

Challenges of Foreign Reporting in China: An In-Depth Discussion with Jane Perlez

[00:00:00] **Jeremiah:** Hello, and welcome to another edition of Barbarian to the Gate. This is Jeremiah Jenne broadcasting a couple of stories above the city of Geneva, Switzerland, where right now aid workers and various people who work for NGOs are busy updating their resumes. Because they no longer have funding from USAID.

[00:00:27] **Jeremiah:** David, how are you doing? You're calling in once again from Thailand, from Bangkok. You're looking comfortable on the couch.

[00:00:33] **David:** Yes, I'm here in warm, fuzzy Bangkok, temperate all day long. I go swimming every day. I don't envy my friends in Beijing right now, but I'm having a good time. Jeremiah, you're a busy guy. I was just noticing before we came on that you had just given a talk to the Royal Asiatic Society in Beijing about this wonderful book by Graham Peck, I almost said Gregory Peck, Graham Peck, Two Kinds of Time, based upon an article review that you wrote for China Books Review, the China Archive, and then you have a talk on it, which is going to be out soon.

[00:01:04] **David:** I just want to plug you a little bit. You're doing some really great stuff other than this modest podcast here. You're doing some really good sinology out there. It's good for you.

[00:01:12] **Jeremiah:** I appreciate that. And yes, it was nice for the Royal Asiatic Society to host the online talk. I have been doing a monthly column, I guess you would call it, for the China Books Review, doing retrospective looks at some of the important, sometimes overlooked classics in the literature about China and Graham Peck's Two Kinds of Time, which I can't recommend more.

[00:01:34] **Jeremiah:** Oh, yeah. Great book. It's a great addition to that. But thank you for the plug. I appreciate it. Sure. Speaking of plugs, we have with us today, Jane Perlez, whose excellent podcast, Face Off, U. S. vs. China, the second season, drops this week, in fact. Jane is, of course, a New York Times correspondent and was the Beijing bureau chief from 2012 to 2019.

[00:01:59] **Jeremiah:** In addition to Beijing, her assignments have taken her to Warsaw, Vienna, Washington, Indonesia, Pakistan. She has been a Pulitzer Prize winner as part of a team of reporters. She has also produced other podcasts, including On the Trail with Xi Jinping about China's leader. And a

five-episode look at Richard Nixon's groundbreaking China diplomacy, *The Great Wager*.

[00:02:22] **Jeremiah:** Jane, thank you so much for joining us today from Cambridge, Massachusetts. How are you?

[00:02:27] **Jane Perlez:** I'm fine and good to be here and congratulations on *Barbarians at the Gate*.

[00:02:32] **Jeremiah:** The new podcast is about U. S. and China. And I got a chance, I really thank you for letting me listen to some of the first couple of episodes.

[00:02:39] **Jeremiah:** And I was particularly taken by the second episode in this new season in which you talk about foreign reporting. And, of course, some of the major events that have occurred in the late 20th century and early 21st century, and you've covered China for years, of course, including as the bureau chief.

[00:02:55] **Jeremiah:** In your estimation, how has the environment for foreign reporters in China changed from when you first arrived to when you left in 2019, which is, of course, right before the pandemic?

[00:03:06] **Jane Perlez:** It has changed radically because I don't admit this very often, but I first went to China during the Cultural Revolution.

[00:03:13] **Jane Perlez:** We don't need to talk about that, but talking about my time with the *New York Times* from 2012, when I went as a correspondent and then later became Bureau Chief. When I first went in 2012, it was quite, by Chinese standards, quite loosey goosey. There was always trouble in getting visas. The big newspapers always have had trouble in getting visas.

[00:03:38] **Jane Perlez:** But, at that time it was a slight thaw, I would say, it was the end of Hu Xintao, Xi Jinping was just coming in, people were quite optimistic about him, they had no idea what he was going to be like, they got him all wrong in the beginning, but thanks to I guess the Hu Jintao era was relatively easy to get a visa, so I went from Pakistan to China.

[00:04:05] **Jane Perlez:** My beat was China and the world, basically. So that meant I travel to the North Korean border, for example, with China. And that was possible, even though we were trailed by streams of young enthusiastic

minders, I guess from the MSS, I'm not quite sure from where, but wherever you went in Dandong, you were followed insistently.

[00:04:31] **Jane Perlez:** But my first big sort of assignment or story that I wrote, I don't think you would at all be able to do today. I went to Astana, where Xi Jinping announced Belt and Road Initiative. He was at this very small auditorium at the university there. I guess not more than 200 people. And the Chinese press was arrayed in the back row with Ching Gang as their minder.

[00:04:56] **Jane Perlez:** And I was just sitting next to them. And Xi Jinping was down in the, at the podium talking about the great things he was going, China was going to do with Belt and Road. And I mentioned this because it was very interesting to see the relationship between the Chinese press and the big man. So these Chinese reporters, Xinhua, et cetera, are lined up in the back.

[00:05:19] **Jane Perlez:** They had their laptops in front of them. And some of them were taking photographs of Xi Jinping at the podium. And at one point, Qinggang lifted up one of the laptops with the photo of various photos of Xi Jinping speaking, and took it down to a member of the standing committee, Wang Huning, and Wang Huning said this one, so they sent out that one.

[00:05:43] **Jane Perlez:** And it was interesting because I'd covered the State Department as a correspondent and it's not unlike the way the State Department works. So that was a very interesting insight. So in that, at that period, it was quite loosey goosey. Of course, later, which we'll talk about, it got much worse.

[00:05:59] **Jeremiah:** Was there a particular moment when you were at the bureau in Beijing? Where you thought to yourself, there's a shift here, like you have experience reporting in other places, so you can get that kind of sixth sense. Was there a moment when you were working at the Bureau, when you looked at your colleagues and said, I feel like there's something going on here, that things are moving.

[00:06:20] **Jane Perlez:** It took quite a while actually for that, for the eyes to really open wide. Maybe I was just a slow learner but it came very sharply when, in 2018, when Xi Jinping announced he was going to be leader forever. Chris Buckley, who was a preeminent and still is preeminent reporter on China, wrote a piece about how.

[00:06:42] **Jane Perlez:** Xi Jinping had done away with the two terms that were in the constitution and made himself emperor forever, if you like. And he wrote a piece that included the word stealth. He said that Xi Jinping had done this by

this and stealth. So eight o'clock that morning, my phone rang, eight o'clock, right on the dot.

[00:07:02] **Jane Perlez:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs, you have to come to the ministry at 10 o'clock. Chris and I went in there and we were put in one of those rooms on the ground floor. There are all these palm trees that they make it look like a fake Hawaii, and then you go in these rooms and these big armchairs and no tea this time.

[00:07:21] **Jane Perlez:** And we sat and waited. And then about four guys from upstairs from the press office came in, I think we recognized one or two of them, and they read us this long screed. And then we said, we asked, started to ask a question. No questions. They left and they showed us the door. So that was pretty clear message.

[00:07:44] **Jeremiah:** If you get invited for tea, you at least want to get some tea.

[00:07:48] **David:** I've talked to a lot of reporters, both inside and outside, about this particular period and the sort of the increasing truculence and information control.

[00:07:57] **David:** And, but a lot of the reporters would say to me that if you want to get a characterization of the Chinese government. A feeling of their personality or the personality of the system. One of the things that they say to me is why they are so lacking in self-confidence despite such decades of economic growth, the increased importance in the global community, and the amazing technological infrastructure developments.

[00:08:22] **David:** They still act as if they're not quite sure of themselves and they're trying to protecting the information that they have. They seem to harbor an inferiority complex after all this time. Have you felt that and have, has anyone mentioned this and does that strike a note?

[00:08:35] **Jane Perlez:** I wouldn't quite express it as an inferiority complex. I know, I understand completely what you're saying and I think it comes from being part of a Leninist system and I think everybody's on unsure footing because they have to make sure. That they're in conformity with the system. And if they're not in conformity with the system, then they're out or they're in serious trouble.

[00:08:56] **Jane Perlez:** I think that breeds the, what some people perceive as insecurity. I think a lot of people are actually very, people I met in the system are very confident. I don't think you can be, stay in the system and be a fairly senior person in the system. And not have some confidence in it.

[00:09:14] **David:** Do you think that there's a schism there a little bit between the people who are actually in power and the media?

[00:09:21] **David:** Because that's also another sort of point of departure that I have. When you meet people in the, in state media, they're brimming with enthusiasm and confidence and, and sometimes they're really quite open, actually, about talking about certain things, especially when we talk about things like soft power, they're really gung ho on it.

[00:09:39] **David:** But elsewhere, it seems like that there's not there's a sort of a closed off feeling that, that feels out of touch with their actual clout.

[00:09:47] **Jane Perlez:** I think that I understand what you're saying. I think, generally speaking, a lot of reporters for state media are outgoing, very confident people. Maybe that's why they're chosen, or maybe that's why they go into the field in China.

[00:10:01] **Jane Perlez:** Much more, perhaps, outgoing than Western journalists in a way, although back in the day, they were very outgoing, super confident people I don't know if you ever knew John Burns, who was Reporter in China way back when and other classic adventurous types. I like to think I'm quite adventurous, but I'm not as adventurous as those guys.

[00:10:23] **Jane Perlez:** Patrick Tyler, very adventurous, very outgoing, very confident. And I think that the Chinese media chooses people like that, or they become like that.

[00:10:34] **Jeremiah:** Jane, one of the things I've observed, knowing some of the members of the Bay, the China correspondent community is that I always felt there was two types and there was the, but there was all, there was one group that was, they come out of a China background, like they had studied Chinese at university, they'd maybe studied abroad in China, their Chinese was usually pretty good, or maybe they even come from a Chinese cultural background.

[00:10:57] **Jeremiah:** And so this was present for a lot of those correspondents. This was a dream job and they were very focused and aware of China. And then

there was another cohort that was made up of, I won't say older, but more experienced correspondents who had worked in Moscow back in the day and had worked in Central America or in South Asia, they had gone through many different postings and now they were in Beijing.

[00:11:21] **Jeremiah:** And I, what I found very interesting about these groups was that they Whereas the correspondents who had done the kind of circuit, maybe lacked a specific China knowledge and the Chinese language, what they did bring was a sense of perspective, or some of the things that people complained about.

[00:11:37] **Jeremiah:** Reporting in China, they could say that's true. It was the same when I was here or when I was there. And I wanted to get your take on that because you have reported from many different parts of the world, including some very challenging reporting environments like Pakistan, to some extent, like Indonesia.

[00:11:55] **Jeremiah:** And I was wondering Not as challenging as China, not as challenging. This is my question. So how does, how do those areas compare to reporting on China? Is China a special case or does it share some other features that, or are there things you can take from other postings that have utility in a environment like China.

[00:12:14] **Jane Perlez:** I'm not very reflective about our profession, I have to say, I think basically a reporter is a reporter and that person has to be adventurous and has to understand the place where they happen to be and they have to know how to get a story and they have to know what a story is.

[00:12:30] **Jane Perlez:** Sometimes, I sometimes felt as a non China expert that. My colleagues who had this deep Chinese, China background, which I was very envious of, got so far into the weeds I had no idea what they were talking about. So a mixture of the two is good And there are some great China reporters who have deep Chinese background.

[00:12:52] **Jane Perlez:** So But I do think the fundamental is seeing a story and knowing how to go about and how to get it. I never really thought too much about the divisions, but you are right, there are divisions. Reporters, and there are people who come, I shouldn't say this, but there are people who come to it from totally the outside.

[00:13:09] **Jane Perlez:** Exhibit A would be the producer of the recent two and a half hour piece on WGBH, I think at Frontline. The producer and director of that didn't know anything about China when he started.

[00:13:21] **David:** I've noticed a sort of a shift. In focus since the 1990s and the early 2000s as over the years, the increasing Chinese diaspora seems to become more and more important or more and more interesting to cover because China is so much more porous now, people are able to travel.

[00:13:41] **David:** There's lots of people going overseas. There's been stories lately about the famous JF or Jifeng bookstore that was a longstanding bookstore in Shanghai that has moved now to Washington. DC, and there's a renaissance overseas, a recreating China as it should be outside of the wall.

[00:13:58] **David:** There's lots of stories about stand up comedians that work both within China and outside of China. We had a journalist talking about that on our podcast at one point, who actually, have a performing career in China, but also can do it outside of China in English. And many other aspects, the plight of scientists.

[00:14:18] **David:** In Chinese scientists in the U. S. being hassled by the FBI and so forth. There's a lot of diet. There's a lot of interesting China diaspora activity that connects to what's happening right now in China. Is that a new beat or is this something that can be covered without being in China?

[00:14:36] **Jane Perlez:** I'll be totally blunt.

[00:14:37] **Jane Perlez:** It's a product of the fact that there's so little reporting of in China and I find it totally exasperating. It's, that's the reason, is because the China, the reporting in China is so limited. So let's talk about that. In 2018. The first Trump administration expelled 60 China, China reporters from Washington.

[00:14:57] **Jane Perlez:** They said that they were spies. Now, some of them may have written, little notes for MSS about where they went that day, but I don't believe that any of them, or maybe a few, I can't, because I don't know, but I don't think many of them were full fledged spies, getting really important really important stuff.

[00:15:18] **Jane Perlez:** China, who knows, but they expelled 60 of them. And my attitude is if they were really spying. It's better to have them in front of you so you can see what they're interested in and what they're doing than expelling

them. Knowing full well that we, American reporters in China, would be expelled. And they didn't care.

[00:15:38] **Jane Perlez:** I spoke to someone who was very senior at the State Department last year about this when I was reporting our episode on journalists in China, which I think, by the way, is a very good very good episode. And thanks for giving it a plug, Jeremiah. But when I spoke to this former State Department person, he said it doesn't matter if we don't have any American journalists in China.

[00:15:57] **Jane Perlez:** They just write what the CCP tells them anyway. I could have thrown the phone at him. This is just incredible. We were, when I say we, Nearly 20 American journalists were expelled in retaliation in 2020. There are very few American and Western reporters in China right now, when we need them most.

[00:16:15] **Jane Perlez:** The New York Times has two reporters, there were ten when I left as bureau chief in 2019. The Washington Post has a big fat zero. And the Wall Street Journal has three. Now, you may have gone through all this territory before in another episode, but we can't emphasize that enough. That the time when we need to know about China from the ground, we don't know about it.

[00:16:37] **Jane Perlez:** And in particular, we don't know about the people. Keith Bradsher, who writes about the economy for the New York Times, does a brilliant job in writing about, the trillion dollar trade surplus, the huge manufacturing that's going on. All this stuff that's really important to know.

[00:16:55] **Jane Perlez:** And Vivian Wang writes about people, but it's very difficult for her to write about people. We just don't. We just don't get a sense of how, what are the unemployed plasterers, the unemployed bricklayers doing who aren't working because of the real estate crash. We don't know. And now there are inventive ways that we can talk about how to get at that.

[00:17:15] **Jane Perlez:** But I remember it wasn't really my beat, but it was very important for me to be able to go to the symphony on a Friday night and see families bringing their seven year old kids to listen to classical music. It was very important to go to the Picasso exhibit at 798 and see middle class families bringing their six and seven year olds to see Picasso.

[00:17:39] **Jane Perlez:** We don't get any sense of that at all. And that's a tragedy, and we should all be lobbing about it and screaming about it to the rooftops.

[00:17:47] **Jeremiah:** Those of us who have lived in China or worked in China, I think we're well aware of some of the challenges. And we hear about the challenges that foreign correspondents face.

[00:17:54] **Jeremiah:** Encounter. Sometimes they tell the stories humorously, sometimes the stories are not that funny. But I, it does seem to me that there is a disconnect for those people who are less familiar with China about what those challenges might be. So if Jay, maybe share your experience or experience of your colleagues during the last, during the time that you were in Beijing, during the time that this, the environment changed so dramatically leading up to the expulsion for somebody who has been, is not unaware of just what it means to try to cover a story in China.

[00:18:27] **Jeremiah:** What are some of these really tangible obstacles that reporters face just doing their jobs?

[00:18:32] **Jane Perlez:** First of all reporters face what every everybody in China faces Which is super surveillance and that increased in front of our eyes while I was there I mean you can't walk two steps without a camera watching you and without security people Knowing on their cell phones where you've just been and probably where you're headed.

[00:18:52] **Jane Perlez:** As a reporter, that makes it really difficult. Now, when I was there, it was possible for some reporters to go to Xinjiang to see the situation with the Uyghurs, if they were very discreet and very careful. Now, ISIS, now it must be just totally impossible, totally off, off limits. I think it was possible to go to some of the Tibetan areas, totally off limits.

[00:19:15] **Jane Perlez:** And towards the end, the last couple of years of my time in Beijing, it became increasingly difficult. I'll give you a very simple example. I went down to Guizhou in the south to do a story about a documentary filmmaker. And it was a way to tell a story about what the filmmaker was making his film about.

[00:19:35] **Jane Perlez:** And the first afternoon, I was greeted at primary school with great warmth and the kids were great and we had a wonderful time. And the next morning I went with the filmmaker to I think it was some kind of some kind of village gathering, I forget exactly what it was. And I hadn't been there

an hour and the local security people came and they just escorted me to the local train station.

[00:20:00] **Jane Perlez:** Can't be here. Please go. It was the time of the National People's Congress. So things were, it's always tighter all over the country for reporters during the National People's Congress. But I knew they took me to the train station. One of the, one of the people, one of the women handed me a bag of chocolates and sweets.

[00:20:20] **Jane Perlez:** I said, no, thank you very much. You're kicking me out of here. And got on the train. It's very simple. It just. It's a white face and it's hard. Now if you're a white face and you've arranged to go to a solar panel factory and they want to tell you about their latest battery invention or an EV factory and they want to tell you about their latest batteries, please come in the door.

[00:20:43] **Jeremiah:** You mentioned the challenges of being, if you will, like a, an obvious foreigner trying to cover these stories. I was wondering, and of course the challenges that, that foreign reporters. or reporters of foreign nationalities have had in China. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit, too, about the, one of the other important staff at the Bureau, which are, of course, the news assistants, who are an integral part of any kind of news gathering operation.

[00:21:07] **Jeremiah:** They've always come under tremendous pressure, even going back to the Olympics, because of their kind of liminal status between the, they are Chinese nationals, they're not allowed to be correspondents because of Chinese law. They work for the foreign, they work for foreign media, and that often puts them, it makes them a little vulnerable.

[00:21:25] **Jeremiah:** And I was wondering if you had noticed that their lives or their jobs have changed in the same way that the reporters, professions have in the last 10 during that time?

[00:21:35] **Jane Perlez:** Definitely. This, the hidden story that should be revealed in all its glory actually, because the news assistants are absolutely vital to all the foreign bureaus.

[00:21:47] **Jane Perlez:** In Beijing and Shanghai and wherever else they might be. And they're wonderful people and a lot, quite a few of them are quite young women reporters. And one of our news assistants, Albie Zhang, is here at

Harvard at a Nieman fellowship this year. And last year, Elsie Chen, who was also in our bureau, was at the Nieman Foundation as well.

[00:22:07] **Jane Perlez:** But to get to the nub of what you're talking about, yes, they are called in and they know when they. When they're hired, that this will happen, they called in to have quote unquote, a cup of tea with the security people. And it was like, I guess they meet them in a cafe or something like that. And I just asked them to tell me when they had a date to go for the cup of tea.

[00:22:33] **Jane Perlez:** And I also suggested to them that when they had this cup of tea, to be totally honest. And don't hide anything, because they were not doing anything that they shouldn't be doing. We wouldn't let them do anything they shouldn't be doing. So just tell them what you're working on. I don't care. Tell them. And, a few weeks later, or the next day, they can see that you were telling the truth.

[00:22:54] **Jane Perlez:** Sometimes it got quite hairy. We had one news assistant who was very brave and covered some unrest. When I say unrest it's not quite the word to use. But Some disaffection at Beijing University and she was called in a lot and that was very difficult. And in the end, I said, look, if you want to leave, you should just leave.

[00:23:15] **Jane Perlez:** And she went on and did something else. So it's, they do amazing work. Couldn't, we couldn't survive without them. And they're the heroes of our work.

[00:23:25] **David:** I resonate very much with what you said about what we've lost, about what it was like in this sort of golden age and where, how it's gotten worse.

[00:23:33] **David:** For me the last time you I worked for a study abroad program there and you gave a talk to our students. This is probably 2016 or 17. I remember. That was a sort of a golden age. Yeah. Yeah. Because when you look back, my students were actually interning at many different NGOs at that time which sounds amazing now.

[00:23:53] **David:** And even two of them were even LGBTQ NGOs which we've talked about on this podcast. And furthermore, students were able to go and get access to all kinds of interesting sorts of situations, articles or write papers about it. This is maybe not something for the news, but I feel like that one thing that's missing from everything, all the news about China now and bless their hearts, reporters can't cover everything, but there's a sort of a lack of

information about what it was in contrast to what it is now, what we had back then.

[00:24:25] **David:** And I'm not sure exactly if that sort of perspective I think is important, but is it part of the news?

[00:24:31] **Jane Perlez:** I don't think so, David. Look, it's so hard to get important stories about China. Look, this is our biggest competitor. The United States is fixated on China. There's this unreal atmosphere in Washington about China's to blame for everything.

[00:24:45] **Jane Perlez:** It's really important that we get stories from, with the limited resources that we have to get stories that are realistic and are about what's happening today and how, what China is doing. For example, I think it's important that we understand, I don't think that what reporters do then or, the reporters themselves are not important.

[00:25:04] **Jane Perlez:** It's what the reporters report that's important. Contrast between now and then, not important. Our readers need to know. What's going on? For example, I think we should really try to understand what regular workers in China are thinking and doing. Since we can't really talk to them, the Times did an ingenious thing the other day.

[00:25:25] **Jane Perlez:** They wired up a food delivery person. With a video camera and asked her to take this on her 14 hour day delivery day around Shanghai. And so they did this long distance, amazing. And she logged down what her payment was at each stop and by the end of the day, I think it worked out that she'd earned 17 for 14 hours.

[00:25:49] **Jane Perlez:** Incredible. That's the kind of stuff that we need to know about reporters. Reporters are just the background noise that go and get the story. Sorry to be so old fashioned.

[00:26:00] **Jeremiah:** The issue of reporters sometimes becoming the story has also...

[00:26:04] **Jane Perlez:** Ridiculous. total waste of time.

[00:26:06] **Jeremiah:** I'm not gonna name names.

[00:26:07] **Jeremiah:** This isn't the place for it. But there, there have been some reporters in the last 15 years who, at least in our little household, were notorious

for, if I can't get the story, I'm gonna kick a hornet's nest and get footage of being chased around by the police and that will be my story. And it does a disservice to the I think the profession in general, but we'll leave that out.

[00:26:28] **Jeremiah:** Recently, you've been telling stories through podcasts and of course, this is a medium that so many people now use more than books, more than newspapers. They get their stories from podcasts.

[00:26:42] **Jeremiah:** And I think it's also been really interesting how you've been doing these as limited series. And I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about how it, in terms of the storytelling transition from being a reporter who's covering the story of the moment. To now telling a longer and more involved story, how has that been, how has that transition been for you?

[00:27:03] **Jeremiah:** And have you felt, what, has it changed the kind of stories that you are telling or would like to tell in the future?

[00:27:10] **Jane Perlez:** I'll start by telling a funny little story. I don't know if this is interesting or not, but when I left Beijing in the fall of 2019, I came to a fellowship at the Shorenstein Center at Harvard, which is a, which is for media folks, right? So I get here and I say, so I'm supposed to write a paper, how long is that paper supposed to be? And they said, 15, 000 words. I said, forget it. I'm not, I've never written 15, 000 words. I'm not starting now. I'm doing a podcast. Of course, I had no idea what a podcast was. So I turned to my colleague, Adam, who had, was, the sophisticated guy from New York magazine, Adam Marson.

[00:27:47] **Jane Perlez:** And I said, He knew everything about everything. I said, what do I do now? I've said, I'm going to do a podcast, but I have no idea how to do it. You better go and find a producer. So I was lucky I was in Boston and there are all these podcast producers around the place because of WBUR and WBGH and NPR, et cetera, et cetera.

[00:28:06] **Jane Perlez:** So I found Jeb Sharp, who was a very experienced foreign correspondent with NPR. And she'd also done a lot of producing. And I said, okay, I want to do a podcast on how Washington got Xi Jinping completely wrong. And I want to open with this ridiculous state department lunch where Xi Jinping came with Joe Biden and they were both vice presidents, but everybody knew that Xi was going to be the president.

[00:28:36] **Jane Perlez:** And I want to tell how all these China experts were in the room smiling from ear to ear. And it wasn't because it was Valentine's Day,

2012. It was because they thought that Xi Jinping was going to be the next great Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. There couldn't be more wrong. So anyway, Jeb said, okay, that sounds good.

[00:28:58] **Jane Perlez:** So off we went. So that's how it started. I love doing it because. I love the collegiality of it. I really like the collegiality. On this current podcast face off US versus China, I think we're a great team. We're very lucky. I have Mia Lobel as executive producer. She worked at Pushkin Industries.

[00:29:18] **Jane Perlez:** How much better can that get? She had just left Pushkin when I was starting this and she was game. We have Nina Porzucki, who's the editor and who saves me every day when we tape. And does amazing editing. And then we have a great engineering firm in engineers in Philadelphia. And on top of it all off, we have Frank Zhou, who's the associate producer, who is a junior at Harvard and does all the audio for the Crimson.

[00:29:43] **Jane Perlez:** So he's. Amazing.

[00:29:46] **Jeremiah:** That sounds like a great team. Can you give us a sneak preview for the second series or second season of Face Off? What are some of the topics that you'll be covering in the the season that drops this week?

[00:29:57] **Jane Perlez:** As you mentioned, we we start with Xi Jinping and Trump, and we actually start with you, Jeremiah, as you do a nice tour of the Forbidden City I'm not sure you do the actual tour, but you talk about the tour that Trump did in 2018 with Xi Jinping and how the Chinese flattered the heck out of Trump to try and get him to try and be malleable, just as he pointed out as an emperor many centuries ago had done with his visitors.

[00:30:25] **Jane Perlez:** I think that's really neat. And then we transit to, transition to Minxin Pei. Talking about Xi Jinping and what he's going to do or not going to do. My favorite episode is the one you mentioned on journalists, because we open with audio from Tiananmen Square on June 3rd, night of June 3rd, with the soldiers shooting their way into the square and Richard Roth being right there talking live into his antiquated cell phone, or for us now, antiquated, holding up like a five pound brick that was the cell phone.

[00:30:59] **Jane Perlez:** Getting it live into the studio, we do a really neat episode on Hollywood. The problem, and I'll tell you about a few more, but the Hollywood episode came to mind this morning because you probably saw the headline. There's a new movie, a new animated movie in China. Yeah, Nazha 2. That just did a billion dollars at the box office.

[00:31:22] **Jane Perlez:** And the headline is who needs Hollywood, but we have a great episode on Peter Law, who lived in China for many years, who you both must know and the ups and downs of the movie industry in China. Needless to say, we have an excellent episode on TikTok with Louise McTarcus of Wired. We have an excellent episode on EVs with Michael Dunn, Driving with Dunn is his podcast.

[00:31:48] **Jane Perlez:** And we're going to close. With a look at Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin and how the whole international architecture has, the 1945 architecture is done. And we do that with Eva Dalda.

[00:32:01] **Jeremiah:** Wow. That's a, it's going to be a great series and we look forward to listening to it throughout the spring. And also, thank you, Jane, for taking time out of your busy schedule to, to join us here on the podcast.

[00:32:12] **Jane Perlez:** Thank you both. Great to see you in podcast studios. Too bad though, that we can't all be in China. Next, next year, Beijing,

[00:32:20] **David:** next year in Beijing.

[00:32:21] **David:** Say hello to Nina for me, Nina Prozooka, I haven't talked to her in a long time.

[00:32:26] **Jane Perlez:** How do you know Nina?

[00:32:27] **David:** She used to go to China to do mostly stories about language.

[00:32:32] **Jane Perlez:** That's right. Very excellent. That's right. Yeah. She's a brilliant producer. Brilliant. Oh my God. Are we so lucky?

[00:32:39] **Jeremiah:** Thank you all very much. Thank you, David, for staying up late. And thank you all for listening. I hope you can tune in again to another episode of Barbarians at the Gate.

[00:32:47] **Jeremiah:** You can find us wherever podcasts are given away for free. With that, cue le drums.