

Demetri Kofinas: 00:00:00 Today's episode of Hidden Forces is made possible by listeners like you. For more information about this week's episode, or for easy access to related programming, visit our website at hiddenforces.io and subscribe to our free email list. If you listen to the show on your Apple podcast app, remember you can give us a review. Each review helps more people find the show and join our amazing community. And with that, please enjoy this week's episode.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:00:48 What's up everybody? My guest today is John Mearsheimer. Dr. Mearsheimer is professor of political science and international relations at the university of Chicago, and someone whose writings and lectures I was assigned to study early on in my undergraduate coursework in American foreign policy. His intellectual contributions have had a profound influence, not only on me but on the thinking of an entire generation of students in international relations. He's been a vocal critic of neoliberal hegemony, nation building, as well as the so-called forever wars that America has been engaged in ever since our invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. He's long argued on behalf of the realist school, which views the international system as fundamentally anarchic and where the most dominant concern among the great powers is defined by their desire and competition for security, that sometimes leads to war.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:01:53 Our conversation today focuses on two major themes of professor Mearsheimer's latest book, "The Great Delusion," where he attempts to explain why American foreign policy since roughly the end of the Cold War up until the present day has been such a colossal failure. And how much of that failure can be ascribed to a fundamental misunderstanding on the part of America's foreign policy elite about the relationship between nationalism and liberalism, arguing that nationalism is by far the more powerful of the two forces, and that therefore liberal hegemony was always destined to fail. He makes the argument for a more restrained, humble US foreign policy that acknowledges not only the limits of nation building but also the realities of international conflict that the United States is at risk of instigating with countries like China and Russia with whom it is currently in a deep security competition.

New Speaker: 00:03:00 This conversation continues well into the overtime. And this week's rundown is particularly useful, I think, for anyone trying to grapple with some of the concepts of international relations that we lay out today. So, if you've been on the fence about subscribing to our Hidden Forces Patreon page, I think this might be a good opportunity to try it out. There's a link to the subscription page in the description to this week's episode as

well as information about how to link your overtime feed to whatever podcast application you use to listen to the regular episode. So, you can listen to everything through the same application. So, make sure you do that. Also, remember there's no forward commitment. You can cancel at any time. And subscribing even for a month is a great way to show your support for the show, especially if you've been a regular listener and have gotten consistent value from the work we do. So, without any further ado, here is my conversation with professor John Mearsheimer.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:04:13 Professor John Mearsheimer, welcome to Hidden Forces.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:04:18 My pleasure to be here.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:04:19 It's my pleasure having you on. How long have you been in New York?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:04:22 I've been here just today.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:04:24 Oh, you just got in?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:04:24 Yes. Although I was born in New York of many moons ago and lived in New York city and then in West Chester County for most of my early life.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:04:32 Where did you grow up initially in New York city.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:04:34 I was born in Brooklyn and grew up mainly in Queens in an area called Richmond Hill.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:04:39 Oh, interesting. Where in Brooklyn where you born?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:04:41 I was born in an area called Crown Heights.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:04:43 Oh, that's interesting. Well, you're in Chicago now, how long have you been at the university of Chicago?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:04:46 I've been there for roughly 37 years. I went there in 1982, it was my first teaching job, and I've never left.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:04:54 So I told you that I first read your work when I read the Israel Lobby, and I think it was 2007, is that correct?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:05:01 Yes.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:05:02 And you co-authored that with Stephen Walt, and we had Steven on the program, I think he was episode 92.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:05:07 I see.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:05:07 So I've been waiting to have you on ever since and I'm so happy we're able to do this in person. You are now out with a new book. It's been out for a couple of months now. It's called the Great Delusion. What are you on now? Is this, like your fifth book?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:05:19 This is my sixth book.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:05:20 Your sixth book. So, this is sort of a continuation of The Tragedy of Great Powers, except that instead of being a rubric for realism, this kind of traverses liberalism, realism, and nationalism. It looks how they all interplay.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:05:33 I like to think that I've written two major theoretical works. The first was The Tragedy of Great Power of Politics, which is really a realist track. It lays out my theory of realism. This new book, the Great Delusion goes beyond tragedy, and it talks about the relationship between realism, nationalism, and liberalism. So, the scope of this book is wider than the scope of tragedy.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:05:59 So what was your objective in writing the book, and what did you feel was missing from your body of work up until this point that you wanted to address here?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:06:07 Well, I had two reasons for writing the book. First of all, I was very interested in explaining why American foreign policy from 1989, when the cold war ended, up until roughly 2018 had been such a colossal failure. In other words, what went wrong? If you think back to the early 1990s, there was so much optimism in the air about the direction the international system was headed, about American foreign policy, and something went badly wrong. So, number one, I wanted to try and figure out what went wrong.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:06:41 Number two, I was also interested in writing a book about the relationship between realism, liberalism, and nationalism. I always thought that nationalism was an incredibly powerful political ideology and I had not written hardly anything about that. I'd written a little bit about liberalism, and of course a lot about realism, so I thought it was time to write a book that dealt with all three of those isms. And in doing that, I thought I

could say a great deal about what went wrong with American foreign policy over the course of the post-cold war period.

- Demetri Kofinas: 00:07:17 What made you focus on nationalism?
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:07:19 I thought from just watching how the world works and reading different books and articles over the years, that nationalism was incredibly powerful.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:07:29 Because of course, nationalism made a comeback after the 9/11 attacks in a big way in the United States.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:07:36 I think that's true in a certain sense, but the argument that I make in the book is that nationalism is always there. Sometimes it's below the surface and you don't see it. And I think what happened in the 1990s is that liberalism was paid an enormous amount of attention and we talked liberalism, liberalism, liberalism. And people began to think that nationalism had disappeared, but of course it had not disappeared. And, as you point out, after 9/11, and certainly in the last few years, it has begun to rear its head and become very obvious to almost everybody in the West.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:08:15 So the book is really interesting because like I said, it's a theoretical treatise. There are references to historical facts, but they're there in service of helping build a larger theoretical framework, and there's also a lot of philosophy. And you pay a lot attention to that. And much of that really has to do with like questions of human nature and also the individual, like what comes first, the group or the individual?
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:08:38 I guess my first question is when did you begin to study these writers like David Hume or Machiavelli or Plato or some of these philosophers that dealt with these questions, and how important do you think this is? And perhaps also, how much is this missing in political science, in the kinds of educational experiences that students have in college? How much are these foundational texts missing and how important are they? Why did you include them basically?
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:09:02 Well, my view is that to understand how the world works, you have to have theories in your head, right? And if you have theories in your head, the question you want to ask yourself is, what are those theories? Where did you get those theories from? And I therefore began to think, as I embarked on this project that deals with liberalism, realism, and nationalism, about the great writers who had written about subjects like

liberalism. And of course, I went to people like Thomas Hobbes and John Locke and so forth.

- Demetri Kofinas: 00:09:38 John Rawls.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:09:39 John Rawls for sure.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:09:39 Of course.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:09:40 Yes. And I began to examine their works very carefully. Now I want to emphasize that when I was a graduate student at Cornell, in the latter half of the 1970s, I studied these individuals, but it was my first introduction to them and my knowledge was quite superficial. But for purposes of writing this book, I had to dig really deeply, and I had to figure out exactly what I thought nationalism is, exactly what I think liberalism is, and then how do they compare to each other. And that involves dealing with big theoretical issues.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:10:16 And by the way, these are not issues that the average person cannot understand. I think these are pretty commonsensical and pretty straight forward issues. It took me a long time to figure them out, right? And figuring out how all the pieces of the puzzle fit together. But nevertheless, I think the story that I tell in the book, even though one would say it's theoretical, is a book that a well-educated person could understand.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:10:43 Totally. And I actually would recommend to listeners not only to read your book, but to read it together with Jonathan Haidt's "The Righteous Mind." Because I've read that book also, I don't know if you're familiar with Jonathan's work, but that deals basically with why people are divided along politics and religion. And I think it embeds really well with what you did in this book because both books, I think, help really bring a lot of clarity to people who struggle to understand why are we so divided, why we argue along so many lines. I mean so much of what I saw in his book in terms of how he talks about conservative versus liberal, I saw in the way that you talked about nationalism and liberalism. So, what was the story that you're trying to tell in the book?
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:11:23 Well, one of the main themes in the book is that nationalism is a much more powerful force than liberalism. And the question you have to ask yourself is why is that the case? My argument is that liberalism and nationalism are built on a very different assumption about human nature, and that nationalism is built on a more solid foundation. Now what exactly am I saying?

Liberalism is predicated on the assumption that we are all individuals from the start and that we come together and form social groups. We form social contracts, but we are above all else individuals.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:12:09 Nationalism, on the other hand, assumes that we are from the get go social animals. We belong to groups. We belong to tribes. We belong to nations. Now the question you have to ask yourself, the \$64,000 question, so to speak, is which one of those assumptions is correct? And the fact is that we are all social animals from the beginning, who later in life, this is when we get to be say, eight or nine years old, begin to carve out room for our individualism. So, our individualism is subordinate to our tribalism.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:12:47 That's a very different way of looking at the world than the liberal perspective, which starts with the individual. And I think is basically wrong-headed. And for that reason, I think nationalism is a more powerful force than liberalism, which is not to say liberalism doesn't have any power or any attractiveness at all. It certainly does. America is a fundamentally liberal country, but America is also a very nationalistic country. We are a liberal nation state. That's liberal nationalism.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:13:21 So there's so many things I want to kind of drill down in what you're saying. One of them is this distinction between what is a more primal force, which is nationalism, it sounds like, and liberalism, which is something that relies much more on reason and reason thinking, right? You make this contrast in the book.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:13:41 My argument just about liberalism, and your question is an excellent one because it gets at the essence of what liberalism is all about. Liberalism is predicated on the assumption that we have powerful abilities to reason, but we cannot reach universal agreement on the big questions about life. In other words, is abortion good or bad? Is affirmative action good or bad? Is democracy the best political system or not? Human beings disagree over first principles. And sometimes they disagree so fervently that they will kill each other.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:14:22 Liberalism is designed to deal with that problem. It's designed to deal with the limits of reason. And the way liberalism works is that it privileges individual rights. Remember the emphasis on the individual. And the idea is that if you and I disagree on a particular issue, what happens in a liberal society is you have the right to live your life the way you see fit and I have the right to live my life the way I see fit. If you want to be a Catholic, and

I want to be a Protestant, there's space for you to be a Catholic and space for me to be a Protestant and space for this person over here to be an atheist or this person to be a Muslim.

Dr. Mearshheimer: 00:15:08 So we all have rights, we all have freedoms to live life as we see fit. And then the other thing that liberalism does is it preaches the norm of tolerance. You have to have tolerance to make a liberal society work. If you want to be a Protestant or Catholic and I'm the opposite, I have to be tolerant of you and you have to be tolerant of me. So again, liberalism is predicated on the belief that we cannot reach agreement on some of the core issues about human life. And therefore, we have to carve out space in civil society for each of us to be able to live our life the way we see fit. In other words, we have to have the right, the freedom to live as we see fit. And we also have to be tolerant of each other. That's really what liberalism is all about, and it's what makes it so attractive.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:16:05 So we should probably try to define some of these terms like what is nationalism, what is liberalism? But you're kind of doing that already. I want to throw out a couple of thoughts that I had while you were talking. One is just in terms of moral philosophy, this is the ought problem, the fact that the world is a certain way, but we have a sense of how it should be. And everyone has a different idea of how it ought to be. And this is sort of the fundamental problem.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:16:27 But two things that came to mind. One was when this country was founded, it was founded with a certain set of Judeo-Christian principles and ideals. And I assume that most of the people, most of the founders are, if not all of them, had some sense of universal morality that was not something that they had to arrive at through reasoned investigation.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:16:47 And I wondered to what extent how liberalism has transformed over the decades and centuries where we've become a more agnostic or atheist society and we've had to sort of update how we think about universal morals. Because we still have a sense of right and wrong in America, and we see that very much in foreign policy, so I want to throw that out. And the other thing is you mentioned tolerance, and you make this great point in the book about... I think you call it the liberal paradox, which is that on the one hand a liberal society needs to be tolerant but at the same time it can only tolerate so much. Because if it tolerates anything then the state, which is integral to securing those rights, which really aren't inalienable, goes away. What are your-

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:17:32 Well, let me deal with your first point, and then if I forget the second-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:17:35 Oh, [crosstalk 00:17:35]-

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:17:35 ... I'm sure we can go to that one.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:17:36 ... I scraped it down.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:17:37 I don't think that this country was created on the basis of Judeo-Christian principles. I think that this country was created on liberal principles. And I think the founding fathers were not that religious, and what they wanted to do was to create a state that left lots of room for people to practice religion as they saw fit. And that's what a liberal society is all about.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:18:09 Now, liberalism, I believe, has evolved over the years in the sense that in the beginning the emphasis was mainly on negative rights. You had the right to live the way you saw fit. And what's happened over time is that liberals, not all liberals, but a lot of liberals have come to emphasize not just negative rights, the right to free speech, the right to assembly and so forth and so on, but they have begun to introduce positive liberties into the story. In other words, people have the right to equal opportunity. That's a positive right. The right to equal opportunity. So, what we have done is we have moved from classical liberalism, with an emphasis on negative rights, to progressive liberalism where there is an emphasis on positive rights.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:19:05 So like libertarianism, right? When we think about it, that's-

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:19:08 Exactly. Libertarianism was, in a sense, classical liberalism. All you did was concentrate on negative liberties, on freedom in the libertarian story. And libertarians don't like positive rights. They don't like the idea that you create a state that goes out of its way to help people achieve equal opportunity. That's a positive right. And libertarians don't like that. But the fact is that libertarians have lost the game. We live in a world of progressive liberalism. We live in a world where progressive rights really matter.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:19:46 I do want to talk about that because you make some interesting points in the book about the forces that have made it difficult for libertarianism to actually exist in America, which is really interesting stuff I have thought about before, like including industrialization. I want to go back to this point though about

the founders. So, in that case, in your research, where did the founding fathers, so to speak, the founders of this country, what was the foundation for their sense of morality, which informed the drafting of the constitution, the bill of rights?

- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:20:15 Well, the founding fathers were almost all from Great Britain or from England, and they had been heavily influenced by liberal thinking in England. And here people like Thomas Hobbes, who, although he was not a liberal, I believe, was the person who laid the foundation for liberalism, and people like John Locke, David Hume, Adam Smith, and others just mattered enormously. And the founding fathers, in putting together the constitution, thought long and hard about how to create a liberal state. They were dealing with a country, and we're talking here about the United States, that had a whole slew of different religions within it. Most of them were Protestant religions, but there were puritans, there were Baptists, there were Methodists, there were just all sorts of different kinds of religions in the United States of America at the beginning. And they didn't want to privilege any one religion, they wanted to give people the right to practice religion as they saw fit. That's what liberalism is all about.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:21:26 Well, America, at its founding, was a more liberal... Am I correct to assume that it was a more liberal society than the Great Britain? And are you saying that that was in part a reflection of the realities of an extremely diverse country?
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:21:38 I'm not sure that it was in practice more liberal when it was founded, mainly because of slavery.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:21:43 Right. But when did they abolish slavery in Great Britain?
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:21:46 They abolished that later, after 1783. But the point is there were many more slaves in the United States.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:21:52 And the slave trade was an enormous business in the US.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:21:55 Absolutely.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:21:56 During that time.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:21:56 Absolutely.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:21:57 Yeah.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:21:57 I think in principle, the United States was a fundamentally liberal country from the beginning. And again-

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:22:04 ... it was a fundamentally liberal nation state. It's the combination of liberalism and nationalism. But it was a fundamentally liberal state in principle from the beginning, but in practice it was not, mainly because of slavery. And I would also note when the European immigrants, the so-called hyphenated Europeans begin to come in in the 1830s, from 1830 up until world war II, they're actually treated-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:22:32 The Irish and the Italians.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:22:33 ... very [crosstalk 00:22:33].

Demetri Kofinas: 00:22:33 Those, Yeah.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:22:33 Yes, exactly. Especially the Irish.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:22:35 Yeah. Also, of course, there's the native peoples of the Americas. A couple of days ago I downloaded a C-SPAN podcast. I used to listen to C-SPAN stuff a long time ago. It's been a while. But I came across a couple of lectures, fascinating. They weren't really good unfortunately, but they had a fascinating title, and it was basically looking at the policy, what would effectively be the foreign policy of the settlers towards the natives in the Americas at the time. It's interesting, because I was preparing for this conversation, I just thought I'd never thought of it that way. And of course, I'm pretty sure what was the Bureau of Indian Affairs was like one of the first departments that was created in the United States.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:23:14 I don't know that for a fact, but I'm sure that was the case.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:23:17 It was an old one. So, let's go back to this question I had, which was to really define what do we mean when we talk about nationalism? I mean, you've talked about some of it, but what is nationalism?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:23:27 Nationalism is, as I said before, predicated on the assumption that we are all social animals and that we, in the modern world, are born into social groups called nations. We're born into the Italian nation, the American nation, the Japanese nation. There are all these different nations around the world, right? That's the first part of the definition. And the second part of the definition is the belief that each one of those nations should have its own state.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:23:58 Its own physical territory also.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:24:00 Yes, physical territory. Of course, if you have a state, you have physical territory, you have control over that territory. And very importantly, you emphasize the importance of sovereignty or self-determination. You do not want other nation states interfering in your politics. That's what sovereignty is all about. But anyway, to go back to the definition, the word nation state, and of course the planet is filled with nothing but nation States, if you think about it. The word nation state encapsulates the definition of nationalism. We are all social animals born into nations and those nations that we're born into want their own state.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:24:41 Think about Zionism, right? What Zionism is basically Jewish nationalism. Theodore Hertzal, who was the founding father of Zionism, his most famous book is called the Jewish State. Jewish nation state, the Jewish state. Think about the Palestinians. What do the Palestinians want? They want a state of their own, a Palestinian state. This is what the two states solution is all about. So, you can see when you talk about Zionism and you talk about Palestinian nationalism, that it's really all about this concept called the nation state, which again embodies nationalism.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:25:22 Well, I mean the same was true. I'm Greek and the same is true also of the Greek nation. And it's interesting, we saw also, by the way, the same thing happen after the breakup of the Soviet Union and also during the world war one interwar period. There was also, I guess, historically, a lot of the great powers used nationalism to try and reorganize the world, whether it was in Africa, Eastern Europe, et cetera. And so, like nationhood would be considered the largest social grouping that we have ever devised in the world. The largest sense of grouping.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:25:53 I don't know if it's the largest grouping ever, right? Some people might say that civilizations are larger grouping.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:26:02 What would be an example of that? Like the Huntington style?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:26:05 Yes, exactly. Sam Huntington wrote about civilizations, which is a broader concept than nations, but I believe that civilizations are nowhere near as powerful as nations are. And that would be one of my fundamental criticisms of Huntington's book. Talking about civilizations doesn't take you far, if you want to understand the modern world, you want to talk about nations. And to get to your question, there's no doubt that what's happened over the past 200 years is that lots of the political

institutions that were out there like empires, think of the Austro-Hungarian empire, the Ottoman empire, the Russian empire and so forth and so on. They have all fallen apart in large part because of nationalism. And that's why the world today doesn't have any meaningful empires, its instead comprised of nation States.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:27:06

What happened to the Austro-Hungarian empire? You now have Austria, you have Hungary, you have the Czech Republic, you have Slovakia and so forth and so on. What happened to the Ottoman empire? It completely fell apart. You have Turkey, that's the remnant state, and then you have all these different States in the middle East.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:27:24

That's so interesting. It's been a very long time since I read that paper. I didn't read the book, I read the paper, and it was 2003. But I recall Huntington saying that China, the Chinese nation is not really exactly a nation, it's kind of a civilization. I think it was sort of an interesting point that he made and I don't know if you remember that. I mean it's just come into my head now, but it's a remarkable country because it's 1.4 billion people that manage to basically have a very strong sense of nationhood and identity.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:27:52

But it's a nation state. It's not a civilization.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:27:55

It is. But I'm just saying, I remember him saying that in the paper. Or I think at least he said it. And it just came to my mind because it is such a large community that has a sense of nationhood.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:28:05

Yes.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:28:06

You know what I'm saying? And that's unusual because we don't have like anything near that size, I guess Indians. But Indians are very tribal too, right? It's almost like confederal in a sense. It's not confederal, but-

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:28:15

No, I think you can talk about an Indian nation state. I mean in all of these countries, whether you're talking about China or India, there are divisions. For example, in India there are Muslims, huge Muslim community, and there are Hindus. And in a place like China, there's Tibet and then there's the Uyghurs. There are all sorts of tensions among different groups in both of those societies for sure. But they aren't both nation States.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:28:44 Does it matter in your view? And also, how would you even go about measuring this? Measuring social cohesion within a nation? Like we saw, for example, one of the issues with US social engineering trying to build democracy in the Middle East, the challenges that the United States government had in a country like Iraq where you had these tribal divisions, where this country was sort of clubbed together. How do you think about that when it comes to looking at nations and nationalism?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:29:11 Well, I think that there are a number of nation states around the world, which are comprised of different groups. And one might even say comprised of different nations that are looking to break away.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:29:23 Like Syria.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:29:24 Syria would be one. I mean Spain is actually another example, if you think about Catalonia, right? I mean the Catalonians for the most part would love to gain independence from Spain, and the government in Madrid is doing everything it can to hold Spain together. There are many people who think that as a result of Brexit, Great Britain will break apart.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:29:46 Scotland.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:29:46 Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales will go their separate ways. So, I think what our discussion here highlights is that although I talk about nation states as if they were closely knit coherent holes, that's usually not the case. And the nationalism in many cases is quite thin. But nevertheless, I believe it is there.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:30:14 We're going a little bit off topic now with my question, but I'm going to ask, as it popped into my head. When I was in college, I was studying for a year abroad and I wrote a paper based on some of the stuff that we were learning in a class on European Union, and it was around the irony of integration. That as the European Union was integrating more and more, there was fractures were happening within the nation states themselves. And I think this is a really fascinating example of the power of nationalism, the European union, right?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:30:43 Well, the European Union was designed to ameliorate, if not do-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:30:49 Exactly. Yeah.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:30:49 ... away with nationalism. What you wanted to do is take Germans and turn them into Europeans, take Greeks and turn them into Europeans, take Spaniards and turn them into Europeans. That did not happen, number one. And number two, as you're pointing out, if you look inside the various states that comprise the European Union, inside most of those states, you saw quite significant political cleavages. You saw real centrifugal forces. This is true in Spain as we were talking about.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:31:21 France also.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:31:22 Yeah, France, it's true. In Belgium. And this is true in many countries around the world.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:31:28 When I was studying this, the country that I looked at closely was France with the national front.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:31:34 Le Pen.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:31:34 Le Pen's party. Europe's fascinating because it really... It seems to me that Europe was the attempt by the Europeans to do... Basically it came right after a world war where Hitler and the Nazi Reich had attempted to unify the continent by force, and then the project basically look to still unify the continent but do it diplomatically over a long period of time. And it seems that it's failing. I don't know what you think of where the European Union is at this point.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:32:02 Well, I think almost everybody agrees that the European Union is today in trouble. I think up until roughly 2009 when the Euro crisis hit big time, most people were quite confident about the direction the EU was headed. I mean at the end of the 1990s, the Euro was introduced, and the 1990s were a period of great prosperity for countries in the European union. I think most people thought the EU was headed in the right direction and in fact nationalism would be ameliorated over time.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:32:36 Then starting in about 2009, things began to go south. And I think in 2016 with Brexit, a hammer blow was delivered to the EU. And now if you just sort of look at what's going on in countries like Italy and countries like Greece, and you look at the differences between France and Germany over how to run Europe, it doesn't look like a happy future is in store.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:33:01 It's so fascinating because this brings us back to what you said at the beginning, which was really how we went from the 1990s to where we are today. And the 1990s was such an optimistic

time, not just in the US but Maastricht was passed in the early 90s, Germany reunification happened. The Euro, monetary union, when they were... It's remarkable to go back, because I had studied this period in college, when the technocrats in Europe would debate... As you know, I'm sure, the technocrats in Europe were debating Maastricht and the Euro. They saw the problems that they could encounter, but they saw them as opportunities. They saw the discrepancy between fiscal monetary policy, the tensions it would create as crisis opportunities for further integration. They saw it optimistically. Now, these things are sources of instability on the continent.

- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:33:51 Yes.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:33:51 It's quite remarkable.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:33:52 It is quite remarkable. I think the article, one of the most important articles written in modern times, it was Francis Fukuyama's piece that appeared in the national interest in 1989, entitled, The End of History. And basically, what Fukuyama argued in that piece was that the liberal democracies had defeated fascism in the first half of the 20th century. They had defeated communism in the second half of the 20th century. And now the only viable political form of government that was left for every state on the planet was liberal democracy.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:34:31 So Fukuyama's basic argument was that over time we were going to have more and more liberal democracies until we reached the point where the planet had nothing but liberal democracies on it. And in a world like that, we were going to live happily ever after.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:34:46 And if you read the Fukuyama piece carefully, he says at the end that he believes the greatest problem that we are likely to face in the future is boredom. Boredom. Because he thinks that liberal democracy is on the march and it's for everybody. And of course, it's not turned out to be the case at all.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:35:07 It's amazing these periods of optimism. Now who was it in the early 20th century who wrote similarly about industrialization? The optimism around the type of wealth that industrialization would create, where people would become effectively bored. That was the-
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:35:22 Well, there was a book called The Great Illusion.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:35:26 Oh, Angel's book, right?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:35:27 That's right. Norman Angel. Right.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:35:29 Yeah, exactly.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:35:30 And the title of my book is a play on Norman Angel.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:35:34 It's interesting. I think I had read pieces of Norman's book, and I had seen it referenced often because of course it came right before World War I. And had effectively predicted that World War I would not happen-

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:35:44 Correct.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:35:45 ... on account of economic interdependence that the great powers would no longer go into conflict because their fates were so intertwined economically and that the importance of their economies would trump security.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:35:58 Yeah. This is a common argument even today with regard to US-China relations. Many people believed that United States and China will not ever fight each other because of all the economic interdependence. The basic underlying assumption here is that prosperity trumps security. That states care more about prosperity than anything else. And because you have all these economic interdependence, if you go to war, the end result will be that you'll damage the prosperity that both sides or all sides are enjoying. And many people thought this was the case before World War I. But obviously security concerns trump prosperity concerns and you had World War I.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:36:39 Countries like Germany, and I believe Germany was principally responsible for starting World War I, were concerned about the balance of power. The Germans were deeply fearful that Russia was going to grow and grow and grow, and because it had such a large population, it would become the dominant power in Europe and it would threaten Germany. So, what the Germans wanted to do was attack Russia and weaken it before Russia got so powerful that it could attack Germany. Those calculations trumped calculations about prosperity, which were largely driven by all of the economic interdependence in Europe at the time.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:37:17 That's also a really fascinating period. We covered it only peripherally in an episode with Bruce Schneier on cybersecurity because I used the Cult of Offense, the Schlieffen plan as a stepping stone to where we are today with cyber warfare because of course mobilization mattered during World War I.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:37:36 It mattered enormously.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:37:36 They were incentivized to mobilize. And we've just talked about it in the context of cyber war, where now not only is there an advantage to striking first, if you don't strike fast enough, you could lose your weapon because the weapon is an exploit and the exploit could be patched. That's just a fascinating period to study.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:37:51 Yeah, well the Germans had a problem in World War I, not to get too far-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:37:54 No, please. I love these stuff.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:37:56 But the Germans faced the two front war problem. They had to fight the Russians in the east and the French in the west at the same time. Actually, the French and the British in the west, and the Russians in the east at the same time. So, they had a deep-seated interest in striking as fast as possible against France and Britain in the west, defeating France and Britain in the west while leaving themselves exposed in the east, and then shifting forces to the east to deal with the Russians. That situation created incentives for the Germans to strike in the west with the Schlieffen plan as quickly as possible.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:38:32 This also makes me think about something. I wonder, have you found in your research, historical research, that there is a correlation between being landlocked and being nationalistic? Are countries that are more exposed to threats, that are more threatened, are they more nationalistic than other countries? Than an Island country, for example, like New Zealand?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:38:53 No, I don't think so. I think that nationalism is everywhere. I think that every country is nationalistic. I think countries that operate on real estate where they have next door neighbors who can attack them, think about war differently than countries that are basically islands. If you're Great Britain, you're not going to think about attacking France or attacking Germany because you have this huge body of water called the English Channel between Britain on one hand and the continent on the other. But if you're Germany and France or you're Germany and Russia or you're Germany and Poland, and your next-door neighbors, and your armies can just cross the border that separates these different countries, you think seriously about war all the time. So, I think it's just how you think about war that's different between Island countries and let's call them land powers like Germany and France and Poland and Russia.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:39:54 Because this also makes me think about something else. You mentioned Russia and the concern that the Germans had about Russia's population growth.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:40:02 Well, not its populations growth. They took its population growth for granted. What they were worried about was its economic growth. It was population growth plus economic growth.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:40:13 So population, economics, and I think geopolitical or geo-strategic positioning or territorial positioning are probably the sort of three classic pillars that manifest as sort of power in a nation state. I don't know if I've got that right exactly. But what I'm basically trying to say is that we have sort of analog, traditional notions of what power politics is about, or what military strength comes from rather is what I meant to say. Military positioning. So, where you're positioned, the size of your population, and the strength of your economy. But we live in a very different world today where technology has disrupted modern warfare at the very least, and we also see changing demographics, but it's not clear to me that let's say a country with very poor structural demographics like Germany or Japan for example, would be at the same disadvantage today as they would've been a hundred years ago militarily because of their population.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:41:14 You don't talk about that much in the book. I don't know that you did or didn't really come across, but do you think about that at all? How does that work in your mind?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:41:21 Well, I talk about this at great length in the Tragedy of Great Power Politics. My argument is that the two principle ingredients of power are population size and wealth. You have to have a large population and you have to have a lot of wealth. China was not considered a great power during the cold war in large part because it didn't have a lot of wealth. I mean it did have a lot of population, a lot of people, but it didn't have a lot of wealth. China today has a lot of people and it has a lot of wealth, and that's why we are so worried about China. So those are the two key building blocks.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:41:58 I don't think where you're located geographically tells you much about power. It tells you a lot about your potential for fighting wars against neighbors. Now there is one major qualification to that argument and that is the presence of nuclear weapons. One could argue that even if you're not very powerful, you don't have that large population. Let's just say you're Japan compared to China, right? Japan is a much smaller country, population-

wise, than China is. And let's hypothesize a situation where they have the same per capita gross national income, right? So, wealth is pretty much equal. One could argue that Japan doesn't have much to worry about because it has, in this world I'm describing, it would have nuclear weapons. Japan with nuclear weapons would be okay. It would be secure versus China, even though China is much more powerful in terms of those traditional indicators of population size and wealth. And that's because of nuclear weapons.

- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:42:58 But the fact is, if you look at how states behave, most states don't think that nuclear weapons buy you that much security, and they do care about the size of their army and the size of their Navy. So nuclear weapons do matter, but they don't matter that much. And what that tells me-
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:43:14 That's interesting.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:43:15 ... is you can go back to the story I tell in Tragedy of Great Power Politics. The story that existed well before nuclear weapons, which is that what really matters for measuring the global distribution of power is population size and the strength of your economy.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:43:31 That's really interesting. I wish I had read Great Power of Politics because I have two questions that seem to run counter that, or they have embedded in them some sort of assumptions or beliefs. So, when you were talking about nuclear weapons, I was thinking about Iran, of course, and I was... Actually, I should have also mentioned North Korea, but also thinking about Ukraine, a country that gave up its nuclear weapons. And I wonder would they be in the same position they are today, vis-a-vis Russia, had they not given up their nuclear weapons? Question number one.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:43:58 And question number two, in a world, let's say where we experience climactic changes, significant climactic changes, for example, is there not an argument to be made that perhaps there is a point at which population becomes a liability for national cohesion in a country, let's say, like India? Could that actually be counterproductive?
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:44:19 Let me deal with your first question. You probably don't realize this, but I wrote an article in 1993 that appeared in the same issue of Foreign Affairs where Samuel Huntington's famous Clash of Civilization-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:44:35 No, I didn't know this.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:44:35 ... article appeared, where I said that Ukraine should keep its nuclear weapons.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:44:40 That's so interesting.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:44:41 And that it should keep its nuclear weapons because-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:44:43 That's ironic, given what we were just saying.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:44:45 Yes, because the day will come where the Russians will cause trouble in Ukraine.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:44:52 I shouldn't be laughing. I shouldn't be laughing.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:44:52 And the Ukrainians will-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:44:54 Interesting.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:44:55 ... wish they had nuclear weapons.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:44:56 So interesting. So how do you square that with what you said before about, it doesn't really seem to matter so much?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:45:02 Well, I think almost everybody agrees that nuclear weapons make it almost impossible for another country to invade that nuclear armed country. My point to you was that countries with nuclear weapons tend not to feel very secure. Just think about Israel. Israel is the only country in the middle East that has nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are the ultimate deterrent. Yet the Israelis worry constantly about their security. During the cold war, in Western Europe, we had the American nuclear umbrella over every country in NATO. Yet we built very powerful conventional forces and we constantly worried about a Warsaw pact conventional attack into Europe. In other words, the Israelis don't think nuclear weapons provide that much deterrence and NATO forces, NATO countries didn't think nuclear weapons provided that much deterrence.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:46:03 So it's how countries think about nuclear weapons. But my point is if Ukraine had nuclear weapons, I think the Russians would not be in Eastern Ukraine today. I think they still would have taken Crimea. I think that Ukrainian nuclear weapons probably would not have prevented Russia from taking Crimea, but I do not believe they'd be in Eastern Crimea. And I would believe the Ukrainians would feel more secure, not totally

secure, given what I said about how countries think about what nuclear weapons give them in terms of deterrence, but they'd feel more secure than they now do if they had nuclear weapon.

- Demetri Kofinas: 00:46:44 I also wonder to what degree there's an asymmetry. In other words, the North Koreans, I think, benefit much more, and I think the Iranians would too, by having nuclear weapons because there's a disproportionate threat that they can deliver against the United States. In other words, for Israel, they would be using the nuclear weapons against countries within striking... I mean very close to themselves. They'd be threatening those countries directly. Whereas in the case of like a North Korea, they can basically have a completely dilapidated economy and maintain their grip on power entirely because they can threaten the United States, which is basically a proxy of the country that's immediately to their South, which is the real concern, which is South Korea.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:47:23 Well, the North Koreans would have a similar problem to the problem that Israel has in terms of using nuclear weapons against countries that are close by.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:47:34 Well, I mean against the United States, they basically can threaten the US-
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:47:38 Not yet. North Korea can't threat us yet.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:47:41 I thought the debate was that they might actually be able to do it. They haven't tested an intercontinental ballistic missile to prove that they could do it, but theoretically they might have something that could hit California. That's not correct?
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:47:53 Not yet.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:47:54 Oh, interesting.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:47:54 Not yet. I do not believe that they're there yet. I do believe that they will get there. I think the greater threat at this point in time is that they would use nuclear weapons against either the South Korea or Japan, and you want to remember that there are large concentrations of American military forces in both South Korea and in Japan, and I wouldn't be surprised if the North Koreans would use nuclear weapons, that they'd target those American forces.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:48:17 But you're correct that it is somewhat difficult for North Korea to think about using nuclear weapons in its neighborhood. And

the same thing is true of course, of Israel, with regard to Israel. But I would just say turning to Iran, I think from Iran's point of view, it should have nuclear weapons because if Iran had nuclear weapons, I believe the United States and Israel would not be threatening to attack Iran. Now it's not in our interest for Iran to have nuclear weapons. I want to be very clear in that.

- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:48:46 From an American point of view, and certainly from an Israeli point of view, you don't want Iran to have nuclear weapons. But from Iran's point of view, having a nuclear deterrent I think would force the Americans and the Israelis to stop threatening Iran for fear that Iran might use those weapons.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:49:04 I want to come back to those contemporary issues and what you think are some of the strategic challenges facing the world as we move forward into this new century. But I want to again, come back to your book and explore some more of these themes. So, one of the things that you write about in the book is that nations want states and states want nations, which I thought was really interesting. Can you explore that here a bit? What do you mean when you say that?
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:49:29 Well, you want to remember that when I talked about what is nationalism? Nationalism is all about nation states, right?
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:49:38 And that came out of the treaty of Westphalia? The nation state?
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:49:41 No, the states that existed at the time of the treaty of Westphalia, which was back in the 17th century.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:49:49 I think in 1649.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:49:50 But back then, you were dealing with dynastic states, not nation states. Most people believed that nation states came on the scene in the late 1700s. Usually either France or the United States are categorized as the first nation states.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:50:09 Post monarchy?
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:50:10 Post French revolution.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:50:12 Post French revolution.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:50:13 Napoleon actually-
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:50:15 Pre Napoleon?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:50:16 Yeah. Well, just immediately before Napoleon. So, if you look at the key works on nationalism, it's usually the United States or France that is sort of treated as the first nation state. And that's why nationalism is a powerful force in the 1800s, the 1900s, and of course in this century. It's a force that's been around for a little over 200 years. But before that, before the French revolution, before the American revolution, you did not have nation states, you had dynastic states. Right. And those were different political forms for sure.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:50:55 We have this great quote by David Armitage. Is there any relation with him and Rich Armitage?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:51:01 Not that I know.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:51:02 Are they the same generation? I wasn't familiar with him before that. But he has this great quote that you have in the book, and the excerpt that you have in the book is, and I quote, "The great political fact of global history in the last 500 years is the emergence of a world of states from a world of empires. That fact more than the expansion of democracy, more than nationalism, more than the language of rights, more than even globalization, fundamentally defines the political universe we all inhabit." Would you agree with that?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:51:34 Yeah, I would agree with that. And he's basically saying that if you look at the planet today, it's filled with nothing but nation states. Again, this emphasizes, or this makes clear how powerful nationalism is as a force. But if you were to look at Europe, let's say in 1450, or you were to look at the globe in 1450, it was filled with all sorts of different kinds of political forms. Europe had principalities, duchies, city states, empires.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:52:05 It was fascinating.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:52:05 Yes. It was a remarkably heterogeneous world. And what happened over time is that all those empires went away, right? Europe came together as a body of nation states, and then all over the planet in places like Africa, places like Asia, what happened was nation states were formed, and that's the world that we live in today. I think that's basically what Armitage is talking about. And he in effect is saying, in my opinion, that nationalism is more important than globalization or any of these other forces that we pay so much attention to. This is not to say that things like globalization don't matter, that would be ridiculous. Or to say that nuclear weapons don't matter, or that liberalism doesn't matter. That's not the argument. My

argument is nationalism is just so powerful to just shape the world in profound ways.

- Demetri Kofinas: 00:53:03 So what would a map of Europe in 1100 AD look like?
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:53:08 Well, a map of Europe in 1100 would be filled with a whole sort of smorgasbord of different kinds of-
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:53:13 You wouldn't even be able to make it out. I say that because-
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:53:16 It's one of those things where if I gave you a week to memorize all the different places on the map in Europe, you probably would fail the exam.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:53:23 There are probably like werewolves and elves and stuff in there.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:53:26 Yeah. It was just a very different world than exists today. This was medieval Europe.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:53:32 Yeah, yeah, yeah. When I was in high school in 10th grade, I was in an AP European history class and the teacher was very passionate about European history, and he had us read "A World That Only If By Fire," which is a sort of history of the middle ages. I've mentioned this before some years ago in another interview, and some people got on my case about it, saying it wasn't accurate. I don't know how accurate you can get about the middle ages. But it was fascinating. It was a fascinating read just sort of describing this world.
- Demetri Kofinas: 00:54:01 One of the things that she mentions in the book, the author was that basically beyond borders, there were... Literally maps also would show like unicorns and things like that, which I guess brings me to the thing that I was really thinking about, which is how our world, to go back to Armitage, that our world is defined by the nation state, and that in fact we think about the world, that very much our mental constructs of the world are in terms of nations. And I think that's a powerful thing to recognize.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:54:35 I think that in the liberal west, that is not always true. I think that most liberals in the west, and this certainly includes the United States, think about liberal states. Most Americans don't think of the United States as a nation state. They do not think of the United States as a very nationalistic power. They think nationalism is a force that doesn't matter that much here in the United States. What really matters is liberalism. But of course, my argument is that they're wrong. Elsewhere around the

world, once you're outside of the United States or more generally outside of the West, nationalism is just a well-recognized force, and people consciously think in terms of nation states.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:55:28 Is that because we're an empire and we have felt for so long so secure in our position?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:55:34 No, it's because we're a liberal state and liberal ideology is so deeply baked into our DNA that we gravitate to thinking about liberalism above all else. And you want to remember our earlier discussion here, where I pointed out to you that there's a real tension between liberalism and nationalism. And liberals tend to dislike nationalism intensely. So, they don't want to pay nationalism much attention, therefore they're not going to tend to talk, this is Americans, in terms of nation states. They're going to talk in terms of the liberal state. This is Fukuyama.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:56:10 Yeah. Early 90s.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:56:11 This is early 90s.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:56:12 Nationalism was a scourge that the Europeans in particular, the European project, The EU was about eliminating nationalism from Europe, which was seen as the cause of war.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:56:20 That's correct. Do you see that argument being made all the time? So, it's very important to understand that this tension between liberalism and nationalism exists, and that in liberal countries like the United States and most West European states, at this point in time, nationalism is seen, to use your terminology, as a scourge.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:56:40 But the French, the French have always been hyper-nationalistic and they are a very liberal state.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:56:45 Yes, that's true. And my point to you is that everybody's been nationalistic. Most countries have not been that out front about it. But let me give you a good example. This is one of my favorite quotes from an American policymaker, who is viewed as a card carrying liberal, who, if you think carefully about what she is saying, is talking in very nationalistic terms. And this is Madeline Albright, who was asked, when she was secretary of state, why the United States was intervening all over the world. And she said, "It is because we are the indispensable nation. We stand taller and we see further." Just think about what she's saying.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:57:28 1990s again.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:57:30 We are the indispensable nation. There's the word, nation. She recognizes we are a nation. We are the indispensable nation, we stand taller, we see further. That's the chauvinism that invariably comes along with nationalism. So, Madeline Albright, who is a profound liberal imperialist or profound liberal hegemonist, is also a first order nationalist.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:57:59 Absolutely. Again, it made me think about the 90s. As you were talking, I was looking at another quote that I had here of Hannah Arendt that you have in the book, where she talks about the abstract nakedness of being nothing but human, as the greatest danger to the rights of the people, specifically in the case of Germany. But again, it brings us to this tension between liberalism and nationalism because nationalism is so empirically important for securing the rights that liberals hold so dear. Right?

Demetri Kofinas: 00:58:29 So I mean, what are we seeing today, in your view, in terms of this resurgence of nationalism in the US, in the UK, in Europe, what's being tapped into that's causing that?

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:58:42 I think there are a number of things that are going on here. I think that liberalism has failed in a number of important ways, and what it has done is that it has brought nationalism to the surface in ways that we didn't anticipate in the 1990s. A really good example of that would be open borders immigration.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:59:08 And in Europe in particular with the case of Syrian refugees, which harps on the strings of liberal impulses and yet it's destabilizing to the nation state.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 00:59:17 Yes, this is a really good example of the tension between liberalism and nationalism. You want to remember that liberalism privileges individual rights, and liberalism says that those rights are inalienable. This is of enormous importance. That means that every person on the planet has the same set of rights. Therefore, there's going to be a powerful tendency in the liberal approach to international politics to favor open borders or porous borders, to worry about the rights of people in the Middle East and to see them in very similar terms to the way Europeans are supposed to see themselves, because we all are part of this body of people who have universal rights.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 01:00:10 So liberals are going to have no trouble with open borders. In fact, they're going to like open borders. But nationalism is all

about tribalism. It's all about the belief that you belong to a particular tribe, you operate on a particular piece of real estate. You control those borders, you control who comes in, you control what the nation looks like. And then if you really begin to think about it, is at odds with the idea that you can just let anybody in the country.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 01:00:42 And you see the same thing in the United States. Trump understands full well that the American people are very nationalistic, and they just don't want open borders. Illegal immigration drives most Americans crazy. The idea that just anybody can come in. Americans are not against immigration, but the belief of most Americans is that the government should control who comes in and the government should reflect the will of the people. But liberalism, in very important ways, again, pushes in a very different direction. It favors open borders. It doesn't favor discriminating against people who come from other countries and want to come here because we all have inalienable rights. There's a certain similarity between all of us.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:01:31 That's interesting, and that brings us to your distinction about Universalist and Particularist strands. Also, something else that's really interesting here is that liberalism celebrates diversity and yet too much diversity begins to chip away at the national solidarity that's needed to keep the state together.

Dr. Mearsheimer: 01:01:48 That's exactly right.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:01:49 Professor Mearsheimer, I want to continue this conversation into the overtime where I really want to talk about liberal hegemony, and that's really a way of talking about American empire, and that's not a traditional empire, but the American hegemony since World War II. And then I also want to see how much we can tackle in terms of some of these current geopolitical issues we face, in particular China. And I know you've talked a lot about China. I've seen a number of recent talks that you've given.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:02:17 For regular listeners, you know the drill. If you're new to the program or if you haven't subscribed yet to our Patreon audio file, autodidact or super nerd tiers, you can do so by heading over to patreon.com/hiddenforces or going directly into the description to this week's episode and there is a link that will direct it to the Patreon page. There is also a link. This is very important. If you're already subscribed to the overtime feed, you should have an RSS link embedded in your podcast application of choice integrated so that you can get these shows

automatically downloaded to your phone just like you listen to the regular podcast.

- Demetri Kofinas: 01:02:56 I don't want you guys not to have that. It's awesome. It's a great feature. Make sure you check that out. And if you have any issues, email me. Also, the rundowns, this week's episode is pretty epic. Lots of beautiful pictures, lots of great excerpts from Dr. Mearsheimer's book. I highly suggest it if you haven't subscribed to that tier yet. Professor Mearsheimer, we're going to be right back.
- Dr. Mearsheimer: 01:03:20 I look forward to it.
- Demetri Kofinas: 01:03:22 Today's episode of Hidden Forces was recorded at Creative Media design studio in New York city. For more information about this week's episode, or if you want easy access to related programming, visit our website at hiddenforces.io and subscribe to our free email list. If you want access to overtime segments, episode transcripts, and show rundowns full of links and detailed information related to each and episode, check out our premium subscription available through the Hidden Forces website or through our Patreon page at patreon.com/hiddenforces. Today's episode was produced by me and edited by Stylianos Nicolaou. For more episodes, you can check out our website at hiddenforces.io. Join the conversation at Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram @hiddenforcespod, or send me an email. As always, thanks for listening. We'll see you next week.