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MOSCOW. DECEMBER 7, 2021. PIR PRESS. "One of my best qualities is one of my worst qualities. I tend never to be satisfied with what I've said or what I've written. The good part of that is that I'm always striving for perfection. The bad part of it is that you can get paralyzed with this obsession with perfection rather than going forward more quickly with an approach "that's good enough," Robert Einhorn, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

Open Collar №39 with Robert Einhorn

EDITORIAL: *Today is the birthday of a member of PIR Center's Advisory Board, an American diplomat and expert on arms control and nuclear nonproliferation, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution **Robert Einhorn**. The distinguished expert has over 40 years of civil service in various government bodies, as well as work in respectful US think tanks. In this conversation, Robert **Einhorn** shared with us stories about how he got into the world of nonproliferation, what paths difficult but interesting life as a diplomat led him through, as well as his vision on some fundamental issues of life, friendship and professional calling.*

How we became friends with PIR Center

When I left government for the first time in 2001, I joined an American think tank – the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the CSIS got a large contract for a project. And the contract came from another think tank called the Nuclear Threat Initiative. And it was to do an evaluation for that-time G8 partnership about dealing with the threats of weapons of mass destruction.

Interestingly, my partners at the CSIS who were working on this project were Michèle Flournoy and Tony Blinken. So, we needed a Russian partner and we approached PIR Center. PIR Center became our partner and we worked cooperatively with PIR Center. I got to know the people there and personally Vladimir Orlov. And I went back into government in 2009. But I have established good relationships with PIR Center, trusted PIR Center, trusted Volodya, who became a friend. That's the nature of my association with PIR Center. Also, I knew that Roland Timerbaev, who passed away not too long ago, was affiliated with PIR Center. I knew Roland way back in the beginning of the 1970s when I was a member of American delegations to various conferences. And Roland was there, I worked closely with him and I think his ties to PIR Center helped to strengthen my ties to PIR Center as well. It was mostly this global project on the G8 global partnership. It took a number of years. But even since then I've collaborated with PIR Center, not on specific projects but when I've come to Moscow I've attended meetings at PIR Center, I've worked with colleagues there.

Window to the nonproliferation world from the dormitory room

Talking about my way to the world of nonproliferation, I think it is a little of both: I chose, and I was chosen. It's a funny story. I was at graduate school at Princeton, it was called Woodrow Wilson School, now it's changed its' name. Not it's Princeton School of Public and International Affairs. At that time, I was rooming with a guy who was the son of one of the most senior Canadian officials in the UN system. This Canadian official was head of the Disarmament Office at the UN Secretariat in New York. There was a UN rule called anti-nepotism, which meant you can't hire your relative. But the rule doesn't prohibit hiring the roommate of your son. So, I went to work at the UN Disarmament Office in 1971. And in connection with that job, which was in New York, I met lots of American diplomats who also worked on disarmament questions. And they said to me: «Once you come back to Washington and join us». At that time, there was an agency called Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. It was housed in the State Department but it was autonomous. I joined this agency (ACDA) and stayed there for 40 years: during the administration, first, Ronald Reagan, and then George H.W. Bush and moved to the state net to the State Department in 1986 and stayed there until 2001. And then I returned at the request of Secretary Hillary Clinton in 2009. I served as her special advisor on nonproliferation and arms control until 2013, when I left the State Department and joined a different American think-tank called the Brookings Institution.

Lessons of diplomacy and civil service

I think one lesson is that you have to be persistent. You can't get too frustrated. When you are working in a big bureaucracy, things could get frustrating and you have to be patient. Bureaucracies can move slowly. Sometimes they don't reward talent, they reward connections. And this could be frustrating. But you have to stick with it and work hard and wait for your opportunities. And sometimes these opportunities are unpredictable. Imagine, you are in a position, you are working, no one is recognizing you or appreciating your talents. And then someone you have worked with or worked for gets some senior position and asks you to join him or her. That's an opportunity that you need to take advantage of. So in order not to get frustrated and depressed keep pushing, keep expanding your skills, your network of contacts. And hopefully, then things will fall into place.



In terms of negotiations with the Soviets, or with the Russians, or with the Chinese, or with Iranians... You have to prepare. You have to understand your negotiating adversary: what does your adversary want, what are its interests, how does it view its interest. So, prepare very carefully and figure out what is the best argument to make to advance your position so that your negotiating adversary understands that it is able to serve its own interest while taking into account your interests. And we saw an example of it in Geneva on June 16 with the meeting between President Putin and President Biden. Obviously, these two men have very strong differences and even in the past, they clashed personally with one another. But I think they knew that to have a successful meeting and make some headway they have to show some respect for one another, some cordiality toward one another. That's the only way to be able to sit down and have a discussion even with their sharp disagreements. There is always a way for disagreeing without ruining prospects for progress. I think these two men demonstrated that despite all their differences they both have a mutual stake in trying to stabilize these relationships. Although there was no agreement at this meeting, there was a better sense of what the other side wanted. Hopefully, there will be a follow-up. One of the important developments in the area of our mutual interest – arms control and disarmament, is the launching or relaunching of the bilateral strategic dialogue. Obviously, without the reinstitution of that dialogue, there will be no progress. We'll see where that goes... The basis for the progress was laid but no progress at the meeting itself.

Go forward without changing the direction



In general, I'm quite content with the career path I've taken. I've considered joining the diplomatic service, I was a diplomat but I specialized in a particular area and I was stationed in Washington D.C. rather than serving in American embassies in other countries. It could have

been interesting to do but I find my current approach very rewarding and I wouldn't have traded it. And I've never considered giving up a career in arms control and nonproliferation. I couldn't think about another substantive area that I could find as satisfying as that I chose.

A little about women

In Russia, for a woman, it's rather difficult to reach such heights in the nonproliferation and arms control world...But you shouldn't give up. It's harder for a woman in Russia to get to senior level in the area of foreign policy and national security than it is in the US. But I think more and more women are able to get into the government and attain high positions. So, you shouldn't give up. Things will change. In general, I think we need to get away from differentiating between male and female qualities. I think there is a risk of stereotyping males and females. That's a big mistake to try to say that for males I like, for example, assertiveness and for the females – obedience. That's old school, old thinking.

Both minus and plus

In terms of my own qualities, I think one of my best qualities is one of my worst qualities. I tend never to be satisfied with what I've said or what I've written. The good part of that is that I'm always striving for perfection. The bad part of it is that you can get paralyzed with this obsession with perfection rather than going forward more quickly with an approach "that's good enough".

Song about a friend, or the ode to trust

I think true friendship enables you to completely be yourself. With a friend you can without pretense share your honest thoughts and you can be comfortable in sharing such thoughts. True friendship means trust, to be trusting in other human beings. In the absence of trust, you are too wary, you are too cautious and you really cannot connect with somebody else. Trust is the key element.

Be yourself, not anyone else

When I think about really interesting life paths, I think about people from

completely different fields of activity and backgrounds. I can go in different directions. One direction is like the famous basketball player Michael Jordan. Another way – going in the direction of Barack Obama or other outstanding politicians. But I'd prefer without mentioning a name mention an idea. I would like to be the kind of person who is comfortable in his own skin, who is content with what he is doing, what he's done, outlook on the future. Someone who feels content because he's lived a good and productive life not someone who says "Oh, I wish I've done this and that...", who has all kinds of regrets. It's nice not to have so many regrets.



Politics and ethics

Of course, there is a place for empathy and compassion in politics. I think you have to have empathy. We, the US, not too long ago had a president who simply didn't have any empathy. It was all about himself. And when he thought about the people who were dying from Covid-19, the only thing he was thinking was how this is going to affect my chances to be reelected. We now have a president who is completely different. He has empathy toward human beings. It's not just a show, you could see it when he reacts to other people, when he is with other people. I think that this empathy is one of president Biden's most outstanding qualities. And it makes him a good politician. Many people think that empathy is a bad qualification for a politician because you should be ruthless to be a good politician. But Biden shows that you could be a good politician and still have a lot of empathy for others.

Eternal life

Living forever will get pretty tiresome and repetitious. I think life has a certain arch with its beginning, middle, and end. There are advantages and disadvantages of each of these segments. But if there is no beginning, middle or end to life, I think you lose out on what it's like to live in these various periods. What is young in this case? Young has no meaning. Old has no meaning. I think we'd lose a lot if we lost these very different aspects of the arch of life.

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