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

**ANNA:** This week, Stan and Chris conclude the Risk mini-series of *No Turning Back*, looking back on the six episodes, and looking ahead to the greatest risks facing our nation and world.Our podcast, after all, is called *No Turning Back,* and Stan and Chris will leave you today with clear insights of the challenges that lay ahead.

Thank you for joining us for this the mini-series - I hope they've prompted you to think about risks: whether they be in chess, poker, in special operations, or in business or finance. Our next mini-series, coming to you within a matter of weeks, is about the Future of Work.

If you've enjoyed the Risk mini-series and are looking for more, pick up a copy of Stan's latest book, *Risk: A User's Guide*, which is available everywhere books are sold.

Now, over to Chris.

**CHRIS:** So, we're going to jump in here, with a reflection discussion on the last mini- series that we did on the subject of risk. And so, you know, going into the second year of *No Turning Back,* Stan and I wanted to start getting a little more specific on, on topics, and come up with a series of many focused series on, on different things that are really top of mind, obviously with, with Stan and Anna Butrico's book on risk, just coming out.

We just decided to start with that topic. And we got a great run of, of guets, from Annie Duke, the poker player who was, you know, a collaborator a little bit and adviser and endorser on the *Risk* book. Garry Kasparov, who we interviewed before, but not specifically talking about risk, spent time with a former corporate executive, Bob Wood, who was also a good friend of McChrystal Group. And then John Chambers talking specifically around financial risks.

So, our goal today is to sort of quick, quickly review each of those, just to refresh, we'll spend a minute or two there, and then I think get into our core takeaways and then areas moving forward where Stan and I are having the most discussions around what are the biggest risks out there that we're all facing in the years ahead.

So Stan, any, any opening comments and I'll start with some reflections on our, on our first discussion, but over to you.

**STAN**: Yeah, it's, it's been very fascinating. And if you take all of these different disciplines that our guests represented than our experiences, it kind of comes down to: how should I think about risk? I think that's the question everybody asks themselves and they look to the left and right and they looked to other disciplines and they say: are they thinking about it better than I do? And the answer is, it depends. And so, what we're going to unpack that a little bit, because everybody thinks about risk, everybody deals with it. And so, maybe we can be helpful here.

CHRIS: So we started the series with just a discussion between the two of us, specifically looking at risk inside of special operations and how that's evolved over many generations. We focused specifically for a bit on the Iran rescue, failed rescue effort under the Carter administration, which really led to the start point of the birth of modern, special operations, special operations command, and all the subordinate units. They existed then obviously, but that was the first big push towards maturing them for the modern world.

One of the takeaways, if you look at that operation specifically through the lens of risk calculation, was an effort to drive risk down to as close to zero as possible, and that was certainly a mentality that I probably grew up in inside of the SEAL teams in the late nineties and something that had to evolve when you get into a much more complex, fast changing networked world.

A few things that I remember from that discussion, things that we talk about quite regularly. One being the… we, we talked a bit about the underwater operations in the SEAL teams, and how the deliberateness of, of planning can be a way to de-risk the "unknowables" in an environment like that.

Also spent a little bit talking a time talking about the size of a force, right? There's oftentimes a tendency to think more is better, because I can de-risk, but at a certain point you hit this tipping point where every new thing needs another new thing to protect it and your risk can hit this weird point in the curve when it starts to go back up.

And then also of course, the, the idea of specifically inside of special operations, how, routine and discipline can substantially mitigate risks in the unknowables, where everyone is focused, understands how the person next to them will operate and think, where they carry their gear, those sorts of little details that you find inside a disciplined units, organizations, are so helpful when all chaos breaks out and you're depending on those people to your left and right.

So that was a fun topic for us to review. And then we moved from there into a conversation with Annie Duke.

**STAN**: Yeah. Annie Duke was one of my favorite guests, because it's just fascinating. She's about to get her PhD and she goes to visit her brother and decides to play cards for a while and becomes a world champion. I mean, who does that?

Well, really smart people do that. And I always had a view of poker as somebody is really good at it, so maybe they're either very lucky, just always lucky, or there's some secret to the game. And what Annie teaches us, is at the end of the day, it's a lot about discipline because what you're doing is: there is a random component of chance. There's a risk built in. You never take that out because the next card that comes up is impossible to know until it comes up.

But what you can do is think in terms of probabilities. And so, what she convinced me is if someone is very disciplined and makes each decision constantly reevaluating the probabilities of

success, that you may not see that in who wins the next hand at poker, but the person who wins, ate a lot of hands at poker and goes on to be a world champion. That's what comes out.

The other thing she, she really taught me is: be disciplined how you think about decisions and their outcomes, because we can often make a perfect decision and get a bad outcome, simply by chance. And yet, if we do that, we have a tendency to go, ah, you know, something went wrong, I got screwed. But if we make a bad decision and get a good outcome, we don't think that way, we tend to think that must've been a great decision because I got a good outcome. And so, there is always that part of chance. And that's true, not just in poker, but in military operations and business and everything else.

So, at the end of the day, what I took away from Annie is the most disciplined player, who is the most thoughtful, wins.

**CHRIS**: Which was a nice bridge back over into our second discussion with Garry Kasparov, you know, chess master, world champion, undefeated for an incredible stretch during his, his chess career.

So, obviously just a great person to talk with on a, on a, on a show like this. But we pivoted specifically towards risk. You know, interesting takeaway from that specific conversation, one just fascinating trivia. He's well-known for his, his willingness to play Deep Blue, the IBM supercomputer, which he beat and then lost to in a series. So, we talked a bit about the reputational risk there and why he chose to do it, which he didn't frame as real personal risk. He just thought this is the right thing to do, to kind of continue to evolve how we think about our relationship with machine learning.

The interesting trivia fact was: if you download, you know, chess app, whatever, off the Apple Store, that if you put that on the highest setting it has, I don't know if you caught him saying this that no chess master in the world could beat what's on your iPhone right now. That, that it was much stronger than what deep blue was. Just gives you a sense of how fast that space is growing.

But he, he talks specifically on the, on the chess side around, and we, we discussed this a little bit previously, you know, his approach on understanding himself as a player and when he coaches others now, you have to understand what are your comparative advantages and don't spend all of your time trying to just understand the other, your adversary, but understand where you're at your best.

And he talked about this idea of the Attacker's Advantage, which is when he played at his best and felt like if there was a missed opportunity or an error on the board, that it was mostly not the person on the other side, taking advantage or playing better, but himself misunderstanding where he should have been moving and what aggression he should have been demonstrating, which is great.

And then pivoted to a broader conversation. Garry's gonna be doing most of his work in over the last several years in just global democracy. Specifically with Russia and advising other states.

And that was probably the most powerful take away for me was an outside, thoughtful person who has been looking at, you know, global politics for many years, reflecting on the United States specifically right now, as this global advocate for democracy and sort of saying, look, from the outside perspective, we feel a lot of angst and pain about what's happening in the US right now.

It seems like you're, you're, in-fighting over things that you could solve very quickly. And you're forgetting that you still are this "beacon on the hill" for other democracies on the world to try to live into. And you're inviting as being leveraged by the opponents of democracy that Garry and folks like himself are trying to keep from gaining additional power globally.

So, another, our second, but a great discussion with, with Garry Kasparov.

**STAN**: We, we then gave a look at our new book, *Risk: A User's Guide*, and we, we offered some different excerpts in the book. And one of the things I think people look at in a book on risk is sort of a catalog of all the things that can get me: snakebite, meteor strike, zombie apocalypse. And I go back to… people used to come to me after the tragic loss of Ambassador Chris Stevens some years back. And if you remember, he was operating from an informal consulate and a, a group came in and in the confusion, he was killed in a fire. And people said, well, that was far too risky for an ambassador to do, to put himself in a place like that, where security wasn't perfect.

And my response was always, he was exactly where he should have been. If we wanted to keep him away from risk, we could have put him in Ohio, in an armored building, but he's not going to do much diplomacy for Libya from there. So, we have to live our lives. If we try to, to do all the things we can to avoid all the threats that are out there, we're really just going to wear ourselves down.

So, what we really offer in the book is the advice that there's a lot you can do: not to necessarily duck every threat that's coming, but to make you and your organization more risk-fit, more ready to deal with those threats that come. And some of it's pretty basic. Some of it is communicate better in your organization. Develop a clear, consistent narrative and stick to it. Be adaptable, be able to change as circumstances change around you, leverage diversity to be a strength so that you don't have blind spots in your organization. Similarly, understand your biases because you have some. We all do. Think about timing: when you make decisions and when you execute and of course understand that technology is a two-edged sword: for all the good it does from us, it leaves us a little bit vulnerable.

We talked about… my wife and I bought a new refrigerator recently. It's on WiFi and I'm mystified. I say I never sent any emails. Why is it on wifi? But I guess now somebody can hack in and turn off my refrigerator. If they want to, that's yet a new vulnerability. I got to stay up late and worry about.

So, all these resilience, the things that we can do to make our organizations more capable of responding to the things we can never perfectly predict, offer us the best path ahead.

**CHRIS:** I'm guessing it just sends emails to the Bud Light Lime.

**STAN:** I hope so.

**CHRIS:** We then went into the final two discussions on, on risk with, with Bob Wood, and John Chambers. With Bob, who has had this exceptional career inside of industry, starting as a, just a young professional out of school, worked his way up to the executive level, served as a CEO at a public company, went on to be a board member, throughout different parts of the industry, and obviously a friend and advisor to McChrystal Group as well. And that, that conversation was heavily focused on, which I couldn't agree more with, leaders understanding the transition from contributor to manager to leader and, and challenging themselves to think differently at each stage.

And for Bob, one of the important points that he noted was who are you… who are you listening to? Who you connecting with outside of your immediate circle to advise you? That can be in your organization or outside advisers? What questions are you asking of senior leader, so that you're as, even as a young leader coming up, or manager, you're, you're constantly pushing yourself to think at the next level.

And then what types of questions are you asking from the generation beneath you? Similar to what some things we've talked about before, like having senior peer level and people below you that you're constantly watching and learning from. And then I, especially, Bob had noted as you get more senior, you're not only doing that for yourself, but grooming up that next generation through the questions you ask of them and where you try to get their thinking to the level, you try to pull them up to. So, you know, they're ready to assume that next role of leadership as that as they continue to groom up. And then specifically as you get more senior, the ability to identify risk through the questions you ask.

Bob, I know personally has an artful way of doing this informed by, you know, many years in the professional space, but not just asking the number about why is this… why is this metric not where it should be, but asking the several follow-up questions to get to the root cause underneath that, which is where you can, I think, as a senior leader, really start to identify what are those risks on the edge of the organization? Is that number off because of our burnout, because we don't have the right personnel, because our training isn't effective, because we're losing our position in the market, which is hard to see on a spreadsheet. And it might be 5, 6, 7 thoughtful questions deeper before you get to that, that real risk that you could see down on the front line of the organization, which is not always easy to pull into the board room.

So great discussion there. And we've wrapped up with John Chambers.

**STAN**: Yeah. And I would say about Bob, we are so lucky to have him on our Board of Directors of McChrystal Group. I know a lot of smart people, Bob is wise. So, I would send any listeners who missed the discussion with Bob, go back, because you will come away better.

And then we, as Chris said, we finished with John Chambers on financial risk. And of course, all of us are kind of daunted by the idea of markets and finances and debt ceilings, because it's sort of the black art. It's people with tremendous amount of expertise in that area saying things that I think they carefully in terms we're not going to understand.

And it just scares the life out of us. He talked a lot about things like: what would happen of failing to raise the debt ceiling. What are the real risks there? And they're not as obvious in the downgrading of credit for the nation and all would be huge. And then things like political risk and fiscal risks, monetary risks, external risk, all of these things come out when you step away and sort of blur your eyes. And then the details are not so terrifying.

I spent two years on the Board of Deutsche Bank USA, and my eyes glazed over about 80% of the time. But if you step back and look at the big things, it's common sense. And if we understand that the real risks are not being able to make the system work, and if things don't sound right, they probably aren't right, then people like John Chambers, we can understand where they're going and we can follow so we can minimize that particular kind of risk.

**STAN:** So, should we go into some of the key questions, Chris?

CHRIS: Yeah, I think, I think we should on, you've been in this space for a year plus now writing a book, releasing a book, talking to countless executives about it. So, I'll, I'll push it over to you to drive us through some of those, but you just made a point I want to ask you to… something about, you know, asking the right questions to simplify the problem down, like as a board member or whatever executive level you are. As I've gotten older, I'm a, I'm a deeper believer in, you know, generally speaking, you know, we're all smart enough, right?

I'm never going to be a quantum mechanics physicist or, or go to the moon. But I know I can kind of understand hard ideas if they're explained right. And so, I've gotten more comfortable saying, "I don't get it" and forcing people on the other side to look at me like I'm an idiot. Well, that's okay. I can accept that, but you've got to, I know I'm not a moron, so keep explaining it until I could translate it to somebody else.

And I think often, too often, especially as a younger leader, we're sort of paralyzed by I'm the only person in the room that doesn't understand this. So, I'm hoping somebody else asks for clarification, but when they don't, I sign off on what everybody has increased to. I think that's one of the fundamental problems with groupthink, right? Nobody asks the right question. Agree or disagree, and where did you start to get comfortable with that sort of approach?

**STAN:** Yeah, it's funny because you feel inadequate if you think you don't understand that everybody else in the room does. Soon after I left the service, I joined the board of a truck manufacturing company and we were trying out a new technology and, you know, I didn't understand the details of it, but they're working on engineer's brief and the CEO briefed us.

And then the technology didn't work. And after the fact, I asked one of the engineers. I said, why didn't you know that? I mean, this is what you do all the time? Why didn't, you know, wasn't

going to pass what it was, was environmental standards, EPA standards? And he said, oh, we knew. And I said, what do you mean you knew? Why didn't we, the board, know?

And he said, because you didn't ask. And it, it really woke me up to the idea that, and push me in the direction of every once in a while, I should just step back and ask the question as clear, is it going to work? Are we going to get EPA approval for this? And I know it can put, you know, sometimes more junior people in an organization in an uncomfortable position, but we have to ask questions that way. On the Deutsche Bank board I would ask the same thing and you know, every once in a while, I'd say: this doesn't make sense to me. Should it?

And every once in a while, other bankers, more experienced people, would look at me and they'd shake their heads and say: no, it shouldn't, because it doesn't. And then, you know, we would go in a better direction. Other times they'd go, yeah, you're stupid, Stan. And, you know, let the, let the adults keep speaking.

But it's really important to understand that we don't let your ego or your insecurity stop you from really addressing the thing that, that is your blind spot there.

Let's go to in the question. You know, as we started writing this, it seems so basic. But the number one question we had to answer was: what is risk? Because there are so many different ideas of what it is, and I'm not asking about what is a specific risk, but what is the concept of risk. Chris, what would you have answered at the beginning of this?

**CHRIS:** Yeah, I think the we'll talk about the framing that we've been really looking at in depth, probably in… strangely enough, like in, in the special operations world, I wouldn't have answered it crisply.

You looked at, you know, threats: what's the most likely threat. What's the most dangerous threat and you mitigated how you could, you know, would react if that happened. And that, that was risk mitigation, you know, at a tactical level of folks were going out into the field. You also ran through these silly sorts of risk matrix is for training exercise, but those were always, you know, gun decks, to steal a Navy term. They weren't taking seriously enough.

And so really you looked at risks through this sort of gut feel success or failure. And as you got more experienced and you had a more experienced team, the gut-feel got much better. Now I'm not… I'm oversimplifying it. There were certainly thoughtful approaches put in place when things got at the stakes got higher and higher, but I couldn't have thrown a framework up on the, on the wall, which is why I love the, sort of current view on this, that you've, you've suggested, which is this idea of threats times vulnerabilities, which I, when I'm translating that over to folks, I say, look, I'm a, I'm a rock climber.

That's what I love to do on my, on my free time. Rock climbing is easily explained. It's seen as this very risky sport. The threat is dying...

**STAN**: Chris, it is a very risky sport. That's why it's seen that way.

**CHRIS**: Right. The threat is, is, you know, above 30 feet, you fall and you're going to get seriously injured, above 40 feet, 50 feet, you're going to probably die.

Right? So the threat is, is death if something goes wrong. The vulnerability there is… can be mitigated through training, through the proper equipment, proper safety protocols. And the vast majority of times when there's an accident in the climbing world, it's a human error on the vulnerability side that could've gotten ahead of the threat.

There's the occasional, you know, avalanche that was unpreventable. But there… if you approach it through that threat times vulnerability, you can pull the risk down to near zero aside from the unpredictable rockfall or, or other things that just happen in nature. So, I love that framework.

STAN: Yeah. I mean, whenever I see a rock face, I just give it a wide berth and I've been able to minimize the risk for many, many years. And I intend to stay on with that.

No, it's, it's interesting. Cause I would have answered at the beginning, risks are things. It is a specific event, or it is a media, or it is a person. It is. And I could make a list of risks. Like, you know, as we did in some boards, I was on, you literally come out with all the risks we ought to worry about.

Well, the problem is: if you get a realistic risk, it's endless. And so, you try to just get the most likely ones. And so, as we started framing it for the book, we came back and we go, you know, we're really not very good at understanding all the threats out there because they're just too many. And we're certainly not very good at predicting them when they're going to come.

I mean, how often do we get it wrong and predicting even financial cycles and things like that? So if you can't do much about that, what do you do? You know, buy a lot of insurance, move to a very, you know, move away from the coast, stay away from anything that could hurt you, wear a helmet all the time.

But, but really you have to think in terms of how do I posture myself that no matter what comes, my vulnerabilities are reduced. And when we say about vulnerabilities, this is where Chris Stevens, in my opinion, was in the right place to do diplomacy for the United States when he lost his life. So, we couldn't reduce the risk of him needing to do his job.

And so now, you look at all the other things that might be vulnerabilities in our organization and run our lives that give us a greater capability to respond, to detect those risks that comes, assess them as whether they're really dangerous to us, act on them, respond, and then learn from it so that you're smarter next time.

And if we can focus on our vulnerabilities, two things happen: one, we stopped doing a crap shoot with what risks, what threats can arise. And we accept responsibility that if we are going to actually make ourselves less vulnerable, that takes some effort, and responsibility in our

organization gives us something to do and lets us really drive down what the ultimate risk will be.

**CHRIS**: Yeah, which raises this question of, uh, but that's how you view it, then this idea of what, what do you do about it? Right. So that's a good, it's a different framing on risk, certainly than I ever, ever thought about it previously. So how do we, how do we approach it?

Folks have heard me talk about this before, but I, I love the movie, *Battle for Algiers*. It's an old, black and white about the counterinsurgency efforts that the French were involved in. And there's a, there's a famous part of that movie where the French Colonel was getting questioned about how things are going in the conflict and why they're doing certain things, et cetera. And he pushes back on the media and says, you're asking the wrong questions.

The question you should be asking, is: should we be here in the first place? And of course, that, that opens up a whole different conversation. The… so on that risk front and ambassador Stevens is another great example, the question is, do we want to have an impact in this, in this part of the world, in that case?

The answer is yes. Therefore, there are risks. And so, we need to do our best to understand what those risks are so that we can then clearly articulate the threats, vulnerabilities, how can we mitigate them? Can we mitigate them so far down that we're still at risk, but we're not having any sort of impact, like we would want to have in the first place for being there?

It just creates a much more logical conversation, but it has to start with a clear understanding of what are we trying to accomplish with the actions we are taking, where we were putting forces, business decisions we might make, et cetera. Um, and oftentimes I think that gets lost in the after-action report.

Why were we doing that in a first time? Particularly in a hyper-partisan world right now, because we look at things and, you know, and I don't want to sound coldblooded, but I thought that what we should have done with Ambassador Stevens was build a statue to him and hope we can, we can recruit other people who are willing to sometimes go in harm's way to do the nation's bidding as well as he did. And understand that there is going to be a certain period of, or, uh, randomness where we are going to lose people. There will be a cost to functioning the way that we need to function. And instead of trying to drive decision-makers into reducing all risk in the future, because that will reduce all capability, we need to celebrate it and accept it and move forward.

Let's, Chris, let's talk a little bit about what the big threats are ahead. What do we think? And there, you know, again, there are so many big threats to think about and we're focused on vulnerabilities, but let's, let's just say how we process a few of these.

**CHRIS**: Yeah. I'll name a few, um, that we've had conversations about, and we can dive into to a few of them.

And admittedly, like, I am not a subject matter expert on these topics, but like others we're, we're looking at them constantly trying to think, you know, what's, what's the world look like for the next generation. For me, it's, it's a cyberattack, you know, that could be the next mass global pandemic, could be in the cyber realm.

What we've seen over the last 18 to 24 months, the global economic disruption that comes with an event like that, that can be connected or disconnected from a pandemic-type event. Climate change, obviously, this looming one that is becoming, I think in a good way, a more acute conversation. The reality of mis- or disinformation, that's all around us now. It's not new, but, as we've talked about in previous conversations here, especially with, with Tristan Harris, it is done in a faster and much more effective way. And then the idea of … this is one that I wrestle with, a steady decline, it seems like, in our belief collectively around the world and the importance of that the nation state and what that represents. And there were times when we, there was a time when we didn't have those and it feels like some people want to push towards saying that they're less and less relevant. And I really worry about what that future might look like.

So those are kind of the big, big five that we've talked about, most recently.

**STAN**: Yeah. If I was going to draw a common denominator of those, it would be the interconnected nature of society. If we went back 150 years and you were a homesteader in Nebraska, and you had Holly and the kids, and you're living on a farm, and you eat most of what you make.

And so, the reality is, you're not very effective. You know, you can have a very bad weather event. You can have native Americans attack, but in reality, the prices of farm goods, if you're consuming most of your own, doesn't affect you much. There are some things that do, but, but not a lot. A

And nowadays you go to a place where all the ones you mentioned, the cyberattacks, even if your system's not vulnerable, you create your business or your home, and it cannot be breached by any kind of hacker. The reality is: if someone hits your bank or it hits the electric company, or even hits things two and three away from there, hits the childcare so that the people who, the nurses at the hospital can't go to work, and so the hospital can't function because it's not manned. You just start a domino effect.

The fact that all of these things are connected. And so, things that we don't have direct control over become risks to us in a greater degree than ever before.

**CHRIS:** You just got my wheels turning a bit, as you're walking through that, the, you know, as we're looking at the drawdown of this 20 years of conflict, one of the, and we'll all spend a lot of years unpacking what we learned there and what, what actually happened, but there's, there's a reality, I think that's becoming more acute, which is the, the very modern and interconnected world when it interacts with the, the less technologically developed world, as we found especially in parts of Afghanistan. You bring this mentality, I can put myself to account here, of seeing an interconnected system. So, there's, there's redundant ways to get things done almost

anywhere you look there's, there's another power source. There's another grocery store. There's always, that's how big society scale.

And when you take that mentality, which is a very biased view that we've grown up in the country like this, into a place where you, where you think, okay, I've got to solve the mission. I've got to interact with this part of the valley or this village. You, you… it's almost impossible to appreciate that your disruption of the, the hillside, just up the valley, what that represents to that tribal elder or that village is, you know, we've for 200 years, for multiple generations, that's where we get our food. And you've just, you've just destroyed that. Or you've made it an inaccessible, like the trickledown effects that are, are impossible to comprehend until you really immerse yourself in it. And even then, it's very hard. And so, I think one of the knock-on effects as the world becomes flatter and we find ourselves in tangled in all these various corners, I don't know how we get there, but we have to appreciate not everyone sees the world in that same interconnectedness. And so, it makes those challenges even harder to just think you can go in and solve by bringing your, your very specific view on, on the world.

**STAN**: Yeah, that part of it is, is you pull that out because what happens in the minds of other people you'd say, well, it doesn't matter. I know what I know. I believe what I believe. I study, I, I have achieved absolute truth or whatever each of us hopes we have, and you say it doesn't matter to me what they think, but in an age of misinformation and disinformation, maybe it does matter. In the age of COVID-19, if we've got a suspicion of science, a suspicion of the effectiveness of vaccines, we have a percentage of the population that is unwilling or frightened to take a vaccine, then the entire concept of vaccinating a population, and therefore stopping the transmission of the disease, doesn't work. If we think about what makes a nation, you know, the United States wasn't created by God, who didn't drive, you know, draw off, you know, boundaries. It was a covenant between a group of people who agreed to do certain things, to be members of that society, to take on certain responsibilities.

And in return, they got certain benefits, defense, and rights and things like that. But if people don't accept that agreement, anymore, then suddenly the basic ties that make it work aren't there. And you can go to almost anything we can think of: if the cyber-system stops working then suddenly, or you don't trust it and you can't do banking over it. And you've got to go to the bank, but they've closed your local bank because they went all online, then suddenly the effect of all these things that seemed to be out of our world, but aren't, become apparent.

**CHRIS**: Combining those, those two ideas: mis- or disinformation, and the threat it poses to nation state, as a sort of governing model globally, can you turn that over to… you've done tons of work on national service since you left the military, with the risk equals threats times vulnerabilities, does that, does that plug into that equation to try to solve some of this, this issue?

**STAN**: I believe it does because I believe one of the things we lack right now is sort of… the sinews that connect our society. And that is the belief that other people are Americans, just like we are. And therefore, we should trust them, we should interact with them. We should would do things effectively. And there were times that were forcing functions earlier in our history: the Civil War, First World War, Second World War, Great Depression, and some other events that,

that forced people to interact on a level where you developed at a familiarity with different parts of the American population.

Now, I think what's happened is we've become segmented to a great degree, almost tribal. And you don't really interact with people, not from your zip code, or not from your economic circle, or not from your religion. However, you, you line up your life. And national service, the concept is one, you force people to do something for a common idea, a common goal, which is the good of the nation, and the society in that nation, which also forced them to do it together with other people – where you suddenly start to have interaction where the suspicions start to lower a bit. And it's a funny, psychological thing. Once somebody has had to contribute to something, they value it differently.

If you've ever go… we used to make soldiers pick up trash if they got in trouble. If you made them pick up trash, they didn't like people littered after that. And I think that's true if you do things for the nation, you start to think you have ownership.

**CHRIS**: The… I can't remember the exact stats, but there, you may know them off the top of your head, but, the odds of you made a, a soldier in the Army or any of the services that they have a family member, that they're direct descended from, that was also in the service is pretty high these days. So, we've got this incredibly powerful military, better equipped, better trained than it's ever been, but it's smaller in the demographic that it draws from. And it's getting, it's getting, the familial ties are getting more and more distinct each generation.

I don't come from what I would call a particularly military family, perhaps like the McChrystal clan, which you can describe. But I have a father who was in Green Berets. My uncle was in the SEAL teams, myself and my brother are SEALs, my cousin's in the SEAL teams.

**STAN**: So, what is not military about that, Chris?

**CHRIS**: But that's a very… in one way I could say in that risk equals threat times vulnerabilities. In one, one way you could say, well, that's a good thing because it gets better with each generation. You know, I could, I could raise my son or daughter, should they choose to go into the military, to be better than I was.

But you could also argue the counter, which is your national service idea. And maybe that's becoming more, as it becomes more narrow and specialized, is it actually creating a vulnerability that we're not paying attention to?

**STAN**: I think it does. I think it has two. The first is that the military starts to view itself as separate, as this independent entity, that is an at times the military can say, well, we're not appreciated or something like that. And there's also the danger that the military starts to say that, well, we are the defenders of the nation's values. We are the defenders of the Constitution and other parts of our national society just don't do it like we do.

And you say, well, okay, what's wrong with that? Well, it's only a short slide from that, to a military that says, well, we've got to step in and take over the government to protect the Constitution. And how many times in third world countries do we see that? I mean, we saw one this week in the Sudan and the argument is to protect our nation's democracy, we are going to impose a military government. And it may be with good intentions, but exactly what you say, if you start to have a military that is not part doesn't view itself and is not viewed as an inherent part of the population, I think you create a risk there with the division.

**CHRIS:** You know, maybe as a closing thought here. One of the things we talk about in the, in the leadership course, we teach together up at Yale, is the, you know, as you look at case studies, one of the, not always, but sort of constant patterns, if you look at history is, you know, one generation creates a problem, the next one solves it, creates otheirur own, and it's sort of this cyclical thing.

And you get, you know, you're always going to be judged by the next generation and they'll fix your problems. They'll make their own. But through that lens, like, I, I am confident, because I guess I'm a broadly an optimist, we'll get through these issues that we're just describing here, especially the, the misinformation, disinformation, that comes with this sudden burst in technological expansion.

And I think we're making a mess of it right now, because we weren't born as digital natives. There's this generation trapped in the middle that I think we're… that I feel the most strongly for, who were sort of… that parents of my age, that didn't know that, that the potential threat there for the next generation.

And it was just sort of handed off and they've been pulled into this realm, again, we talked with Tristan at length about this, but I think that this next, you know, preteen generation, they're watching all this happen and I'm confident they're the ones that are going to solve, solve this. I have no idea how, but, I'm curious if, if you have an optimistic bent on that and you know, you have young grandchildren who are going to be in that generation as well.

How do you think they're going to tackle it?

**STAN**: Yeah, it's a great question. I think it's likely to get worse before it gets better, but I share your optimism. I do think that that's the generation that will sort it out. I think what we have got to do, the responsibility for really my generation, even older than yours, is we have to admit there's a problem now.

We have to put on the table that okay: technology got out in front of us. We were not yet mature enough as a society to use all this technology as effectively and safely as we'd like. I liken it to tobacco. You know, there was many, many years from people smoked and then there was the year when, or the time when we knew, and we had increasing information that it was dangerous, and we had this long period where we had sort of denial. Big Tobacco was saying, nah, it's not really dangerous. It's all right. And each person made a, a judgment.

I think we're in that phase right now. And I think we've got to force our way through that phase as quickly as we can, because the young people, I think will make the decision not to smoke. And I think they'll make the decision to do technology more effectively to force it to be done. But, if it goes too slowly, a lot of damage could be done in that, in the interim.
And I don't know how much of that's going to be government, you know, mandates and controls. I don't know much will be social norms. I'm not sure how economic factors, you know, force better behavior because they really didn't do it for Big Tobacco. But I think that's what our generation has got to help do right now. Try to prevent more damage as we sort out what the right solution is.

**CHRIS:** Yeah. I think some of the conversations, I mean, it's October of 2021, and there are finally some really thoughtful conversations going on around this topic, right, at the, all the way up to the legislative level and pressure on, on tech companies that I think will force their thinking. Because it's, you know, it's a blink of an eye, so we still have the original founders running these companies that, that, you know, created it in their dorm rooms, quite literally in some cases.

And so we're chapter one of this long, a long story. But I do think, it will require, you know, maybe it's not the tobacco analogy, but like, in the vehicle world, like we didn't say get rid of all cars and go back to horse and buggy. But we did say, let's have inspections. Let's you seat belts, let let's put traffic laws in place.

Because these are big, dangerous things going very fast and it'll kill people. And they still do, but we have to regulate it too to some degree. And I guess ultimately that's, that's the promise, but I also think there's a, a promise, as there always is, in the next generation sort of looking up and out and going: well, you kind of got that one wrong, but, but we're going to learn, you know, to, to my daughter's thirteen, she wouldn't think about smoking right. When I was thirteen, like the cool kids were sneaking around the back of the school smoking, right.

To her, that would be ridiculous. Right. Because she just understands the threats of that. And so I think, I think part of that will be the solution as well.

**STAN**: So, I would circle back to rock climbing, Chris, because I think it's really good to get your mind around. You know, you rock climb and you do it very well. But you understand it in detail, you know what the risks are, you know, what you can do to mitigate those risks, and unlike technology right now, we're not even a hundred percent sure what the risks are.

And just like, you know, your daughter's not going to smoke, because she knows the risks of smoking and she goes that that would be ridiculous. And so, I think we've got to get to the point with technology where we understand them, and we agree upon what the risks are.

**CHRIS**: Yeah, I think as opposed to other like generational risks, there is a, there's a timestamp on this one because there … I'm over my skis, but there's a, there's a global impact here. Not everyone was going to suddenly get lung cancer. Right. But we are on the precipice of some major things going very wrong around the world if we, if we don't learn here quickly.

So, well, a great, a great series, a great wrap-up. And I think we went to some, some fun areas today. We hadn't, we hadn't talked about before. And we look forward to the next one that's right around the corner.

**STAN:** I do too, Chris. Well done. Thank you.

**CHRIS:** Okay. Thanks everyone. We'll see you s