  
and tickets are selling fast.  
So get yours at [abcdances.com](http://abcdances.com).  
That's [abcdances.com](http://abcdances.com).  
I'm Barry Weiss and this is *Honestly*.  
There are a lot of experts that we've been hearing about  
in the past few weeks.  
A lot of people who know a great deal about Hamas  
or Hezbollah or Iran or China or Russia,  
the regional experts.  
There are also a lot of subject matter experts  
who can tell us a lot about cyber warfare or decolonization  
or, for example, the way that foreign governments  
have influenced higher education in America.  
All of those stories are important,  
but each one of those topics  
only gives you a slice of the whole story.  
What if you want to understand the whole thing?  
Well, that's when you turn to Walter Russell Mead.

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Mead, who is a professor of foreign affairs and humanities at Bard College, better than just about anyone else right now, is able to connect what can seem like disparate dots, say the digital revolution or globalization or the Iran deal and pull them together to show us the big picture.

The reason I wanted to talk to him today is because despite what you read in the headlines, this isn't just a war between a terrorist group called Hamas and Israel, but the bleeding edge of something much more widespread that has the potential to touch the lives of every American. No one articulates that better than Walter Russell Mead, and I hope you find this conversation as important, as urgent, and as fascinating as I did.

Shortly after I recorded this conversation with Walter as in hours after, Yemen declared war on Israel with Houthi rebels firing missiles at a lot, and in a major provocation from China, Israel was removed from Baidu maps late on Monday night. Though I didn't get to talk to Walter about these discrete developments, in many ways they confirm what Walter expresses in this conversation, that this war isn't just a regional conflict, that it is fundamentally about a world, as he puts it, spinning out of control.

Stay with us.

This episode of Honestly is brought to you by Cozy Earth. I don't know about you, but I've had a hard time sleeping lately. One thing that helps is having soft, luxurious feeling sheets. That's where Cozy Earth comes in. Cozy Earth gives you the softest, most luxurious feeling fabric, and they guarantee it. What that means is that if you don't love Cozy Earth's bamboo sheets, you have a hundred days to get your money back. Start with Cozy Earth's best-selling bamboo sheet set. They're super soft, they're ethically sourced, and they regulate your temperature,

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bath towels, and more.  
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That's CozyEarth.com promo code BERRY.  
If you've been listening to Honestly  
or reading the free press,  
you know that we've been covering  
the war in Israel obsessively  
since Hamas attacked on October 7th.  
We've been staying up around the clock  
to get you original reporting, analysis,  
opinion pieces, videos, and of course podcasts  
to help you understand what is going on in the Middle East.  
But so many of you are writing in with questions  
about how the conflict even got to this point  
and about Israeli history more generally.  
Questions like, who runs Hamas  
and why aren't they in the West Bank  
and how did Israel get established anyway in 1948?  
I wish we had the time to get into every detail here,  
but since we don't, I'd like to direct you  
to my friends at Unpacking Israeli History.  
They have episodes with topics ranging  
from the history of Hamas  
to whether Israel should ransom captured soldiers  
and Israel's disengagement from Gaza in 2005.  
Unpacking Israeli history cuts through the noise  
and helps you understand Israel's present  
by understanding its history.  
So educate yourself and learn the history  
behind the headlines by going to Unpacking Israeli History  
wherever you get your podcasts.  
Walter Russell Mead, thank you so much for joining me today.  
Barry, it's great to be back even at a terrible time.  
I'm really eager to talk to you  
and I've been thinking so much since October 7th  
about a few moments sort of from the before times  
have sort of leapt out at me.  
And one of them was the last time I saw you in person.  
We were in Dallas, it was June.

We were both there teaching at summer school at UATX,  
this school that I'm on the board of.  
And I remember you saying something  
that made the hair on my arm stand on edge.  
And I remember very distinctly the sort of quiet  
that washed over the room, the dinner where we were speaking.  
And you talked about how we were in a pre-war moment.  
Do you remember exactly what it was that you said that night?  
I was talking about how after the end of the Cold War  
we went into a post-war moment era in history  
where the news was really driven  
and international politics was driven  
by dealing with the consequences and the loose ends  
from the last big international contest.  
But it felt to me like right around 2014  
about the time when Putin went into Ukraine the first time  
we started shifting into a pre-war era.  
And in a pre-war era, the problems that you deal with,  
the things that you face internationally  
are things that if they're not successfully dealt with  
could lead to a new era of major great power conflict.  
And we are there and October 7th,  
I think just hammered that home.  
When you said that in June,  
could you have ever anticipated  
that it would only be a matter of months  
before that pre-war era came to a close  
and a sort of wartime era began?  
Well, it felt like we were moving quickly  
and at an unpredictable pace towards a future.  
I think even now it's still kind of unguessable.  
But something big does seem to be lying in our near future.  
Something big and something bad.  
I wanna use the time that we have together  
to sort of build up to the question of what that big thing,  
that big bad thing that feels like it's lying in wait will be.  
But I wanna sort of start with a smaller aperture  
and widen out toward that bigger theme.  
So let's start with what's actually happening right now  
on the ground in Israel and in Gaza.  
This past Friday, and we're speaking on a Monday,  
Prime Minister Netanyahu announced  
that the second phase of the war had begun  
with IDF troops officially entering Gaza on the ground.

Now many, including many in the Israeli security establishment are warning that this kind of warfare is going to be brutal and extremely challenging for a number of reasons, not just the sort of urban warfare that we saw in places like Iraq, but the fact that there are essentially two cities in Gaza, the above ground city where the civilians are and the underground city where Hamas men and weaponry are. The other thing that many people, I think many people, not just critics of Israel have pointed out is that it's going to test international support for Israel because in trying to wipe out Hamas, there's going to be a lot of civilians, Palestinian civilians that were killed. So simple question, is Israel right to pursue this ground invasion? Is there any other way that they could sort of be defeating Hamas other than this strategy? I don't think there is an alternative. That doesn't mean that this alternative will necessarily work, we'll have to see. But I think after what happened, they have to both for domestic political reasons and for the strength of the Israeli deterrent internationally. And again, in just sheer self-defense, they really have to break Hamas. What does breaking Hamas look like practically? It would look as if Hamas as an organization could no longer carry out initiatives on any serious scale that it lacked the capacity to govern even parts of Gaza that it had gone, in a way it's sort of like ISIS went from being this territorial empire and quasi state into there are still scattered groups in that area who think of themselves as ISIS, they're still ISIS fighters. But the entity that we saw that had controlled almost everything in central Syria and Western Iraq, that no longer exists. But again, the sentiments behind Hamas will not go away. The people who have had the training that Hamas, thanks to Hezbollah and Iran have been able to impart, will not leave their heads. There will be efforts to begin to reconstitute

and breaking Hamas is not the end of the terrorism problem,  
but it does change the focus.

It's an effective response to what Hamas has just done.

One of Hamas's political, almost military strategies  
is civilian death.

Not just Israeli and Jewish civilian death,  
but civilian death on its own side.

In other words, they seem to want Palestinians,  
innocent Palestinians to be killed  
in order to turn the tide of public opinion in the West,  
across the Arab world, across the entire globe,  
against the Jews in Israel.

What is Israel to do in the face of an enemy like that?

When you have to proceed deliberately,

I noticed that the offensive has begun very slowly.

Some people thought, wow, they're gonna just go rushing in  
and try to flatten the whole Gaza Strip and so on.

But they seem to be moving in a very deliberate way.

You can't, in the nature of warfare,  
eliminate all civilian casualties.

So one of the reasons warfare is a terrible thing  
and we should do everything in our power to not have wars,  
but they have within that constraint  
and within the fact that they're in a densely populated area,  
fighting an enemy that glories in the use of human shields,  
they are doing what they can  
to act carefully and deliberately.

They don't always succeed.

And let's remember, we can be talking about 18 and 19-year-olds  
on a surge of emotion.

Some will have had families,  
members killed in the initial attacks.

All will be worried about their own lives  
and making split second decisions  
for hours every day under extreme pressure.

Not everybody is going to get  
every split second hair trigger question right.

But there's a difference when civilian casualties  
are the unavoidable byproducts,

something that you don't want to accomplish,  
that you try to minimize, you do what you can to avoid.

Those civilian casualties are not the same  
as those that are done as deliberate murder.

Maybe a way to summon up is that war is not a war crime.

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In other words, those on social media,  
and there are many of them who list the number  
of Israeli dead and list the number,  
which is hard to ascertain, a Palestinian dead,  
hard to ascertain because Hamas rules Gaza,  
but suffice it to say it is a higher number.  
They are missing something in your view.  
Well, a lot more Japanese died in World War II  
than Americans died at Pearl Harbor.  
So are we going to say that World War II was a war crime?  
Again, this is the thing where people either out of ignorance  
or because some kind of emotional bias  
is twisting their thinking in some way,  
people judge anything Israel does  
in a completely different framework  
from the way we look at any say of the wars of history.  
There are a lot of progressive groups,  
including members of Congress,  
very prominent people here in America  
and certainly around the world, calling for a ceasefire.  
Explain if you would to listeners  
who are inclined to hear that word and think,  
ceasefire is good, ceasefire means the end of war.  
Explain if you would why you believe  
that calls for a ceasefire are misguided.  
Well, let's imagine, let's travel back in time  
to July 7th, 1944.  
And the Allied soldiers have just landed  
on the Normandy beaches  
and are just beginning to sort of expand their foothold.  
And now you have some very good-natured people,  
I suppose, saying, well, let's have a ceasefire.  
I mean, the casualties in Normandy are terrible  
and the civilian casualties, their French civilians,  
their cities like Sherbrooke, right in the path of the war,  
we need a ceasefire.  
That ceasefire probably would have allowed the Germans  
the time that they needed to assemble the forces  
that could throw the Allies back into the sea.  
And so a call for a ceasefire that sounded so humanitarian,  
so even-handed was actually an attempt  
to hand the victory to one party.  
Now, I am not saying, I would never say  
that everybody who calls for a ceasefire today

is consciously trying to help Hamas.  
We should never underestimate what the combination of fuddled goodwill and lack of historical knowledge can create in the way of confusion.  
And there's much more of that than real ill will.  
Nevertheless, it remains the fact that a ceasefire at this time allows Hamas to continue to prepare, does nothing for the release of hostages, does nothing really to alleviate the suffering of the people in Gaza.  
The war will resume more bitter than ever.  
It's a real mistake, I think, to call for a ceasefire.  
Hillary Clinton, by the way, gave a great talk recently. I don't know exactly when, I just saw it on Twitter.  
I think it was in the past few days, it was an interview with Noro Donald somewhere.  
Yeah, it was really terrific.  
And she was just very clear, saying, it hands a victory to Hamas.  
It sounds humanitarian, but actually, it is helping the terrorists.  
And this is one of the many times in her career when Hillary Clinton has been dead right.  
Let's say that Israel is able somehow to get rid of Hamas, to the extent that Hamas fighters can be eliminated.  
What happens the day after that?  
What would be the group that could come to take over Gaza in Hamas's place, or is the idea and the end game on the part of Israel, at least in the short term, to sort of reoccupy Gaza, which seems like a nightmare?  
Well, I think there might be, there's gonna necessarily be a kind of an occupation of Gaza because while you've been fighting in one part of Gaza, you can't not occupy the part behind your front lines where you're fighting.  
So we're looking at an Israeli occupation of a hostile Gaza in wartime conditions, and that will continue right through to final victory, assuming that that comes.  
So the end of the war will actually find Israel occupying de facto all of Gaza.  
So the question is not whether there'll be an Israeli occupation at the end of the war, but how will it end?



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To whom will the Israelis hand over power?  
We can actually be a little bit optimistic here  
because I think many people in the Arab world,  
including many of the Gulf Arabs,  
sympathize with the Palestinians as a people  
and sympathize with the Palestinian cause,  
but have lost all faith  
in Palestinian political leadership.  
Fatah, the group that controls the West Bank,  
is seen as hopelessly incompetent, corrupt.  
People say it hasn't had an idea in 25 years.  
I don't know if that's fair,  
but that's the impression people have.  
And then Hamas is an Iranian linked death cult.  
And frankly, there are a lot of people in the Gulf  
who see that with all of the horror and loathing  
that you and I see it.  
I mean, it's not that hard.  
It's a human thing to understand what a terrorist death cult is  
and why you don't want one operating in your backyard.  
So I really wouldn't be at all surprised  
if we see something of an Arab initiative  
to bring in new leadership for the Palestinian areas  
of the West Bank possibly, as well as Gaza,  
maybe with some kind of a formal continuity  
to the current Palestinian authority.  
Maybe not, I can't tell you.  
But the Gulf states, part of the Abraham Accords,  
they want the Palestinian situation to be quiet.  
They don't want the Middle East to have recurrent wars.  
They don't want Iran to be able to use Palestinian discontent  
as a wedge to insert itself into the region.  
So in that sense, the confluence of interests  
that we saw between the Israelis  
and most of the Arabs before the war  
is actually still there now.  
The Arab governments, due to public opinion  
and perhaps their own emotional reactions  
to what they see have certainly not been shy  
about condemning Israel,  
but many also condemned Hamas very strongly  
at the beginning.  
And behind the scenes,  
we're seeing all kinds of indications, I think,

that they are looking to work cooperatively with Israel  
to get to a future in which there'll be order  
in the Palestinian territories  
and some form of Palestinian governance.  
But the Arabs are gonna wanna make sure  
that it's a sort of rational, pragmatic leadership.  
What do you do about the fact  
that while many Palestinians in Gaza  
just want a good life, they hate Hamas,  
they hate what Hamas has done to their people,  
there are also a good number of people there  
who support Hamas,  
who have been indoctrinating their children in schools  
from an extremely young age  
to wanna go and become martyrs,  
to want to go and kill Jews.  
I've seen the analogy to sort of denazification  
being floated out there in various pieces and things.  
And I wondered what you make of that historical analogy.  
What would it look like to essentially de-Hamasify Gaza?  
Well, one thing I would say is that  
the trend across the Arab world  
has been away from the kind of deadly  
and perverse form of radical Islamism  
that Hamas has come to embody.  
So that if you look at,  
you take surveys of young people in Egypt  
and across the Gulf and in other parts of the Arab world,  
they're sick of it.  
This Islamism, the jihad,  
it all sounded very exciting at one point,  
but what does it lead to?  
It leads to terrible governance.  
It leads to civil war.  
It leads to unbelievable chaos, random death.  
There's no good, nothing good down that road.  
So Hamas in that sense,  
because maybe it's tight ideological controls in Gaza.  
It's the sort of fanaticism that comes very naturally  
to people living at the edge of a frontier.  
They've created something that's unusual  
by Middle Eastern standards today.  
And so when I think about,  
how the place might evolve in a post-combat era

with the Arab world helping to build something new there  
and put in new governors with new ideas,  
it seems to me there gonna be a lot of people  
at the end of this war in Gaza  
who look around the ruins that Hamas has left  
and ask themselves,  
what good has come from this?  
Is Israel any weaker than it was at the start?  
Is my house any nicer than it was at the start?  
Even angry people who've been socialized  
into some kind of fanaticism  
are capable of learning from experience.  
The Nazi party was not as popular in May of 1945  
as it was in June of 1940.  
Right now, Walter, the war is being reported on in the press  
as if it's a war between Hamas and Israel.  
But it seems to me if you just look at the plain facts  
that the war is already much wider than that,  
that essentially it is Israel and America  
at war with the so-called axis of resistance.  
You have Hamas and Islamic jihad, of course,  
attacking from Gaza,  
but you have Hezbollah firing missiles into Israel  
from Lebanon.  
You have Shiite militias from Syria.  
And then you have these 21 American service members  
who have been injured in drone and rocket attacks  
in military bases in Iraq and Syria by Iran.  
Can you give us a sort of sense of the broader war  
that's actually going on here?  
Well, I do think that what we are looking at fundamentally  
is an Iranian war to conquer the Middle East.  
It's a war that Iran has been waging for a long time.  
Iran's enemies in that war are first and foremost Israel  
because Israeli survival is incompatible  
with Iran's domination of the region and the United States  
because we're a country that has long seen  
the connection of our interests and values  
with those of Israel.  
But it's also a war between Iran  
and most of the sunny Arab states.  
So Iran's hostility to Egypt, to Saudi Arabia,  
to the UAE is really quite definite, quite pointed.  
Iranian supported proxy groups like the Houthis in Yemen

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have actually sent missiles into Saudi and Emirati territory. Syria is one of the great battlefields of this war in which far more Arabs have perished in Syria in the last five years than have died in the entire era of Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And yet somehow what's happened in Israel-Palestine is seen as genocidal violence while the much greater violence just a few miles away in Syria in which Sunni Arabs are disproportionately the greatest victims. And many, by the way, are Palestinian refugees living in Syria. This is just airbrushed away by people who actually hate Israel much, much more than they love Palestinians. But anyway, Iran has seen that it needs to break American power and resolve in order to take over the Middle East. The idea there is that if Iran did manage to become a dominant power in the Middle East so that other governments had to basically toe the Iranian line, Iran would have the power to control oil prices around the world. It would be a great power if it control the Saudi investment funds, the Emirati, the Kuwaiti, the Barati funds as well as being able to mobilize the manpower and the oil resources of that region would make Iran what it desperately wants to be a real great power. The problem, as I see it, is that it's been an article of faith in the Democratic Party since the Obama administration that the best way to deal with Iran is to appease it, to find a way to maybe reach some kind of detente with Iran to stroke and pat and quiet Iran under Obama. It was the nuclear deal known as the JCPOA. But Biden, at the beginning of his administration, wanted nothing more than to revive the JCPOA and did everything possible to try to get Iran back into it. But amazingly, Iran is more interested in advancing its agenda than it is in reaching a civilized responsible agreement

with the United States.

Let's go back, if we could, just for a minute to the Obama policy vis-a-vis Iran, which, well, I guess I'll put the question to you. Do you regard that as sort of the original sin of this war that we're seeing right now?

Well, look, you can see, you know, if you wanna ask what was the big mistake America made in the Middle East, there's so many candidates for that.

Yes.

And certainly...

Maybe choosing to go to war in Iraq. Yes, I was gonna say that, you know, knocking out Iran's biggest regional opponent, the only country in the Middle East that was able to keep some kind of a balance in Iran, and then failing to create a stable Iraq so that today Iran is the most powerful actor inside Iraq.

Yes, that was a historic mistake.

So maybe it's W. Bush that deserves the blame in this moment rather than Obama.

I would say what we have is a beautiful bipartisan era.

I talk about a generational failure of American foreign policy, where in various, really since the end of the Cold War, American presidents and the American foreign policy establishment has pretty systematically misread the international system and made more poor choices than good choices.

They weren't all bad, and there have been some accomplishments, but on these big strategic issues, we've basically, we've allowed China to almost equal our strength in and around Taiwan, which nothing else makes the possibility of a U.S.-China war likely than our simple failure to match China's military buildup, which we knew everything about in the Far East all those years.

But you could go back through the New York Times, through discussions in the Council on Foreign Relations and other people, and you wouldn't find a lot of awareness that our failure to do this was creating an immense bomb

that could go off at any moment.  
In the same way we appeased Putin,  
Bush did it when he invaded Georgia in 2008.  
We didn't make a real response.  
What we did in 2014,  
Neville Chamberlain I think would have been embarrassed  
by the Western approach to Putin after 2014.  
Then the serial appeasement of Iran.  
People thought, I think we lived at the end of history  
that American power was so great,  
we had an infinite margin of safety.  
And so we've, in Russia, in the Middle East,  
and in the Far East, we've made one big mistake  
after another, and as a result,  
we're sort of in a dark alley with three big guys  
who don't like us very much.  
Let's go back to Obama-era foreign policy.  
Steelman, the argument for me,  
what was Obama and the Obama administration's best argument  
for its policy vis-a-vis Iran  
with specifically the JCPOA, the Iran deal?  
There were two, and one I don't find particularly compelling  
and think they should have been able to see through,  
but there was a very sophisticated Iranian influence  
operation, I think, that they kind of fell for.  
And that was the idea that Iran is the most modern society  
in the Middle East.  
It's unnatural that these hardliners control it.  
Just under the surface is a modern pro-American country  
waiting to get out.  
Now that part is actually, to a large degree, true,  
but the argument then was that by opposing the regime,  
by sanctioning it, by pressuring it, by isolating it,  
we were strengthening the hardliners.  
And so we should have a sunshine policy  
by being warming and understanding.  
This, by the way, is what many liberals thought  
we should have been doing with Stalin in 1946, 47.  
It's also what Chamberlain and the appeasers thought  
they should have been doing with Germany in the 1930s.  
It's the classic delusion that it's our hostility  
that makes the hardliners hostile and strong.  
And if we take off the pressure,  
the internal good guys will win.

Well, very often it's the opposite.

There was talk among the German generals of overthrowing Hitler in 1938.

But when the English and the French folded like a cheap suit, that it was impossible after that point to attack Hitler from the military's point of view.

So there was that.

And I think that delusion is getting harder to maintain, but a lot of Iranians, the former minister, the former reformist people, spent just a lot of time courting American diplomats, American officials, American think tankers selling this story.

Why was selling that story to themselves and to the American public so important and valuable?

Okay, and now we get to the stronger of the two arguments, I think, the one where they really do have a point.

And that is they ask themselves, what is the worst thing that could happen in the Middle East? Is it an Iranian nuclear bomb?

Or is it a major US-Iran war in the Middle East?

That is, if President Obama having basically gotten elected for criticizing George W. Bush's war to stop Saddam Hussein's nuclear weapons program in 2003, now tries to take the United States into a war against Iran in 2013 or whatever in order to stop the Iranian nuclear weapons program, what does that do to the Democratic Party?

What does that do to American public opinion?

I think there was a sense that, this is the thing that you have to avoid.

An Iranian nuclear weapon, many of them I think have thought, is a bad thing, we don't want it.

But you know what, the Soviets have a nuclear weapon and we've lived with it since 1947, the North Koreans, the Chinese, a lot of people have nuclear weapons, we've been able to use deterrents.

And if you look at the deal that right before the October 7th massacres, you would see that the US was essentially trying to offer the equivalent kind of NATO Article 5 protection to Saudi Arabian Israel.

You know, we would, particularly with the Saudis,

we would put, extend our nuclear umbrella over them,  
which was a way of making it,  
that they would not go quote ballistic  
if the Iranians developed a nuclear weapon.  
And so I think both the Obama and the Biden administrations  
in their heart of hearts,  
have thought it was more important  
to reduce the chance of a US Iran war  
than to stop the Iranian nuclear program,  
even though they're not able to say that out loud.  
Beyond that, there's an additional question,  
which is, once people really began to worry  
about the rise of China,  
I said something nice about Hillary Clinton earlier,  
I'm gonna say something else nice about her.  
Long before 2008, Hillary Clinton  
was probably the leading China hawk in the United States.  
And I can remember her talking about the dangers of China  
when all the other foreign policy people in the room  
would sort of roll their eyes.  
But once the rise of China really began  
to engage people's attention,  
then it seemed kind of obvious,  
again, especially the Democrats,  
but maybe not only the Democrats,  
that the US needs to reduce its commitments in Europe  
and the Middle East,  
in order to be able to kind of move resources,  
military resources, diplomatic focus  
to the China question,  
so that we can do that without going on  
kind of a wartime basis,  
with going back to Cold War defense budgets  
and all of that.  
So you'll find some Republican analysts  
like Elbridge Colby,  
who say, we've gotten,  
we've letting ourselves get in such a hole in the Far East  
that we have to reduce our commitments elsewhere  
or watch the Chinese take Taiwan,  
which is actually a world historical disaster that would.  
What do you make of that argument?  
Well, first, I like Bridge,  
I think he's a really smart guy.



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Myself, I actually think that unhappy as it is,  
we're actually condemned by the nature of our interests  
to be a global power.

Let's just characterize these two views  
for people who have never heard of the name Bridge Colby,  
which is to say there is two ongoing world views  
about American foreign policy.

One is the notion that all of these conflicts  
are somehow connected.

And if we don't show a muscularity toward Putin,  
vis-a-vis Ukraine,  
and defending the Ukrainians against Russian aggression,  
that will send a signal to Beijing.

Equally, will it send a signal to Tehran?

And then there are those like Colby,  
who are sort of in the more realist,  
if I can call it that school,

who say things like America is a weakened power,  
our munitions are weakened,  
our internal will as a country is weakened,  
we are no longer sort of America that we once were,  
despite the rhetoric coming out of the White House.

And we need to make very calculated decisions  
about where we put our resources.

And if we're putting our resources into the Middle East,  
let's say, or Ukraine, let's say,  
it's distracting us from the core conflict of our era,  
which is China.

Is that a fair characterization?

I think that's how Bridge would describe it.

My own take would be a little bit different.

You know, I don't consider myself  
some kind of like hideous, dark,  
uber Machiavellian realist who, you know,  
but I do think I actually, a lot of my analysis,  
you know, certainly Henry Kissinger is probably  
the living person I've learned the most from,  
both from his books and our conversations.

So a lot of people would indeed call me a realist.

So I don't think it's that.

But I do think I look at American international interests  
in maybe a, you know, somebody say an idiosyncratic way.  
I look at the last 300 years of world history  
as this contest, a series of contests

between English-speaking commercial, reasonably liberal maritime powers and these big land powers.

So, you know, England versus Louis XIV in the 17th century, England versus Napoleon, England and America versus the Kaiser, England and America versus the Kaiser in Japan, England and America versus the Soviet Union. Okay, there's a, there's a pattern.

There's a theme.

Yeah, there's a theme, right?

And in a lot of ways,

if you look at American foreign policy over hundreds of years, not a few decades, what you see is that our greatest statesmen, leaders have always believed that we needed a balance of power in Europe so that no single country dominated all of Europe and was able to kind of harness all that power to attack us and our friends globally.

But also nobody could do that in Asia for similar reasons.

And then we've added to that since World War II the idea that Middle East oil is so important, that we also have to prevent any single power other than perhaps ourselves who can be trusted from having the power to stop the Middle East oil flow and therefore hold the world economy and the world politics up for ransom.

I think that description of our interests remains valid.

Now, within that, we have greater and lesser priorities.

In most of the Cold War, Europe was the central focus of the contest, but even so we fought a war in Korea and a war in Vietnam, and we were heavily involved in Asia in various ways.

And of course, in the Middle East during the Cold War, we were involved.

So for me, it seems that the real task for American leadership now is not to sacrifice interests that actually are vital for our prosperity and our safety, but to find the cheapest best way to secure those interests, make a reasoned case to the American people about why that's the case.

A reasoned case that might include  
a little bit of scaring people,  
because in fact, if these things don't happen,  
the future is quite scary.  
And then you can get, as we've been able to do  
over and over again in the past,  
get the resources that we need for this policy.  
Well, speaking of American leaders  
sort of scaring the population into sobriety,  
how would you rate Biden's actions and his rhetoric,  
because those are actually two very different things  
over the past three weeks?  
And do you think that this war  
is gonna mark a watershed among Democrats  
about what has been the sort of the consensus position  
since Obama toward Iran?  
Very good questions.  
You know, the president has done some good things  
since October 7th.  
He has, even if people say it's a bear hug to Netanyahu,  
that he's embraced him as a way partly  
of trying to control and limit his reactions,  
clearly at a time when much of the world  
was already starting to isolate Israel and condemn it.  
And clearly at a cost to his own standing  
in the Democratic Party,  
President Biden has been pretty clear  
that Israel has a right to defend itself  
and has offered American help to enable Israel to do that.  
He's taking incoming fire for that,  
paying a political price.  
And I, for one, want to acknowledge that.  
Where I think it's less robust  
is one still gets a sense that rather than  
telling people the awful truth about Iran,  
we still seem to be trying to make this  
about just Israel and Hamas, you know, Israel and Palestine,  
Israel and the Arabs.  
That's not actually what's going on.  
What is actually going on?  
What is that hard truth?  
I think it's this.  
I think the Iranians saw that the Biden administration  
was putting together a diplomatic initiative

that would bring Israel and Saudi Arabia into open alignment  
that, you know, they were negotiating  
some kind of Saudi intervention  
to provide Israel with guarantees  
that the Palestinians would be governed well,  
but then get for the Palestinians in return  
some more security than they've had in recent years,  
more security and kind of political profile.  
And Iran saw this as a direct threat  
to its own plans to conquer the Middle East  
and or to dominate, let's say the Middle East.  
Whether Iran made a phone call to Hamas  
and said, now is the time to go, we don't know.  
But certainly over many months,  
Iran has been providing Hamas with the training.  
I mean, this may shock you Barry,  
but there aren't a lot of big paragliding schools in Gaza,  
you know, and you can go back and look at past Olympics,  
that the Gaza paragliding team was somehow not there.  
But Walter, square this for me.  
The Wall Street Journal, especially your paper  
on the news side, you're on the opinion side  
has had a series of bombshell reports  
on the extent to which Iran actively trained Hamas fighters  
and also coordinated the massacre of October 7th.  
And yet you have in the Biden White House  
a total lack of clarity about that.  
They're saying that it's not clear  
that we don't really know, help square that for us.  
It seems abundantly clear.  
Why won't the White House admit it?  
What's at stake in the White House not admitting it?  
Because if you admit that you don't have an Iran policy,  
which is to say that the two signature policies  
that the Biden administration came in with  
were one, quote, will park Russia.  
And the other is we'll pacify Iran, all right?  
The park Russia thing failed  
with the Russian invasion of Ukraine.  
And the pacify Iran has clearly failed as badly.  
It's an open stinking sore, all right?  
But if you say that,  
then you have to have another policy toward Iran.  
And what would that be?

Do you get a lot tougher on Iran?  
And if you do all that,  
first of all, the Democratic left is already really angry  
at Biden for going as far as he has on the Middle East.  
I'm sure this would just inflame people  
even more on the left.  
But also you've got then what are you gonna do?  
What's your response gonna be?  
Are you gonna attack Iran?  
Are you gonna help Israel attack Hezbollah?  
Are you gonna give Israel bunker busting bombs  
to go in and destroy as much as you can  
of the Iranian nuclear program in retaliation?  
Just exactly what are you going to do?  
And no administration wants to make really big decisions  
on the fly in real time.  
So you do wanna figure it out.  
However, I think ultimately my guess is  
they still think the worst thing that could happen  
in the Middle East is a US Iranian war.  
That would be terrible for the country.  
Putin is the big winner of this in some ways.  
Make the crisis in the Middle East even bigger.  
The price of oil doubles goes to \$150 a barrel.  
Putin is minting money.  
Our European allies are facing crippling  
economic conditions.  
Inflation in the US has taken off  
and your reelection campaign is coming up in the next year.  
All right, no president is gonna look at that scenario  
and say, oh, I'll pick that  
until they're absolutely sure  
that there really aren't any other alternatives.  
And I think there's still people in the administration  
who are willing in a way to come up with non-policies,  
things that sort of look like a policy  
but don't actually address any of your problems  
simply because policies based on the honest truth  
about the situation in the Middle East  
are almost all unbearable  
from the Biden administration's point of view.  
Before we get to China and Russia,  
let's stick for just one minute on what you alluded to there,  
which is the way that this war has deeply impacted

Biden's approval rating among Democrats.  
He's down 11 points since the war.  
And that sort of reflects the broader trend  
that we see among Democrats.  
Earlier this year, Gallup found that for the first time  
in the US history, Democrats' sympathies  
for the Palestinians outpaced Democrats' sympathies  
for Israelis.  
And it's especially notable among young Americans  
over one fourth of young Americans,  
according to a recent poll between the ages of 18 and 24,  
say that the long-term solution to the conflict  
is for Israel to be erased  
and given to Hamas and the Palestinians.  
And I'm not exaggerating that poll.  
So what is Biden to do?  
And is this just the future  
of the Democratic Party in America?  
Nobody makes you be President of the United States.  
Anybody who's President of the United States  
has worked like a coolly,  
or worked like a slave in an ancient Greek mine,  
you know, sweated blood,  
sacrificed friendship, family, leisure time  
in a long, long struggle to get that job.  
And so when you get that job,  
you have to be the President.  
You know, you actually have to do it.  
And you've got to lead the country.  
You've got to tell the American people what's going on.  
You've got to tell the American people why it matters.  
You've got to tell the American people  
what it is that you plan to do about it.  
And you've got to convince them that it's the right thing.  
Now, if I were President Biden,  
I would plan some,  
I would look at Franklin Roosevelt's fireside chats.  
I would start thinking, okay,  
how do I explain to the American people  
that we are not in the place  
we all thought we were a few years ago?  
We're in a different and much scarier world.  
But at the same time, how do I show them  
that with the right choices and right policies now,

we can stay safe.  
It's harder than it would have been.  
It's more expensive and riskier than it would have been.  
But by doing some smart right things now,  
we can make it better.  
So we're going to begin today,  
massively rebuilding the defense industrial base.  
We're going to deepen our relationships  
with our Arab partners.  
We're going to increase our production  
of oil and gas domestically,  
even as we continue with other things  
to promote an energy transition.  
Because in a world in which war could break out  
in the Middle East, it's just very important  
that we be able to do everything possible  
to keep world oil markets stable.  
You know, so in any case, you do those things.  
Then I would bring some sensible,  
centrist Republicans into my administration.  
I think they do need to understand  
that they need some personnel changes.  
When major policy choices,  
which might have been made for perfectly sensible reasons,  
have gone badly, the president doesn't need  
when he sends the Secretary of State to the Middle East.  
Maybe it shouldn't be the same guy  
who talked about wanting to make MBS a pariah.  
Maybe it shouldn't be people who are associated  
with errors in the past that people in the Middle East  
knew were errors at the time  
and didn't thank you for making.  
And maybe you also want to bring in people  
on the Republican side.  
Obama had Robert Gates for the first part  
of his administration.  
FDR had, I think, Stimson, a Republican as Secretary of War.  
Today we'd call that Secretary of Defense.  
You know, so there are things you can start to do.  
I think you talk to business leaders.  
I think you talk to Hollywood  
and the entertainment industry  
and start awakening Americans,  
the public at large in our leadership class,

to the real situation that our country is in  
and start trying to get everybody working in their own way  
at their own pace on their own priorities  
as they see them to start pulling in the right direction  
in the same direction as we've done  
in great emergencies in the past.

Let's stay for a minute if we could on Russia and China  
and how they're perceiving the goings on in the Middle East.

We know that Hamas has been very thrilled  
with what Putin has been doing so far.

Here is what Hamas said in a statement  
from about a week ago.

We appreciate Putin's position regarding  
the ongoing Zionist aggression against our people  
and his rejection of the Gaza siege,  
the cutting off of relief supplies  
and the targeting of safe civilians there.

Just yesterday evening in Dagestan  
where there remain 800 or so Jewish families,  
there was an attempted pogrom.

I guess you could say an actual pogrom.

I think 20 people were injured at the airport there  
when sort of a bloodthirsty mob stormed the airport  
on the news that a plane was landing from Tel Aviv.

It's like a site out of the Middle Ages  
other than the fact of the plane.

So give us a sense, please, of Russia and Putin  
in all of this.

Well, first Barry, I should remind you  
that the BBC told us that the mob in Dagestan  
was anti-Israel, not anti-Semitic, so.

I'm sure they were there  
to protest BB Netanyahu's settlement policies.

Yeah, no, there were a lot of things.

Also, Israel's whole stand on intellectual property.

It was an anti-Israel gathering that got out of hand.

Understandable grievances bubbling to the surface.

Yeah, we're back to the Cold War

when Russia was a huge sponsor of Palestinian terrorism  
and Russia has decided to go back to that today.

See, we don't want, the Biden administration doesn't want  
Russia and Iran and China to cohere  
because that just makes all of our problems worse.

But they also know that coheering



makes all of our problems worse and that's what they want.  
They want our problems to be worse.  
And so Russia, which when you think about it,  
Putin and the Ayatollah Khomeini  
have almost nothing in common, ideologically, intellectually,  
and many of their interests are quite different.  
And yet Putin's desire to see American power  
strained everywhere  
and if possible beaten back in the Middle East  
is so strong that he is willing to embrace Hamas.  
Remember what a turnabout this is for Putin.  
Putin took power by crushing what he called  
terrorists attacking Russia,  
Chechen terrorists attacking Russia.  
So Hamas terrorists doing the essentially the same thing  
out of, you know, in some ways comparable political ends,  
Putin is now endorsing a hundred percent.  
So, but this is all, it all makes sense  
when you look at the geopolitics.  
Talk to us about China,  
which I think you would argue based on everything I've read.  
If you're writing that it is the gravest threat  
to American national security,  
how is Beijing perceiving everything  
that is unfolding right now?  
How are they taking advantage of it?  
Well, first let me say Beijing  
is the most important long-term threat.  
It is not necessarily the most urgent threat.  
And that's actually a distinction  
that's also in the Biden administration's  
national security strategy.  
And it's an important distinction  
because China, while it's recent economic  
and demographic problems may be causing a rethink there,  
but for a long time has been the habit  
of seeing itself as a rising power.  
So, okay, we don't solve the Taiwan problem  
this year, you know what, in five or 10 years  
we'll be stronger and we can come back to it then.  
While Russia and Iran both are on much shorter fuses.  
I think Putin felt that if he didn't go after Ukraine now  
he might never have the chance  
or never have as good a chance again.

And Iran certainly feels that everything is going its way in the Middle East. And if it doesn't push its opportunities to the max it will lose the glittering prize that it sees right in front of it. So China is perhaps a more patient power than Russia and Iran. That however, it remains the case that Xi Jinping, who is let's face it a communist and a dues paying member of the Chinese Communist Party who has reinstated the forms of totalitarian social control that Mao Zedong would have just only, if Mao had only had the internet his ability to control China would be even greater. And Xi Jinping is building the strongest most authoritarian government that the world has ever seen. And he sees American power as a threat. You know, there are a lot of people in China who actually don't like what Xi Jinping is doing there. I don't know how much you've been able to travel in China but I used to go quite a bit in the old days and you would hear all kinds of Chinese people from officials to professors to students the ordinary people whose vision was that China as time went by was gonna become a normal country as they said. And by that they meant like a Western country would have democracy. There'd be less interference from the government less interference with your right to use the internet, et cetera. That's what they thought the natural trajectory of China's development would mean. But for Xi Jinping and the people around him that's a mortal threat to the power of the Communist Party and not coincidentally to their own power in China. And they see America very much as a country that we might tolerate Chinese communism when we couldn't do anything about it. But any success we have, any power we have undermines both by example and by influence, the security, the stability of the communist system that I think Xi Jinping sincerely believes is necessary to Chinese development and even national unity and independence.

So they see us as a mortal threat.  
We'll be right back.  
We know we should turn it off.  
We know that sleep is good for us,  
but we can't seem to make ourselves do it.  
Therapy can help you right now.  
It can train you to give your brain a break  
and work with you instead of against you.  
If you're thinking about starting therapy  
and I can't think of a better moment to do it,  
you might wanna consider giving better help a try.  
It's entirely online and it's designed to be flexible,  
convenient and suitable for you.  
Just fill out a brief questionnaire  
to match you with a licensed therapist  
and you can switch therapists at any time  
for no additional charge.  
Visit [betterhelp.com slash honestly](https://www.betterhelp.com/honestly) today  
to get 10% off your first month.  
That's betterhelp, H-E-L-P, dot com slash honestly.  
So Walter, you've written about how the war in Israel  
is merely one hotspot for the future.  
Israel is merely one hotspot in a world  
that's spinning out of control.  
It's a very evocative phrase.  
And I wonder if you can explain a bit more  
about what you mean by that.  
What are the things that are spinning out of control?  
Because based on what you've written,  
it strikes me that that isn't just a comment  
on our lack of strong national security strategy.  
It's something deeper than that.  
Exactly, Barry.  
Well, I think the best way to think about  
the world situation in our time,  
and it's a very grandiose phrase,  
but what else can you do is to think that this cliché,  
everybody's always talking about the information revolution  
isn't just a tired cliché.  
The economy is changing, technology is changing.  
Just a couple of years ago with the pandemic,  
we discovered that all the time  
we'd been talking about great stagnation, nothing changing.  
Actually, when the pandemic came,

we could all stop going to work,  
or many millions of us could stop going to work.  
And this great migration of commuters  
in and out of the city every day  
that consumes an immense amount of energy, time,  
economic resources to maintain,  
mass transit systems and cars,  
it's actually not necessary anymore.  
And we're probably gonna move away  
from what was the central kind of economic  
and social form of the 20th century.  
And we'll probably move away pretty fast.  
And cities, their tax bases are gonna be in free fall.  
Again, all kinds of problems coming there.  
But in so many ways, old industries are dying,  
new industries, new jobs are coming.  
What is artificial intelligence gonna do  
to all kinds of work that people do?  
I think maybe the self-propelling cars,  
self-driving cars seem to be edging closer to reality.  
That's a lot of jobs.  
So huge social upheavals.  
Think about the industrial revolution.  
When I call the spinners and weavers  
suddenly lose their jobs because of this,  
you know, the textile mills.  
And the other upheavals that you see,  
riots, revolutions,  
the political situation inside every country  
kind of goes out of control.  
Because nobody understands these new forces.  
Nobody knew in 1820 that the railroad was coming  
and would make things even more chaotic.  
And then steel mills, telegraphs, you name it,  
that this whole procession of new developments  
was gonna upset the status quo in every possible way.  
So in other words, technological change  
leads to economic upheaval, leads to conflict.  
And maybe the war that we're seeing  
is in some way connected to the digital revolution  
that until now has seemed pretty bloodless.  
That's right.  
Well, again, the industrial revolution itself,  
it takes time for things like communism

to grow out of the social stresses  
that the industrial revolution produced.  
But, you know, the first wars of the industrial revolution  
were cavalry campaigns in the age of Napoleon.  
The last war of the industrial era  
was probably World War II that ended with atom bombs.  
So everything changed during the industrial revolution,  
the nature of the state, the nature of political parties,  
the nature of religious institutions,  
the nature of the family,  
this whole thing of the nuclear family  
replacing extended kin networks.  
Urbanization, in every country,  
cities were just a small percentage of the population  
in 1800, in every developed country,  
there are a large majority of the population today.  
So humongous changes, mass immigration  
on a scale nobody had ever seen.  
And so for much of that time,  
nobody understood quite how the economy worked,  
you know, what's gonna prevent a recession  
or a depression or make one.  
No one knew how to develop a social safety net  
that would take care of the costs of the industrial revolution.  
What I'm saying is we are moving  
into another one of those storms.  
The 1990s that people thought of as the end of history  
and an era of permanent calm,  
it was the eye of the storm.  
And we are now going, you know,  
it looks to me like the eye is passing over  
and we're about to get hit with the backside of the storm.  
Every time we talk, I'm just so compelled  
by what you have to say.  
And I go back to what you were saying earlier  
in this conversation about how we need Biden  
to have these fireside chats and we need sort of the,  
the energy and the focus and the duty  
of all of these different aspects of American private sector,  
American citizens pushing in the same direction  
toward a broader goal that is so much bigger  
than any one of us.  
And then I look to President Biden  
or I look to former President Trump.

And frankly, I look to like the halls of the Senate and Congress, at least most of them and think, oh my God, who could possibly be the leader that could do that kind of work? Because I just don't see that capacity in our current president. Like is this moment going to also sort of usher in a new set of American leaders with a very different understanding of our place in the world? Or who do you look to for a bright spot, I guess, help me with my pessimism about the current slate of leaders who you could say have brought us to this past. And I don't necessarily think are the ones to get us out of it. Well, I will say with, even though I'm one of them myself, I think the baby boom generation has been a disaster in terms of American foreign policy, American educational policy, the direction of American society. And it really is time for a change. We do need a new generation of leaders with new perspectives. Now that said, the thing that worries me most is guess who educated these younger generations, the boomers. In that sense, we have not done our part. You look at the state of American universities, we were talking about that a little bit at the start of the conversation. The intellectual leadership that should have been making our universities beacons of hope, freedom, innovation. On the science side, we're not doing that bad of a job, but anything having to do with the humanities and social sciences, we seem to have utterly lost our way. So I do worry that we've got a new generation coming along that's gonna have to punch through a lot of illusions, false teaching, bad ideas, and ultimately find their way to solid ground. That's what's going to have to happen. I think it will because it has to. One of the things that has happened

since the massacre of October 7th is,  
I don't even know the right word,  
explosion seems too weak,  
an orgy of anti-Semitic assaults,  
harassment and violence all over the world.  
From Dagestan to Montauk, New York to Cornell University,  
you name it, it's everywhere.  
And it feels like the lid was just pulled off  
of something that was already boiling.  
It's hard to express the level of fear, isolation,  
alienation that Jews all over the world  
have been feeling for the past few weeks.  
In your latest column for the Wall Street Journal,  
you're not Jewish, Walter,  
but you make the case that this isn't a really a Jewish issue.  
It's an issue for all Americans  
and for all people in the West.  
And I wonder if you can explain why that is.  
Well, I've just written this book  
on the history of US-Israel relations,  
Ark of a Covenant, United States Israel  
and the fate of the Jewish people.  
And so that involved me in a really deep dive  
into the history,  
not only the diplomatic relationships between the country,  
but of the place of the idea of Israel  
and the idea of the Jewish people in the American mind.  
And it struck me over and over as I was doing this,  
how the attitudes that have made the United States  
historically maybe the most hospitable country  
in world history for its Jewish population  
are directly linked to the ideas  
that make America work for everybody.  
So you think about where has anti-Semitism,  
virulent anti-Semitism really flourished in the past?  
Where does it flourish today?  
We think about medieval Europe,  
where these sort of the inquisition,  
these kind of fanatical, holistic Christian missionary types  
who want to make a perfectly Christian society  
with no descent,  
not even other kinds of Christians  
and certainly no Jews had no space for Jews  
in their imagined utopia.

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / A World Spinning Out of Control

In 19th and 20th century Europe,  
the nationalists who wanted to turn Germany  
or Hungary or you name it into like the special place  
that's for us Germans and pure-blooded Norwegians  
and nobody else and we're gonna have our own language  
and our own culture and no interlopers,  
no alien Jews are gonna be in there  
screwing with the purity of our national self-expression.  
You find it reviving anti-Semitism there.  
Today, obviously among sort of fanatical Islamist  
jihadi types who have this vision  
of the pure Islamist community in their imaginations,  
now there's no room there for proud and free Jews.  
And so the Jew becomes identified  
for all these holistic total society types  
as the face of the great enemy,  
the reason I can't live the way I want to,  
the reason my beautiful utopia is not working out as planned.  
It's the Jew.  
In America, we've had a really different idea  
of what our society is.  
We've long thought that in order for it to work,  
it has to be a place where people  
from many different cultural backgrounds,  
ethnic backgrounds, religious backgrounds  
can work together all accepting sort of the common ideas  
of constitutional order, the rule of law.  
But that within that framework,  
we can work cooperatively on common issues  
while each group can go ahead and develop.  
If you wanna be unitarian,  
you can be as unitarian as you want.  
You can be, you know, you can be glad kosher Jewish  
and that's fine, or you can be like totally secular Jewish  
and that's fine.  
It doesn't matter to the government.  
It doesn't matter to society  
as long as you just pull your weight  
in this common American enterprise.  
That's the vision that enables us to work.  
Now it's always been imperfect.  
You know, nobody, you know, blacks were not,  
you know, Native Americans, a long list of people  
and wouldn't work in the same way for women



## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / A World Spinning Out of Control

as it did for men, but here's the thing.  
Those who believe in the American way,  
and I am one of them,  
believe that while we haven't built utopia  
and we'll probably never build it,  
over the centuries it's gotten remarkably better.  
The general level of prosperity has reached a place  
no one could have imagined in 1800.  
And furthermore, groups that were marginalized  
and enslaved, mistreated, isolated, looked down on  
have increasingly found better and better places  
in American society.  
And there's been a growing perception among Americans  
that moving down that path is what we should all be doing.  
The essence of America is to get better.  
Now, anti-Semitism in America, historically,  
we've had several peaks.  
There was one in the 1890s and other in the 1930s and 40s.  
It goes up and down in America.  
It's not like never-present,  
it's never gone away completely.  
But actually the 1930s and early 40s  
were some of the worst times.  
And what do you see in those days?  
You saw the Great Depression,  
where unemployment reached 25%.  
My grandfather used to talk about one night in the bank  
where all of his savings were in, had folded  
and he had zero money and no relief on the night  
his wife gave birth to their first child.  
They had suddenly no money.  
So this kind of terror.  
And then you had the communists,  
you had fascists coming into the country  
or arising out of the country.  
And people believed they lost faith in the American way.  
And as they did, they lost faith in this idea  
that people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds  
could work constructively together  
to make it better for everyone.  
And you could do this without giving up.  
Like I don't have to give up my Christian faith  
for America to be a better place for everybody,  
Christian, non-Christian, you know,

by my contributions and theirs  
and working together across religious,  
regional, cultural lines  
to build something good and new makes sense.  
And when we lose that, two things happen.  
America doesn't work as well and anti-Semitism rises.  
You can look at those Tiki torch boys in Charlottesville  
back in what was that, 2017 or whatever.  
Right.  
And you can look at the people marching on campuses today  
and talking about death to the Jews and whatever.  
They share three beliefs in common.  
One, they make an idol of ethnic identity.  
So for the white nationalists,  
if you're not in the like white, pure group, you know,  
you're only a destructive influence in America.  
And the exact mirror image for some of the far left,  
that if you're white, you're not right,  
that this is about new groups  
and systematic racism being needing to be changed.  
So that's one thing.  
The next thing they believe is that the American dream,  
this promise that if we follow the American way  
and work together, it gets better for everybody,  
they don't believe that.  
On the right, they think this, you know,  
this far crazy right,  
they think the great replacement is coming to destroy them.  
On the crazy far left,  
they think it's only been systemic racism  
and all the happy clappy talk about common interests and all  
is just a mask for oppression, colonialism,  
all of these settler colonialism, blah, blah, blah, blah.  
And the third thing that the far right  
and the far left have in common is that they hate Jews.  
You know, for the white nationalists,  
the Jews are part of the great replacement.  
They're not white.  
And then for the far left, the Jews are white.  
They're Uber white even.  
So those three things in common,  
they're all destructive to what has historically  
made America work.  
And I think when our enemies overseas look

## [Transcript] Honestly with Bari Weiss / A World Spinning Out of Control

at the rise of these sentiments in America,  
both on the right, not on the left and on the left,  
it's not a partisan thing with them.  
What our enemies really hate is the vital American way.  
And they're glad to see the far right rise up.  
They're glad to see the far left rise up it.  
It warms their cold hearts to see us ripping  
and tearing at each other and denying the truths  
that over the centuries have made us the most successful  
large human society in history.  
Walter Russell Mead, thank you so much for coming on, honestly.  
Thank you, Barry.  
See you again soon, I hope.  
Thanks for listening.  
For more coverage of the situation  
currently unfolding in Israel,  
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