"There's No Going Back"

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 "There's No Going Back." Four words, five syllables, and such a simple saying; yet the implications behind Clint's message foreshadow a disconcerted future full of twists and trials in a constantly evolving world. As humanity advances into a continuously developing technological world in search of global interconnectivity and international relations, we see a stagnation in interpersonal relationships as well as the beginning of a new digital era; whether or not it works towards a beneficial future is uncertain. Despite the progress made daily and the various leads we gain over our competitors in an ever growing digital environment, there are still many seeking to sow unrest and discord among the different countries in the world, using the internet and social media to their advantage.

Social media and the internet have been the gateway for the spread of radicalized messages and a source of strife prevalent in the international community in recent decades, and it shows no sign of declining. Ever since the September 11th attacks, terrorism and the rise of extremists globally have been in full bloom, with many groups finding a haven in which they can spread their messages within the internet. Social media and online websites were the key to prolonged survival of Al Qaeda and various other terrorist cells, as well as the gateway to the western world, where individuals were easily swayed to their cause. Ever since their founding, Al Qaeda has been prolific in their use of the internet, posting videos of their acts as well as their announcements of future attacks and rallies, designed to attract support for their actions

worldwide. Moreover, terrorism has evolved in recent decades, ranging from more directed and dangerous attacks to networked, skillful attacks, to inspired, frequent attacks enabled by the internet. It has gone from smaller, more severe attacks spearheaded by terrorist cells to isolated incidents by individuals inspired by the directed attacks globally, indicating a constantly evolving threat. The new era in which we find ourselves is largely dependent on the global audience, with violence and extremist ideologies becoming the norm. Social media has allowed groups to mobilize large amounts of people with significant impact, as shown in the 2011 Arab Spring and Occupy movements. However, the adaptive use of the digital world to communicate a radicalized message has also reached isolated individuals, especially in the United States. Examples are shown in the event of the livestreamed mosque attack, which had around 1.3 million uploads, and several other shootings. Inspired attacks such as these are a large threat facilitated by larger bodies spreading their ideologies, often fueled by violence and corruption. Three major ideologies dominate the world currently, being: white supremacy, incel, and conspiracy theories. These three are often the culprit for western extremism, further encouraged into the open by the rights we hold, such as free speech, and stimulation from large terrorist cells or countries seeking to capitalize on instability in the west. However, violence is only one of the several major issues plaguing society today, with the majority of problems lying within the digital world itself.

As social media and the internet grow in influence, one of the most pressing matters is the social and political fractures that come around as a result of the virtual world dividing the physical world. The digital world used to be an escape from reality, but now the physical world is an escape from the virtual world, especially today, in a society where we see everything, yet experience nothing. The internet provides an unbalanced view of the world, as it caters to a

consumer or viewer's needs and wants, feeding into their confirmation bias. It places you in a bubble of people with similar interests, further dividing the population into opposing and differing views. It breeds distrust and a negative perspective of the physical world, resulting in an isolated generation with antisocial habits and rash tendencies. Foreign powers capitalize on social divides and distrust, with countries, such as Russia seeking to foster tension and divide indirectly, through the use of personas and people who seek to slowly change our views, such as presidential candidates who push Russian policies, influencing the audience. Furthermore, due to the centrifugal forces present throughout the population and the state, the United States loses traction on the world stage, with their influence slowly waning as others make breakthroughs in technology. Russia gains ground in the political war against the U.S., and China is winning the economic war as well. In addition, China is also the main foe in the global cyber "race", especially when considering artificial intelligence, quantum computing, biotechnology, and digital currencies. Due to the fact that China incentivizes their people to work harder and do better, and because they subsidize and support technological corporations, they develop technology and make advances in the digital sector much faster than the rest of the world. Moreover, the state unifies the people and supports all kinds of scientific research, while on the other hand, the United States does not. They make leaps and bounds in gene editing and creating an improved human, while Americans are in disarray when considering the potential ethical and moral implications of experimenting on humans. As the rest of the world advances in the digital era, America must strive for stability and a unified vision in order to remain relevant as a world power.

Ultimately, among the instability and the unrest present in the world, we must venture to find solutions that promote unity and strength in the face of adversity. In order to combat the

devolutionary forces and unrest within the state, we must seek to promote technological innovations as well as the support of scientific research, putting aside our differences and morals in order to work for a better future. In conjunction with foreign powers, the war on terrorism internationally must be a focus, as attacking the root of the issue will likely aid in removing the hold extremist groups have on isolated individuals. However, we must also consider domestic solutions as well. The crackdown on extremist sites and "free speech" blogs as well as the issue of mental health should also be considered. Overall, with the developments in technology and research the world has made, and the different views and issues associated with it, one can see that there really is no going back.