



WTH is going on in America? Sen. Ted Cruz on the George Floyd protests, China, Iran, and the Zodiac Killer

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Danielle Pletka: Hi, I'm Danielle Pletka.

Marc Thiessen: I'm Marc Thiessen.

Danielle Pletka: Welcome to our podcast, What the Hell Is Going On? This is a particularly what the hellish week. Marc, what the hell?

Marc Thiessen: Well, first of all, who the hell do we have on the podcast? We've got Ted Cruz on the podcast today. So we're going to have a really interesting conversation with him. We talk a little bit about the current unpleasantness that is plaguing our country. And also about China and Iran and the national security challenges we face.

Danielle Pletka: And true confessions, don't forget that.

Marc Thiessen: We have a very interesting story for you at the very end of the podcast. Last question, that Dany snuck in there, something to do with serial killers. But anyway, we'll get to that in a moment. So look, there are riots happening all across the country. We had an American named George Floyd who was brutally killed by a police officer. We all saw the video, we're all horrified by it. A lot of people have gone to the streets to protest what was done to him. The police brutality, the racism that's involved in that. And then a lot of people have come in — some organized, like Antifa, some not organized — going in and have started looting businesses, throwing rocks at the police, setting cars on fire, and causing general mayhem. So we literally have the largest spread of riots in our country in decades happening all across the United States of America. What's going on, Dany?

Danielle Pletka: Well, I think that we have a really, really sad story that we're facing up to. I'm betting that our listeners like you and like me and like Alexa are talking a lot about this at home, many families are together now, because of the coronavirus. This is something that good parents talk to their kids about. Police brutality is real and racism is real. Those are really important, moral, national, political conversations to have. This is an expression I absolutely despise, but I will use it nonetheless, a teachable moment for a lot of us.

Danielle Pletka: What's happened unfortunately, is that truly the disgraceful of the earth have exploited the murder of this African American who had a police knee on his neck, asphyxiating him for eight minutes. They have on his back, on the backs of people who are fighting racism, they have decided that now is the moment that they should just be stealing crap. That they should be destroying people's livelihoods, that they should be trashing people's cars, that they should be, honestly, demeaning this

important national moment in order to satisfy their lust for stuff.

Marc Thiessen: And not just a lust for stuff, there's also organized rioters called Antifa. They really are fascist movement that is highly organized. They're Marxists, they're anarchists. They don't believe in rule of law. They're exploiting this crisis to advance their agenda, which is to destroy our country and destroy capitalism. So they're burning down businesses and they're throwing rocks at police. Who gets hurt by this? Who gets hurt number one are African. There's a woman on Twitter the other day that just touched my heart. Her name is Gigi Robynson.

Marc Thiessen: She had just started working at a Walgreens and the people and the rioters came and burned down the place of business where she worked and she's now out of a job and she tweeted out, "I'm so hurt. I'm barely surviving and not only do you all burn my job, Walgreens, down but the grocery store in my neighborhood was looted for what? Now my mom can't get her prescription or food. How is this for us?" My heart breaks for the family of George Floyd; my heart breaks for any American who is worried that they might be the next George Floyd because of the color of their skin. But my heart breaks also for people like Gigi Robynson and 40 million people put out of work during the pandemic, during the lockdown. And just as the lockdown's starting to lift and people start coming to work, within a week, their businesses, their places of employment are being destroyed. My heart breaks for those people too. That's not fair. We have to restore law and order here. We can't have a conversation about race when the country's burning.

Danielle Pletka: No, but you also undermine the very message that you seek to send out. That's why it is the worst form of exploitation. And you're right, the Antifa people are the top-down scum that are exploiting George Floyd. And then there are the bottom-up people who are stealing stuff, who are ruining people like Gigi Robynson's life. So we talk about that a little bit with Senator Cruz, but we also talk to him about those overseas who are laughing as they seek to deepen the divisions in our country: the Russians, the Chinese, the Iranians. How their information campaigns are using bots, using propaganda to try to stoke the flames.

Marc Thiessen: Look at what China is doing across the world right now. So, first of all, they are trying to cover up their complicity in the spread of this virus that has put 40 million Americans out of work and cost us trillions of dollars in lost GDP and just cash spent, borrowed from our grandchildren to cover the cost. These riots are giving them a great excuse to do that. And at the same time, China is using the virus to crack down on democracy in Hong Kong, attacking vessels in the South China Sea of our allies, threatening Taiwan. This is like a gift to the Chinese Communist Party, these protests. One of the things we've talked about on the podcast a lot Dany is how the world is interconnected, right?

Marc Thiessen: For a while people didn't realize the fact that the existence of totalitarianism in China affects our lives here. And now we've seen that because the Chinese Communist regime lied about the virus and allowed it to spread over here. But the same thing is that the way we conduct ourselves in this country has an impact as well, because they can exploit those kinds of things. They see this as an opportunity to hurt America while she's down, while we're convulsed by these riots. So what we do here affects foreign policy, just as much as what China does can affect our health security.

Danielle Pletka: You're totally right. We cannot pretend to ourselves that what happens here doesn't

matter the world over. It makes me ill to think that people in Beijing or Moscow or Tehran think that they have the right to lecture the United States. Which — notwithstanding everything that we've seen going on, notwithstanding the fact that we have plenty of room for improvement, plenty of room to get better as a country — is still far and away the country in which most people in this world would rather live under. Alright, so we're super lucky to have Senator Ted Cruz with us today. In addition to having his own podcast, "The Verdict," which we recommend to you. He is probably well known to all of you. Quick bio, lawyer, — something, I didn't know, the first Hispanic to clerk for a chief justice of the United States, which is a pretty cool thing — United States Senator from Texas and valiant grower of beards.

Marc Thiessen: Here's Ted Cruz.

Marc Thiessen: Senator Cruz, welcome to the podcast.

Ted Cruz: Great to be with you. Thanks for having me.

Marc Thiessen: Well, thank you. Well, we're in the middle of what none of us expected, which is riots all across the country over the death of George Floyd. You have a lot of legitimate protesters out there who are trying to march in solidarity. And then you have a lot of people out there who are taking advantage of this to wreak violence and destruction. Give us your take. What's happening?

Ted Cruz: Well, it's horrifying what we're seeing. I mean, first of all, you have George Floyd's death, which most of us by now have seen the video. What the police officer did there was completely wrong. It was police brutality. It was grotesque. He kept his knee on Mr. Floyd's neck for eight full minutes while Mr. Floyd was handcuffed, while he was incapacitated. I think it is the right thing that the US Department of Justice launched a civil rights investigation. I think it's the right thing that the prosecutors have brought a homicide case based on the evidence. There's no legitimate law enforcement purpose for what happened to George Floyd.

Ted Cruz: I think people all across the country rightly and understandably exercise the First Amendment rights to speak out against racial injustice, to speak out against police brutality. But then I think violent criminals cynically decided to exploit and take advantage of those protests and began engaging in looting, began engaging in violence, began engaging in assaulting police officers and burning police cars and murdering police officers and burning our cities. It is horrific. It's something our country has not seen on this scale in my lifetime. I think we need to stop it now. I think it's incumbent on the President, the Attorney General, governors, mayors, police chiefs, to stop the violence and keep people safe. And we need to use every law enforcement tool we have to prevent these criminals from jeopardizing people's lives.

Danielle Pletka: Well, they're not just jeopardizing people's lives. They're also undermining the very cause that people went out to protest for, because by underpinning legitimate protests with riots, with thievery, and with, as you said, with murder, they are discrediting the importance of speaking out against that police brutality. So what do we need to do as a country? Let's all agree — and you're not going to hear any dissent from me and Marc about the need to press back on rioters and to address that with all appropriate force — what should we be doing? How can we stop this from happening in the future?

- Ted Cruz: Well, our journey towards justice has been a rocky journey from the beginning of our country's history. Our racial divisions have been real and profound. We were a country that started, and for centuries maintained, the evil institution of slavery. And we fought a bloody civil war with 600,000 Americans who lost their lives in significant part to expunge that original sin of America. And to end that abomination and in the decade since we've seen Jim Crow laws, we've seen the Ku Klux Klan, we've seen both explicit discrimination and injustice, and also implicit discrimination and injustice.
- Ted Cruz: But given all of that, I also agree with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who said the arc of history bends towards justice. Our country was founded on a promise of equality. We didn't always honor that promise, but we have been on that steady journey. I think calling out — the law needs to protect every American, regardless of skin color. It needs to protect black people and white people and Hispanic people and Asian American people and everybody and protect everyone fully and fairly. Anytime you have a shooting involving a police officer and in today's politicized world, there are players that immediately blame the cop, immediately demonize the officer. I think that's very unfair. I think it depends on the facts and circumstances of what actually happened.
- Ted Cruz: In this instance, we have a video of what happened and there's no legitimate law enforcement justification. I spent a lot of my life in law enforcement. There's no reason when, when Mr. Floyd is gasping for breath and pleading for his life, for the officer to keep his knee on his neck in the way that he did.
- Ted Cruz: But I think highlighting it, I think policies, I think training. But I also think not demonizing cops. Right now, it is police officers who are protecting minority communities, who are standing in the way stopping the rioters from burning people's shops.
- Ted Cruz: And by the way, most of these communities that are being terrorized are minority communities. One thing you said a minute ago, that I very much agree, these violent rioters, what they are engaged in is racism. Because they are attacking — destroying and burning minority communities is not an act of racial justice. And it is cynical trying to co-opt a peaceful protest and use it for your own violent and criminal ends, and its effect is bigoted and racist, what the violent criminals are doing.
- Marc Thiessen: We just had a St. Louis police captain, David Dorn, was shot and killed by looters yesterday. He's an African American and his life matters, too. The pandemic lockdown really hit the African American community hard. First, the virus hit the African American community disproportionately, but also the job losses.
- Marc Thiessen: And a lot of these people had just come back to work, were just getting their lives started again. And then these looters came in and destroyed their places of business where they had work. And now they're out of work again. This is really not just tearing our country apart racially, but it's really doing great damage to the African American community.
- Ted Cruz: You are absolutely right. And unfortunately, you've got too many elected politicians who are playing politics with this, who have decided it is beneficial to them politically not to stop these riots. And you've also got organized groups like Antifa that are helping fuel the violence.

- Ted Cruz: And for two years, I've been calling on the President to designate Antifa as a domestic terrorist organization. And thankfully, this past week, the President announced he was going to do that. That is a long time overdue. Antifa, sadly has fueled far too much violence already, but this past week has really been the culmination of Antifa's violent terrorist agenda.
- Marc Thiessen: So one of the things that we've seen is that these images of violence that we're seeing are being exploited by our enemies around the world. China has been particularly aggressive in promoting these images and using it for propaganda to say, "Look at all at the chaos in America." Talk to us a little bit about how our enemies are taking advantage of this situation.
- Ted Cruz: Well, China, I just saw yesterday, where one of their senior officials tweeted out that America needs to do more to stop racial injustice, which is-
- Danielle Pletka: Unbelievable.
- Marc Thiessen: Tell that to the Uighurs.
- Ted Cruz: And that's exactly right. One million Uighurs, right now, are in concentration camps in China, are facing torture and abuse and in some instances, murder. I actually think if you look at the coronavirus pandemic, I believe the most significant foreign policy consequence of this pandemic is going to be a fundamental reassessment of our relationship with China.
- Danielle Pletka: Well, it's been a long time coming. The question, I think, for a lot of us looking at the dysfunctionality of this relationship and how far it's gotten away from us over the years, is what we can do. If you look at the amount of legislation that's been introduced, first of all, it's legion. And it's all over the map.
- Danielle Pletka: You've talked a lot about this, and I think you've thought a lot about it. What are the right steps that we should be taking? Because it's not like we should be concerned about buying plastic shoes or toys from K-mart that were made in China. But there are things that we need to be less dependent on. What should be our priorities here?
- Ted Cruz: Well, as you mentioned, there are lots of different parts of this problem. And when you talk about the legislation are legion, I'll plead some guilt to that. I think I've introduced about a dozen bills on this topic. I apologize to the trees that have been slain as we're preparing these bills.
- Ted Cruz: This is a complicated problem, and let me take several components of it. Let's start with the pandemic itself. The Chinese Communist government bears very real and direct responsibility for the over 300,000 lives that have been lost to the coronavirus pandemic. There are serious and real questions about the origins of the virus. We know that two different Chinese government labs in Wuhan were studying coronaviruses derived from bats. We know that State Department internal wires raised concerns before the outbreak that the shoddy security in these labs would lead to a global pandemic. And we know that the Chinese government destroyed all the samples in the labs as the pandemic was starting, which certainly is conduct that evidences that they're trying to hide something.

- Ted Cruz: Regardless of the origin, what we know for a fact right now is that China actively, aggressively, vigorously lied and covered up the coronavirus outbreak. You look at the heroic whistle blowers in China: physicians, journalists who spoke up, who tried to draw attention in December of last year, 2019, tried to draw attention to the coronavirus and the Chinese government, they arrested them, they persecuted them, they silenced them, they forced them to recant their stories.
- Ted Cruz: Any responsible government would have stepped in, would have sent public health professionals, would have quarantined those who were infected. And there's a very real possibility this could have been contained as a regional outbreak rather than a global pandemic. But China deliberately lied and the cover-up — so one of the steps we need, in terms of what to do going forward, is we need a careful, full, complete, and credible accounting of China's responsibility for this pandemic. How they covered it up. What the origin of the virus was.
- Ted Cruz: And I think that's only going to come with concerted international pressure led from the United States, but across the world. So that's one component, is understanding their responsibility and quantifying and detailing it with clear and objective evidence.
- Ted Cruz: A second thing this crisis underscored is the vulnerability we have in our supply chain. And in particular, when it comes to critical infrastructure. Let's take, for example, medical equipment, PPE, masks, and gloves, and gowns. A very large percentage of the PPE of the world is manufactured in China. They have control of it and we are dependent on them for it. Not only that, pharmaceuticals.
- Ted Cruz: The Chinese government, as a concerted strategic matter, decided to target critical pharmaceuticals, lifesaving pharmaceuticals, to go after them in the US and to drive out of business American production of pharmaceuticals. And right now, a very large percentage of pharmaceuticals we rely on and the ingredients for pharmaceuticals we rely on are manufactured in China, whether it is antibiotics or blood pressure medicine, or heart medicine, or cancer medicine, or Alzheimer medicine, or antidepressants, or antianxiety medicine, or vitamins.
- Ted Cruz: And in the midst of this crisis, at least one state-controlled newspaper in China directly threatened to cut off pharmaceuticals to the United States as a tool of economic warfare. You're literally threatening Americans lives by denying needed, lifesaving medicines.
- Ted Cruz: I think it's completely unacceptable that America remains vulnerable. That allows millions of Americans' lives to be dependent upon the whim and discretion of the Chinese Communist government. So we need to work to decouple our economy from China and, in particular, to decouple the critical infrastructure, the lifesaving medicines that we need so that we're not dependent and vulnerable to the Chinese Communist government.
- Marc Thiessen: So let's talk about China's responsibility a little bit. So we've got something like \$2.6 trillion that we've spent to make up the lost revenue and paychecks of Americans who have been put out of work. 40 million Americans thrown out of work. Businesses destroyed. There's some statistic I saw that something like 40% of the job losses may end up being permanent. Losing billions and billions of dollars in GDP every day that this lockdown has gone on.

- Marc Thiessen: How can we hold China accountable for that, and do you support stripping them of sovereign immunity so that American citizens and American businesses can sue for damages?
- Ted Cruz: Let me take each piece of that. I think the first step is getting a clear accounting and understanding what their responsibility was. I think a second step is legislation that I've introduced that focuses on their cover-up. And I've introduced harsh sanctions on Chinese officials who engaged in censorship of coronavirus and critical health-related information. We've always thought of censorship as a human rights issue. Now we see that it's a public health issue and a national security issue as well. So that is another step in terms of directly penalizing those Chinese officials who are responsible.
- Ted Cruz: There's obviously a lot of discussion about going after Chinese assets, waving sovereign immunity, trying to litigate directly. And I understand every bit of that sentiment. I have to admit, I've got some real caution. Because, if we go down that road, the next step we are going to see from enemies of America is they're trying to do the same thing to us.
- Danielle Pletka: That's what I say. I'm so happy to hear you telling Marc that.
- Marc Thiessen: We did a whole episode on this; I was on the other side.
- Ted Cruz: I yield to no one in how much I despise Commie bastards. If we could go and just seize their assets and have that be the end of it, I'd do it in a heartbeat. But it isn't complicated that the next day after we do that, we're going to see American company assets all across the world threatened with being seized. And at the end of the day, we have greater vulnerability to that than they do. Any time you're using a tool to escalate, you want to make sure you're doing it in a way that doesn't hurt America more than hurting the other guy.
- Ted Cruz: And so I actually think we don't have to answer the question of the remedy first. There is real value to quantifying, to providing transparency, that the Chinese, I think, are quite susceptible to global pressure and if we can detail credibly what their responsibility is, then I think there's much more likely to be real and meaningful remedies that stop short of simply the US government seizing Chinese assets wherever we can find them.
- Danielle Pletka: We've got a ton to press in and not a lot of time, and I want to talk to you about Iran and we want to talk to you about the elections this year. But one last thing, getting to what my kids say is my favorite topic, which is Tom Cruise.
- Danielle Pletka: You've focused in yet another piece of legislation on Chinese manipulation of US media, both pressuring Hollywood to toe the Communist Party line on issues that they care about, but also using US radio to propagandize for Communist China and no one being the wiser. Just talk a little bit about that and then we'll hop over to Iran.
- Ted Cruz: Sure. Well, when it comes to propaganda, the Chinese Communist government engages in an enormous amount within China, but they also engage in an enormous amount on the global stage. And then one of the areas in which they engage in rampant propaganda is Hollywood. And you look at major Hollywood studios now, access to the Chinese market represents big, big bucks, millions of dollars. And, as a

consequence, we are sadly seeing pretty much every major studio willingly allowing the Chinese government to censor American movies. Now, I'm not talking about what China says. I'm talking about American movies produced in America and Hollywood is going along with letting them censor it.

Ted Cruz: So, some examples. Bohemian Rhapsody, fabulous biopic of Freddie Mercury, the lead singer of Queen. They willingly edited out scenes from the movie that show Freddie Mercury is gay because the Chinese government didn't want to acknowledge that he was gay. How the hell do you tell Freddy Mercury's life story without acknowledging he was gay? It was part of his life. Like it's ... And what's funny is, these Hollywood producers like to virtue signal what great champions they are for free speech, and yet they'll happily erase out major parts of Freddie Mercury's life and let the Chinese censors change it.

Ted Cruz: I'll give you another example. It's the one, Dany, that you pointed to, which is Top Gun. Probably the greatest Navy recruiting film ever made. I think it also drove up beach volleyball by big numbers. Top Gun, they're making the sequel. It's coming out, I think, this December is when it's expected to be released. And to appease the Chinese censors, they changed Maverick's jacket. And in particular, what they did is, in the original movie, Maverick's jacket had the Taiwanese flag on the back and it had the Japanese flag on the back. They took them both off. They didn't want to upset mother China, and so Taiwan was erased; Japan was erased. Think about for a second what that message is saying. Are we really saying that Maverick is scared of the Chinese Communists?

Ted Cruz: So, what do we do about it? Well, the answer, in terms of what to do about it, I filed a bill called the SCRIPT Act that says that US government assets will not be provided to assist filmmakers in making a film if those filmmakers are going to allow the Chinese Communist government to censor the film. And the US government, all the time, provides assets that are used in films. Think about all the movies where you see jets, where you see Navy ships, where you see DHS equipment, where you see planes. I mean, we're talking thousands of movies where the US government assists in, in particular, making hard assets available. And I don't think we should use government force to stop Hollywood from going along with censorship, but there's no reason the federal government should facilitate their empowering the Chinese censors. And so, the SCRIPT Act is an effort to stop that.

Marc Thiessen: Just as an aside, you are a master of naming bills. Because I'm just looking at some of these bills that you have. You have like the SCRIPT Act, which is Stopping Censorship, Restoring Integrity, and Protecting Talkies Act. You've got the Offshoring Rare Earths Act, which is the ORE Act. You've got the Blocking Invasive Attempts to Manipulate Signals Act, which is the BEAMS Act. I just want to commend you, as a former Senate staffer, on your bill naming skills.

Ted Cruz: And Marc, you can appreciate this as a former staffer, as much as I would love to take credit, I will say I have very talented and creative staff who come up with those titles. I usually laugh enthusiastically, and then generally sign off on it, but I can't claim credit for any of those creative acronyms myself.

Marc Thiessen: Well, someday you have to give us the ones that are on the cutting room floor.

Ted Cruz: I will say there's a bill Dan Sullivan and I have talked about several times concerning North Korea that spells out an expletive towards Kim Jong Un, And I'll just say it

ended with U.

Danielle Pletka: All right, Mark and I are going to spend the entire intro just trying to figure out what that one is. So as threatened, let's talk a little bit about Iran. You've actually been a critic of the administration's policy on Iran. You've, on more than one occasion, suggested that the Trump administration has been too soft on Iran. We're in the middle of the administration trying to push on snapback sanctions. They just cut off a bunch of waivers. Where are they going wrong?

Ted Cruz: Well, they're headed in the right direction. It just has been not always smooth getting there. And so look, let's rewind three and a half years, beginning of the Trump administration. We come in 2017, two biggest foreign policy decisions that are made early on, and I think they're both interrelated. The first one was the decision to move our embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. In the Trump administration, both the State Department and the Defense Department vigorously argued against it. Rex Tillerson, Jim Mattis, both passionately said, "No, this will inflame the enemies of Israel. It'll inflame the enemies of America. We shouldn't do it." I leaned in hard with the President directly, battled internally in the administration, and at the end of the day, President Trump agreed with me, move the embassy. I think it was incredibly important. I was there the day the embassy opened, the 70th anniversary of the creation of the modern state of Israel.

Ted Cruz: Part of the reason I think it was so important, and this is the case that I made to the President, is that moving the embassy would be seen and heard by our friends and enemies as an unequivocal statement that America will stand up, stand with our friends and stand against our enemies. And I do not think it was coincidental that the week we opened our embassy in Jerusalem is the very same week that the Trump administration announced they were pulling out of the disastrous Obama Iran nuclear deal. That's the second big, big foreign policy decision in the Trump administration, and it was a bare knuckle battle with the exact same battle lines. Both State and Defense, Tillerson and Mattis, argued vociferously that we should stay in the deal. I argued vociferously on the other side.

Ted Cruz: Now, pause for a second and reflect. The Iran deal was an area that Trump and I explicitly disagreed with on the campaign trail. When we were running against each other in 2016, I pledged that if I was elected, on the first day in office I would move the embassy to Jerusalem and on the first day in office, I would rip the Iran deal to shreds. Trump disagreed with me on the Iran deal. He said he was not going to rip it to shreds. He was going to renegotiate it instead, and this was one of the sharpest consistent foreign policy differences throughout the campaign. Fast forward to the Trump administration. I made the case vigorously and repeatedly to the President. He ended up agreeing with me and pulling out of the deal, overruling both State and Defense. I think that is the single most important foreign policy decision that has been made in the entire Trump administration.

Ted Cruz: After we pulled out of the deal, there were still a whole series of waivers in place, which you guys know about. The most important of those was the oil waiver. We had a waiver that allowed Iran to sell about a million barrels a day of oil, primarily to China and India, and that was the principle revenue source that was funding the Ayatollah Khamenei, that was funding terrorism against America. There was a battle within the Trump administration about whether to end the oil waiver. State, once again, on almost every one of these State has been on the wrong side of the issue, State argued, "No, don't end the oil waivers. It'll cause the global price of oil to

skyrocket." The Department of Energy, to their credit, took the other side and said, "Yes, end it. There's plenty of oil in the world. It's not going to cause prices to skyrocket."

- Ted Cruz: I engaged both publicly, and even more vigorously privately, and said we should end the oil waivers. The President agreed. And by the way, State was wrong and Energy was right. Oil prices did not skyrocket, so what State was saying was just demonstrably false. There were the civilian nuclear waivers. As you know, for two years, I've been pounding on the Trump administration, particularly State. Foggy Bottom, at every stage, has resisted doing the right thing, but they have eventually... and this has been in large part because the President has overruled them, we've ended the civilian nuclear waivers now. When I started focusing on them two years ago, State was fully dug in and preserving them.
- Ted Cruz: You mentioned, Dany, now snapback. I am hopeful that we will exercise snapback, that we will reimpose sanctions, worldwide sanctions on Iran. State has been mightily resistant. I've been publicly calling for us to exercise snapback. I think there's a good chance the Trump administration will do it, but getting them there has taken vigorous encouragement and vigorous persuasion.
- Danielle Pletka: Why do you think that is?
- Ted Cruz: I think there are a lot of career folks at State. I think there are a lot of career folks at Treasury who, frankly, are supporters of the Iran deal and want to see it come back. They want to see Trump lose. They want a Democratic president, and they want to reinstate the Iran deal. And I think they're digging in and fighting at every stage.
- Ted Cruz: And a lot of this has been even smaller trench warfare. So, I'll give an example. Some of your listeners... you guys are very savvy and well-informed foreign policy observers, and that's true of many of your listeners, but not everyone may be following this day to day. So, the snapback provisions of the JCPOA, which was the Obama Iran deal, provide that any of the original signatories can "snapback," in other words, reinvoke the global sanctions, if Iran fails to meet its obligations. Iran has plainly failed to meet its obligations.
- Ted Cruz: Now, we're no longer a party to the agreement, but the terms of the JCPOA say an original signatory could invoke snapback and they don't say anything about still being an active party to the agreement. What I knew was that the State Department, the legal advisors office, had prepared an opinion that concluded that the US could invoke the snapback sanctions even if it was no longer a party to the agreement, because it was an original signatory. That legal analysis from the legal advisor was kept confidential. They didn't want to release it publicly.
- Ted Cruz: As you know, in the Senate, we have all sorts of levers to encourage an administration to move. And so, last year they wanted to nominate a new Deputy Secretary of State, Steve Biegun, and I placed a hold on the nomination. I said, "I'm not going to let the nomination go through." The State Department was apoplectic. And they were like, "Why not? Why would you possibly do this?" I said, "Look, it's very simple. Make public the legal advisor's opinion that the US could invoke snapback and I'll lift the hold." They're like, "Well, we don't want to make that public." I said, "Okay." And they said, "But then we won't have a Deputy Secretary of State." I said, "Okay."

- Ted Cruz: And they kind of had a primal scream, and then they made the legal analysis public and I lifted the hold and Steve Biegun's the Deputy Secretary of State.
- Marc Thiessen: Well, Steve is a fellow former staffer on the Helm's Senate Foreign Relations Committee with us, so he has a good appreciation of those tactics.
- Marc Thiessen: Let's turn to politics for a second. The Republicans have a lot of seats up in the Senate. Donald Trump is running for reelection and between COVID and now the riots and everything, we have no idea what's going to happen there. What happens if the Democrats get those levers that you described back in their hands, and we have a House run by Nancy Pelosi, a Senate run by Chuck Schumer, potentially without a filibuster, and Joe Biden in the White House to sign the bills. What are we looking at here?
- Ted Cruz: I think the consequences would be spectacularly bad for the country in terms of substance and policy. This is not your father's Democratic Party. This Democratic Party has been, I think, fully radicalized. Some of that is a response to Trump. They hate Donald Trump so much that it has driven them over the edge. Listen, there are things Trump says and does that I don't agree with and I don't like. But, I think today's Democratic Party — just a few years ago, Bernie Sanders, for example, was a fringe character in the Democratic Party. In fact, he wasn't even a Democrat. He was a socialist. Now, most of the Democrats openly embrace socialism. I think if we see a bad election in November, if the Democrats take the White House and if they win by any sizable margin, they will keep the House and they'll likely take the Senate, if they're winning.
- Ted Cruz: If that happens, I think you will see massive tax increases. I think you will see the Green New Deal, massive regulations on energy destroying millions of jobs. I think you will see — on growing policy, we'll go back to the Obama Iran Deal. I think we will go back to rolling antagonism towards Israel. I think we will go back to an embrace of Communist China. I think we would see... There's an old phrase "Personnel Is Policy." Imagine for a second, Treasury Secretary Elizabeth Warren. I think that's a very real possibility in any Democratic administration. Imagine for a second, EPA Administrator Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. I think that's a very real possibility. The radicals have been unleashed. By the way, I think if the Democrats win the White House and the Senate, they will end the filibuster. I think you will see a massive amnesty plan because they will try to lock in an advantage at the polls as long as they can. I think you will see justices who are radical and committed to undermining free speech, religious liberty, the Second Amendment, our fundamental rights.
- Ted Cruz: The thing that's scary is, as I look at the election, I think November is unbelievably volatile. I think that whole outcome I laid out is entirely possible. I also think it's possible that Trump gets reelected by a big margin, that we keep or grow our majority in the Senate and that Republicans take the House. It really depends on the next six months. How these multiple crises that are playing out in our country, how they in fact play out, how the coronavirus pandemic plays out, how the economic crisis plays out, how the rioting and violence plays out. If we're headed in a good direction, we could have a terrific election. If we're heading in a bad direction, we could have a really, really bad election.
- Danielle Pletka: Senator, we're going to let you go and vote, but you have your own podcast, "The Verdict." I commend it to everybody who hasn't heard it. Really, a great listen. I

know that you understand how tough it is for a plucky little group of people from a think tank in Washington to get their own podcast up moving, so I think you have an opportunity to really help us out here by giving us a blockbuster confession that we can trumpet out to bring in new listens. Is there something beginning with a Z that you'd like to tell our listeners?

Ted Cruz: Well, I will say-

Danielle Pletka: Sorry.

Ted Cruz: ... when I was campaigning, some high school kids showed up at an event with a sign that had written on it the question, "Are you the Zodiac Killer?" I have to admit, I stepped over to that young man, somewhat ominously, and said, "Son, if I were, would you really want to be asking me that question?"

Danielle Pletka: On that threatening note, thank you so much for sharing time with us, especially at this time in our country. We've really enjoyed the conversation. Thanks for the hard work that you do. Everybody, head out and listen to "The Verdict with Ted Cruz." It's a great podcast.

Marc Thiessen: Thank you, Senator.

Ted Cruz: Thanks, guys. This was fun.

Marc Thiessen: Dany, we had the Zodiac Killer on our podcast and we didn't even know it.

Danielle Pletka: Ted Cruz is a formidable guy and scary to some, so when this whole Zodiac meme became a thing, I got to say, it increased my respect for him a lot. There is nothing I like more in politics than somebody who is able to laugh at themselves. Because God knows, there are what, like three, four of those people in Washington, DC? So yes, there he was, the Zodiac Killer. He also is an incisive and an excellent legal mind and agreed with me about the whole question of whether we should-

Marc Thiessen: I knew you would latch on to that.

Danielle Pletka: I know. The question of suing China where-

Marc Thiessen: Your victories are so rare that when you have them, we have to celebrate, right?

Danielle Pletka: Well, I wouldn't put it quite that way, but yeah. Look, he is emblematic of the steam that's behind doing something on China in the Senate and the House. I think that's probably a good thing.

Marc Thiessen: Here's the question that we didn't ask him because we ran out of time, but I'll ask you, are we heading into a Cold War with China?

Danielle Pletka: I think we are. The most recent news that China's not going to allow US flights to land and that the Trump administration is retaliating by not allowing Air China to land in the United States is classic Cold War playbook stuff.

Marc Thiessen: Yeah, I think we are. I think we didn't start the Cold War the first time when it was at

the Soviet Union. It was Soviet aggression and Soviet expansionism that we had to push back on. Now, we're, I think, at the start of a new Cold War and the new Berlin is Hong Kong. This is really where we are. The first Cold War with the Soviet Union started with a battle over the freedom of a city. Now, we're having a battle over the freedom of Hong Kong. It's the flashpoint that I think has started heading us down into a path because the Chinese Communist Party is emboldened, aggressive, expansionist, and they're afraid of their own people, just like the Soviet Union was. And so they have to lash out at a foreign enemy in order to justify their totalitarian reign.

Danielle Pletka: I just hope we do it smart. All of the things that send-

Marc Thiessen: Well, we won the first one, so we got a playbook. Right?

Danielle Pletka: Well, it took us 70 years. But, we've never had an adversary like China. We've never confronted a country of 1.4 billion people with a ton of money and an impressive military that's already made huge inroads. This is not going to be one of those things where we force everybody to choose between the United States and China because it's going to be really hard. Getting this right, doing it intelligently, and I think also giving China options to make good choices is going to be a big part of that. One thing I really like is the education part. I like what Cruz talked about, not just because he talked about my horrible secret, which is that I love Tom Cruise. Yeah, I know, I know, I know. I love Top Gun. Yeah, I know, I know, I know, I know. Write to your congressman if you disagree with me, but that the American people don't realize how aggressively they're being propagandized without even seeing it. Whether it's in their public schools or it's on their radios or it's in movies.

Marc Thiessen: Not to intentionally use the phrase, we're kowtowing to China all the time when it comes to entertainment because, and this is the big difference we'll have with the Soviet Union is, they're not—I wouldn't say they're an economic powerhouse, but they have a valuable economy. Nobody really was dying to invest in the Soviet Union or do business with the Soviet Union.

Danielle Pletka: Plus, they want to sell tickets. It's 1.4 billion people with some money to buy stuff and people want to sell to them.

Marc Thiessen: No, that's exactly right. In fact, a lot of these movies, they can't succeed simply on Western box offices. They have to do well in China in order to recoup the money. But again, this is what totalitarian regimes do all the time, which is they force you to censor yourself. We can't allow that. Anyway, I don't want to go down too far down this path because I think we should do a whole podcast on whether we're in a Cold War with China at some point.

Danielle Pletka: In the meantime, we're so grateful to all of you for being here with us. Thank you. Stay safe out there. Stay safe at home. God, just stay safe. Summer is coming. Hopefully, we will have a little bit of a respite for the much, much beleaguered American people.

Marc Thiessen: Or, the next plague will arrive.

Danielle Pletka: I know, locusts. Folks, don't hesitate to reach out with ideas, compliments, insults for Marc. Thanks for being with us.