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Not because they can solve. But because they make fewer mistakes and that's a fundamental, you know, issue machines, you know, machines cannot offer us a hundred percent perfection.

CHRIS: Welcome to *No Turning Back*, a podcast hosted by General Stan McChrystal and myself, Chris Fussell. Our goal here is simple: to have serious conversations with serious leaders so that we can learn from the best and navigate these complex times together. Thanks for joining us.

ANNA: Welcome to the third episode in the risk mini-series on *No Turning Back*. This week, Stan and Chris speak to chess grandmaster, Garry Kasparov, about risk: in the game of chess, and more broadly, in society. Garry is well-known as a World Chess Champion who famously dueled against IBM's supercomputer, Deep Blue. In more recent years, Garry has been translating and expanding his focus to the Renew Democracy Initiative which aims to promote and protect democracy worldwide.

Garry first came onto *No Turning Back* this past January, and Stan and Chris were intrigued by all Garry had to say about risk. This week, they take a fascinating deeper dive on how Garry thinks about risk and opportunity against an opponent, and the risks that Garry faced when decided to play chess against a machine. Garry speaks to broader topics on how society now has a new relationship to risk post-COVID-19, and also speaks to disinformation – the risks it presents to our society on a national and global scale.

Risk: A User's Guide, will publish one week from today. We hope the topics and questions covered are intriguing to you, and encourage you to pre-order the book to enjoy more conversations and insights like the ones included in the episode. Thank you to Garry for joining us for the second time.

Now, over to Chris.

CHRIS: Yeah. Great. Great to see you again. And thanks for making the time. We want to talk about risk. And so, I know we sent some notes ahead of time. We'll follow those as much as it makes sense to really follow your lead. You know, we're a little over a year into this and you are the first person we thought we were going to have back on the show because your thoughts are so, so timely right now.

So, for what, for whatever that's worth we'll, we'll send you a trophy to put on the wall or something. But we really appreciate the second round here on the podcast. Stan, over to you.

STAN: Yeah. As Chris mention, Garry, we really appreciate you coming on and I've been particularly excited because you're thinking about a lot of the things I think we're all thinking about now around risk, and we're not going to talk very much today about chess, but, you know, with a grandmaster, I've got to start with chess.

And when we wrote the book *Team of Teams*, we explored the interconnected nature of the game. The fact that it's... how complicated it is and the options after two or three moves, it can be so daunting, but I want you just to give our listeners an idea of how you think about that. When you think about chess and risk, when you're playing, are you thinking about the risk of what the opponent can do, or you thinking about the opportunities that you can do to put risk on them?

GARRY: Oh, thank you very much for this question, because this is a great theme. It's one of the few ways that chess thinking can directly translate into the real world. So, as you point out in your book, chess is too complex to analyze all the possibilities. The number grows exponentially from move to three and even supercomputers, meet algorithms and the algorithm tricks, even to deal with a huge decision tree after just a few moves. So that's why, you know, it's a simple, you know brute force. Doesn't do the trick, you know, unless, you know, you, you, you have some algorithm use to, to, to, to select the right moves.

And it's now more and more, we see machines, you know, operating with patterns, not just, you know, a simple calculation. So, the risk opportunity equation in chess is very much, very much a matter of style. So, one player, very strong player, may look at a given position and see the threat to my king. And immediately he immediately acts to shut down that thread with prophylactic moves. Oh, I have to eliminate threats. No, I have to make sure I build a strong defense around my King and, you know, just to push, push attacking pieces... you know back.

Another player, also very strong player, might see the same position and scratch his or her head and decides my attack chances are better than my opponents so that they, the opportunities, my opportunities can outweigh the risks. And that this was my style. My style, more dynamic and optimistic. And in in my book, *How Life Imitates Chess*, I wrote the section that called the "Attacker's Advantage."

It's being aggressive, suited my style, but it also has practical benefits in the long run, especially these days when these things change so fast and so often. So, if you take risks and fail, you learn more than if you sit tight and don't test your intuition and skills. But again, at the end of the day, it's about your nature. It's about what makes you feel comfortable because it has, and in many situations in life, you're at nexus and there's no right choice or wrong choice, it's a choice that will lead to sort of other, other crossroads. And eventually you always have to make these choices. And it's very important that you feel comfortable with where we're heading.

CHRIS: Garry, can we pivot over to some personal risk? One of the areas that Stan and I talk a lot about between ourselves, and with other leaders, are moments of risk takers, measured risk takers. Most leaders we work with have some of that in their DNA. And they also get these moments where they're willing to take personal risks.

Many of our listeners will be familiar with your, your series of games against IBM's Deep Blue which, from the outside, would seem like a very risky and bold personal move. Why, why take the risk of losing to a machine? Why take that challenge, right? Why not just stick to the, the human competitors? Can you talk a little bit about that decision or risk like that? And you said, I'm going to jump into an entirely new space and really try to define what this looks like at personal risk, reputational risk.

GARRY: It's a very complex question because it's not exactly the risk we just discussed because it's it has other elements. This decision had element, like a promotional elements, is my duty is to promote the game of chess. So, there were several motivations. Though, many people in the chess community to try to keep computers out. And they told me not to play them, but I have to say that prior to my matches against IBM computer, Deep Blue '96, which I won, there was one to remind people about this fact, you want to preserve the historical record, and the 1997, which I lost, we already faced machines.

And I knew that it was something that we couldn't stop. You know, it's we, we had to take our chance to, to measure our abilities, our intuition, our creativity against machines, brute force. So, this personal challenge was of something new and different, but it was also, I could feel it was a big showcase for chess because my match was the Deep Blue, but chess was on front pages around the world.

It's not just me and artificial intelligence. I think I did more for IBM stock price than anyone else. Yeah. So, the way I saw it, we don't lose these matches, you know, we'd get more attention for chess and even my five legendary, legendary world championship ...of course, I wanted to win and it's just, you know... should you remember that I never, I had never lost a match before in my life. So, and I knew it was inevitable that machines will surpass me one day, but at that time in '96 and even in '97, I felt that I was the favorite. Yeah. You may call it eager or competitive nature. But, you know, if you lead a life in sports, you train to rise to challenges.

And I have to say that, you know, my preparation problem was inadequate in 1997, but analyzing the game subjectively, so, I think I, I was still, you know, a superior to the computer, but at the end of the day, it's just, it's the, again, it's the result matters. And the machine, you know, proved to be just better by making fewer mistakes.

So, but also also, you know, just put aside these, these chess factors and, and, and, and the personal factors, I feel that was part of great science experiment or even social experiment. And that was my duty to participate. The founding fathers of computer science, the legends like Alan Turing and Norbert Wiener, they were obsessed with machine chess, all were back in the 1940s. So even before computers existed to run the programs. So, beating the human world champion was a dream that pushed decades of programmer and designers.

So, that's why I felt that IBM betrayed science by playing only to winning our second match, turning Deep Blue into a black box and not releasing data. And then of course retiring Deep Blue. It was their right., it was a good business decision, but it was not science anymore. So

that's why it felt so disappointed. Yeah. And so I, at the end of this match in 1997, actually at a time when I realized that there'll be no new match with Deep Blue I thought it will be a curse for me. Now I believe it was a blessing because I was the first knowledge worker who had his job threatened by computer.

And instead of turning into some formal modern luddite, I decided that I had to take the opposite of you and to look for way to work with machine. You cannot beat them, join them. And since 1998, I've been promoting advanced chess, humans plus machine, playing other humans plus machines. And also, I'm arguing for the most effective forms of human machine collaboration. So that's why this experience helped me to recognize, and the problem was, was one of the first that it's no longer the age of competition. It's, it's time to it's time to find ways to, to work and collaborate with machines.

Going back to what I said, you know, a few minutes ago, you take your risk, you lose, but you learn something. And if you sit. Then it just, you know, you will not have this precious, precious experience.

CHRIS: That's fascinating. Can you say a little bit more, you mentioned you didn't feel like you've prepared well enough. Is there a different way of thinking about preparation in that world versus the human competitor? Because that's a lot, a lot of that is... how is machine learning and augmentation going to affect corporate leaders? They're thinking that as well. How do I get my people ready for this next gen?

GARRY: Look, you know, it's, the preparation is different. And also, it's not different. It's the same. Because at the end of the day, what, what, what does preparation mean? So, you have to collect data about your opponent. You have to prepare a strategy based on what you understand your strengths, opponent's strengths, your weaknesses, opponent's weaknesses, to look, whether it's chess, a business or military.

So, you just, you go through the same, same, same kind of process. Now my complaint was that, you know, I had zero information available from, from Deep Blue. In 1996, it was understandable. In 1997 it was actually my mistake because I while I insisted on having access to Deep Blue games in 1997, before 1997 match, I did a very, very lousy job reading the contract and I didn't find out the that's the, the IBM pointed out in, in the, in the footnote, in the fine print that I could have access to games played by Deep Blue officially, and this war changed everything because the blue hasn't played a single game outside of the lab. So, which means in 1997, I faced a stronger machine. It took one year, and they did a very good job by making machine, you know, more sophisticated.

So, and I still had no information available to me. Plus, you know, the, there were many things that, you know, could, could make this match more... the rules more fair because it's the, it's the fact is that machine could crash and then they could reboot it at any moment. So, without, without providing sufficient explanation, what's happened.

I said, afterwards, look, if you know, if I have a heart attack, I lose, I lose the game. So that's the, that's the, so it's... I forfeit the game. So why Deep Blue, you know, crushed and it says, tell me what was the reason of the crash, because we never had any access to what, you know, what, you know, programmers, you know, told Deep Blue. The judge, the, the man who follow this, you know, Ken Thompson, one of the leading programmers.

So, he just saw the screen from Deep Blue, but not, you know, what was sent into it. At the end of the day, water under the bridge? I say, they say, who cares? So that's, that's my fault. I just, you know, I'm willing to accept it. And it's, it could ... agony Of all of us fighting the machines because when you look at human machine relations, it always starts with us looking at machines.

That's the ... it's, it's, it's a toy then, you know, there's a stage where machines can do it, like in a play chess, but it's probably beating still 95, 98% of the chess players. But from a professional point of view, it's still, it's still, it's not a joke, but you can, they're often laugh at that.

Then you have the short phase, which is this phase of competition, by the way, which is the shortest one, but it's, it's so attractive for general public. Wow. This is a competition. And then, you know, it's quite soon machines are better ever after. That's it. So those, the four stages and, and again, in chess would pass this stage three earlier than other games.

And now, thanks to my experience in chess, I could be very specific in, you know, explaining why humans cannot compete against machines in any games because every game is a closed system. And the moment you put machine within the closed system, a framework designed by humans, machines will ever do a better job for simple reason. Not because they can solve the game, but because they make fewer mistake. And that's a fundamental, you know, issue machines, you know, machines cannot offer us a hundred percent perfection. That's why those who say, oh, driver-less car had an accident. Yes, of course I had an accident, but you know, it's, it's still much better than 40,000 people being killed in this country, on the road because of human mistakes.

So, it's all about machines making fewer mistakes and, you know, that's what I learned, you know, during that match. Yes. Maybe I could do a better preparation. Yes. I, I actually, this, again, it's, it's always easy to be a Monday morning quarterback, but you know, it's it get, it would not change the outcome, long-term outcome.

And that's why, you know, that's why I say the match was blessing for me because I understood that's it, you know, we have to prepare for different world and thanks for this experience because I played with other computers, probably stronger than Deep Blue. In 2003, against Israeli program, against a German program. So, they, they, they, they were very good, not as powerful, you know brute force as Deep Blue, but they already had better chess. They could play better chess. And by the way, today, your, if you have chess app on your mobile, it's at least as good as Deep Blue and the program you can download on your laptop, such as engine it's much stronger than Deep Blue.

So, but again, it's just, it's, it's, it's, it's natural because we have the Moore's Law and we have more and more data, quality data that is being used by computers. Again, what is important? You know, you have your experience and you apply these to the trends and you can actually see what's coming, you know what's coming next.

That's why, going back, the Attacker's Advantage, taking risk is good because you know, with all the risk you're taking and potential failures, you still ahead of the curve, you are the cutting edge. So that's why you can see what's, what's, what's potentially, you know, coming at or hitting you around the corner.

STAN: Well, that's, that is fascinating. And it's so... if I win on my phone than I am the equivalent of a grandmaster, that's ...

GARRY: Ooh, okay. This is that it's your phone, which means, you know, you can get, can be cheating. So obviously machines are designed and to please, you know, please the customers, because they can play very low-quality chess. So, but if you put it on the top level in your phone, I don't think even I can beat them.

STAN: Don't worry. I never would. I'm gonna pull a little further though, on this relationship between men and machines and risk, and I'm going to go back in history a little bit. Okay. We for the new book we've written on risk. We study Lieutenant Colonel Petrov and Colonel Petrov in 1983 is running a defensive operations center in the Soviet Union.

And he gets the indications that the United States has launched a nuclear strike against the Soviet Union and in a very simplistic version, his responsibility is to go to Moscow, report that, with the expectation that there would be a strike put into execution, but Colonel Petrov makes the decision not to report it.

And they talk about these 20 minutes in the operation center where he decides not to act because he doubts the accuracy of the machines. Now, this is 1983, earlier technology, but he makes a very human decision to depart from this machine-based system that had been implemented. What does that say about our relationship with technology then, and Garry, where do you think it's going? If you extrapolate that forward, what do you think about our relationship with machines making critical decisions?

GARRY: Oh, thank you very much. I think upi just brought, you know, a story about the real doomsday scenario, not from *The Terminator*, not from Hollywood movies, but something that could have happened on September 26. The fateful day, September 26th, 1983.

And we can also add that was a really tense moment because a few weeks before just on early September the, the Soviet jet shut down the Korean jetliner killing 269 people. So that was one of the worst moment in the Cold War period. And imagine, you know, that's that's at that time, you know Lieutenant Colonel Petrov face that these historic decision that could, you know, could end the, the, the history of our civilization.

So why he decided to wait, Again, it was very easy to just push the button move forward. So. before I answer this question, you know, I always want people just to look at again, let's let's fight Hollywood brainwashing propaganda with other Hollywood products. And I always bring the story from *The Empire Strikes Back*.

My favorite episode of the *Star Wars*, not back all 1980. So, the moment where, you know, a Han Solo desperately trying to escape from the Imperial Guard and had no other choice, but to lead his spaceship into the asteroid field. And C-3PO in a squeaky voice is telling him that the chance of surviving in the asteroid field is 3720:1, and his answer is, "Never tell me the odds."

Now this is very important because both were right. Machine always knows the odds. From the machine's perspective, chances of surviving in the asteroid field were slim to none. Non-existing. So that's why going back being caught by Imperial Guard, you know, then tortured by Darth Vader and eventually being killed probably next 10 hours it's still better than that almost inevitable deaths in 10 seconds by now by an asteroid.

But only human could understand that this one, 1 against 3020, it's a much better option because it offers me a chance to survive. Going back was not an option at all. So that's why to evaluate this, this one, evaluate something that, you know, that matters at this very moment, it's something that all humans can do.

Now, according to Lieutenant Colonel Petrov, the reason he decided to wait is that because he had few actually thoughts that, that, that that he had, he contemplated. One of them that the system was new. This system called Aqua in Russia, that was just introduced, but what's most important that he couldn't believe that the first nuclear strike from America would have only five minutemen, only five minutes.

You don't do it with five. You do with hundreds. So, if you attack, you don't send five. So, he saw this as this, this that's, it's something that's, you know, just didn't match up. From machine's perspective, doesn't matter. Even one missile, you, you respond, but he decided to wait because he thought it might be a mistake because it didn't, you know, in the meet, you know human logic that the, the first nuclear attack would have, you know should be devastating.

And again, he doubted that the, the new system that they introduced, you know was, was perfect. So, he waited and again, those a few minutes, yeah, that he decided wait, they were, you know, they were most dangerous moments in history of our civilization, even without, without our recognition of this fact.

So again, it's brings us to the modern days and also just, you know, we should recognize that while we rely heavily on technology, we still have, you know, we still must have a certain element of control, because at the end of the day, you know, it's just, it's it's, it's humans have to decide risk on a personal level, on a societal level, because otherwise you end up with the tragedy of the, of the comments and society, and it's just, you know, it's, it's, it doesn't work at all.

So, it's a it's like in the free world and the free market what's best for me works most of the time, but democracy also requests responsibility in a sense of shared risk for the greater good. So, I, I think that is this, that's this, the story that you brought in gives us some indications, how we should build relations with computers and while machines, you know, could grab more and more space in decision-making. If we look at the hundred percent process, so the humans are still dispensable because even our small contribution to this process could have a decisive outcome

STAN: Garry, he possibly saved the world. Was he honored in the immediate aftermath by the chain of command?

GARRY: No, absolutely not. It's just it's he, he, I think it was like he was not punished, but I think his career perspectives were, were were killed, which is again, totally ironic. But we knew that, you know, that's, that's that's, the story was buried and only after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many years later, we actually discovered it again from the system's perspective, which is, you know, it's sounds horrible.

But from these, from the perspective of dictatorship, the fact that he didn't follow these instructions, basically it's equally, he violated the command because there were instructions and it was not for him to make a decision. So, he had to pass it to his superiors in Moscow and he decided to make a decision because he knew he was better equipped to make a decision.

By the, by the standards of the system, it was a violation of the rules. That's why you can, he saved the world. They knew he saved the world, but they decided, you know, that's, you know, that's you know, that that's, that's only good for him not to be punished, but of course not awarded.

CHRIS: Hmm. Pulling back to the current day. Last time we spoke, Garry, you talked a bit about organizational risk and how organizations are hesitant to... it's easier than to spend money on the near-term immediate issues, measurable problems that it is future thinking, deeper research and development, growth initiatives, et cetera.

And you could make that argument was one of our sort of inherent risks rolling into the pandemic. We, we were out of practice of solving big problems. But some things got moving relatively quickly. So, over the last 18 months, I'm curious, reflecting on what's going on around the world, tons of negatives obviously, and the problem is not yet gone away, but do you see any long-term positives coming out of this in how people think about big problems and the coordination forward thinking that's necessary?

GARRY: Yeah. This is a big, big question to me and I think it reflects society that has becoming increasingly risk averse for the past decades. Corporate culture doesn't exist in a vacuum. You can have risk-taking leaders who break out and can see society from the CEO position. Yeah. So Steve Jobs, Jack Welch, but mostly they're reflected.

So you can go back to the old. Nobody ever got fired for buying IBM days. Yeah. Conserve the decision-making. But today companies are focused more than ever on the quarterly reports and

daily stock price. So, taking a risk that might not pay off for a year or years could cost you to job, your bombers, and hurt your stock options.

Now, the recent events, the, the tragical events for many of us, I think made quite a contribution to start changing this mentality because we all of a sudden faced, faced a crisis that we couldn't predict. And all of a sudden we've discovered that years, if not, decades, of cutting R& D on, in big pharma, because why should you waste money on your own research risky research of vaccines or antibiotics because any new new drug that you bring to the market, you know, has to be at perfectly safe. 00.1% of risk, you know, could lead to a massive class lawsuit against you.

During the pandemic oj, you have something that offers 95%, 90%, 85% of, of success. Great. We grab it. So, I think now this is that's that's, we are again, moving in the right direction, but we're still living in a world where, you know, tying executive compensation to stock performance in the short term, seems reasonable.

And these people, they have skin in the game. So now, how do we encourage, you know, short-term, you know risk taking mentality?

So, it's because the benefits of, of, of taking risks, the benefits of, you know, of, of being ahead of the curve, they could be phenomenal, just, you know, look at Moderna for instance. They have been doing, you know, this is the man who actually created Moderna, he has been doing it for years. So just having the mRNA vaccines, you know, just for, for Ebola, for ... but it was not, you know, a demand all of a sudden, you know, now it's, he's a billionaire. Moderna was one of his start-ups. But now that was a time where just, you know, we wish we had more Modernas.

We had, we should add more people who could take this, this risk early, you know, just investing in something that society didn't want to touch. Or again, was very cautious in, in, in incorporating. So, I feel that, you know, that's as the, the, it's the still the ripple effect across, across industries.

And what is pharma now doing? Because they all know they have to prepare, and no one is going to blame you for having a new drug that okay, potentially, you know, may cause damage for, for few people. Again, when I say a few people it's even if you have 2 or 3% of population being hurt, so that's horrible, but people realize, oh yeah, we have hundreds of people, you know, probably dying, you know, even if they're vaccinated, but hundreds of millions now being protected.

So, of course, you know, this is, it's nothing offers a hundred percent protection. There's no way you can get to even close to a hundred percent. But right now, we're talking about the wellbeing of the whole society. And I hope that, you know, these that's, what we're experiencing now in, in, in, in, in the medical world will actually spread around and we'll encourage, you know, more short-term risks, making decisions by, by the corporate leaders because the potential benefits might, you know, over what overwhelm the fear of failure.

STAN: That's really interesting. Let me expand the idea of risk here. And I want to give our listeners a little bit of an idea of passage or, or evolution of thinking over time. If I was to go back 10 years, what would you say with a three top risks 10 years ago? What are they now, and what will they be 10 years from now?

GARRY: Oh, look I, 10 years ago, 10 years ago. Yeah. 10 years ago, I didn't think about any specific risk, but my concern was complacency because there were things that, you know, that we couldn't predict, but I knew they would happen. So whether it's a climate change, geopolitical crisis, you know, pandemic. So, this is yeah.

It's and these things are not going to disappear and they cannot be predicted, you know, it's exactly. Oh, if we knew that, you know, that's this, there would be a disaster, a disaster in a nuclear plant. Oh, that's great. But the problem is, you know, you always operate with some sort of statistical probabilities.

Just, you know, imagine that you had, you know, just the group of scientists that somehow got access to, to, to Nostradamus' book, you know, they have this magic crystal. They look at this and, and they find out that the potential risk of a big disaster on, on Fukushima flat plane.

So, in 2000, I think it was 2011, yes, in 2001, they showed up in, in just, you know, and make a report to, to a Japanese prime minister, the government and say, you know what? We're dealing with a 20% chance that there will be a blow up, which could lead to a loss of a \$1 trillion in value potential. Ah, but if you spend \$10 billion now, you can stop it.

Tell me what are the chances that the government would even listen to them? 20 percent chance in 10 years, 10 years from now... come on, says this will not be there in the office. And also, you know, 20%, 10 billion. Okay. Just, you know, next day. So that's, that's, that's a problem. We are ... what pandemics told us the crisis next crisis would be inevitable.

Because it's globalization, it could be pandemics. It could be something in there just with, it was, it was a real virus that hitting people with the virus, hitting computers, something will happen. And, and that's why, you know, it's our only response is to be prepared by being more dynamic and less risk averse.

I don't know what kind of risk we'll be facing from now, because I don't know what kind of jobs our kids, our grandchildren, will covet 10 years from now. There'll be new jobs. Most of the lucrative jobs today, like an older 3D engineer and a drone operator and a social media manager, they didn't exist 15 years ago.

So that's why we can predict with all certainty that in 10 years there'll be many new jobs and these jobs will bring benefits, but also will bring new risks. Maybe on your school that, that that's someone who will be walking on Mars. Come back and bring you bring a, I dunno, a microorganism that could cause another pandemic.

I don't know, but this new development, exploration always brings risks. But what we know from history, the, the benefits always outweigh the potential setbacks because yes, exploring space, dangerous, all sorts of dangerous. The, the, the, the crew may die, you know, from radiation. This is, could be asteroid that will hit, hit the spaceship, or they bring something back to earth.

But there's also a chance that one of that asteroids, they discover something that will help us to replace oil and gas with new source of energy. We don't know, but all we know from history that the odds are now in favor. Exploration always helps us to move forward. So that's why, again, I, I think it's more psychological now, rather than, you know, us trying to make predictions because we can easily got, got it wrong, but I know that something will hit us.

And unless we change our risk averse mentality to be open for new challenges and become more dynamic, we'll be hit as badly as we have been aware, we had been hit by the pandemics.

STAN: Well, I feel very reinforced by your comments there because the book that we just finished argues that the greatest risk to us actually is us. It's our unwillingness to address our vulnerabilities because we can never accurately predict the exact nature or timing of risks that are going to merge.

GARRY: Yup. I just, I just couldn't agree more. So that's again, it's this ...it's it's at the end of the day, it's it's for us to make decisions it's asked three benefits or to suffer the setbacks.

STAN: Exactly. Chris?

CHRIS: Garry, can we talk a little bit about disinformation and the risk that, that presents? It gets a lot of attention now because it's so ... it's so much faster and it's getting technologically impressive with deep fakes and all that other stuff that's out there in the disinformation world. Not to mention just the interconnectivity that we all share now that makes it, makes it having so much faster.

But it's not new, and so, when we were talking about... Stan and I talking about having a conversation with you, I was saying, you know, if we went back, you, you two are relatively the same, same age, as a young child, your view of the United States and Stan's view of the Soviet Union would have been fed by different lines of different disinformation.

And now you'd have a much more equal understanding of those two systems, right? That system was sort of broken down by opening things up, right, through relationships. So here in the United States, McCarthyism worked and created a lot of fear, irrational fear because people didn't understand the reality of what was happening on the side. And I'm sure there are versions coming the other way, but it drove post-World War II socioeconomic prosperous society to say, I'm going to, I'm going to spend my money on a fallout shelter in my backyard, rather than just taking my kids to the park, right, where things are safe and stable, but I'm convinced that there's, there's a huge existential problem.

So, we fell for disinformation. It's part of our DNA. Like we're susceptible to it. There seems to be a new conversation or a new way of thinking about today's disinformation. Would you agree with that or do you think it's more of the same? It's just happening faster? And if there is an exit, how are we going to learn through this? So that one day we look back at it, as you know, and then there was the current version of McCarthyism, or however we're going to look at what's happening right now.

GARRY: You put so much in one question, you know, it has elements of history and it's, this is almost forces me to give some kind of political analysis to what you said.

It goes, it's the, the, disinformation back in the late forties, early fifties, was very different from what we are facing today. Yeah, while, you know, my criticism was, you know, just, it was a dark chapter in American history, but it was somehow based on the existing spread from, from the communist Soviet Union and for the expansion of communism.

And I don't know how to translate the nuclear war in the beginning of the 50s, but, you know, the, we started in power, before Stalin's death, you know, the Soviet leadership was to contemplating all sorts of scenarios of nuclear confrontation with the United States. So today the situation is different. And again, going back to just, you know, what was said a few minutes ago when I talked about the risks is... because it's the, one of the problems is, you know, it's, it's, it's a retreat of democracy.

Democracy has declined for 15 straight years in the world. And of course, China is pressing that advantage. And of course, Russia is there. So...American retreats, 10 years ago, I thought it might be a risk. Now it's not a risk. It's a fact. It's the so, and, and American almost disappears from the world stage was like an open invitation to interference, definitely for Putin, to interfere in American political life and to actually use an opportunity to spread this disinformation.

It's quite ironic that the technology that has been developed and conceived, invented, developed in the free world and manufactured in the free world. They'll sound with this manufacturers in China, of course, it was an idea to promote individual freedom, has been used by dictators on flux and terrorists to promote their clandestine agenda.

So, disinformation is not new. Yes, as you pointed out, but there's so many ways now to, to promote it, there's only one way to tell the truth, a million ways to lie. And with all these channels that are available for, for super spreaders, it's easy to play, as you said Chris, you know, it's just to play with the human mind, so that just with our nature, we'd rather, you know, grab the story that looked fresh and unique and just, we never heard about it.

And disinformation could be packaged in many smart ways. You know, it's not like, oh, outright lie. No, no, it's just, you know, this is, there's a real story, but it has elements of that. So how to separate lies from, from, from truth. And and I think it just, you know, it's, it's, it is, it is a huge threat and we see that, how disinformation by the way, coming from both sides, you know contributed to the growing divide in American society.

Which you know, this divide is something that, that dictators around the world celebrate because they can point out saying, look, you know, democracy is just, is no good. You know, it's the modern technology expose the weakness of democracy that we expected otherwise. We expected a new technology to help us to promote democracy, but we still yet to find the right, right, right algorithm, how to, how to combat it. And it's very important that you know, that we, you know, we fight it in without, without rallying our respective political causes. Because I'm, you know, I, I believe you know, that that's, that's Donald Trump did something to be banned from Twitter, but I'm not comfortable seeing that, you know, that these, these Twitter or other social media platforms, they are turning a blind eye to the world dictators.

Yeah. It's... or even people in America who are promoting equally, equally destructive views. So, it's this, I want the same standards to apply. And if Trump was out, I want Vladimir Putin out, Xi Jinping And, you know, people here in America, you know, for instance, you know, you have, you talk about superspreaders that are just, you know, are telling Americans not to, not to be vaccinated.

Why, what about ... and his Twitter and, and, and Facebook that is openly telling his followers not to be vaccinated because it, you know, it's a conspiracy against Black people. So, I think this is a problem that we often deal with disinformation based on our political preference. And I hope that we, we, we, we can come to an agreement that the same rules would apply to anyone, whether we like them or not. Whether we agree with them or not.

STAN: I love that. As a way of, of wrapping up, I want to make a couple comments. First, Chris, you were trained as a Navy SEAL to do underwater operations coming out of the water and going on to combat. What you've done since then is you have expanded that into helping organizations function. How leaders lead an organization function.

Garry, you took a natural intellect and a skill. You honed it into being the best chess player in the world. And now you've taken that perspective, those experiences, not just those talents, and you've expanded it into things that matter much more than, than chess ever will: democracy, the future of people, and opportunity.

And so, I guess what I challenge each of us, both as participants here, but also everyone who listens to this, the idea of how you contribute starts with thinking. It starts with taking what you know, and adding to that. Listening, listening to what other people can bring, thinking for yourselves, and then finding the way that you can contribute in a way that that makes everything better.

So, Garry, you made our podcast, as you did the first time, better today and better as a series that I'm deeply appreciative of, of all that you do.

GARRY: Thank you very much. Thank you so much. And I also know I'm very happy that you you joining now the Renew Democracy Initiative advisory board, the organization that I formed in February 2017, to share my experience of fighting for democracy elsewhere, with the American public, again, as you said, it's about our almost lost ability to listen to each other, just

to to, to understand that, you know, different opinions, you know, do not mean that we have to confront each other. So yes, it's a, it's, it's, it's an intellectual exchange and I'm happy to be guest at your podcast because that's where this, you know, I can feel that there's a flow of the ideas, you know, it's, it's, it's helping out listeners to actually to formulate some new ideas for them and, and, and to look at the world, you know, from, from different perspectives.

STAN: Perfect. Well, thanks. I'll look forward to it, Garry, and take care.

GARRY: Thank you very much.

CHRIS: Thank you, Garry. It was a pleasure.

Yeah, I'm, I'm always impressed. I mean, you've spent more time with, with Garry than I have, but, just the way someone like that, their, their brain thinks is, is, is pretty impressive. And his, his breakdown of the... if you could talk more about that, that vignette from your, from your book. I think people would enjoy it, but his perspective on that I thought was really interesting. And just so listeners know that was, that was not a planted question. He didn't know we were going to ask about that. Just if you're curious how smart the guy is, he could go into the whole history of that right off the top of his head.

STAN: Yeah, it really was that Armageddon moment in 1983. And then from the Soviet era, it was Ronald Reagan and the presidency, it was after the Beirut bombings, America was becoming more aggressive in the world.

And there was this perception that the Americans just might launch a strike. And so, his description of it of course captures some of the drama of the moment. But if we think about that really Garry was saying today about risk was it is your capacity to deal with risk that is most important, as a chess master your ability to see the chess board and respond as opposed to knowing each perfect move, or his focus now on democracy, the resilience of a society to process disinformation or to deal with many of the challenges that come up.

That's the thing that jumped out at me. He's, he's thinking broadly about those kinds of risks that are really important, you know, at the end of the day.

CHRIS: Yeah. And that, I mean, there, there's some sort of intuitive angle to hit the way his brain works or chess masters, generally. They, they see risk and opportunity in just such a different way. But it's, it's neat to see him sort of get excited about questions like that. Cause you, you know, you're hitting on something deep inside his brain of, you know, putting risk in, into play for others to deal with, or backing off and creating risks by being too defensive, just... and the way he can build on that out to a society level. And, you know, with what's going on currently around the world, his work in democracy, he's, he's a pretty amazing guy. And I have, I would love to have him on again and really get inside his head on his push into the democracy space.

Right. He is, I would argue, legitimately concerned about the degradation of democracy. And we were talking a little bit before we started recording on how he's seeing that play out from an international perspective, the way that people are looking at the United States right now, and what he was saying before we started recording was, so much of, it seems self-induced obviously he knows the United States very well.

A lot of people, the international community doesn't have that inside perspective that Garry does. And one of his concerns is this... the self-induced sense of panic and chaos, that isn't really the day-to-day concern inside the United States, down to the individual citizen, is creating this perspective around the globe that maybe democracy is a failed, a failed enterprise, right. And obviously dictators around the world are leveraging that to their advantage.

STAN: Yeah, absolutely. I had an extended conversation this morning with a former Afghan official and talking about the collapse of Afghanistan and she described it in ways that you and I would immediately feel familiar with as this loss of confidence as Afghans around the country started to feel that their central government was shaky and unlikely to survive. They suddenly all recalculated what the correct action for them was. Should they resist the Taliban or should they not?

And so, and then when a district near them decided not to, then it became a momentum was created. And so, pretty soon, by the time it got the Kabul, really, it was decided because the Afghan people had lost all confidence that they had a viable future and opportunity to resist the Taliban advance. And so, it just, you know, resistance seemed to evaporate. And so, this comes down to what's in the minds of people and what's in the minds of societies does so much to determine how they respond.

If America, if America is viewed as weak or as president Xi Jinping described us willing to discard our allies like trash, and I paraphrase, but that's almost the phrase he used, then, then suddenly people lose confidence in us as a partner and as a society. And then you, you do have real problems.

CHRIS: Yeah. And I thought his, his response when we were talking at the end there about disinformation and, you know, uh, a generation ago or post-World War II versus now was not what I expected. He was making a mor... there was, he saw more separation in that, that I would, that I thought about. And I'm oversimplifying it, but basically saying the clarity of that post-World War II environment, you know, two big threats, sort of time and risk bound, a very sophisticated game, but, controlled game versus now, which is much more chaotic, as, as a whole another level of stuff to think about their disinformation. It can be leveraged in a chaotic realm versus a more... very dangerous, but more static one of previous generations.

STAN: Yeah. And then the final point I just found really interesting was our confidence in technology. You know, we talked about the Lieutenant Colonel Petrov doubted the new system that had been put in in 1983. And as he was right to do that, but how are we going to feel if your cell phone gives you locational data next week? Are you going to doubt that that data is correct? Or are we going, are we becoming conditioned to accept certain things?

Which of course carry risk.

CHRRIS: Yep. I teach a class on special operations, as you know, but for others, and we had a discussion recently about how that part of the military, that's part of your defense apparatus and your strategy going forward, forces like that. They're obviously going to change over the next several generations as it has in the past.

How do they leverage disinformation, or do they? Is there, is that a subspecialty either to, to leverage it, fight it? How critical is that going to be? I mean, it gets very, very frightening, very quickly. If you think about how sophisticated we might need to be, on a fast-changing battlefield, to report accurately or fight very believable, inaccurate information.

And that immediately drives decision-making thousands of miles away. So, there's a lot more to consider. Garry was a great guest. I can imagine having him on pretty regularly if he's, if he's willing to do it.

STAN: Absolutely. Great time.

CHRIS: All right. Thanks everyone.